

# **Belonging in Byker**

**The Nature of Local Belonging and Attachment in  
Contemporary Cities**

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## Abstract

This study is about how we live in cities. It is about the nature of the relationships we have to the places in which we live, whether we feel a sense of attachment and belonging to local communities and what the nature of these attachments might be. Specifically it asks what are the characteristics of local belonging and attachment in cities today? What circumstance shape and influence these attachments and how are they affected by processes of urban change? Despite drawing on sets of literature from across the social sciences, the research demonstrates the value of a geographical lens in analysing these questions by demonstrating both the social and spatial nature of an individual's sense of belonging. Located primarily within literatures from human geography, the work of this thesis seeks to move this discussion forward from relational discussions of mobility in everyday life, by acknowledging the importance of both place *and* mobility for understanding and explaining attachment and belonging. Based on the exploration of local belonging and attachment in a local community in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, two conclusions were reached. Firstly the nature of local attachments as being characterised by sets a set of three characteristics; comfort and confidence, commitment and contribution, and irony and critical distance and secondly, the basis of such attachments as unfolding as a process within the materiality of everyday life in place, pointing to both the territorial and relational nature of such attachments. In doing so, the research argues for an understanding of attachment to place as a process with affective dimensions as well as spatial practice within the everyday and secondly, to recognise the agency or the desire to belong as part of these active negotiations. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the potential for an understanding of the place of local belonging within human geography debate, reiterating the value of a complimentary understanding of both territorial and relational approaches to place.

## Chapter One: Belonging In Byker

### *The nature of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities*

“Standing on top of Byker Hill, John Wesley exclaimed of the breath-taking panorama beneath his feet: ‘A vision of Paradise!’ Presumably, in 1790, it actually excluded Byker, since Byker then was a village, and mostly behind his back. His vision of Paradise was the city of Newcastle down in the valley.

...For me, in 1970, the vision began from the hill sweeping down along the steep cobbled streets with row upon row of terrace flats, into the town, over the river and the bridges beyond. The streets of Byker, serene in the morning sun with smoking chimney pots, offered me no Paradise; but I was looking for a home.

Walking down Janet Street on that soft Saturday morning in the late autumn, I was put under a spell. That spell was to last for ten years; after which there were no women to stand in the doorways and no dogs to doze on the pavements, and no streets to run down the steep hill.”

(Extract from *Byker* Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, 1983)

In this introduction to her first book on Byker, an inner city area of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Konttinen speaks of a deep attachment to place. This attachment is forged and expressed around both the people and the place itself; the topography, the bricks of the chimney pots and the women in the doorways. It also speaks of a need to *have* a sense of place, of looking for a home that may not be ‘Paradise’ but a sense of belonging premised on something which can be as intangible as being under a spell.

Using the concepts of attachment and belonging to place, this thesis seeks to understand what this intangible relationship with place might be and how is it experienced in cities. In the midst of urban change what might happen to our relationship to place when there are no longer the “streets to run down the steep

hill” or some other transformation of place has occurred. In seeking to understand the nature of place attachments in cities, change, and more specifically, urban change is isolated as one of potentially many factors that can influence our relationship with place. What happens when many of the material and social elements that have made a place “home” or “Paradise” are no longer there and a place has been transformed physically as well as re-imagined by somebody else? Equally, can migrants to an area, such as Finnish born Konttinen, access these local attachments, or do they remain the preserve of ‘locals’ built around shared identities, family roots and generations of “women standing in doorways”? Whether people move to new places, or places move around them the question remains the same: How do people make sense of the changes that occur in our cities? How do they live amongst transformations of place? And how do they reconcile the changes around them, with the relative steadiness of everyday life? In short, this thesis asks; what is the nature of local belonging and attachment in cities today?

The particular local community of Byker which Konttinen wrote about and photographed in the 1970s (and subsequently in 2008) was a community undergoing extensive transformation. A desire on the part of city planners, as well as central and local governments, to modernise and demonstrate ‘progress’ saw communities in cities across the UK physically transform in terms of the built environment as pre-war ‘slums’ were torn down and visions of modern living built in their place. Today, local communities such as Byker continue to face significant changes through local and regional economic restructuring, changes in migration patterns as well as the physical transformation of the urban landscape as they try to imagine new futures. It is within this context that the thesis seeks to address and bring an empirical understanding to the contemporary nature of belonging to place.

The thesis does this, in the locality of Byker. Such a study could take place in any local community in any city and in any country. But to quote one former resident, *“there is something about Byker”*. Byker brings with it a legacy of discussions around local identity and urban change, discussions where people and place become tightly bound together. Whilst it has its own particular history, it shares in facing common issues and challenges with other localities. In wishing to

demonstrate the value of the universal in the particular (Tomaney, 2013), Byker seems a strong place from which to start to address questions of local belonging and attachment.

In this introductory chapter, the central themes of the thesis to be explored in subsequent chapters are introduced. The first is the question of belonging itself and how we understand what it might mean in today's society to say *I belong here?* The second concern is the importance of a spatial consciousness or geographical imagination to questions of belonging. This sets the scene for further exploration of the concept of place as it is theorised in human geography in Chapter Two. Thirdly a rationale for the particular focus of belonging to the *local* is outlined making the case for the local as a key 'locus of belonging' and therefore central to a geographical understanding of belonging and attachment to place. The fourth central element of the thesis, as hinted at in the opening vignette, is that of change or transformation of place and its impacts on belonging and attachment. In particular, the urban change of local neighbourhoods is of central concern.

## **1.1 Do We Still Belong?**

In a world characterised increasingly by hyper-diversity, mobility and global flows, can we still talk of belonging to a place? And if so, where do we belong? And how? A fuller account of the literature that discusses how we understand and conceptualise belonging is explored in Chapter Two. However the relevance and timely interrogation of the concept is assessed here.

"Identity in the UK is changing". This is according to a report on *Future Identities* produced by the UK Government Office for Science in 2013 which looked at possible implications for policy over the next 10 years as people's identities becoming increasingly plural, differentiated and valued. This signals a desire on the part of the UK Government to engage more fully with questions of identity and belonging, particularly in their capacity to contribute to strengthening social integration and reducing exclusion. Contemporary concerns of political representation of place-based identities, such as 'should Britain remain in the EU?',

'What would it mean to Britain if Scotland gains independence?', 'who speaks for the English?' and 'who speaks for the North-East?' are all important questions concerning place-based identity at the national level. Local and regional discussions of a 'North South divide' increasingly take on cultural as well as economic and social characteristics with the continued project of localism serving to further enhance the question of; what *is* my patch, my parish or my manor?

The danger here is that many of these place-based discussions of identity are couched in binary rhetoric, of 'us and them' or 'us and the other'. This serves to make many contemporary discussions of belonging to place feel reactionary in nature and conservative in intent. I argue that this does not need to be the case. Whilst fully acknowledging the exclusionary and regressive potential of place attachment, it remains just that; potential. The alternative potential and opportunity in place-based identities is that they could provide ways of understanding individual's relationships to place that are progressive and inclusive for the future development of local communities. Therefore the thesis seeks to bring some empirical understanding to the nature of local belonging and place attachment.

The Young Foundation (2008) found that 66% of those surveyed reported feeling they belonged in their neighbourhood. They felt some sense of belonging to a local neighbourhood, defined by the survey as 'the area within 15-20 minutes walking distance from where you live'. Some suggestions were made by the report as to which neighbourhood factors may influence this relationship between people and place. Factors such as having family and friendship networks in the area, lack of crime, feelings of personal safety and overall satisfaction with locality were all suggested. However the report merely touches the surface of people's complex relationships with the places in which they live. Therefore more searching questions concern how we continue to live in local neighbourhoods amongst such global influence and change? How do we make sense of these varying influences? And how do we carve out our everyday lives within local communities? As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the way we conceptualise and talk about the local has changed dramatically as modernity and globalisation have sought to provide new understandings of who we are? And what we *should* be? And what

our place is in the world? Yet as the above survey suggests, local neighbourhoods continue to have a stake in our lives, and what's more, may have consequences for our sense of wellbeing.

The two reports above hint at the importance and timely nature of questions of belonging and attachment to place. It is the aim of this thesis therefore to delve into the nature of these relationships with place in an effort to understand how and why people continue to have attachments to the local. To get behind statistics such as those cited above and to understand how being in place is felt and experienced, requires a more in-depth investigation into the relationship between people and place. It requires an approach which engages with geographical and wider social science literature and employs qualitative methodologies. This thesis takes such an approach.

## **1.2 Geography Matters**

Belonging to a place may not always be experienced or expressed as being under a spell as described by Konttinen (1983) in the opening vignette, but the sentiment is not unique. As Escobar (2001) reminds us, given the primacy of embodied perception, we always find ourselves in places. "We are, in short, placelings" (pp.143). Therefore there appears a universal state of the human condition, that "to live, is to live locally, and to know is first of all is to know the places one is in" (Casey, 1996:18) with questions of belonging to place appearing at once to be on the surface of contemporary life whilst at the same time continually blurred around the edges. Belonging becomes an important question not only during periods of rapid change (modernity, globalisation, postmodernity) but also goes to the heart of philosophical questions of how we understand ourselves and our place in the world.

Belonging is a question tackled by many disciplines and with many different viewpoints. In this thesis, the concept is explored through a mainly geographical lens. This brings a spatial consciousness to individual biographies and an awareness of the importance of territoriality in social relations to this multi-

disciplinary context (Harvey, 1973, Gregory, 2009). Therefore this lens brings the importance of place, and how we understand and conceptualise place in articulating a sense of belonging, to the fore.

In attempting to understand the nature of attachments to place in the context of *change* there is a need to understand how the three themes of time, space and environment intersect. In order to do this, the thesis draws on the writing of David Harvey (1973) and the different and complimentary uses of both a geographical and sociological imagination. The latter, as defined by Mills (1959), allows an understanding of the individual experience by locating oneself within a given period. It allows us “to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two in society” (Harvey, 1973:23). A spatial or geographical imagination on the other hand allows recognition of the role of space and place in individual biography and crucially, the importance of territoriality in relational understandings of how social relations are produced in space (Gregory, 2009). In short, a study such as this one could have operated from a specifically sociological plane, however do to so, would have been to abstract the social relations of a place away from their ground *in* place, and to overlook the way in which those relations are produced via a spatial consciousness.

With a particular concern with the effects of urban change on social relations in mind, the thesis continues to be influenced by Harvey when he argues “the only adequate conceptual framework for understanding the city is one which encompasses and builds upon both the sociological and the geographical imagination” (1973:27). Thus a geographical lens allows the potential to fix the location of events, places, people and phenomena on the surface of the Earth (Gregory, 2009). It recognises that attributes and characteristics of people are inextricably bound up with places, whilst a broadly defined sociological lens becomes crucial in a critique of the traditionally narrow spatial consciousness of the disciplines of planning, architecture and development as practitioners of urban change.

Therefore while accepting Mills (1959) assertion that the sociological imagination is the common bond of all social science disciplines, including that of

human geography, a conceptual awareness of space and place remain vital to the understanding of individuals relationship to a place in the context of urban change.

Topophilia, described as the affective bonds between people and place by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) has been the subject of humanist geographers' and philosophers' scholarship for many decades, the main points of which are discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Here however it is worth briefly outlining the nature of the interest in place attachment for this thesis and why questions of belonging in relation to it are so pertinent.

Humanistic geographers view place as *practiced* space; arguing space becomes place when it is used and lived and that experience is at the heart of what place means (Cresswell, 2009). The philosophies of Martin Heidegger introduced the notion of dwelling to these understandings in the early twentieth century as a way of understanding the nature of 'being-in-the-world' and a way in which humans dwell in and *build* a sense of place to which they are attached (Heidegger, 1993). This inspired much of the self-conscious writing on place by humanistic geographers from the 1970s onwards.

Dwelling for Heidegger describes the way we exist in the world and the way we give it meaning. Key to the notion of dwelling is the *felt* experience of place, and this understanding is central to this thesis. In critiquing the lack of attention the dominant logic of positivism in the 1960s gave to this dimension of place, Yu-Fi Tuan lamented that geographers:

“write as though people were endowed with mind and vision but no other sense with which to apprehend the world and find meaning in it. He (sic) and the architect-planner tend to assume familiarity – the fact that we are orientated in space and home in place- rather than describe and try to understand what “being-in-the-world” is truly like” (Tuan, 1977:201).

It is this felt experience of place that has been the most important contribution of humanistic geography (Cresswell, 2009) and is the intellectual tradition to which this research seeks to contribute. However in doing so, the research acknowledges “the dark side of Heideggerean notions of place” (Cresswell, 2009:5)

as a kind of organic, rooted and bounded place, potentially limiting and exclusionary. As a result, Doreen Massey even suggests that if debates on attachment to place did not start from Heidegger, “perhaps it would have never found itself this conceptual tangle in the first place” (Massey, 1993:65). This notwithstanding, recognition that places are shaped and ‘built’ by those whom have the power to do so, means acknowledgement that place involves “choices that exclude people and the meanings they represent” (Cresswell, 2009:5). Insisting that place is therefore a social construct leads David Harvey to the conclusion that “the only interesting question that can be asked is, by what social process(es) is place constructed” (Harvey, 1992:5).

This thesis attempts to address some of these processes of the production of place by explaining how people live in and make sense of urban change and development in communities. This draws on both the importance of the felt experience of place, of being-in-the-world, but also the power geometries (Massey, 1991) that construct this. Therefore the thesis is not only interested in how and why people have attachments to place, but how places themselves are produced by the social relations of their inhabitants.

### **1.3 The Lure of the Local**

“For some people the lure of the local is neither felt nor acknowledged; for some it is an unattainable dream; for others it is a bittersweet reality; at once comforting and constricting; for others it is only partial reality, partial dream” (Lippard, 1997:7)

This thesis accepts, as does Lippard, that the lure of the local is subjective; not always a ‘cosy hearth’ as described by Tuan (2001) and not something that can be understood as fixed or static. In doing so this thesis attempts to bring the ‘lure of the local’ back into contemporary theorising on place in human geography by taking an understanding of the local which sees it as being fluid and relational and therefore not a bounded container of space.

“The lure of the local” writes Lucy Lippard, “is the geographic component of the psychological need to belong somewhere” (1997:7). Within this key text on the meaning and dynamics of the local, Lippard argues that we are starting to look again at lost or neglected ‘local attachments’, but crucially, we find ourselves not really knowing how to reconstruct them organically in our contemporary image. This thesis seeks to address this gap by providing empirical understanding to how we experience being-in-place in local communities. Traditional locality studies, once the go-to literature for understanding local social life, now appear worn and outdated in a highly globalised, mobile world. Yet there remains a defence of the local and a willingness to *know* the local as a locus of belonging (Lippard, 1997). This is a defence that is often conceptualised in reaction to a perceived sense of placelessness (Relph, 1976). Harvey refers to the “crisis of homelessness to be found in the modern world” (1996:301), of people losing their roots and connection to a sense of homeland and importantly for this thesis, points to “even those who physically stay in place may become homeless (rootless) through inroads of modern means of communication” (ibid). Harvey notes also the “sense of terror of time-space compression” and the “fear of loss of identity (understood as identification with place” (Harvey, 1996:300) for philosophers’ such as Heidegger.

However the recovery of ‘roots’ or sense of identity (supposing these things ever were really lost) does not always have to be motivated by fear. Casey asserts that to live, means to live locally and understand the place you are in and your place within it (1996). The value of *knowing* the local to the thesis is that it offers the appropriate scale at which to bring a spatial consciousness into the sociological imagination (Harvey, 1973) though an appreciation of social relations as they are worked out and accommodated in particular places. Although the empirical focus of the research is narrowed by an attention to the local, it does not follow that the geographical knowledge produced is similarly restricted. In addressing the concern over the loss of ‘the bigger picture’ and the ability to communicate across boundaries in drawing on the local, Lippard turns this argument around and instead laments the loss of the ‘small picture’ from *not* looking to the local. She argues the local is rarely homogeneous, that most places are complex, layered and diverse. A lens of the local therefore, provides a scale at which the universal can be found in

the particular as local life is in fact, about communicating across boundaries. (Lippard, 1997).

This has important normative dimensions for how we understand space and place. In referring to the 'smaller picture' above, Lippard draws on longstanding traditions from post-developmentalism and environmentalism of 'small is beautiful' (Schumacher, 1993) and of ways of knowing the world and our position in it with moral and environmental integrity. The 'ethic of the local' (Gibson-Graham, 2003) is returned to in more depth in the next chapter. However far from the local being conceptualised as limiting and regressive for knowledge of the social world, it can in fact offer greater potential. Wes Jackson (1993) explores these ideas through the process of becoming "native to our place" and by placing value of 'homecoming'; people who "want to go back to a place and dig in". Therefore the potential of the local as a site of knowledge production and its use in this thesis is summed up by Tim Ingold (1993):

"the local is not a more limited or narrowly focused apprehension than the global, it is one that rests on an altogether different mode of apprehension - one based on an active, perceptual engagement with components of the dwelt-in world, is the practical business of life, rather than the detached, disinterested observation of a world apart. In the local perspective the world in a sphere...centred on a particular place. From this experiential centre, the attention of those who live there is drawn ever deeper into the world, in the quest for knowledge and understanding."

Therefore whilst the thesis recognises the local as a site "within networks of varying geographical composition, spaces of moment and circulation" (Amin *et al.*, 2003:25) it also contends that often it is an intense engagement with the local that allows insights into the human condition (Tomaney, 2013).

## 1.4 Regenerating Local Identities

From the 1980s onwards, regeneration, particularly in the UK, became just as much about regenerating imaginaries and images of a place as it did about revitalising the physical fabric (Gold and Ward, 1994). In relation to Byker in the opening vignette, Konttinen describes the physical regeneration of the community, but also hints at the social implications for a community being designated as a 'slum'. The photographs and words from residents in the *Byker* (1983) collection work to challenge the condemnation of such communities by the then Newcastle City Planning Officer, Wilfred Burns as having "no initiative or civic pride" (1983:125). There is a power dynamic at work here concerning who has the authority to shape places and perceptions of places. So what implications are there for a person's relationship to place when not only the physical urban landscape around them is changing but the place is talked about, thought of and envisioned differently by those who have the means and the inclination to do so? In addressing the question posed by Harvey (1992), of what social processes construct place, this brings the chapter to the final substantive interest of the research: the context of urban change.

This thesis is interested in changes that are brought about, specifically in cities, by the change in use, appropriation and imagination of urban space due to post-industrialisation where by places need to reinvent and rearticulate their identity in the wake of the erosion of former regional industries and economies. This, quite specific focus, comes under a broader umbrella of transformations and changes in place as a result of globalisation. This is not to say that relationships to place existed in a stable vacuum before this period. Places have never been sheltered from outside influence or existed in a straightforward and immobile state (Cresswell, 2010). However a commonly recognised era of heightened globalisation from the 1970s onwards, characterised by super-diversity, increased mobility and time-space compression (Harvey, 1989) increases the need for understanding how people live in places and make sense of the multidimensional changes around them. Therefore a focus on changes in place attachment brought about by globalisation does recognise the heightened and multivariate influences

exercising on place today and the complex negotiations and accommodations demanded to be made sense of. In short, does urban regeneration, and the imaginary of place it can produce, foster or undermine local belonging and attachment for residents?

Globalisation, understood as the accelerated circulation of people, commodities, capital, information and images implicated in a process of time-space compression (Harvey, 1989) has created a number of responses by geographers in considering what this might mean for place. Does place even still matter? This is one of the questions raised by the process as distance between place becomes compressed, difference becomes smoothed over and particularities of place become diffused. The broad consensus amongst geographers is that place still *does* matter, despite some calls of placelessness (Relph, 1976), non-places (Auge, 1995) within the geographical literature.

The broad agreement is that globalisation is itself not homogenous, but effects different places in different ways and at different times. There is a “*power-geometry* of it all” (Massey, 1993:62), meaning:

“Different social groups have distinct relationships to this differentiated mobility; some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it”

Here Massey is pointing to the social and spatial unevenness of development which heightens further the complexity of how different people experience and make sense of living in place. For the purpose of this thesis, this difference is characterised by the uneven economic development of places, the uneven distribution of globalisation’s benefits and drawbacks and, crucially, the differing local and regional responses to this. Globalisation then provides the context within which to understand the impacts of deindustrialisation on place, and the people who live in these places.

By addressing the issue of urban change and regeneration in a study of attachment and belonging to place it serves the intellectual purpose of not losing

sight of the territorially embedded nature of development and agency (Pike *et al.*, 2007) and challenges the overstatement and oversimplification of the impacts of globalisation on place. By taking urban and community regeneration as its focus, an attention to the role of territory and the materiality of place in negotiations of belonging is required and reconsideration is made of the 'reach' of relational thinking of place within human geography. A focus on regeneration, the material transformation of place therefore brings attention back to place as it is understood by both planners and residents, as an area of land that will have different meanings to different people. It brings the flux and flow of globalisation and all this entails, back down to earth.

## **1.5 Summary**

This chapter has introduced the reader to the main concerns of the thesis and the rationale for those concerns. Belonging, the local and the changing nature of cities through the specific process of regeneration and urban development come together to pose the question of how do we live in contemporary cities? Place-based belonging and identity has always had currency within the social sciences, now however, the "small picture" (Lippard, 1997), of how we relate to the local communities in which we live, has started to come into even sharper focus against a backdrop of discussions on both the continued importance of place-based identities and the nature of place itself. This provides a strong rationale for the local focus of the study and the methods used to study it.

This chapter opened with a declaration of attachment to the local articulated against the changing nature of that place ("*A spell that was to last for ten years*"). Drawing from the same case, this thesis looks at place attachment in Byker 40 years on. Through the lens of geographical literature however the thesis hopes to say something more than just about belonging in Byker; it seeks to understand the nature of place attachment and belonging to the local in contemporary cities. It hopes to provide a way of understanding resident relationship to place in communities that, in whichever form, have experienced and continue to experience

both great and more subtle change. In summary why, when we are told we are living in an era when “all that is solid melts into air” (Marx, 1848), do people continue to form attachments and what circumstances in this current era influence and mediate them?

The conceptual and theoretical questions in this research emerging from the overview presented here are put under empirical investigation around three main research questions;

- 1) What are the characteristics of local belonging and attachment in local communities and how are these formed and expressed?
- 2) What are the circumstances which may influence why people form and express attachments and belonging to the local?
- 3) What happens to local belonging and attachment in the context of urban change?

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

Having established the motivations for the study of local belonging and attachment in the context of change, the following chapters provide the theoretical, contextual and methodological framework for analysing these questions before an in-depth discussion of the empirical findings.

Chapter Two provides a review of the current literature on belonging and attachment to place. To do this, several sub-disciplines of both geography and sociology are accessed, including community studies, urban studies and local and regional development. Having identified some of the main questions arising from this literature, the chapter builds a theoretical framework for analysing them based upon both a social and spatial lens of analysis. This draws on understandings of how space and place are conceptualised within geographical literature as well as drawing on broader understandings from the social sciences of the production of space and everyday life in a local community.

Chapter Three puts the methodological choices of the thesis under scrutiny. In particular, and based on arguments emerging from the review of literature in Chapter Two, this chapter argues for the importance of a grounded and ethnographically-informed approach to exploring questions of local attachment and places particular emphasis on the dual approach of narrative interviewing and extensive field-observations.

Chapter Four sets out the specific context of the case study. It situates this within a critical review of local and regional development in the UK, and specifically Newcastle upon Tyne in the North East of England. This provides an understanding of the context of the urban regeneration in the area, against which expressions and negotiations of local belonging may or not be articulated.

Grounded in the empirical findings of this research, Chapters Five, Six and Seven delve deeper into the nature of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities.

Chapter Five, addresses the question of *how* we belong. Here three sets of characteristics identified in the empirical study of Byker are outlined and discussed. In this chapter comfort and confidence; commitment and contribution; and irony and critical distance are all discussed as important characteristics for understanding the nature of belonging and attachment to the local. In doing so a discussion is also had around the geographies of local belonging and how expressions and negotiations of local belonging can be thought of as situated as well as part of broader networks.

Building on this discussion, Chapter Six analyses the reasons *why* people have a sense of belonging or otherwise to where they live. In developing an understanding of the nature of belonging and attachment to place as fluid and contingent (Savage *et al.*, 2005) these reasons are discussed as sets of circumstance and interpreted and understood via the concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). In this chapter there is a discussion of the need to re-think traditional conceptualisations of 'roots', consider the micro-geographies and situated

practices of social capital, as well as the influence of cultural and symbolic capital on how people negotiate a sense of belonging to place.

Chapter Seven then turns to look specifically at the context of urban change and transformation. It does this by asking how local residents give meaning to local urban regeneration through their appropriation and felt experience of such places. By doing so the chapter highlights the difficulties in separating the tangible, from the intangible affect of regeneration and therefore the complexities of the influence of urban change on local belonging and attachment.

Finally in drawing the thesis to its conclusion in Chapter Eight, there is an attempt to synthesise the above three research questions into providing an answer for the overarching interest of the thesis; the nature of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities. This chapter argues that a nature of local belonging has emerged from this research that lends itself to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between territorial and relational understanding of place and place attachments and how this might be helpful in future analysis of place-based identities.

## Chapter Two: Geographies of Belonging in the Everyday Experience of Place

This chapter sets out the current theoretical and conceptual discussion and debate surrounding the nature of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities. In doing so it draws upon relevant literature in human geography and social sciences more broadly and identifies gaps in their conceptual and empirical remit. In identifying the key questions and gaps within the literature, a theoretical framework is constructed in order to begin to make sense of some of these questions. Being concerned with the nature of local belonging and attachment in the context of urban change, a broad range of theoretical and empirical literature is drawn upon in framing and understanding how people live in local urban communities.

The chapter begins with a discussion of how belonging and attachment to place has been researched and theorised in human geography. It identifies gaps in the theoretical study of belonging in terms of how we understand the nature of such attachments, as well as in its empirical study in identifying whom and what has been the main focus of attention and inquiry. For the purpose of this study, the scale of the local is focused upon to help crystallise questions of how and why people might form attachments to place. As a result a theoretical framework, prioritising the negotiated production of space and place, is outlined drawing on varying conceptions of place within human geography debates. Once these questions of belonging and attachment to place have been framed, the chapter moves to a discussion that situates the two main questions of the research; how people belong and why they might belong? In doing this, existing literature illuminates how individuals negotiate, express, practice and *feel* attachments, and what circumstance might shape or influence them. This is done with particular attention to the role of urban change.

Firstly however, the chapter explores the treatment that the concept of belonging has received within human geography before moving to a more detailed discussion of how belonging has been theorised within the discipline later in the chapter.

## 2.1 The Nature of Belonging in Human Geography

“Belonging has no place in geography” (Antonsich, 2010:645) at least if its lack of entry in one of the most quoted dictionaries in human geography (Gregory *et al.*, 2009) is to be used as a benchmark. Yet belonging continues to provide an extensive and far reaching research agenda in the discipline albeit continuing to operate as a “vaguely defined and ill-theorised” (2010:644) concept. As a result belonging, as with many concepts in the social sciences, remains contested and multidimensional. However a definition offered by Wood and Waite (2011) drawing on Ignatieff (1994) provides this thesis with a good place at which to start. According to this definition, belonging can be described as:

“a dynamic emotional attachment that relates individuals to the material and social worlds that they inhabit and experience. It is about feeling ‘at home’ and ‘secure’, but it is equally about being recognised and understood”  
(Wood and Waite, 2011:201)

This is helpful because it recognises both the personal and intimate feelings of being ‘at home’ as well as understanding belonging as a discursive resource which can affect a politics of belonging. These two dimensions of belonging defined by Antonsich (2010) as ‘place-belongings’ (feeling ‘at home’) and ‘politics of belonging’ (being recognised and understood) follow Yuval-Davis’s (2006) assertion of the importance for scholars to recognise and interrogate these two dimensions in equal measure (referred to by Yuval-Davis respectively as ‘belonging’ and the ‘politics of belonging’). Further, recognition of the dimension of place-belonging from Antonsich assists a focus on *territorial* belonging which is central to this thesis.

The above definition offered by Wood and Waite is also helpful in that it brings together both the material and social worlds into an understanding of belonging. This reflects the nature of belonging as a process of both affect and practice and importantly, of practices which are *situated* in the materiality of place. Moreover the work of Vikki Bell (1999) emphasises that people do not “simply or ontologically ‘belong’ to particular places or social groups” but that it is a process of becoming. This process is one of both affective and material practices. Bell

herself has drawn attention to the 'performativity' of belonging and Fenster (2005) and Fortier (1999) to the 'affective act' of both 'longing' and 'being' in belonging. Interestingly the significance of the emotionality of belonging is something Wood and Waite single out in their critique as a question that seldom receives attention in human geography.

Antonsich (2010) warns that empirical studies of territorial belonging need to consider closely both dimensions of belonging; territorially as 'place-belongingness' as well as recognition in a 'politics of belonging'. Although both are addressed by this research, it is the expression of "I belong here", the territoriality of 'place-belongingness' which the thesis is mostly concerned with, which Antonsich himself argues to be "first and foremost a personal, intimate feeling of being 'at home' in a place". Although the politics of belonging and the conditional working of power relations cannot, and should not, be separated from the social world, this thesis aims to capture a 'snap shot' of those relations in belonging to place from which further discussion of the politics of belonging can develop. In addition this responds to Antonsich's own critique of Yuval-Davis work that her analytical framework of belonging, although useful, overlooks the notion of place itself, "as if feelings, discourses and practices of belonging exist in a geographical vacuum" (2010:647). This thesis therefore, seeks to take the concept of belonging, as it is outlined above and "get back into place" (Casey, 1993)

In focusing on territorial belonging, the nature of place attachment also requires clarification. Although difficult to separate out from belonging to place, place attachment is understood in this thesis as an element of territorial belonging so much as it emphasises some form of affective bond between people and place and landscape (Mah, 2009). Yi-Fu Tuan's (1974) first discussed, in depth, the concept of topophilia, as the affective bond between people and place. Since this, the concept of 'place attachment' has been explored widely by both geographers and environmental psychologists. Literature from the latter on the subject of place attachment is vast (see Scannell and Gifford, 2010, Lewicka, 2011). However some of the language and discourse such discussions are framed by in this field become problematic once abstracted from their origins in the sciences and applied

to the study of social science. Examples of such language would include the use of 'instruments' to 'measure' the 'predictors', of place attachment (Lewicka, 2008, 2011) as well as "attempts to synthesis place attachment into a three dimension, person-process –place organising framework" (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Although the latter reflect only a partial view of the environmental psychology work on place attachment, and by no means wishes to evaluate this work within its own discipline, the ontological differences in an understanding of attachment and belonging to place between environmental psychology and cultural geography mean there are limits to how far this thesis can engage with such literatures.

That withstanding, the literature from environmental psychology is helpful to this thesis in identifying key elements which may shape place attachment (discussed later in this chapter) but it is to cultural geography that the thesis turns for a definition of place attachment. Here, Lowe's definition of place attachment as the following is helpful:

"(place attachment is) the symbolic relationship formed by people giving cultural shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual's and group's understanding of and relation to the environment" (Lowe, 1992:165)

Drawing on Mah (2009) the thesis takes this understanding of place attachment further to include social and economic processes and an understanding of place as "inhabited" (Cresswell, 2004) to capture the dynamics of community change and urban transformation. This is essential for the context of cities and urban change.

Now that the two main concepts of belonging and attachment to place have been defined for the purpose of this thesis, the chapter turns to consider the treatment of belonging within human geography and its intellectual position within the discipline.

### **2.2.1 *Belonging and Mobility***

In their special edition review on *Geographies of Belonging* Kathleen Mee and Sarah Wright (2009) point to the disparate literature on belonging within

human geography. Sub-disciplines such as migration, diaspora and citizenship studies have all addressed the issue at various scales yet several empirical and conceptual gaps remain within our understanding of belonging more broadly. What has tended to unite the study of belonging throughout human geography however has been an undercurrent of mobility and movement which has consequences for how belonging and attachment to place is understood within the discipline.

A preoccupation with mobility reflects a 'mobilities turn' or 'new mobilities paradigm' (Sheller and Urry, 2006) within the social sciences and geography in particular, with a number of key works from Urry (2000, 2007) arguing that in a complicated globalised world it is the centrality of *mobilities* that needs a fuller understanding instead of the inhabitation of a shared space of place. As a result, focus has shifted to sociality and identity as being produced through networks of people, ideas and movement, urging researchers not to start from a position of fixity and boundedness as taken for granted, but instead starts with mobility as a central fact of modern and post-modern life (Cresswell, 2010). This thesis seeks to move this discussion forwards by acknowledging the importance of both fixity *and* mobility for understanding and explaining attachment and belonging.

Mobilities as "a leading issue of formative influence in human geography" (Cresswell, 2010:552) has resulted in debates surrounding identity shifting from a perspective of identities as place-based and prescribed towards an understanding of their being mobile and achieved (Giddens, 1991). This has led writers such as Bauman to argue;

"In our times of "liquid modernity"...not just the individual placements in society, but the places to which the individuals may gain access and in which they may wish to settle are melting fast and may hardly serve as targets for life projects" (2001:146)

This articulates a view that identities based in place are no longer regarded as having the same currency they once did. Instead, many scholars now view identity as:

“a set of loyalties to humanity as a whole, to be inculcated through a distinctive educational programme emphasising the commonalities and responsibilities of global citizenship” (Nussbaum, 1996 cited in Harvey, 2000:530).

Therefore it would seem, in this context, somewhat obscure to focus on nature of local belonging and attachment, especially when ‘fixed’ against an ethics of the cosmopolitan; a citizenship based upon a shared humanity (Appiah, 2006). The privileging of the global portrayed by many as “a unifying vision for democracy and governance” (Harvey, 2000: 529) has undermined attachments to the local, viewing them at best with scepticism and mistrust and at worst dismisses them as obsolete and redundant. Cresswell (2010) however is quick to point out the dangers within the mobilities turn of losing a sense of historical awareness, reminding us that “people and things have always moved and mobility did not start in the twenty-first century or even with the industrial revolution” (pp.555). In this same respect we should also remember that in contemporary cities people and things do at times stay still.

The ‘turn’ regarding mobilities has also shaped *who* geographers study and *why* they study them. This has resulted in a focus and value (at least in research terms) placed on those exhibiting some form of heightened mobility with migrants, unsurprisingly “often central characters in writing on belonging” (Wood and Waite, 2011:202). There is little doubt the study of migrants, jet-setting elites and those displaced from their place of origin is of substantial use to not only understanding their own negotiations of belonging but to understanding broader flows and processes in an increasingly globalised world. However this presents an unbalanced picture. What is largely absent from studies of belonging is an examination of the processes of attachment making and the negotiations that take place for people who may not ‘move’ in the same way as those traditionally understood as migrants, transnationals and refugees do.

Where the belonging of more ‘rooted’ or ‘immobile’ groups has been studied it has tended to be based on an ontology which sees the attachment to place of such people as being a singular and less complex process. Identities in this

context are often viewed as being prescribed, not achieved (Giddens, 1991), and this therefore negates the possibility of these identities having the capacity for critical distance, or a sense of ironic self-awareness, as identified by Noble (2011). As such, Noble views irony as a substantial component of belonging in a post-modern era which has become characterised by “an awareness of the collision of competing meanings” (pp.160), therefore rendering irony for Noble as a crucial concept for understanding belonging and attachment to place. Cosmopolitan imaginaries such as Nussbaum’s cited above leave little room for this.

However Craig Calhoun points to this dichotomy between the nature of belonging being understood as either cosmopolitan or parochial as being a false one, arguing “cosmopolitanism need not be presented as the universalistic enemy of particular solidarities” (2003:532). Instead he stresses the need for an appreciation of the differentials in cosmopolitanisms and, in contrast to the ‘extreme’ stance typified by Nussbaum above, points to the work of David Held (1995) as an example of a moderate position. Held’s is an approach stressing the importance of multiple and overlapping allegiances of different scales and therefore begs the question, pertinent to this thesis, of how people negotiate and express these different allegiances and how they might shape and alter a sense of attachment to the local.

This focus on multiple and overlapping allegiances at different scales is captured by Yi Fu Tuan in a discussion of both the overlapping worlds, and the tensions of the ‘cosmos’ and the ‘hearth’ (2001). With this he argues these two scales stand for two sets of values. The hearth is local, cosy, familiar and nurturing and by contrast the cosmos is abstract, impersonal and accessible only to mediated experience. Although sensitive to their false polarisation, for the purpose of simplicity and clarity, Tuan argues they correspond to our dual nature of both the body and mind respectively. We want, and yearn for both. Therefore the question is raised of how these tensions and accommodations between “the nurturing intimacy of the hearth...and the air and light, the capaciousness of the cosmos” (2001:319) are worked out at the local scale.

In turning to literary forms for inspiration on how attachment to the cosmos and the hearth might be expressed, Tomaney (2013) uses poetry to demonstrate the virtues of local belonging. Through this analysis, Tomaney points to how art and literature offer an understanding of local cultures and solidarities as a moral starting point and locus of universal concern in ways that social scientists often struggle to articulate. He concludes that these ideas of belonging and having roots in the local are not redundant and should not be explained away or dismissed as a kind of fetish; “irrational, backward looking and reactionary” (2013:663). This provides a foundation for a more grounded understanding of how people make sense of the places in which they live which “test the ground between the local and the universal, the particular and the cosmopolitan” (Tomaney, 2013:668). This research seeks to contribute an empirical understanding to such arguments by grounding a similar analysis in an ethnographically-informed account of local communities.

In doing this the work of Hazel Easthope (2009) and Anne-Marie Fortier (1999, 2000) is useful in building a framework for understanding belonging that recognises both mobility *and* place as essential components of identity construction. Drawing on empirical work on the migration experiences of young adults in Australia (Easthope, 2009) and Italian culture in Britain (Fortier, 1999, 2000), these studies are ones which do not wholly retreat from the mobility paradigm but rather provide a moderating of it in some way. Fortier points to the importance of recognising attachment and rootedness in migrant-belonging, *as well as* movement, “however temporary these (attachments) might be” (2000:2). Therefore this allows an exploration of achieved identities but which also retains the importance of place to some degree. Many studies of Asylum Seeker and Refugee re-settlement have sought the same theoretical understanding of how people live in place, by drawing attention to how the global flows of migration ‘touch the ground’ in local neighbourhoods. For example Neil Spicer (2008), in his study of Asylum Seeker experience of local neighbourhoods in the UK highlights the centrality and importance of this scale of geographical understanding to how displaced people make sense of both their loss of home, and experience of re-settlement.

To summarise, the ‘mobilities turn’ in particular, and the era of increased globalisation more generally, have had significant consequences for the study of belonging and attachment to place in human geography. This has been inflected through who has been studied (and by extension whose stories remain largely absent) but also the analytical devaluing of belonging to place and in particular the local within these debates. The thesis starts from a position that the study of belonging to place does indeed have universal purchase but can only achieve this if it is framed within critical understandings of place, and for the purpose of this thesis, critical understandings of the local.

In order to ‘get at’ this grounded understanding of the nature of local belonging; whether it can be understood relationally as a cosmopolitan belonging or territorially as a parochial one (or as a tension in between), specific questions of how and why people belong to the local need to be asked. Only by understanding the finite details of people’s relationship to place, how it is expressed and negotiated and what elements inform them, can we get a sense of what it means to belong to the local and whether this can be thought of progressively or otherwise. This, as Escobar, drawing on phenomenological anthropology points out, does not necessarily have to be attended to by more sophisticated theoretical frameworks, but instead by capturing the cultural processes through which places are rendered meaningful by focusing on the domain of the everyday; the place-based life world of practical and social life (Escobar, 2001). To do this, the thesis turns to focus upon the local.

## **2.2 The Lure of the Local**

In an effort then to make a more inclusive investigation in terms of *who* is studied and a more grounded investigation in terms of *how* identities are studied, the scale of the local provides a platform from which to study belonging and attachment. As Casey reminds us, “to live, is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the places one is in” (Casey, 1996:18). This speaks not only to how feelings of belonging to place are associated with the Self (as vividly described by

bell hooks, 2009), but how we give meaning to the social world, finding universal value in the particular (Tomaney, 2013).

Within a mobilities and cosmopolitan turn in human geography, the 'lure of the local' (Lippard, 1997) can often be side-lined, as was discussed above. Despite this there are ethical and political dimensions to the local which not only make it a worthy and illuminating focus of geographical enquiry, but also help us crystallise the questions already beginning to form about how and why people have attachments and belonging to place. There is a need then for an ethics of the local to offer a redefinition of what it is to be cosmopolitan (Gibson-Graham, 2003), one which is grounded in the lived experience of the everyday offering an intimate, yet reflexive, understanding of the place we are in. Lucy Lippard's writings on the local are informative here as they point to the lure of the local as "the pull of place that operates on each of us, exposing our political and our spiritual legacies" (pp.7). Therefore it addresses the affective dimension of people's relationship with place as part of how they view themselves in relation to the world, but also as part of a process of identifying with a particular place. Crucially, Lippard sees the local as "the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to a prevailing alienation" (pp.7). The local is therefore identified as a scale at which people can belong, and often want to belong and that this belonging is part of a psychological 'need' in the face of prevailing alienation in the modern world. This is something recognised more widely in environmental psychology literature on place attachment as such attachments being a "prerequisite for psychological balance and good adjustment" (Rowles, 1990 cited in Lewicka, 2008:211) and helping to give a sense of stability in an ever changing world (Lewicka, 2008).

Yet this "psychological need to belong somewhere", when couched in terms of an "antidote to a prevailing alienation" (Lippard, 1997:7), is often the most problematic element of place belonging for Geographers. This "psychological need" has been criticised for advancing an exclusionary, reactionary and regressive form of local belonging and attachment predicated on a desire for 'spatial fixity' as a rejection of cosmopolitanism. David Harvey (1996) writes of a definition of

geographical community by some scholars as having “a dark and repugnant presence” (pp.311) citing examples of Young (1990, cited in Harvey, 1996) who argues “Racism, ethnic chauvinism, and class devaluation...grow partly from the desire for community” (cited in Harvey, *ibid*), Freud who felt that that “hysteria was linked to place” and Foucault (1977) who pointed to the heightened and strict surveillance many ‘sealed communities’ have to endure. These are fiercely made arguments and although not representative of the views towards local belonging within human geography as a whole, they are symptomatic of the fears and anxieties that can surround a discussion the concept.

Tensions over local attachments and the right to assert local identities often rise to the surface during times of change, in particular when this change is directed towards the physical environment. This sense of disruption is something Michael Kenny (2011) is sensitive to in his writing on the sense of dislocation between white working class communities in the UK and centre-left political parties. Kenny argues the gradual erosion of traditional working-class institutions such as trade unions, labour clubs and working men’s clubs and the sense of dislocation this can bring are bound to manifest themselves in struggles over the identity and ‘ownership’ of places where it is felt social and cultural ways of life are under threat. He goes on to argue that the “knee-jerk” response to such struggles “underestimates the widespread desire to keep hold of institutions, practices and landscapes” in an increasingly fluid and uncertain world (2011:180). Kinship ties are important here, but so too are the physical tropes of local solidarities such as local shops and services, working men’s clubs and public spaces.

There are of course dangers associated with such articulations of belonging drawing on reactionary politics and boundaries of fixity. However, as Escobar (2001) reminds us there are other possibilities for projects constructing places and identities and local and regional worlds; possibilities where a progressive cultural politics of place can be based on “democratic, pluralistic, and non-exclusionary goals” (2001:150). The task becomes how such place-based struggles can develop in a way that is “plural and outward looking, but also sufficiently engaged with poorer communities to have depth and durability” (Kenny, 2011:181). Ones that

recognise the need for communities to have a sense of rootedness and a sense of continuity and of belonging to part of a wider whole (Kenny, 2011).

Conversely, in focusing on the accounts of ‘Englishness’ amongst ‘new cultural class’ residents in Stoke Newington, Jon May (1996) found they neither demonstrated a clearly ‘bounded’ sense of place, nor a more progressive one. His conclusion instead was the need for attending to how connections between ‘a global sense of place’ (Massey, 1991) are imagined and by whom, “before automatically assuming a global sense of place describes a more progressive identity politics” (May, 1996:211). This suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the conceptual understanding of belonging and sense of place.

Yi-Fu Tuan’s (1988) work on ‘rootedness’ and ‘sense of place’ is helpful here by starting to unpack what we actually mean by such attachments when we described them as ‘rooted’ or ‘global’, ‘progressive’ or ‘reactionary’ and whether the dichotomy between them is as marked as some would have us believe. He draws attention to the use of the two terms, ‘rootedness’ and ‘sense of place’, as ones needed within contemporary culture to restore and recapture some lost sense of place and a longing for roots. However he does not see a search for recapturing a sense of place or understanding of roots as being the same as a desire for ‘rootedness’s’. This he regards as “being at home in an unself-conscious way” which is not, he argues, the same as a ‘sense of place’ which implies a certain distance between the self and that place which allows for some degree of critical distance. Tuan’s argument persuades us that a dichotomy between ‘rooted’ and ‘global’ does not have to be the case. Therefore more discretion in using analytical terms such as ‘sense of place’ and ‘rootedness’ is beneficial for understanding the subtleties of attachments to place.

David Harvey (1995), in a discussion of the failed campaign to oppose the closure of the Cowley car plant in Oxford, attempts to reconcile the importance of these grounded, situated politics and struggles of the everyday life in a place, with a need to relate this to wider class politics. In doing so Harvey came to a recognition that this necessitated a move from one level of abstraction to another,

from 'roots' to 'sense of place'. He does this via the use of Raymond Williams' concept of 'militant particularism' defined as:

"ideals forged out of the affirmative experience of solidarities in one place get generalised and universalised as a working class model of a new form of society that will benefit all of humanity" (1995:83)

Harvey's tendency during the study was to extend the analysis of the politics surrounding the Cowley plant to wider class based politics. This was in contrast to co-editor, Teresa Hayter who "rejected any perspective that did not accept as its basis the critical struggle for power on the shop floor of the plant" (1995:72). Although not willing to compromise his Marxist framework, Harvey does concede that there is:

"something problematic about imposing a politics guided by abstractions upon people who have given their lives and labour over many years in a particular way in a particular place" (1995: 73).

In abstracting away from politics of "the shop floor" (ibid) something was lost. Harvey was attempting to relate the defence of place in this instance, to broader class politics which in some way, was in danger of overlooking the particular. However, as Hudson and Sadler (2003) have argued, it is important to recognise attachments to place and class politics as being contingently conjoined in a variety of complex ways, that are complimentary, rather than competitive. Thus avoiding the real, situated issues becoming diluted and rhetoric changing from 'our community' and 'our people' in the coalfields, to 'the organised working class', the 'proletariat' and the 'masses' (Williams, cited by Harvey, 1995:84).

Struggles over place, such as the Cowley plant and the examples of industry in the North East of England written about by Hudson and Sadler, highlight the tensions and accommodations between class and place as the basis for social organisation and how, as Hudson and Sadler (2003) found, the two are contingent in campaigns to defend the right to "live, learn and work" in particular places (ibid:290). As the latter summarise:

“The ‘normal’ pattern of social organisations with capitalist societies is one that chronically involves competition between territorially defined groups attempting to promote the interests of “their place”. It is *not* the case that territory replaces class as a basis for social organisation and practice, but rather that identification with and attachment to place itself becomes integrally involved in the process of class formation” (ibid:300).

Michael Kenny (2011) makes clear that what is missing from the political discussion of the local is an effort to engage critically with its position with regards to cosmopolitanism, agreeing with Calhoun (2003) that the two do not need to be viewed as mutually exclusive. This would be a discussion that recognised the local as having “width as well as depth” (Lippard, 1997:7) and recognised what is lost when abstractions are made “away from the shop floor” (Harvey, 1995) but also being open to a “progressive sense of place” (Massey, 1991). A conceptualisation of this kind would appear to go some way in addressing the “hysteria” of place the concerned Freud et al above.

Instead of dismissing or ignoring ‘militant particularisms’ as symptoms of misplaced desire for ‘rootedness’ (Tuan, 1988) it is more useful to frame such questions in a way that focuses on how such tensions are worked out in the everyday life of place. Michael Kenny’s argument is useful here in articulating a value in addressing the question of local attachment that negates their fetishisation. As Featherstone *et al.* argue;

“The role of geographers should not be to leave these invocations of spatial discourses and imaginaries to politicians, policy makers or political activists. Nor should it be to look down on those who use spatial terms and vocabularies without the requisite nuance that characterise geographical debate. Rather, it is crucial to engage with struggles over the terms of debate around localism and to contribute to strategies of collective resistance” (2012: 1)

There is a role then for geographers to seek to understand how people understand place themselves and crucially the concepts and language they use to articulate

place and their relationship to it. Therefore taking an empirically grounded look at how people talk about place, borders and boundaries and whether the vocabulary of 'nodes', 'assembledge' or 'territory', is appropriate for understanding how people negotiate and express their experience of place. This forms the basis of the methodology and analytical framework later in the thesis as they allow the research participants to speak for themselves and articulate how they understand these central issues.

What is important for this thesis is that such struggles over place exist. The real, lived, materiality of such experience needs to be acknowledged and understood at the local level of the everyday at which it takes place. Defence of place has been highlighted by examples from Harvey (1995) and Hudson and Sadler (2003) by focusing on threats to industry in particular places. Escobar (2001) uses examples of threats to ecology to demand a similar conceptual framework in forcing attention to the fact that place continues to be important in the lives of many people and there is use in this framework here:

“perhaps most , if we understand by place the experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness (however unstable), sense of boundaries (however permeable), and connection to everyday life, even if its identity is constructed, traversed by power, and never fixed” (2001:140).

As this discussion has argued, “cosmopolitanism is not wrong, but by itself it is inadequate” (Calhoun, 2003:550) and there is an identifiable need for more grounded empirical understandings of how the impacts of global mobility are experienced in the everyday (Blunt, 2007) within geographical literature. “The conundrum” argues Hall, “is therefore one of how to engage in more connected and open processes of updating notions of belonging” (2013:47). By seeking to understand why and how people have attachments to the local this research is seeking an understanding of local belonging which moves away from a formulation that views such attachments as regressive and exclusionary to something which is “more connected and open” (Hall, *ibid*).

The challenge facing this thesis then is to find a framework to analyse ideas of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities that is informed by place; grounded in the everyday lived experience of the local, whilst at the same time recognising the context of globalisation that shape such experiences. Therefore this chapter draws on a negotiated understanding of place using varying theories of the concept within human geography to outline the theoretical position of the thesis. This will then be used to frame questions of belonging and attachment to the local.

### **2.3 Theorising the Local**

Geographers broadly agree that in the face of globalisation and time-space compression (Harvey, 1989) place continues to matter. Despite this there continues to be disagreement over why it matters, and how it should be conceptualised. Territorial approaches recognise the importance of 'real' and 'imagined' boundaries and borders to how a place is created and experienced through spaces of political engagement (MacLeod and Jones, 2007), whereas a relational perspective prioritise "the spatiality of flow, juxtaposition, porosity, and relational connectivity" (Amin, 2004:34). Of importance to this study are the different priorities of these two approaches and the respective value they give to issues of local identity, belonging and attachment to place.

Stepping aside from the binary positions of the two approaches, the framework of this thesis aligns itself with Pike's (2007) discussion of place as potentially being more productive if relational and territorial approaches were viewed "not as competing 'either/or' choices but seen from a 'both/and' perspective shaped by theoretical, methodological and political context" (pp.1147). This allows us to view and ask questions about how people live in places that are at once local as well as situated within wider global networks. Taking this approach throughout the thesis allows for an understanding of places as both bounded and porous (Morgan, 2007) and a theorisation of the local that "is not universal in its character" and whose affects "differ greatly over time, from person to person and from community to community". (Lippard, 2007:7). Therefore it does not hold to

essentialist notions of local culture, but begins from a position of recognising the social production of places and well as place identities.

What is required therefore is a dialectic of understanding premised on the definition of place as a process of social construction, in an effort to acknowledge the social construction of boundaries and territories. Therefore, the definition of place by John Agnew (1987) is useful by conceptualising place as involving three elements. Firstly, 'locale', the setting in which social relations are constituted, then 'location', which Agnew defines as the geographical area encompassing the social and economic processes operating at a wider scale and, finally 'sense of place', the local 'structure of feeling' of place. The importance of Agnew's definition for this research is its recognition of the relationship between the objective macro-order of location, across and between scales, and the subjective territorial identity of sense of place (Staeheli, 2007). This demands attention to territory, not as a static container, but as a "setting" for social relations and location of social and economic processes.

### **2.3.1 *A Complementary Theorisation of Place***

As outlined above by reference to Pike (2007), this thesis takes a complimentary understanding of these two approaches to place. The dominant relational view within human geography, valuing mobility, flow and networks as key to understanding place, has led to place-based loyalties often being viewed as "backward, anti-modern and provincial" (MacLeod and Jones, 2007:1180). However if a socially produced sense of territory is re-inserted into relational understandings of place, a different set of questions comes into focus. The most pressing for this thesis are to what extent these attachments persist and a need for a proper investigation into their nature, expression and negotiation. By reasserting the importance of territory and curbing a tendency to overstate a relational approach to place, a platform is provided from which to address questions of belonging and attachment to place.

Local community, or geographical community, is understood as being bounded (Harvey, 1996). This can be problematic as the idea of drawing neat

definable boundaries around a place is one which at first appears at odds with the relational approach dominate within human geography. Doreen Massey's paper, 'A Global Sense of Place' (1991) is a key starting point from which to understand a relational view of the world and one which seeks a progressive understanding of place and place identities. In the paper she attacks the traditional drawing of boundaries by geographers and the notion that places are static. Massey instead argues that places are the result of reproduced social relations drawn from a network of global flows of people, capital and ideas. She cites the example of the community in which she lives, Kilburn in North West London, as one which demonstrates the way in which places, as well as people, can have multiple identities. What Massey stresses is a progressive sense of place which should not be thought of as something introverted, drawing upon a long singular sense of history, but one which "includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and local" (1991:28).

Clearly it is important to be conscious of the links a place has across space, but this should not be done at the expense of acknowledging the historical links through time and territory. Although Massey does acknowledge time in the use of her geological metaphor, there remains a lack of recognition of what this history means for a sense of place in the present. Narratives of heritage of a place will too have been shaped by links with the wider context, and therefore by ignoring these an important part of the construction of a sense of place is overlooked.

Therefore a failure of relational theorists to recognise the significance of territory and boundaries has meant that struggles over place have been largely dismissed as misguided and irrelevant in a global world, characterised by flows and networks (Amin, 2004, Massey, 2004). Yet MacLeod and Jones (2007) argue that to view the territorial approach to place as somehow in opposition to mobility, is to fall foul of a caricature reading of this approach to place. Despite boundaries being given importance in this approach, they are not seen as fixed or objective. Advocates of this reading continue to be critical of the social, economic and political forces at work in constructing and reconstructing territory. As Escobar writes;

“people continue to *construct* some sort of boundaries around their places, however permeable, and to be grounded in the local socio-natural practices, no matter how changing and hybridized those grounds and practices might turn out to be” (2001:147).

For many the concern is less with the materiality of borders, and more with their subjectivity and the ways in which they become used by individuals to make sense of the world around them and live their lives within. The work of Anssi Paasi (2002) highlights the role of borders and regions as producing non-essentialist constructs of identity, produced and reproduced through discourse. As a result it is the *meaning* of these dynamic social constructs which ought to be the object of our examination (Paasi, 2002); the *sense* of boundaries, rather than territorial lines themselves which matter in everyday life (Escobar, 2001).

Ultimately, questions of belonging and attachment are empirical ones and as MacLeod and Jones note:

“the degree to which one interprets cities or regions as territorial and scalar or topological and networked really ought to remain an open question; a matter to be resolved *ex post* and empirically rather than prior and theoretically” (2007:1186).

This critique calls for more grounded and empirical research into how people actually experience and give meaning to place and whether they see themselves as part of a ‘network of flows’ or something with more perceived stability and ‘rooting’. This study aims to answer such a call.

### **2.3.2 *The Production of Space***

In managing the relational as well as the territorial influences on experience of place, and to achieve the complimentary position on theorising place advocated by Pike (2007), the thesis turns to the spatial dialectics of Henri Lefebvre. In *The Production of Space* (1991a) Lefebvre presents a double triad to conceptualise how space is produced. This refers to the perceived, conceived and lived space

and its translation into spatial terms via 'spatial practice', 'representations of space' and 'spaces of representation'.

To take the 'representations of space' firstly, this can be understood as the conceptualisation of space by "scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artists with a scientific bend" (Lefebvre, 1991a:38). 'Spaces of representation' on the other hand are "directly lived through its associated images and symbols, hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'" (1991a: 38-39) and 'spatial practice' amounts to how people use and appropriate this lived space of representation. This is useful to this thesis in firstly satisfying the need to understand the role of territory in the relational production of place and secondly in providing a way to theorise living in contemporary cities.

However, Lefebvre does not see these conceptualisations of space as oppositional or binary, rather they are dialectical, one informing and acting upon the other. People live and conduct their everyday life in absolute space, in buildings, streets and towns, but their experiences are informed by how they perceive these spaces, whether they see them as safe or dangerous, exciting or dull as well as how the spaces are conceived by planners, policy makers and developers who decide what the space 'should be' in normative terms. One understanding of space is needed to understand and produce the other.

As "*both* a statement about what the world is and a method for organising this world for the purpose of study and presentation" (Ollman, 1990, 1993 cited in Merrifield, 1993:517), a dialectical understanding of space allows for "grappling with interconnections between the global and the local, and the general and the particular" (Merrifield, 1993: 517), "reconciling the way in which experience is lived and acted out and how it relates to... economic developments on a global and national scale" (ibid:522). Therefore dialectics allows for a study of the contradictions between the processes of urban change and transformation and the lived experiences of local communities which may be played out at this level of social experience. This view sees space not as a dormant container for social life, but as a dynamic process of production which not only informs social life, but in

turn is informed by the social practices within it. It allows for place to be seen as “*fusion of space and experience*” (Merrifield, 1993:519) and a fuller investigation into the nature of the process of belonging and attachment at the local level. This is a theory of space that considers territory, boundaries, heritage and the built environment, whilst also attending to the relational process that have taken a role in shaping such things.

To summarise, this section of the chapter has argued the local provides an important locus for understanding the nature of belonging and attachment; not only whether such sentiment persists, but what form they take within tensions of cosmopolitan and parochial attachments. However in an effort to avoid the “dark and repugnant” (Harvey, 1996:311) elements of bounded- communities, the local needs to be understood as a fluid and contingent process of a dialectic production of space (Lefebvre, 1991a).

Questions of local belonging and attachment in a community must therefore begin with an appreciation that while “acknowledging the fluidity of place (this) does not mean denying materiality and structure, but rather setting this in context” (Rogaly and Taylor, 2009:20). Such tensions are the sites at which these expressions are “probed and worked out” (Hall, 2012:5), and in examining these sites we can begin to understand how they are negotiated and expressed and what circumstances play a role in shaping them. In order to achieve this, a way of theorising the local has been outlined which allows for recognition of the universal in the particular, viewing places as a dialectical process of social construction (Cresswell, 2009).

## **2.4 Theorising Belonging: How People Belong**

The chapter now returns to a discussion of how belonging and attachment to place have been theorised within human geography. In a review of geographies of belonging, Kathleen Mee and Sarah Wright (2009) agree with Antonisch (2010) that despite wide ranging engagement with the concept empirically, there is a lack of a theorisation of the concept, resulting in a lack of a framework for its

understanding. The thesis addresses this by looking at questions of *how* and *why* people express belonging to the local, identifying the nature of these attachments and the circumstance which shape them in contemporary cities. Such questions are addressed directly in this section by way of a review of the existing literature.

The work of Probyn (1996) is valuable in starting to think about belonging as a process, emphasising both the 'be' and the 'longing' or yearning of the term; an "achievement at several levels of abstraction" (Probyn, 1996:3). Within such processes and negotiations, Fenster (2005) argues there needs to be an appreciation of the everyday practices of belonging as well as a 'sense of belonging'. These distinctions, Mee and Wright argue, point to the importance of avoiding using a taken for granted notion of belonging (Antonsich, 2010) and to the need to unpack the ways in which belonging is both actively practiced as well as how it is 'sensed', felt and experienced. This understanding of belonging to place as a process, negotiated through situated everyday practices, along with the felt experience of a 'sense of belonging', is crucial to this thesis in moving away from a bounded or authentic understanding of belonging and towards understanding how people experience a sense of belonging as part of a constructed nature of social identity.

Therefore, in seeking an understanding of *how* people belong to the local- *how* such attachments are expressed and negotiated- it is both the everyday practice and *felt* experience of the everyday which are of interest in this thesis. With respect to practices of belonging, Fenster (2005) stresses how everyday practices of belonging connect the concept with an idea of how people make a place in the world and how they might go about 'acting' this out or 'performing' local identities (Bell, 1999). With regards to affective dimensions of belonging, a felt *sense* of belonging described by Probyn offers a layered understanding of how belonging is constructed and negotiated through affective dimensions such as memory, fear and comfort. Therefore it is both the *sense* of belonging and the felt experience of place in addition to the role of everyday practices which provide the conceptual tools for this thesis in exploring the nature of local belonging and attachment. What follows is a discussion of the theoretical and empirical

implication of both these components of belonging. It is to the everyday practice and effective dimensions of belonging, which the chapter now turns.

#### **2.4.1 *The Everyday Experience of Belonging***

Before a review of the empirical literature on how people belong, the lens of the everyday used to explore these practices and negotiations needs to be theoretically outlined. This is done by mainly drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991a, 1991b, 2002, 2005) and Michel de Certeau (1984) to gain an understanding of how people dwell in contemporary urban communities and why this concept of dwelling is important in a study of the nature of local belonging and attachment.

This section of the chapter concerns itself with the practices of belonging in the everyday experience of place and how we might study and interpret them. Building on the double triad of space outlined above, Lefebvre emphasises the importance of the everyday in getting to grips with the spaces of presentation; how people actually *live* in a space. Therefore the lens of the everyday becomes a way of “delving into the atomic structure of life as it is really lived (where) you can understand the whole structure of the human universe” (Merrifield, 2006:5). In his *Critique of Everyday Life* Lefebvre calls for social science to “undertake a vast survey of ‘how we live...for example; a day in the life of an individual, any day, no matter how trivial’” (Lefebvre, 1991b:196), asserting that just because the everyday is familiar, it does not mean it is understood; “The most extraordinary things are also the most every day” (1991b:49). In volume three, when talking about the reasons for providing a critique of the everyday, Lefebvre writes;

“Is it merely a question of analysing daily life as of 1981? Of determining what has and what has not changed, forecasting what is going to be altered or consolidated in years to come? No. It also involves establishing whether the critical analysis of everyday life can serve as a guiding thread for knowledge of society as a whole and its inflection in a particular direction in order to give it meaning.” (2005:2)

Here, everyday life is presented as a way of gaining insight into how people make sense of and give meaning to the world around them therefore making it useful in this research as it allows studies of local community to move past mere description of everyday life. For Lefebvre, the everyday lived experience was alive:

“It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house, or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time. Consequently it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic.” (1991b:42).

The dynamic but situational nature that Lefebvre speaks of here captures ideas of dwelling and roots, but in a way that allows multiple readings and a process of construction to be understood. It also draws attention to the affective dimensions as discussed by Probyn (1996), citing passions as a felt experience of place as well as the practice of action in lived situations. Therefore coupled with Fenster (2005) and Probyn’s (1996) call for an analysis of the practices of belonging, this makes the everyday a crucial part of the theoretical framework for understanding local belonging and attachment

Lefebvre stressed that the everyday should be about participating in social, cultural and political life, and borrowing a concept from Heidegger, that it should be about *dwelling*, anything less than this Lefebvre saw as a downgrading of the urban experience (2005). This is particularly important when trying to understand how everyday life responds to periods of change, such as during the process of urban change:

“Is daily life a shelter from the changes, especially when they occur abruptly? Is it a fortress of resistance to great changes, or certain minor but significant changes? Or, contrariwise, is it the site of the main changes, whether passively or actively?” (2005:41)

Here, the use of the everyday and of practices of dwelling become important for understanding how the spaces of representation, lived space, can be read for an understanding of how individuals make sense of social (or urban change).

Often critiqued for premising his understandings of space on abstract theorising (Rogaly and Taylor, 2009 *et al.*), Lukasz Stanek (2011) reassesses this claim by grounding Lefebvre's work in a series of concrete engagements with architecture and urbanism in post-war France, most notably for this thesis, the studies Lefebvre made on the practices of dwelling carried out in conjunction with the *Institut de sociologie urbaine* (ISU). Stanek argues that these empirical studies in particular of urban dwelling were of foremost importance in Lefebvre's development of his theory of the *Production of Space*, *The Right to the City*, as well as his thinking on centrality and everyday life.

Therefore, based on his empirical studies of everyday life in the city, Lefebvre aimed at theorising dwelling as a spatial practice. In particular the ISU carried out studies of dwelling in a detached house (Pavilion) and in collective estates (grand ensembles) in post-War France and was interested in the meaning inhabitants attached to practices of dwelling in these spaces (*L'habitat pavillonnaire*, 1966) It was from here, Stanek argues, that Lefebvre started to develop a theory of the appropriation of space. This was done by paying attention to the spatial practices as well as the marking or boundary making work of inhabitants in giving meaning to lived space. In doing this, Lefebvre reconceptualised dwelling from the understanding of the ISU of focusing only on the domestic interior, to a broader perspective, both scalar and historical. Lefebvre therefore related practices of dwelling to scales larger than the apartment or building and redefined it as "consisting of practices that relate to multiple scales of social processes rather than being confined to an individual dwelling" (2011:86).

Stanek points to Lefebvre's concept of the appropriation of space as a useful perspective on his understanding of dwelling;

"For an individual, for a group, to inhabit is to appropriate something. Not in the sense of possessing it, but as making it an oeuvre, making it one's own, marking it, modelling it, shaping it. This is the case with individuals and with small groups like families, and it is also true for big social groups that inhabit a city or a region. To inhabit is to appropriate space, in the midst of constraints, that is to say, to be in a conflict-often acute- between

constraining powers and the forces of appropriation” (Lefebvre, 1970:222 quoted in Stanek, 2011:87).

Therefore, this thesis can use Lefebvre’s lens of the everyday to understand how people dwell in a space not just for how they use and appropriate it at the domestic level of the house, the apartment or the garden (as the ISU conception did), but for what it can tell us more broadly about how people interpret and draw on the representation of space around them. In the case of this thesis this framework allows for an exploration of how people live in a local community and how they make sense of the social and urban changes around them in negotiating a relationship with that place.

To understand an individual’s appropriation of space and how this might relate to belonging the thesis draws on de Certeau’s *The Practices of Everyday Life* (1984), which concerns itself with belonging in urban spaces and offers a critique of modernist planning ideology. Defined as a theory of territorialisation by de Certeau, he isolates the spatial tactics of walking as a way in which people come to know and make sense of their environment building up a “sentiment of belonging” to these spaces. This helps connect the use or appropriation of space and practices of dwelling in the local from Lefebvre (1970) with a sentiment of belonging. It serves to highlight both the affective and negotiated dimension of belonging and the “ways of operation or doing things in a space” that force us to think about how change in these urban spaces might then become part of the negotiation itself.

Secondly and in a similar vein to Lefebvre’s spaces of representation, de Certeau speaks of production of an image (of urban space) and a Secondary Production hidden in the process of utilization. In other words, he was interested in how people took space and made it their own via the ‘tactics of spatial practice’. This provides useful conceptual tools for understanding how individuals use the spaces in which they live their everyday lives, give them meaning and draw upon them in identity construction which may be at odds with how cities are produced and designed. De Certeau uses the metaphor of grammar to explain this:

“Although they are composed with the vocabularies of established languages ...the trajectories trace out the use of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop” (1984:xviii).

By tracing out these ‘other interests and desires’ via the use of the concepts of tactics and second order thought, it is possible to understand the dissonance between ‘expert’ conceptions of what a place is and what it means to a person living within it. Therefore, applying the understandings of the production of space from both Lefebvre and de Certeau is helpful in studying the impacts of urban change on local belonging and attachment.

To summarise, a lens of everyday practice is useful theoretically in a number of ways. Firstly, it allows us to get back into place (Casey, 1993) by re-inserting questions of territory into a relational understanding. This focuses on how the tensions and accommodations between the two become part of the social construction of local attachments. In this way it continues a movement in globalisation studies to bring the flows of globalisation ‘back down to earth’, (Held, 1995) and looks at how they play out in a local context where such flows touch the ground. Secondly, it encourages a prioritisation of the process involved in forging local attachments, as emphasised by Fenster (2005). And thirdly it allows both the everyday practices as well as the affective dimension (as identified by Probyn) of local belonging to come to the surface, and a serious consideration of the role of memory, fear, joy and other *felt* experiences of place in the process of local belonging.

#### **2.4.2 *How Do People Practice Everyday Belonging?***

Turning to empirical work on everyday practices of belonging, Vikki Bell (1999) and Anne-Marie Fortier (1999) argue constructions of belonging have a performative dimension, therefore this research seeks to establish what kinds of practices are involved in how people express and negotiate attachments and belonging to the local. One example, walking as practiced narration (de Certeau 1984), has been used increasingly within social science as a way of understanding

experience of place. Phil Jones and James Evans (2012) provide an example of this, using walking interviews as part of 'rescue geographies', capturing the embodied relationship between communities and urban space prior to redevelopment. Similarly scholars interested in the lived-experience of Asylum Seekers and Refugees such as Maggie O'Neill and Phil Hubbard (2010) have also used walking as performative praxis to explore being-in-place among groups whose lives are often depicted as markedly transnational. With this in mind, the thesis uses walking interviews as a nested method as part of a broader methodology of qualitative, in-depth interviewing to understand individual's everyday practice in place, and the affective dimensions of their relationship to it, but also pays attention to spatial practices such as walking in understanding relationship to place. This will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Practices of 'neighbourly behaviour' and 'acts of civility' have also been explored in various empirical community studies as practices of belonging. Kathy Burrell (2012) has looked at daily experiences of urban neighbourliness and belonging and found acts such as keeping spare keys for a neighbour, taking in post etc. were all small everyday practices that were used to make oneself 'part of the community', at least in the sense of immediate neighbours. Kathleen Mee (2009) explores 'practices of care' amongst residents in a public housing estate in Newcastle, New South Wales and came to similar conclusions, that there was an effort to make oneself a 'good neighbour' in order to forge a sense of attachment to the community. Therefore, in seeking to understand the nature of local attachments and how people negotiate and express this process, such writings on the everyday practices of neighbours in local communities provide a helpful entrance point to examining how far such acts form part of the forging of attachments. Or whether, as Ash Amin asserts, communities are "marked...by enforcements of introspective community, social attachments that do not cohere, belongings that traverse the city into the ether or globally, irreconcilable differences, and distance and separation" (2006:1021).

Amin states that living with difference "is becoming a test of endurance as the urban public comes to accept that multiplicity is best tackled through isolation

or, depending on who is involved, ejection” (pp.1016). Although no in way wishing to deny the reality of difficult, and sometimes traumatic, experiences in diverse communities, Amin’s statement is a bold one, and one in need of empirical interrogation.

Much of the literature surrounding diverse communities and living with difference (Valentine. 2008, Bauman, 2003 and Thrift, 2005, 2012) reflects on the geographies of encounter and a way of achieving ‘meaningful contact’ (Valentine, 2008) between urban residents. This has tended to focus on the micro-scale of everyday public encounters and interactions; the mundane acts of friendliness (Thrift, 2005) and a ‘politics of connectivity’ (Amin, 2004) which may act as “reservoirs of hope” (Thrift, 2005:147 cited by Valentine, 2008: 328) for community cohesion and as practices of local belonging and attachment.

However, within this vast literature there is very little conceptual engagement with the role of place generally or the local specifically. Couched within the language of community cohesion and multiculturalism more broadly, the emphasis becomes the relationship between individuals and different groups within a community rather the relationship between individuals or groups and *place*. The fostering of ‘meaningful contact’ (Valentine, 2008) within communities could prove useful for a study of local belonging and attachment as it forms part of a process of building bonding and bridging capital (Putnam, 2000 as discussed later) but in order for this study to make use of this there needs to be a re-conceptualisation of the role of place and the local in these relations and everyday practices.

In thinking about how to do about this, Suzanne Hall’s (2013) analysis of Ash Amin’s (2012) *Land of Strangers* is useful. Amin uses a ‘hub-and-spoke’ (pp.17) metaphor to reflect the increasing multitude of opportunities for connection a world of fluidity and technology offers. However, Hall argues this is a metaphor in need of some anchoring, a sense of “gravity”:

“Without this contextualised view of pluralism, too many individuals and groups are analytically omitted from the challenges and prospects of living

with difference and change; too many important processes of finding affinities and forging allegiances are too readily dismissed” (2013:50).

This idea of a composition of connections “with gravity” (ibid) is important to this thesis as it forces an attention not only, as Hall herself points out, to those groups “whose stakes are often highly invested in local worlds” (ibid) but also to the potential of collaboration to provide common projects in which individuals have an active stake (Hall,2013). An example of this type of ‘gravity’ in local networks of attachment is provided by the UK community alliance, *London Citizens*. Jane Wills (2012) has argued the territorial but institutionally networked architecture of this form of community organising:

“allows the alliance to connect islands of social solidarity, and to forge relationships between long standing leaders within these institutions, creating a new community able to operate at the scale of the city itself” (pp.115)

The everyday is a geographically unspecific concept, however by using a local geographical focus, the thesis is able to get a handle on the social relationships that exist within communities. This opens up a discussion of what form practices of collaboration or allegiances may take in local communities and flies “in the face of a long tradition of scholarship that has documented the decline of geographical community” (ibid).

Therefore practices of belonging in the everyday experience of cities are a useful starting point from which to think about how people belong and what characterises the nature of local belonging and attachment. However a focus on these practices is only helpful if they are understood as situated within place and therefore requires both the understanding of dwelling from Lefebvre as “consisting of practices that relate to multiple scales of social processes rather than being confined to an individual dwelling” (2011:86), and a conceptualising of the local that recognises “territorial but institutionally-based” networks (Wills, 2012:119).

### **2.4.3 *Everyday affects and 'Local Structures of Feeling'***

Having discussed and theoretically outlined the importance of everyday practices of belonging in the local, the chapter now turns to the second important dimension of belonging, the affective experience or emotional and *felt* dimension of belonging (Probyn, 1996, Fenster, 2005). In order to provide a framework in which this dimension of belonging can be discussed, the chapter short-circuits what may be considered a more contemporary discussion of emotion and affect, and turns instead to the work of Raymond Williams and his use of 'structures of feeling' (1977) in understanding how people give meaning to the world around them.

The affective dimension of belonging discussed here is understood as a sensation linked to your environment which can be both biological and relational (Dittmer, 2010). Dittmer describes the precognitive dimension of affect explored by scholars as the experience of sensation prior to being labelled as particular emotion, and not always obvious to ourselves most of the time. Therefore, the use to this thesis of a notion of affect as described by Dittmer is that these subconscious attractions and aversions to different places highlight the environmental factors which can contribute to affective attachments to place.

Thus, affect understood within these parameters is helpful for understanding *why* as well as *how* individuals may form attachments to place or otherwise. Despite its prevalent contemporary iteration within recent geographical debate on affect (see Anderson, 2009), questions of sensation linked to immediate environment have longstanding roots in the cultural theory of Raymond Williams. Therefore it is within a review of the work of this iteration of 'affect' that this thesis takes its cue in how the felt experience of place can be useful in understanding belonging and attachment to the local.

Williams uses the term structures of feeling to describe:

“a particular quality of experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or period” (1977:131).

Crucially, structure of feeling is about the intangible “elements of impulse, restraint and tone as well as the specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships” (1977:132). Here, structure of feeling specifically refers to periods in time. However, as Harvey (1996) points out, through Williams’ exploration of culture in relation to place in many of his novels (particularly in *Border Country* and *Loyalties*) this concept lends itself well to exploring the nature of belonging and attachment to place and the “particular quality of experience and relationship” (ibid) that place may inspire. However as Taylor *et al.* (1996) warn it would be “foolish” to take the concept and transfer it “without any modification, from the level of a ‘national society’ to that of a city or region” (1996:6). Nevertheless, in their study of recognising local difference in Sheffield and Manchester, Taylor *et al.* do build and use a concept of ‘local structure of feeling’ on the basis that:

“popular common sense in England would certainly insist on their being important defining differences between the character (and local culture) of the Cockney, the Scouser, the Brummie and the Geordie” (ibid)

Therefore this thesis draws on Taylor *et als.* understanding of ‘local structure of feeling’ in arguing that:

“each urban area, region or locality involves a given inheritance of geographical form (morphology), climate, industrial base, labour market and labour history, patterns of in-migration, and emigration, ethnic and cultural mix, conflicts and contests with other neighbouring towns or cities, and many other given features that define it and endow it with an identity which ...can perhaps be thought of as a ‘local structure of feeling’ “(1996:32)

It can be seen therefore that (local) structures of feeling share a similar precognitive quality with the concept of affect as it is described by Dittmer. Williams writes, that the particular qualities of social experience and relationship that characterise structures of feeling “do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalisation before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits in experience and on action” (Williams, 1977:132). It is these ‘palpable pressures’ which may hold insight into the affective dimension of belonging to place. Williams

talked of art and literature as being articulations of structures of feeling. This thesis uses the concept to understand the nature and expression of belonging, as its articulation. 'Palpable pressure' therefore becomes the sensations of experience of place; why someone might feel comfortable or fearful in a particular place and through being attuned to such 'palpable pressure' an understanding of how and why people experience a sense of belonging to place becomes possible.

An example of some of the 'palpable pressure' experienced in some of the more painful and traumatic negotiations of belonging come from the work of bell hooks on belonging (2009). Although heavily inflected through experiences of racial and patriarchal oppression in the American South, hook's reflections on place where she felt a sense of belonging, her birthplace of Kentucky, lend support to the call for recognition of the affective dimension of belonging and most importantly of memory in belonging. In declaring "Kentucky is my fate" (pp.24) hooks acknowledges "a sense of belonging that I never felt elsewhere, experiencing unbroken ties to the land, the homefolk, to our vernacular speech". Yet as well as attending to the nurturing environment of her childhood, she also describes the "legacy of racial threat and hate that engendered (in me) the desire to leave". What is crucial in hook's desire to return to the place she grew up and to find a sense of belonging there is the role of memory as this passage demonstrates:

"Awakening in the night, when I first moved to my new Kentucky home, I was startled by a familiar sound, the sound of a train, a sound evocative of my childhood...The sound of the train comforts me now as it did then, for I know I have come home. I have returned to the world of my childhood, the world in which I first sowed the seeds of my belonging and becoming...Here in my native place I embrace the circularity of the scared, that where I begin is also where I will end. I belong here." (pp.223)

Here hooks is very much centred on how her sense of belonging is gained from the place in which she grew up, and intently focused on specific memories of early childhood. The influence of life stages and the developmental element of belonging and attachment to place is something which has been explored by Rowles (1983)

which identifies the development of an 'insiderness' built up through years of residence in one community. Equally Degene (2005) and Bennett (2009) have stressed the role of memories in a community for older resident's sense of place and belonging in a local community. However, there is often a suspicion of what David Harvey (1990) calls 'place-bound nostalgia' (cited by Bonnett and Alexander, 2013) dismissed as a form of yearning for a return to community which may or may not have existed. This would conform to Fred Davis's (1979) definition of simplistic nostalgia, which, as anthropologist Carol Stack (1996) points out is rarely what is actually being articulated:

"No one is seeking timeless paradise; and no one, however nostalgic, is really seeking to turn back the clock... What people are seeking is not so much the home they left behind as a place they feel they can change, a place in which their lives and strivings will make a difference- a place in which to create a home" (1996:198-199).

What Stack describes here is a more realistic and forward-looking sense of memory and nostalgia. It negates the need for a person to have left the place of their childhood in order to feel this sense of longing, and recognises that people can feel displaced by changes and movement around them rather than movement of themselves. It also draws attention to the need for people to feel a sense of purpose in place, a sense that they can nurture and make a difference in place as well as place supporting them in their "striving". This gives us some suggestion as to how people might belong to a place and how they might go about expressing and negotiating it.

The role of memory in hook's narrative appears crucial in understanding *how* people belong to a place. hooks continues to highlight this role by pointing to how we make sense of our own biographies. She argues we chart them through place, paying "tribute to the past as a resource that can serve as a foundation for us to revision and renew our commitment to the present, to making a world where all people can live fully and well, where everyone can belong" (pp.5). Here, away from a more bounded sense of a place of childhood and early memories, hooks begins to plot a course for a more inclusive sense of belonging based on past

memories as a resource. This therefore, opens a space for both relational and territorial understandings of place, as place providing the 'locus of memory' (Herbbert, 2005) but not being bounded by it.

This perspective sees the role of memory as an inclusive force, linking individuals and collective memories of place. This is an approach which has been shown to be of value in understanding attachment to place by those interested in rescue geographies (Jones and Evans, 2012). This is particularly pertinent to this thesis as rescue geographies concern themselves with the preservation of personal and collective memories in communities undergoing the process of urban change and regeneration. In their use of the concept, Jones and Evans point to the importance of memory across a spectrum of community residents, ranging from those who have invested a lifetime in a place, to those just moved in. Again this highlights the need for qualitative methodologies able to take account of the emotional construction and re-telling of memories of place.

Building on recent reappraisals of nostalgia and memory as a 'productive' and 'living' disposition, Alastair Bonnett and Catherine Alexander (2013) have explored the concept of 'mobile nostalgia', which becomes useful for this study. They suggest that nostalgia should be seen "not as something fixed and passive, but as a dynamic process that develops in relationship to, and shapes human activity" (pp.394) allowing us to think about attachments to place as working across and between geographical and historical distances. This form of nostalgia, they argue, needs to be acknowledged "as a potentially critical intervention that draws together different modes of attachment and yearning" (pp.391). In other words, it weaves together 'restorative' and 'reflexive' elements of memory, providing both a value of place as well as a critical distance from it.

Therefore it would seem essential for the thesis to maintain an awareness of the role and value of memories in communities, not as a preserve of the older population, a simplistic form of nostalgia "irremediably passive, conservative or uncreative" (Bonnett and Alexander, 2013:400), but as a resource that has the capacity to facilitate belonging to the local, used discriminatorily and critically in maintaining a sense of self and positionality in the rest of the world. Two questions

arise from this discussion of memory; one, how and to what extent do people use memory in articulating a sense of belonging to a place? And two, how is nostalgia used and articulated?

To summarise, in an effort to address the affective dimensions of belonging as instructed by Bell (1999), Probyn (1996) and Fenster (2005), of how people, feel, sense and experience belonging, the role of memory and an idea of a local structure of feeling (Taylor *et al.*, 1996 drawing on Williams, 1977) have proven to be useful starting points for empirical examination. Therefore this adds an additional dimension to the understanding of belonging as practiced within the everyday experience of place and provides further insight into local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities.

The discussion in this section brings together two important points. The first is to think of belonging as a process with affective dimensions as well as spatial practice within the everyday experience of place. The second is to recognise the agency, or the desire, to belong and to view these active negotiations as part of the constraints and circumstance of belonging. Such discussions point toward an idea of belonging to the local as something which is not necessarily a linear process, but one which is impregnated with negotiations, tensions and critical reflections, as Hall describes “the everyday individual process of probing and working out” (2012:5) in place. This thesis therefore seeks to identify of the everyday practices and affect of this process.

## **2.5 Theorising Belonging: Why People Belong**

The construction of belonging, argues Yuval-Davis (2006), reflects emotional investments and the desire for attachments. Quoting Probyn (1996), she continues that “individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fuelled by yearning rather than positing of identity as a stable state” (1996:19 quoted in Yuval-Davis, 2006:202). This poses questions about why people want to belong and what circumstances facilitate this (or

otherwise)? Where does such a desire come from? and equally, what might prevent a person wanting to belong or being able to achieve this if they do?

Marco Antonsich's (2010) review of the literature on belonging understood as 'place-belongingness' (belonging as a personal, intimate feeling of being 'at home') identifies five factors which as Antonsich explains; "can contribute to generate such a feeling" (pp.647). This section of the literature review synthesises Antonsich's discussion of these factors with a similar discussion of the 'predictors' of place attachment provided by Maria Lewicka (2011) derived from the field of environmental psychology. These two broad areas of literature are brought together here to furnish the thesis with a theoretical framework for understanding why people may or may not express belonging and attachment to the local. Both are helpful in that they specifically focus on territorial belonging and attachment and whilst Antonsich's is more fully situated within geographical literature, there are additional learnings from environmental psychology which can provide useful insights.

Lewicka (2011) identifies three sets of predictors of place attachment; socio-demographic indicators, social factors and physical predictors. As a term from environmental psychology with positivist and quantitative methodological traditions, 'predictor' is problematic in the context of this thesis as it fails to capture to subtleties and complexities of local belonging. 'Factors' used by Antonsich has similar problems of determinism, however problems with language aside this thesis is interested in what circumstances may foster local belonging and therefore the reviews provided by Lewicka and Antonsich are a helpful starting point in suggesting the various circumstance to consider.

### **2.5.1 *Physical Environment***

Starting with a consideration of the role of the physical environment would seem useful in addressing the impact of urban change on a person's sense of belonging. However the extent to which the physical environment is believed to have an influence on place attachment according to Lewicka's (2011) review is inconclusive. This, she points out, is largely due to the variation of physical factors

in the environment that could potentially have an impact. Therefore the chapter concerns itself only with those factors pertinent to the context of the urban, focusing in more detail on the relationship between local attachment and urban regeneration itself.

Referring back to Lefebvre's (1991a) theory of the production of space introduced earlier in the chapter, a focus on the influence of the physical environment on belonging and attachment to the local provides a focus for an analysis of the 'representations of space' by planners, architects and developers. How changes in the physical space of a local community influence local attachment is one of the central circumstances in which this thesis takes an interest. Therefore a discussion of how literature surrounding urban change and regeneration have dealt with questions of the lived experience of space and belonging to place more specifically is required.

Degen and Rose (2012) point out that there is an implicit assumption within many recent urban regeneration agendas of the need to directly transform the way people *experience* place, as city landscapes came under increasing pressure from the late twentieth-century onwards to perform as marketable 'brandsapes' (Short, 1989). Therefore there has been something of a "sensory revolution" (Howes, 2006 cited by Degen and Rose, 2012:3272) in the way people experience urban space with increasing attention being paid to the 'liveability' of cities and urban space.

However in general, literature surrounding urban regeneration has been largely silent on questions of local belonging and attachment, save at a very superficial level. A key concern of regeneration debates has however been in relation to the issue of social and economic exclusion and whether the very initiatives designed to address such community divisions are, in fact, deepening them along post-industrial lines (Miles, 2005a). This is useful in thinking though how local development may or may not make people feel 'at home' in their own communities. In particular, top-down cultural strategies have been accused of not paying enough attention to the 'bottom-up' consciousness of local inhabitants and thereby causing further social as well as spatial exclusion (Middleton and Freestone, 2008). Although rarely articulated directly, questions of belonging and

local attachment are implicit in these sorts of debates as they pose a question of what type of local and regional development and for whom? (Pike *et al.*, 2007). However, operationalising the 'for whom' questions is difficult and therefore other indicators such as level of approval, visitor numbers and planned future visits are often used as proxy (Evans, 2005)

In moving towards a more subjective understanding of urban regeneration, Miles, Bailey and Stark (2004) argue that the success of cultural developments is due to local people taking ownership of them "not as exclusive symbols of wealth but as sources of local pride that regenerated a local source of identity" (2004:61). Arguments such as these may suggest a degree of acceptance and approval from local residents but little more. It would certainly be a large conceptual leap to suppose such acceptance means a strengthening of local identity and belonging. Equally questions of ownership suggest a linear relationship which may not take into account the complexities of local resident response to regeneration. Therefore a more qualitative approach is required as elsewhere Miles (2005b) has called for a greater concern in regeneration research with the meaning with which such developments are endowed by policy-makers and practitioners as well as local residents. Jones and Evans (2012) have contributed to this debate more recently with an argument for paying more attention to the affective connections people have to their surroundings, particularly prior to redevelopment if the importance of place within policy and planning debates is to be taken seriously. Therefore this research seeks to gain a qualitative understanding of the affective connections to and meanings of various regeneration attempts in communities with a specific emphasis on how these meanings may contribute to or undermine local attachments.

Where questions of local identity have been addressed in this set of literatures it has often been with a focus on the success of the development itself. Hunt argues that "the most successful cultural enterprises rightly announce themselves with an architectural statement, but they also draw on indigenous traditions which appeal to the city's self-identity" (2004:348). Equally in a study looking at the role of flagship regeneration projects in rearticulating the meaning of

post-industrial places, Miles (2005b) suggests the success of such cultural investments rests on people's sense of belonging to a place and the degree to which culture-led regeneration can engage with that sense of belonging. Miles argues that despite the significant symbolic and material power of flagship regeneration, the statement it makes about place is not imposed upon people; it is, at least potentially, open to negotiation. It is the nature of this negotiation that researchers need to decipher. Therefore this idea can be used in this thesis as a way of understanding local residents' relationship to where they live if those places are subject to urban change.

However despite the growing awareness in urban development of the importance of how people *experience* space and place, there has been a somewhat weak response in taking this further in exploring how this might shape individuals' *relationship* with place. A review of the somewhat older literature on urban development however does provide some clues as to how this might be theorised.

Earlier sociological studies of communities and urban neighbourhoods have recognised the importance of subjectivity and the scale of micro interaction for understanding how people experience and give meaning to the world around them. The Chicago School in particular has provided some of the most influential thinking on urban communities and are instructive for this research in understanding how space has traditionally been conceived by planners and urban regeneration practitioners.

With the height of the Chicago School's contribution to urban sociology being in the 1930s and 40s, much of its concern was centred on the result of urbanisation, prompting the study of social life under these 'new and emerging' conditions. Louis Wirth (1938) in his paper 'Urbanism as a way of life' identified characteristics of urban life resulting from this urbanisation and described it as although potentially harmful to culture, also liberating in terms of its capacity for innovation, freedom, tolerance and progress. This was the beginning of a critical engagement within the social sciences of how the built environment may influence sensory as well as the physical experience of a place and the consequences for

ways of 'being' in the world and therefore provides the background for the intellectual interest of this thesis.

Moving towards Modernist planning debates, Kevin Lynch's book *The Image of the City* (1960) drew attention to the need for urban spaces to be 'legible' and clear so as to allow easy orientation for the citizen. This orientation did not only mean physical movement, but also clear and legible orientation in terms of *meaning*. This 'imageability' discussed by Lynch has implications for this thesis as it is concerned with how the physical environment of a place can influence the way a person makes sense of it, gives meaning to it, and ultimately the relationship they have with it. Imageability brings together two key interests of this thesis, the everyday practice of how people use space and the affective dimension of how they *feel* about it which is instructive for understanding the process of belonging to the local in the context of urban change. In suggesting ways forward for urban development in the 1960's which can still be considered relevant today, Lynch is helpful in arguing:

"If the environment is clearly organised and sharply identified then citizens can inform it with his (sic) own meanings and connections. Then it will become a true place, remarkable and unmistakable" (pp.92)

Continuing, he claimed a need for certain 'plasticity' in the perceptual environment to allow people to interpret it as they will, and called for;

"a richness of possible cues structures and cues, so that the individual observer can construct his (sic) own image" (pp.111)

Although very much situated in the modernist planning agenda of the time, *The Image of the City* is significant in arguing for a less prescriptive approach to the creation of sense of place in the urban environment and for a recognition that citizens need to be able to respond to their environment in a reflexive and open way which will hold and create meaning for them. This provides insight into how urban change may be a key element in the shaping of attachment to place in local communities.

To summarise, early twentieth-century sociology looked at urban change in the context of urbanisation and modernisation and asked questions about what this meant for people living in local communities. Researching in a different context and relying often on quantitative methodology, this thesis seeks to update and expand such debates by asking what influence urban regeneration, in today's context of globalisation, has on urban residents. It therefore seeks to understand the *meaning* of cities today with specific reference to urban change and regeneration in the context of local belonging and attachment.

### **2.5.2 Social and socio-demographic factors**

Lewicka's (2011) review of the predictors of place attachment also stress the importance of socio-demographic factors such as age, tenure, length of residence, socio-economic position etc., as well as social factors namely the social capital gained through the presence of social networks. Antonsich (2010) also highlights the role of relationships, the personal and social ties a person has with a place, autobiographical factors, as well as length of residence, as important in considering the circumstance that enable a person to feel 'at home'. These areas are explored in detail by community studies and it is therefore to this body of literature which the section now turns.

Community studies concerned themselves with discussions of social networks and relations in communities and this focus brings one to the concept of social capital. Central to the concept of social capital is that "relationships matter" (Field, 2008:1). This thesis is interested in how they might matter for local belonging. Despite the concept being "operationalised in a bewildering number of ways" (Gregory, 2009:689) it has been identified by both Lewicka (2011) and Antonsich (2010) as a potentially important factor in understanding why a person may feel a sense of belonging. Therefore it is instructive to explore in more detail how the concept might be used by this thesis.

Broadly speaking, social capital is the idea that access to and participation in groups can benefit individuals and communities. It focuses on the social networks which facilitate such participation and the shared norms and values which

must exist to some degree between individuals if such networks are to be sustained. Therefore the interest for this thesis is how these shared norms and social networks may have an effect on whether or not individuals feel able to express a sense of belonging to where they live.

As discussions earlier in the chapter highlighted, there is much debate amongst social scientists regarding the persistence of local ties and of the relevance of local belonging in contemporary cities. Social capital as a concept is subject to similar discussions. Most notably this came as a result of the thesis which popularised the concept, Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (1995, 2000). In a widely cited paper, and subsequent book, Putnam concluded there had been a long-term decline of social capital in the US and that "most Americans are less connected to our communities than we were three decades ago" (Putnam, 2000:180). This, unsurprisingly, has attracted a great deal of criticism (Lemann, 1996, Cohen, 1999). Yet the continued interest in social capital as a concept by social scientists has continued perhaps, as Halpern suggests, because "social capital gives a name to something that many came to feel was missing in a simplified economic world" (2005:2).

Differing definitions and applications of social capital have lead critics to argue for a clearer distinction of the various dimensions of the concept (Portes, 1998). Halpern (2005) is instructive for this thesis in identifying three of the most important ones. He describes these as (1) the components of social capital- the networks, norms and sanctions, (2) the character of these components, be it bridging, bonding or linking, and (3) the levels of analysis, whether researchers are concerned with individuals, communities or society. Based on this analysis the following discussion will briefly review each in terms of how they may assist this thesis in understanding why people may belong to the local.

Referring to the first dimension, one of the most longstanding debates amongst researchers employing the concept is whether social capital refers to the infrastructure (networks) or content (norms) of social relations (Woolcock, 1998) One of the main theorists contributing to the conceptualisation of the concept, Bourdieu, viewed social capital as relations that are anchored in place or

community, and as something which individuals had to work at in order to maintain their value (1980, cited in Field, 2008). A conceptualisation of social capital based on this understanding fits more broadly with the achieved nature of local belonging (Bell, 1999) and is therefore useful to this thesis. Regarding the social relations of social capital being anchored in place, Bourdieu is quick to point out this can have a coercive dimension, amounting to pressure for the individual to conform. This 'darker side' of social capital is a particular weakness of the concept which will be discussed in more detail later.

Putnam is clear in this belief in the importance of both shared norms and networks, defining social capital as "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (2000:19). However critics such as Misztal (2000) have pointed to the rather circular definition of Putnam's concept, and his failure to provide an account of its production and maintenance. Further criticism has come from Maloney *et al.* (2000) who argue the lack of theoretical clarity from Putnam neglects the role played by political activities and institutions in the production of social capital. In short, they argue the concept has become over-socialised and underestimates the importance of politics and human agency.

However Pahl and Spencer (1997) have pointed to the importance of understanding the different types of social capital and how they lend themselves to different uses at different times. This relates to Halpern's second dimension of social capital, its character. For this, the thesis turns to the distinction between bridging and bonding capital. Putnam viewed some forms of social capital as inward looking and reinforcing exclusive identities and homogenous groups. This he referred to as bonding capital. Bridging capital on the other-hand he described as networks which were outward looking, encompassing people across different groups. In other words "bonding capital provides a kind of sociological superglue whereas bridging capital provides sociological WD-40" (Putnam, 2000:22-23).

For Putnam, bonding capital was good for 'getting by' and bridging capital good for 'getting on'. Immediately the potential for the reproducing of inequalities warned of by Bourdieu becomes apparent. If individuals possess high amounts of

bonding capital it may follow that this leads to communities becoming more inward looking, excluded, and in other words 'trapped' by their social bonds. Bridging capital on the other hand is more closely associated with middle class capital and can be summed up by the popular phrase; "it's not what you know, it's who you know" (Field, 2008) therefore serving to reproduce privilege as discussed by Bourdieu (1980, cited in Field, 2008). These perverse effects of social capital, the unintended outcomes for either an individual, group or community, become the 'danger' (or 'dark side') of understanding social capital as a 'predictor' of place attachment and belonging. High levels of social capital for one group, may lead to the exclusion of another. Therefore it is important to be wary of a discussion which views social capital as a straightforward route to belonging.

As can be seen, appreciation of the components of social capital (norms and networks) as well as the character of these components (bridging or bonding capital) is required for this thesis if social capital is to be engaged with critically as a potential circumstance for why people belong. So too is the third dimension of social capital identified by Halpern (2005), the scale of analysis; the micro, meso or macro-level. Bourdieu's theorisation saw social capital operating at a micro-level, defining it as;

"the sum or resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:119).

Conversely, rather than a capital which was solely the preserve of the individual, Coleman (1994, 1988) views social capital as having the potential to be both a public and a private good, a resource of both the individual and the collective. The idea of social capital as a private good is interesting to this research as this helps to conceptualise it as part of a set of circumstance for why people may belong. However, as has been discussed, the acceptance of social capital as a 'good', public or private, has received sustained critique and needs to be fully interrogated. Therefore just as it is important to specify the components and characters of social capital for this thesis, so too is the level of analysis. For the

purposes of understanding individuals relationship with place, social capital at the individual or micro-level is of most use to research into local belonging.

Halpern (2005) reminds us of the need to recognise the power dynamic involved in social capital and of its use as a resource. In the case of this thesis, the interest is in its ability to act as a resource in fostering local belonging and attachment. However, Putnam has been criticised for stretching the concept to a societal level, making it appear functionalist and inherently 'a good thing' (or a public good). Marrow (1991) applies this to the community level in arguing that the more recent iteration of social capital in community policy discourse has led to a focus on deprived communities. As a result this leaves the concept exposed to becoming part of a 'deficit theory syndrome'. In other words it becomes seen as something lacking in certain communities and therefore a solution to its problems. But as Portes (1998) reminds us, "sociability cuts both ways" and therefore thinking of social capital as an asset crucially brings our understanding of the concept closer to how we normally think of other forms of capital, such as economic and cultural. These are capitals often deployed by individuals to 'get ahead' being typically privately owned and consumed. On this basis, social capital is considered in this thesis as an individual asset for local belonging, but not a straightforwardly positive one. There is the potential for social capital, especially when characterised by a preponderance of bonding capital, to become regressive, inward-looking and exclusionary. So whilst social capital remains an important concept for this thesis in understanding why individuals may express a sense of belonging to the local, it is not viewed as desired solution for non-belonging.

Taking these critiques and caveats into account, the concept of social capital remains an important one in considering why a person may express belonging and attachment to the local or otherwise. This thesis is not concerned with measuring the extent of social capital in communities (although some writers have conflated the concept with questions of belonging, Kearns and Forest, 2001), it is more interested in how the components of social capital (networks and norms) and the character of those components (bridging and bonding) are part of a set of circumstances which can influence why people belong. In other words, and

borrowing from Putnam, how social capital can act as a 'WD-40' in relation to local belonging.

By focusing mainly on the individual level of social capital (as norms and networks), this thesis is interested in whether social capital is used as a resource to facilitate the feeling of belonging to a place. It is less interested in whether this provides a platform for social cohesion, or a shared sense of belonging *between* community members at the meso-level (although this question is touched upon in the Concluding Chapter). It also appreciates the differing character and functions of these social norms and networks (Halpern, 2005) and that social capital cannot, and should not, be accepted benevolently as always being a 'public good'. This thesis considers its potential as a private-good in terms of how far it can explain a sense of belonging to place, but stops short of seeing it as a remedy, or solution for those who do not feel this way.

The sociology of community has long recognised the importance of social capital in terms of the networks and norms it creates, yet with a lack of 'spatial consciousness' (Harvey, 1973) it has failed to adequately conceptualise the role of place in local communities and instead uses 'community' as little more than a container or backdrop for these wider networks. However the emphasis of traditional community studies on the importance of neighbours, familiar ties and a shared pattern of everyday activities have been useful to Geographers in thinking about why a sense of belonging can be felt towards the scale of the local and, in particular to this thesis, in thinking about the practices and felt experience of the everyday.

One important example of community studies of this background is Young and Willmott's (1957) ethnographic account of Bethnal Green in the 1950s, which documented the transformation of the community as families were moved out of the area into new purpose built estates as part of the government slum clearance programme. In their study, Young and Willmott conclude that it was the social bonds created out of the presence of extended kin and length of residence in the community that produced such a strong sense of belonging and attachment to the local. In an often cited passage from this study, a research participant walking

down their street describes to the researcher how they know everyone living in each house and could cite the connections between them. This type of familiarity with place, built over years of acquaintance, was central to many humanist geographers' call for an appreciation of the subjective experience of place. Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) asserts that:

“Attachment of a deep, though subconscious sort, may come simply with familiarity and ease, with the assurance of nurture and security, with the memory of sounds and smells, of communal activities and homely pleasures accumulated over time” (pp.159).

The value of familiarity however is the way it can speak to attachments to a place and allows for a person's relationship with a place to be expressed. hooks (2009) and Tuan both discuss familiarity of place in relation to an intense engagement with the local landscape. hooks and her association with place and memories of her childhood have been discussed and Tuan highlights how for Native American Indians and Maori people in New Zealand “even the rocks, which seem to lie dumb as they swelter in the sun along the silent seashore in solemn grandeur, thrill with memories of past events connected with the lives of my people” (1977:155).

Similarly, in his classic studies on mining communities in Yorkshire and communities living under the blight of planning in Sunderland in the 1950s, Norman Dennis (1956, 1970,1972) stresses the way in which the shared pattern of everyday life for the people concerned informed their sense of belonging to place as well as their sense of local identity. The title phrase, ‘Coal is our Life’ (1956) sums up well how a shared relationship to the labour market based on mining was inflected through shared patterns of daily life and identity. Common narratives were of daughters regularly going shopping with mothers and visiting sisters for a cup of tea in the afternoon. It was this intimate level of detail of how people lived in such communities that allowed the researchers to trace a common narrative of place throughout the community. It is this level of detail and subtlety that this study has hoped to emulate.

Much like the Chicago School studies of urbanisation, the above studies and others like them were prompted by an era of 'modernisation' and 'progress' which saw many communities physically dismantled and dispersed under a modernisation agenda. Today, globalisation, and the heightened mobility of people and commodities provides the contemporary context in which to ask questions about if, how and why people have a sense of belonging to the local and how they negotiate this in cities today in the context of urban change and regeneration. The structural circumstances that underpinned the social relations found in Bethnal Green in the 1950s have all but vanished from UK society. Likewise within scholarly debate, modernity has led to a 'crisis' within community studies (Savage *et al.*, 2005) as a perceived erasure of the importance of face to face interaction seems to marginalise commitment to local attachments. Yet with the additional theorising of a geographical lens, the legacy of earlier community studies is still instructive to contemporary studies of the local as they provide a framework for understanding how local attachments have been shaped in the past and therefore are a starting point from which to test the relevance of that framework today. Therefore one question arising from this literature review is how far do networks of social capital influence belonging and attachment to place today and are neighbours and extended kin in a place still relevant and in what ways?

Despite the 'crisis of community studies' (Savage *et al.*, 2005) there is evidence that the importance of belonging to the local appears to persist. Findings from 2010 Citizenship Survey pointed to the continuing importance of national belonging; with 87% of people in England and Wales claiming they felt they belonged to Britain. This finding was supported at the local level also, with 76% of those surveyed saying they felt a belonging to their neighbourhood. There were mediating factors to this. Most notably in the survey older people (aged over 65) were more likely to express a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, as well as those of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin.

From this two things could be surmised. Firstly as older people are more likely to have lived in the neighbourhood longer, length of residence may be a factor to local belonging. This relates back to Rowels (1983) point about

'insiderness' as a stage of development in older people. Secondly, as Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities typically maintain strong links with extended kin, that the local presence of extended family could also be a factor. If this is the case, the underlying support for a sense of local belonging is starting to look very similar to the circumstances found in studies such as those by Young and Willmott (1957) and Norman Dennis (1956, 1970, 1972). Knowing, and being known by your neighbours was something Young and Willmott found to be incredibly important to feelings of local belonging.

Despite the perceived erosion of this type of social interaction within urban communities, the call for increased neighbourliness and a need to foster a sense of local belonging within communities continues to rise to the surface amongst a range of different groups from politicians to journalists, community workers to estate agents (Young Foundation, 2008). This suggests questions of local belonging and attachment may have intensified rather than gone away. Civic engagement, social networks and security are all factors which come to the surface in discussion of how ethnic minorities and migrant groups negotiate their place in a new community and are usually discussed in relation to social cohesion and inclusion (Devadason, 2010). This raises several questions for this research. Why, when the social circumstances demanding mutual aid characterising Bethnal Green in the 1950's no longer exist, does a desire to belong to place appear to continue? And if length of residence and presence of extended kin no longer exist, do the circumstances for belonging disappear with them?

### **2.5.3 Cultural factors**

As well as social capital, cultural capital and the competing tastes and cultural competencies of symbolic capital have become key in understanding how people relate to the world around them and make sense of the Self. This relates to a discussion earlier in the chapter, on the contingent nature of territory and class as the basis for social organisation (Hudson and Sadler, 2003) and seeks to situate culturally inflected understandings of class within localities. This is particularly relevant for place in the context of urban change which is often fundamentally

about rearticulating redundant class associations with place into something different. Culture often being the main vehicle by which to do this.

In understanding the role cultural capital can play in providing the circumstance in which to belong to the local, a discrete body of research within critical housing studies has developed the debate around the role this can play in negotiating the relationships people have with the places in which they live. Employing a conceptual approach to class analysis derived from Bourdieu (1984, 1986), this body of work provides an understanding of how people might relate to place in a way that cannot be reduced to market dynamics, or their relation to the labour market (Allen, 2008). Therefore looking at the social and cultural factors of symbolic capital and what a place *means* to a person, rather than their economic relation to it. In a similar vein to the call of Miles et al., (2004) in relation to urban regeneration, researchers in this field make a case for the meaning of urban change for local residents to be better understood and it is to this that the chapter now turns.

Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2005), in their book *Globalisation and Belonging*, were interested in how far cultural, as well as social, capital plays a role in fostering resident attachment to where they lived. Within the study of middle class household decisions to move to the suburbs of Manchester they use Bourdieu's notion of habitus, as the dispositions we embody, to think about how the competencies which people possess in terms of capital, influence their sense of 'being' where they live. In other words how their cultural tastes and competencies allow them to identify a place as being important to them. In particular Bourdieu was interested in how such cultural competencies lead to a person feeling more *comfortable* in some places more than others (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986) and this is something Savage *et al.* looked at also. As a way of understanding our *being* in the world, habitus therefore, understood as an array of inherited dispositions that condition bodily movement, tastes and judgements according to class position (Bourdieu, 1984), provides us with a sense of our 'place' in the world and the place of others in relation to the capitals we possess. From

this analysis, Savage *et al.* concluded that local belonging was a fluid and contingent process.

This is also an idea taken up by Greg Madison (2009) in his research into the experiences of 'existential migrants'. He found his participants finding a sense of belonging where there was a sense of a 'match' between their 'inner worlds' (or sense of being) and the 'outer' environment in which they found themselves. The concept of habitus has been made more spatially sensitive through its use by Savage *et al.* and therefore helps make sense of this feeling of a 'match' (Madison, 2009), or alignment (Williams, 1977), and is instructive for this thesis in providing a way to think about how individual's cultural capital inflects their response to perceptions of change both, in the physical environment around them as well as in the demographic make-up of their community.

In operationalising the role cultural capital played in fostering belonging to the local Savage *et al.* were interested in how far cultural tastes related to a sense of local belonging. Therefore they looked at a range of different cultural factors, such as foreign travel, media usage, spending of leisure time and perceptions and use of the city of Manchester and used the concept of global reflexivity or an 'awareness of the world' (Robertson, 1992 cited in Savage *et al.*, 2005) to explore the nature of contemporary cosmopolitanism and its relationship to daily life. The thesis of Savage's work being that those who possess higher levels of cultural capital and had more of 'an awareness of the world' would be less likely to express a sense of attachment to the places in which they lived. This was not found to be the case, and instead, residents would use symbolic capital in expressing a sense of belonging to the local. For example, residents would express belonging on the basis of the symbolic capital living in a particular suburb afforded them, for the lifestyle, access to good schools and opportunity for social mobility.

On the question of global reflexivity, Savage *et al.* found that although there were a few more globally reflexive respondents who evinced a more cosmopolitan outlook, those who might be more generally defined as 'citizens of the world', for the majority, the global reflexivity of residents was shaped, primarily, by white English speaking Diaspora rather than by any more further reaching understanding

of cosmopolitanism. Much of the cultural tastes expressed by the participants reflect influence from either North America, or former British Colonies, and therefore struggle to be viewed as tastes representing 'citizens of the globe'. Savage *et al.* concluded that "empirically, 'actually existing cosmopolitans' do not seem to redeem the hope placed on them by contemporary theorists" (pp.206). This suggests a cosmopolitan outlook, or degree of 'global reflexivity' achieved by inhabiting certain capitals, may still retain parochial roots, or at least be shaped by a sense or imagination of grounded territory (good schools, desirable lifestyle). Therefore, the territorial element of belonging and how these two things speak to each other needs to be further understood.

Discussions of competing cultural tastes are engaged with extensively within gentrification studies (see Lees, 1994 and Ley, 1994). Whereas Savage *et al.* (2005) looked at middle class habitus and local belonging, Chris Allen (2008) directed his attention to working class habitus and how residents responded to their changing urban environment during the process of Housing Market Pathfinder initiatives. Allen describes a state of being for the working class that is 'just being'. 'Just being', Allen argues, is characterised by a struggle for survival rather than a struggle for position and therefore explains that the Housing Market Pathfinder developments which positioned houses as symbolic capital were operating at a different level of abstraction to many of the residents living there, leading to a sense of disconnect, between the urban environment around them and how they felt about living there.

Thus a focus on the cultural competencies as a way of being in the world is useful in this thesis particularly in relation to the question of, what kind of local and regional development and for whom? (Pike *et al.*, 2007). It allows us to ask how local residents respond to urban change in the community, how this might shape their sense of belonging to it, and crucially why they might have responded in this way. Much has been written in urban regeneration literature about culture-led projects only representing the culture and tastes of certain sections of society, largely leaving the white working class as well as many groups with different ethnic and cultural identities absent from the story (Evans and Foord, 2002). If this is the

case then it could be assumed that standardised regeneration programmes, which only represent the cultural interests of a few, will undermine the sense of local belonging and attachment for those who do not share these cultural tastes. This thesis will investigate to what extent this is the case.

#### **2.5.4 Auto-biographies**

Finally, how people relate personal experiences, relations, and memories, particularly of early childhood, as captured in the writing of bell hooks (2009), can be an important way of forging attachments to a place via the use of auto-biographies (Antonsich, 2010). Using individual biographies to understand why a person may feel a sense of belonging to a place, succeeds in avoiding a trap of talking about 'authentic' belonging or a prescribed sense of belonging accessed only by what would traditionally be considered 'locals' and it leaves the opportunity to belong as self-defined. As Savage *et al.* (2005) point out, it may no longer be appropriate to distinguish between 'locals and 'migrants' within a community as this suggests an essentialised sense of belonging which can only be claimed by long-time residents.

Instead, Savage *et al.* propose the concept of 'elective belonging' to describe the way people make sense of their place in and connection to a community. For example 'entrance stories' describing why individuals chose to move to a particular suburb were explored in the study by Savage *et al.* which highlighted how people attached key moments and events in their lives onto places and negotiate a sense of their place within the community from this point.

Elective belonging helps describe a sense of spatial attachment, social position and form of connectivity to other places and it shows how individuals attach their own biographies to 'chosen' (or elected) residential locations. Telling a story which indicates how an individual's arrival and subsequent settlement is appropriate to their sense of self and shows a relational sense of belonging, based on comparing where one lived to other places and other periods of their lives, but also unavoidably rooted in the particularities of a community. There is an elasticity to this discourse which presents locals as neither being trapped in the past, or

migrants as being here today, gone tomorrow (Savage *et al.*, 2005). It is instructive to this research as it both moves away from belonging to local communities being understood along binary lines of 'local' and 'migrant' but also allows for the territorial specificity of place to be acknowledged within a relational framework. As a concept, elective belonging is illustrative of the achieved rather than prescribed identities discussed by Giddens (1991) and tells us something of the nature of social class in local identities.

To summarise this section of literature on why people might express a sense of local belonging and attachment, multiple circumstances have been offered from geography, community studies, urban sociology and environmental psychology as to why people may or may not feel a belonging to place. In investigating the nature of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities this thesis is open to and recognises this multiplicity as an essential part of understanding how people make sense of places. With much of the literature dating back several decades, questions emerge as to what are the contemporary issues of living in cities which may influence belonging to the local, and if 'traditional' communities are no longer based on proximity of kin and length of residence, do social networks and social capital still have a role in providing the circumstance in which to belong? Or, as suggested by the more critical body of literature in housing and gentrification studies, has cultural and symbolic capital become more important for understanding where a person has a sense of attachment and what capacity and propensity does this give someone to belong. With specific reference to looking at these questions in the context of urban change, the meaning and influence of such developments and how they are interpreted and appropriated by local residents is of importance.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

"The beauty of the term 'belonging'", writes Vikki Bell, "is that it affords those of us who were never sure which discipline we were meant to reside within, the opportunity to address both philosophical and sociological concerns". She

continues; “The term enables an escape from the long shadow cast by Heideggerian formulations without completely losing philosophical questions in the consideration of identity” (1999:1). Questions of how people feel about a place are inherently multidisciplinary, and although this thesis is positioned with the literature of human geography, this chapter has demonstrated the impossibility of discussing and theorising these types of concerns without looking to other literature for insight and inspiration.

The review of literature in this chapter has provided the intellectual context and frameworks to begin answering the main research questions. The final section of this chapter summarises the main points of the discussions above in relation to how they help frame these questions.

Firstly, the chapter began with the somewhat ambiguous position of the concept of belonging and place attachment in human geography as struggling to reconcile itself with a discipline often preoccupied with movement and mobility. As the mobilities turn has been subject to critique, and calls for understandings of local processes of globalisation have intensified, approaches within human geography which emphasise place and well as mobility have gathered momentum (Easthope, 2009, Fortier, 1999). This desire to ‘get back into place’ (Casey, 1993) has seen a return of the “lure of the local” (Lippard, 1997), but as the chapter discussed it has become crucial that this be theorised within a progressive sense of place (Massey, 1991) but that also allows for militant particularisms as “ideas forged out of the affirmative experience of solidarities in one place” (Harvey, 1995:83) that do not become too far abstracted away from “the shop floor” so as to become lost (ibid).

Therefore a way of theorising place within this thesis as a complimentary understanding of both relational and territorial approaches to place construction (Pike, 2007) has been advocated, one which crucially understands any boundaries around places as subjective, fluid and contingent (Paasi, 2002) as opposed to regions being ‘unbound’ all together (Amin, 2004). Within the particular context of wishing to explore urban local communities, additional understandings provided by Lefebvre’s (1991a) *Production of Space* are useful in providing a way of theorising how local residents respond to urban change. This dialectic of representations of

space allow for an analysis of how 'experts' in urban development design create space, as well as providing a way of thinking about how people live in, appropriate and make sense of these spaces through a concepts of the space of representation.

Having outlined the broader theoretical framework for understanding place, and specifically the local, the chapter then turned to a discussion around the concept of belonging and attachment to place itself. This section of the chapter reviewed the literature specifically relating to the first research question; *what are the characteristics of local belonging and attachment in local communities and how are these formed and expressed?* It began by highlighting the lack of coherent theoretical framework for a discussion of such questions (Mee and Wright, 2009). In exploring the nature of local belonging and attachment in cities today the thesis takes a twin approach to this; firstly exploring how people belong and the characteristics of this; and secondly, looking at why people belong and what the circumstance surrounding this are. Therefore both the theoretical frameworks for understanding these questions and the empirical work within human geography and other disciplines supporting them were explored for each question.

By thinking about how people may belong, the work of Probyn (1996) is of central importance in recognising that belonging is a process, "achieved at several levels of abstraction" (pp.3). This is important as it avoids restrictive binaries of 'locals' and 'migrants' in community studies therefore addressing anxieties discussed within this chapter from some that place-based identities are inherently exclusionary and based on a misplaced sense of 'authenticity'. Secondly, the work of Fenster (2005), Bell (1999) and Probyn (1996) was drawn upon in providing the two main lines of inquiry into the nature of belonging for this thesis; that belonging has elements of both everyday practice in place as well as affective dimensions. Both of these elements will be considered throughout the rest of the thesis.

With this reaffirming of the importance of the everyday as lens for understanding how people live in contemporary cities, the work of Lefebvre provides a conceptualisation of dwelling in space and how such spatial practices and appropriation of space need to be understood for both their situated nature as

well as being part of broader processes and networks. In thinking about what these spatial practices may look like de Certeau's concept of walking as practiced narration provided some initial ways of understanding practices of belonging, as did acts of 'neighbourly behaviour' specifically from Mee (2009). Again the point was stressed here that if practices of belonging are to be understood as ways of expressing belonging to the local, they need to be situated within a conceptualisation of place outlined as above.

In considering how people belong to the local the affective dimensions of belonging, including the importance of memory (mainly influenced by hooks, 2009) were addressed. Specifically, scope was outlined for the use of a local structure of feeling (Taylor *et al.*, 1996 drawing on Williams, 1977) to understand what 'palpable pressure' acting on a person may help in understanding of the nature of local belonging. This attends to both the intangible affect of place on everyday experience, how affective atmospheres of place (Anderson, 2009) may induce fear, comfort or excitement as well as the affective dimension of belonging in how people express a *sense* of belonging (Fenster, 2005) and what characteristics of belonging this may entail.

Next, the chapter turned to the second main question of the research; *what are the circumstances which may influence why people form and express attachments and belonging to the local?* Again, the chapter outlined the theoretical and empirical debates which help illuminate this question. This involved drawing on a range of literatures from human geography as well as environmental psychology (Lewicka, 2011), urban sociology (principally the Chicago School) as well as traditional community studies such as Norman Dennis (1956, 1970, 1972) and Young and Willmott (1957). Social factors largely highlighted the role of social capital and social networks in local belonging (Putnam, 2000). Therefore the thesis will attend to whether local communities still have a role for such capital and what role it may place in fostering local belonging or whether, as was finally explored, a more dynamic focus on habitus and the use of cultural capital could better explain why people have attachments to the local.

In terms of what circumstance is worth considering in addressing the question of why people belong to place, physical, social and cultural elements were all identified (Antonsich, 2010, Lewicka, 2011). Physical elements and in particular processes of urban regeneration were identified as important to this thesis in addressing the final research question, *what happens to local belonging and attachment in the context of urban change?* Despite the literature surrounding regeneration itself being relatively silent on these questions traditions of looking at the effects of 'urbanism as a way of life' (Wirth, 1938) proved helpful here in strengthening a call, already growing within the literature, that the meaning of urban regeneration for local residents needs be better attended to.

Having outlined and discussed the vast and diverse literature pertaining to the study of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities and applied it to the framing of the three key questions of this research, the next chapter turns to look specifically at the methodological choices and reflections of conducting qualitative research into local communities, and introduces in more detail the community of Byker.

## Chapter Three: Researching the Lived Experience of Place

Following from the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter, the discussion in this chapter attends specifically to what Lefebvre (1991a) referred to as the spaces of representation. This is the grounded, lived experienced of dwelling in contemporary UK cities and forms the empirical work of the thesis. Therefore in providing an analysis of the everyday this chapter attends to how the thesis attempted to 'capture' the space of representation.

In providing answers to the questions of local belonging and attachment, the purpose of this chapter is to set out the methodological approach taken by this research and put those methodological choices under scrutiny. In doing so it argues the importance of a grounded and ethnographically-informed approach to exploring questions of local belonging and attachment in cities and places particular emphasis on the dual approach of narrative interviewing and extensive field-observations. Firstly however, this chapter introduces the area of Byker in more detail to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of some of the challenges and issues conducting ethnographic research in such communities. The chapter then offers some reflections on the choice of methodological approach and use of methods, introduces an overview of the research participants and rationale for their inclusion, and finally considers some of the key issues arising from this type of community-based fieldwork.

### 3.1 The Byker Estate

The Byker Estate (or Byker Wall as it is locally known) sits within the city ward of Byker (Figure 3.1), Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the east of the city just under two miles from the city centre. The estate itself covers 200 acres on the bank of the River Tyne, and in 2012 was home to 5869 residents and 1805 residential and community properties (Figure 3.2). Today 91% of properties in the estate remain under social housing tenure, and in 2012 the building stock of the estate was transferred to the ownership of the Byker Community Trust, operating as a charitable organisation and registered as a social housing landlord (*Data from Byker Community Trust, 2012*)

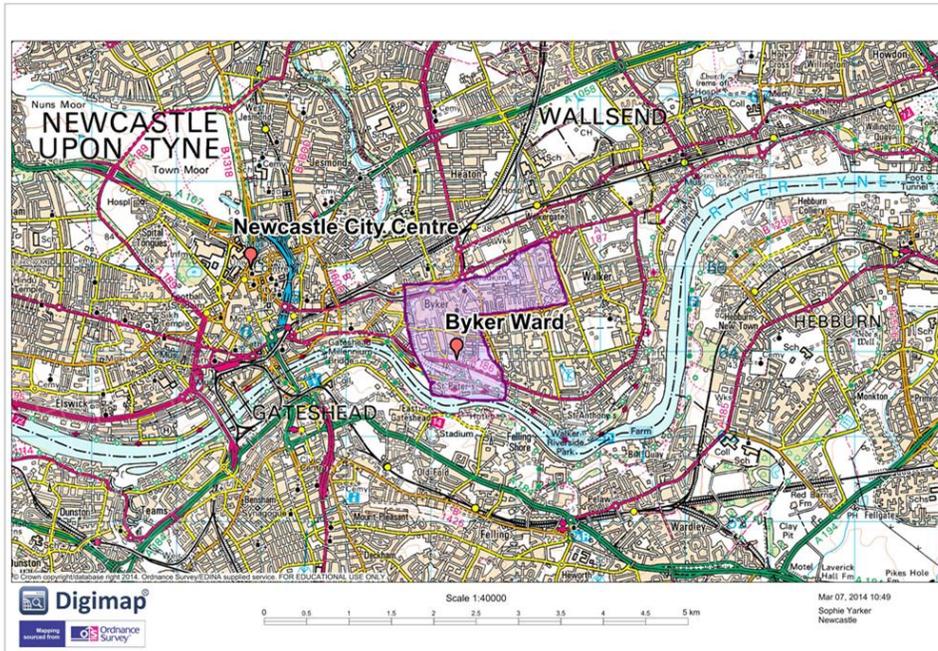


Figure 3.1 Ward of Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne

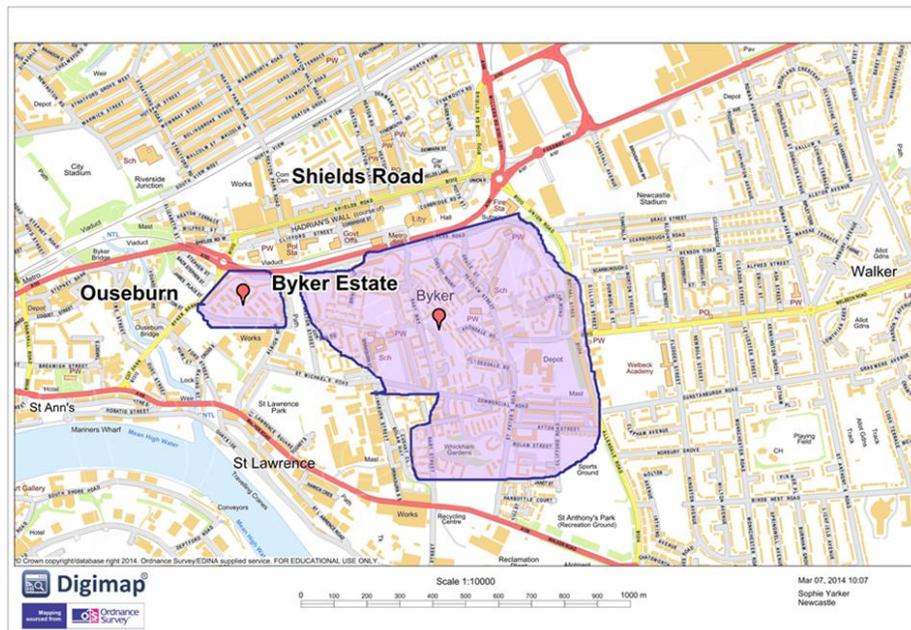


Figure 3.2 Byker Estate

The Estate was redeveloped by the local authority, led by Swedish-based architect Ralph Erskine, from 1969-1983, on the site of streets of Tyneside Terrace

flats (Figure 3.3). Designated as unfit for habitation under the government clearance programme of that era, the redevelopment transformed the topography of the community, replacing linear streets with a combination of high and medium rise buildings. The perimeter 'wall' originally designed to block noise pollution from the planned motorway runs the length of the Estate and houses approximately 620 flats and maisonettes (Figure 3.4). The rest of the Estate is made up of low to medium rise flats and houses are organised around squares and blocks (Figure 3.5 and 3.6). The redevelopment itself has attracted, and continues to attract, attention from urban design circles from across the world. It has won multiple awards for its design (Abrams, 2003) and most recently in 2007, was awarded Grade II\* listed building status. This is acclaim which can be seen to be in contrast to the perception locally, of the Estate as a site of social and economic exclusion, marked by multiple indicators of deprivation and holding a reputation locally as a undesirable place to live.



*Figure 3.3 Former terraces. Mid-way through redevelopment*

*Source: Architects Journal*



Figure 3.4 Perimeter Wall



Figure 3.5 New Housing

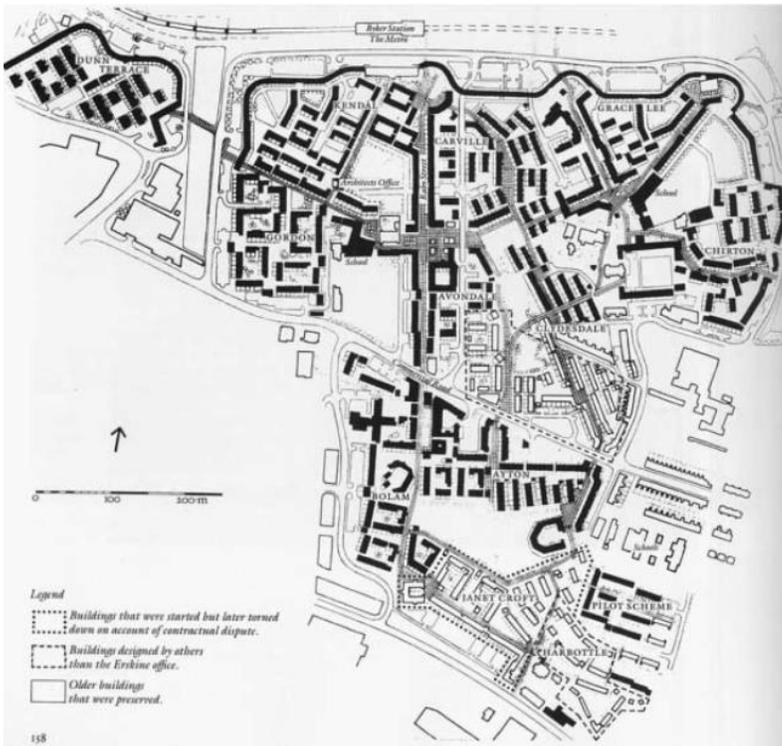


Figure 3.6 Byker Redevelopment Street Plan

The Byker of the 1960s and 1970s at the time of the redevelopment could be described as a fairly homogenous, White, Working-class community. This to a degree has changed (as demonstrated by Table 3.1) with an increasing number of ethnic minority residents moving into the area, although 85% of residents in the ward identify as White British and 88% reported being born in the UK according to the 2011 Census.

	Byker	Newcastle	North East	England
<b>Total Population</b>	12,206	280,177	2,596,886	53,012,456
<b>Most common Ethnic Group: White (English/ Welsh/ Scottish, Northern Irish/ British)</b>	85.3%	81.9%	93.6%	79.8%
<b>Second most common Ethnic Group: White (Other)</b>	4.1%	2.9%	1.3%	4.6%
<b>Third most common Ethnic Group: Black (African/ Caribbean/ Black British)</b>	3.5%	1.7%	0.4%	1.8%

*Table 3.1 Percentage of ward population identified by ethnic group 2011*

*Source: Census, 2011*

In addition to the impacts of global migration adding to the ethnic diversity of the Estate, Newcastle was designated an Asylum Seeker Dispersal point in 2000, with 70 units of housing being offered to those seeking asylum in the first year (Byker Community Trust, 2012). This has had a particular impact in increasing the African population of the area. As Table 3.1 shows the ward population of Black African, Caribbean and Black British residents in Byker stood at 3.5% in 2011, considerably higher than the city average of 1.7% making this ethnic group the largest ethnic minority group in the ward. In addition, 3.1% of residents reported being born in Africa meaning there are more African residents living in the ward than those born in 2001 Accession countries in the EU (2.7%). As data on ethnic diversity is not available at the level of the Byker Estate itself, information from the census at ward level is used as proxy.

The community had also diversified socially, with lower rents, proximity to the city centre and cultural quarters of Ouseburn attracting what Pendelbury *et al.* describe as a “young bohemian group” (2009:188), including artists, musicians, graduate students and designers. The size of this group is difficult to estimate as

data has largely been gathered anecdotally from speaking to those involved in the management of the housing on the estate as well as from residents themselves. However data from the Mosaic Public Sector Group Profiling (2011) is of some help here. It classifies UK citizens into one of 61 Types and 11 Groups and uses this information to paint a picture of an area in terms of the socio-economic position and socio-cultural behaviour of its residents. The picture it paints of Byker is interesting and goes some way to reflect the demographic changes described above. The top two 'types' of citizens living in Byker, as identified by Mosaic are Type 25 and Type 32. Type 25 is described by Mosaic as comprised of both young single adults on low income, drifting in and out of unemployment as well as substantial numbers of very elderly people. Type 32 on the other hand is described as an area populated by people in their mid-twenties, with good educational qualifications and who have made a successful start in professional careers. This goes some way to demonstrate the social diversity of the Estate.

However, as well as the ethnic and social diversity, the Estate continues to retain many of the original residents of the old community and subsequent generations of their families, often self-identifying as 'old Byker families', as well as individuals and families housed there from the local authority housing list, often from other parts of the city. With the information provided by Mosaic along with 2011 Census ward data, we can conclude that the Byker Estate remains a majority White, working-class community with strong family links to the local area, but with pockets of ethnic and social diversity.

Despite this social and cultural diversity, the statistics continue to tell a story of relative deprivation and social exclusion in Byker. In 2000, the ward was ranked the 78<sup>th</sup> most deprived ward in England and Wales (see Table 3.2) and the 2011 Census showed 59% of households in the ward were classified as having either one or two indicators of deprivation (see Table 3.3). Looking at the ranking for 'Housing' as an indices of deprivation in Table 3.2, it would appear that this, along with 'Access' are two of the redeeming indices of the Estate, compared to how it scores on indices of deprivation such as 'Employment' and 'Education'. From this, it would appear, that low levels of educational achievement and high

unemployment could be the main contributing factors to the Estate's position in the ranking of deprived wards. However, looking at Table 3.3, it appears the numbers of households *not* experiencing any of the four deprivation dimensions counted by the census, have increased, so that now, over a quarter of households in the ward are not considered to be experiencing deprivation at the household level. However, in relative terms, Table 3.4 shows the numbers of unemployed in the ward and those with no qualifications continues to be higher than the average for the city of Newcastle and the UK. Statistics from the Byker Community Trust which focus on the Estate only show welfare rates are high with 35% of 16-65 year olds living in the Estate claiming out-of-work benefits, 10% claiming Job-Seekers Allowance and 18% Incapacity Benefit and Employment Support Allowance in 2012. Therefore showing that the area continues to be one of relative socio-economic deprivation.

Over all Rank	Income	Employment	Health	Education	Housing	Access	Child Poverty Index
78	126	73	128	68	3,584	7,666	175

*Table.3.2 Indices of Deprivation 2000*

*Source: Census 2001*

	2001	2011
<b>Household is not deprived in Any dimension</b>	16.9%	26.8%
<b>Household is deprived in One dimension</b>	31.1%	32.8%
<b>Household is deprived in Two dimensions</b>	32.1%	26.3%
<b>Household is deprived in Three dimensions</b>	17.9%	12.4%
<b>Household is deprived in Four dimensions</b>	1.9%	1.4%

*Table.3.3 Change in Households by Deprivation Dimensions\* (2001-2011)*

*Source: Census 2011*

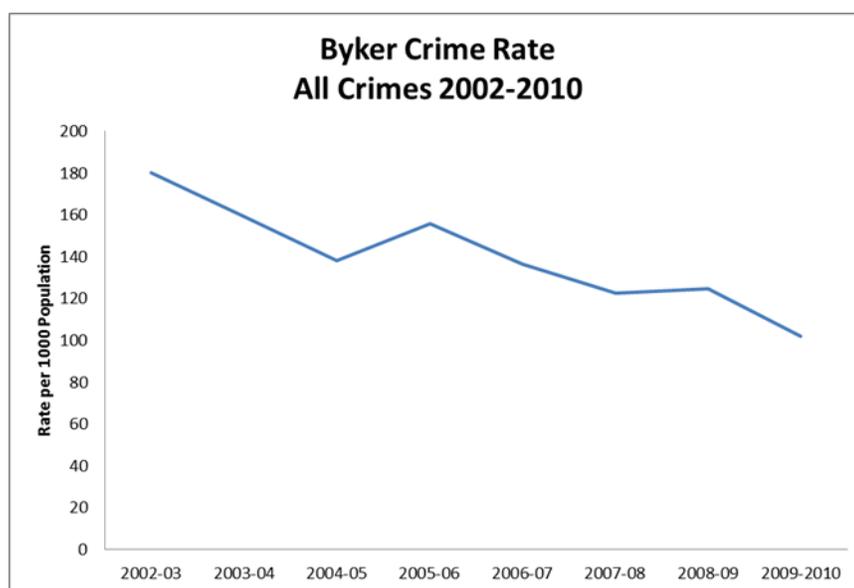
*\*Dimensions describe employment, education, health and disability or housing deprivation*

	<b>Byker</b>	<b>Newcastle</b>	<b>North East</b>	<b>England</b>
<b>Most common Tenure: Social Rented from Council (Local Authority)</b>	48.8%	23.3%	14.8%	9.4%
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	8.6%	5.0%	5.4%	4.4%
<b>Most common occupation: Routine</b>	20.0%	11.4%	14.4%	11.0%
<b>No qualifications</b>	37.0%	23.0%	26.5%	22.5%
<b>Health Day-to-day activities limited: A Lot</b>	13.8%	9.5%	11.0%	8.3%

*Table 3.4 Socio-economic demographics in Byker 2011*

*Source: Census 2011*

Since the 1990s improvements have been made by Your Homes (the arms-length social housing landlord until 2012) and the City Council to overcome problems of vandalism, neglect and anti-social behaviour on the Estate, alongside nationwide area-based regeneration programmes aimed at addressing social exclusion. Crime statistics from the ward level show a drop in the overall crime rate from 2002- 2010 (see Figure 3.7), with marked improvements in crimes such as burglary from a dwelling and car theft. However high rates of criminal damage and violence against a person continue to persist (see figure 3.8).



*Figure 3.7 Overall crime rate 2002-2010*

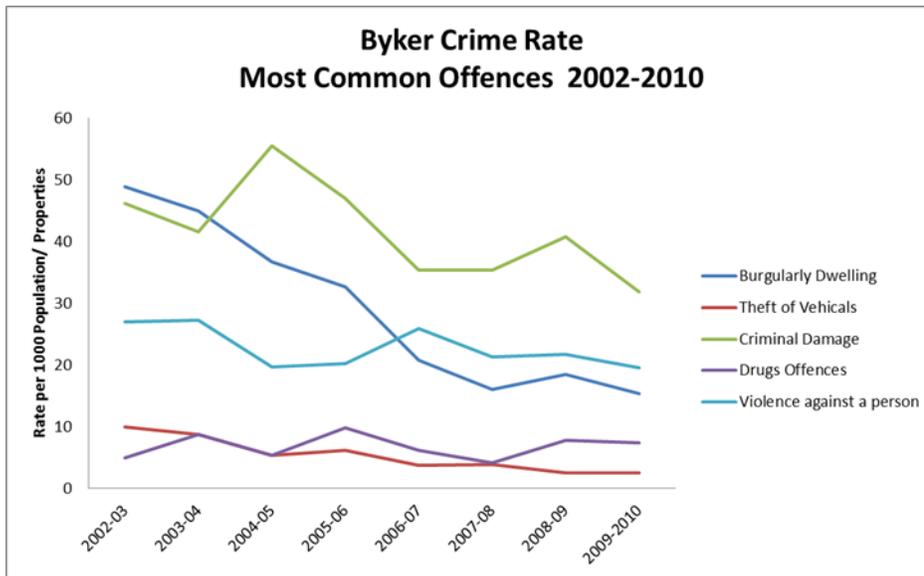


Figure 3.8 Crime rate by type of crime

Byker is therefore a place of complexities. On the one hand, as a predominately social housing estate, the community has become a byword for social deprivation and crime, on the other, because of its architectural credentials, it has become hailed as one of the most influential pieces of architecture of its time. How these conflicting elements are managed in terms of local development, and subsequently made sense of by residents in the lived experience of the Estate, become the central curiosity of the research and make it a rich social milieu from which to explore questions of local belonging and attachment.

### 3.2 Meet the Participants

A total of 38 residents were interviewed for this research, with a further six interviews conducted with non-resident 'experts' on the area. Both current and former residents were spoken to for this research. However despite being sensitive to how the role of memory recall may have on the accounts of former residents, there was little difference found during the analysis between how the two groups

spoke of their relationship to the local and this did not form a structure of the analysis. Therefore from this point the term *participants* is used to describe those who took part in the research who were either current or former residents of the Byker Estate.

The participants are briefly characterised in Table 3.5 below by firstly whether they are 'Old' or 'New' Byker. Secondly these two categories have been classified into further subgroups for the purpose of this research. 'Old' and 'new' Byker were 'member-identified' categories (Lofland, 1976) used by participants themselves to describe both the change in community demographics as well as the change in architecture. It described both the 'new' buildings and layout the redevelopment created but it was also used to refer to the people who lived there. 'Old' Byker was used to describe the 'original' population whose families had moved from the terraces into the new estate and 'new' Byker as a description of the Erskine buildings as well as the new people who had moved to the Estate since building work had finished. These participant-used phases of 'old' and 'new' map onto traditional use the terms 'locals' and 'migrants' within community studies in describing population change and diversification. Therefore it was decided to use these terms to help with the initial analysis of the findings. However it is recognised that these categories are much more complex than the way they are used in traditional community studies and both require further scrutiny.

In discussing the category of 'old' Byker first, this describes participants who have a personal or family connection with Byker before it was redeveloped in the 1970s. Within the 'old' Byker group, 'original' residents of Byker (OR) refers to older members of the community who have first-hand experience of the redevelopment and of the community before the Estate was developed. These participants were usually re-housed in the new Estate. Figures from the Byker Community Trust put population of the Byker Estate aged over 65 years old at 14% in 2012, and although it is not possible to know how many of these residents are 'original' residents of Byker, i.e. living in the area before the redevelopment, it reflects a substantial proportion of the community. 'Subsequent generations' (SG) of 'old' Byker refer to the second and third generation of the original population of

Byker, those who may not remember the redevelopment first-hand, but can trace at least one generation of their family to the area. Again it is not possible to know exactly what percentage of this section of the sample, make up the community of the Estate. The closest approximation, albeit a crude one, is that 85% of the population of the ward were born in the UK, but this tells us nothing of whether they are originally from Byker or even Newcastle. Most of the participants in the 'old' Byker group had lived in the Estate all their lives, or at least for a substantial portion of it.

One of the main areas of community diversification identified amongst those classified as 'new' Byker residents were the increased numbers of those residents identifying as Black African, Caribbean or Black British living in the ward as discussed above. Reflecting the census findings presented earlier (that 3.5% of the ward identify as Black African, Caribbean or Black British) these residents make up the first of the subcategories of 'new' Byker residents for this study. For the purpose of this study the subcategory of Asylum Seeker and Refugee (ASR) has been used to describe the participants who were living in Byker, due to seeking asylum in the UK from African countries. This is not to conflate people of Black African or Caribbean identities in the census data straightforwardly as being an Asylum Seeker or Refugee. However it was the case that all the Asylum Seekers and Refugees participating in this study were from African countries.

A second area of diversification has, as described by Pendlebury *et al.* (2009), been the growth of a young bohemian group of residents, including professionals and artists who are choosing to move to the Estate because of its architectural credentials, lower rents, and proximity to cultural quarters in Ouseburn. As discussed above, this group is difficult to identify in the census statistics as they were usually self-identifying as 'artists' and by the fact that they had moved to Byker for reasons of choice, rather than necessity. In gentrification literature, Ley (1994) identifies a group of early gentrifiers, or marginal middle-class residents as a 'cultural new class'. For Ley, this is a group made up of 'professionals' in the arts, media, and other cultural fields as well as pre-professionals, i.e. students and recent graduates. Crucially, these 'cultural professionals' are usually non-

conformist in their life-style and politics' and have a predisposition towards a home in the central city; "geography matters (for this group), for central city living is far more than convenience for the journey to work; it is constitutive of an urbane life-style" (Ley, 1994:69).

For the purposes of this research then, this group of 'new' Byker residents are identified firstly by their occupation, usually in a broad category of the creative industries, and from this have tended to have similar traits in terms of educational background (most had Higher Education Degrees) and level of choice in moving to Byker. This group of participants were mostly of White ethnic background, but more heterogeneous in country of origin, although most were European. For the purpose of this study this group of participants are categorised as 'Creative Professionals'.

The issues of *choosing* to move to the Estate for some residents and being 'dispersed' there by way of central government policy for others adds an interesting layer of complexity to the catch-all category of 'migrants' when describing these newcomers to the community. Although by no means homogenous groups in themselves, the entrance points into living in the Estate for Asylum Seekers and Refugees and the group defined as 'Cultural Professionals' differs vastly from each other, and differ again from the more 'standard' route into the Estate of the local authority Housing List. Statistical information on housing list tenants was difficult to obtain, as there appeared little information that pertained to the Estate only. Therefore where participants were 'newcomers' to Byker, had not actively chosen to move there, and did not fall into the category of 'Creative Professional' by nature of their employment or education, they have been categorised for arriving in Byker via the 'standard' route of allocation from the local authority housing list.

For these contextual reasons it appears to make sense to think about the different 'entrance routes' taken by new residents into the estate by asking how they came to be living there. This differentiation is also helpful theoretically, also. Fenster (2004) argued a greater degree of choice in where you live will enable a greater degree of attachment to place. Savage *et al.* (2005) looked at the decisions made amongst middle-class professionals in deciding which suburb they moved to

and how this decision was used symbolically to 'say something' about themselves throughout discussion of how people forge attachments to place. Both Probyn (1996) and Fenster's (2004, 2005) work also was used to drive a discussion of the negotiated nature of belonging to place. Therefore as an initial way of making sense of the community in terms of who lives there and the information gathered from them, the typology of *how* participants came to be living there was used to initially distinguish between different types of 'new' Byker 'migrants'

This being established, the 'new' Byker participants have been initially categorised for the purpose of analysis into Asylum Seeker and Refugees (ASR) Creative Professionals (CP) and those from the local authority Housing List (HL). This is not to say that any of these groups are homogenous. There were instances where participants who had moved to Byker because of the Asylum Seeker dispersal programme could equally be classified as 'Creative Professionals' by definition of their educational background or their profession. Equally there were many examples of those participants classified here as 'Creative Professionals' living in local authority properties in the Estate and therefore forming part of the official housing list figures. However despite, and perhaps because of, these overlaps in participant characteristics, the issue of *choice* and degree of choice participants had in choosing to live in Byker is used as a way of imposing some order on the classification of participants for the purpose of analysis. The use of the issue of choice is neither meant to deny the agency of either the local authority tenants or the Asylum Seeker and Refugees nor, in the same respect, to overstate the freedom and choice of the Creative Professional. However, in the absence of an alternative way of usefully categorising the 'new' Byker participants, their reasons for living in the estate initially provides a needed tool to handle the empirical findings.

OLD BYKER 'LOCALS'		NEW BYKER 'MIGRANTS'		OTHER STAKEHOLDERS
Original Residents (OR)	8	Asylum Seeker & Refugee (ASR)	8	6
Subsequent Generations (SG)	8	Creative Professionals (CP)	7	
		Housing List (HL)	7	
<b>TOTAL INTERVIEWS: 44</b>				

*Table 3.5 Overview of research participants*

*Fuller profiles of participants provided in Appendix A.*

The contextual information given alongside the description of the different sub-groups of the sample has been given as just that, an indication of the prevalence of each group within the community. Not wishing to provide an ethnographic account of the community as a whole, the research was not concerned with producing a representative sample of the Byker Estate. Equally, it is acknowledged within ethnographic research that such a sample is not required (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Instead, an approach to sampling was taken that borrowed from a 'theoretical sampling' approach, strategically selecting participants that would best develop and test emerging analytical ideas (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and who either could be categorised under Dean *et al's* typology as being *especially sensitive to the area of concern* (of local attachment and belonging) or were *more-willing-to-reveal informants* (Dean *et al.*, 1967).

In addition to interviews with residents, six interviews were carried out with other stakeholder would could provide social, political and historical context to the Estate. These individuals were sometimes former Byker residents and could therefore reflect on their own lived experience of the place, but more so were able to provide context to various stages of the development of the Estate. These

interviewees included local artists and a photographer interested in the area, a local councillor, community workers, academics and those involved in the Byker Community Trust.

### **3.3 'Getting at' the Local**

In seeking to explore the nature of local belonging and attachment- how this is negotiated and expressed and what circumstance may shape and influence them- an approach is needed that is able to get to the heart of an individual's relationship with place, one which navigates how places are experienced on the ground but also how individuals understand place and themselves relationally, as part of wider processes and networks. The chapter will therefore discuss the choice of a narrative approach for this research, outlining how this meets the aims of the project and fits within its theoretical framework before moving to discuss in detail the two primary methods of data collection; interviews and participant observation. In doing so, the complimentary and contingent nature of the two methods are highlighted, as well as the importance of place and a consideration of the micro-geographies of the interview process (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Finally some insights into the experience of negotiating and managing field relations are offered before an outline of the process of analysis is provided.

A case has already been outlined in the previous chapter for the need to understand fully the meanings individuals imbue certain urban development with in order to better understand their role in shaping and reflecting local identities (Byrne and Wharton, 2004, Middleton and Freestone, 2008, Miles, 2005a, 2005b, Miles *et al.*, 2004). Therefore local residents, those who live within the spaces of urban development and their narratives of place, are at the heart of this research. In speaking to local residents this research agrees with Uprichard and Byrne (2006) that it is not only attempting to build a representation of the urban world, it is also attempting to know the complex urban space-in-itself '*in the making*' (Uprichard and Byrne, 2006, emphasis in original). In other words, it asks how do people give meaning to place? The theoretical underpinnings of the research takes a dialectical

and negotiated understanding of both place and attachments to place as something which is achieved (Lefebvre, 1991a, Probyn, 1996) whilst recognising the very situated practices and sensory emotions. Therefore, a methodology is required to address this concern to understand how people *dwell* in a place. An understanding is needed of how people appropriate space and thus how space is produced through a dialectic of the representations of space (as will be discussed in the following chapter) and through spaces of representation, the lived space (Lefebvre, 1991a). A qualitative, in-depth and situated methodological approach provides the apparatus for this. Therefore a method is required to ‘get at’ (Latham, 1999) the concrete level of the everyday, the “banality, triviality, repetitiveness” (Lefebvre, 2002:47), whilst remaining situated within broader networks of place and place attachments.

Fieldwork consisted predominately of interviews with residents of the Byker Estate as well as participant observation of local community groups, organisations and general community life in the area. However, ahead of this time, informal contact was made with key gatekeepers identified by their position in various community groups and organisations so as to build field-relationships and inform context. This also included meeting with and interviewing some of the ‘expert’ stakeholders to gain additional information on the research site.

The research was ethnographically-informed, meaning that the methods used were driven by a need to understand the nature of local belonging and attachment by focusing on the grounded, lived experience of life in the community from the perspective of the residents. This research has been guided greatly in its ethnographic approach by the writing of Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007) on the subject, particularly with regard to their catholic and holistic approach to what ethnographers do, which they describe as;

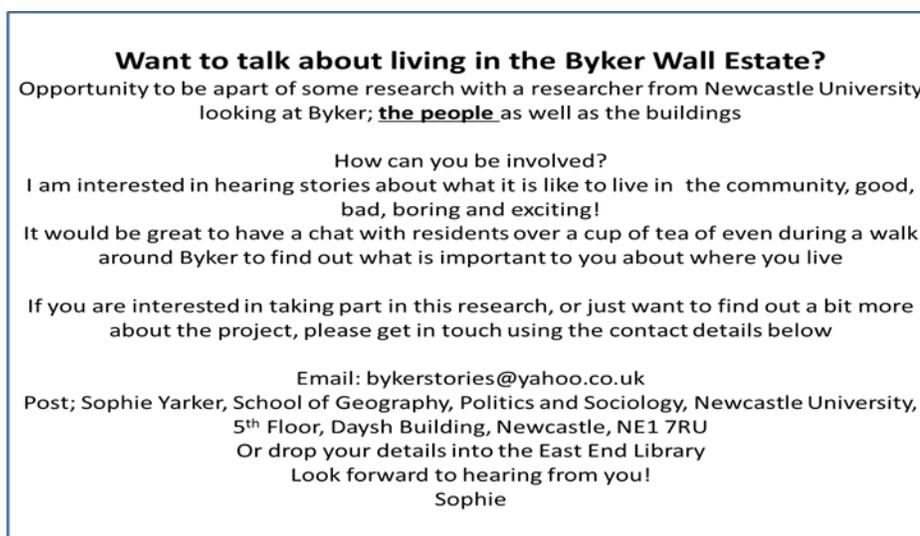
“watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through formal and informal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry” (pp.3).

All of the above were taken advantage of during this study. This is not to say however there is an absence of strategy or determination on the part of the ethnographic researcher. On the contrary, “ethnography is created over time” (Simpson, 2006:135), fraught with negotiations and decisions which ultimately shape the nature and course of the research. However uniting the various ethnographic approaches to research is the premise that people’s actions are studied in their everyday contexts, rather than under conditions created by the researcher. In other words, research takes place ‘in-the field’.

For the purpose of this research, interviewing is understood as referring to the collection of talk and narratives of participants, whether this was in a more ‘formalised’ interview setting, or via naturally occurring talk. This situated nature of the fieldwork highlights the sometimes blurred boundary between observation work in the field and interviewing and in doing so, compliments Hammersley and Atkinson’s concept of ‘interviewer-as-participant’. With this concept they argue the dividing line between interview and observation is most pronounced in formally arranged meetings between researcher and participant in clearly bounded settings. Some of the interviews undertaken in this research would fall into this categorisation, but most are better understood as spontaneous or informal conversations with a purpose (Eyles, 1988) often in public or semi-public community spaces where the distinction between the two methods is harder to define. As a result, the types of data collected become blurred too. Not only was I collecting the spoken information, I was also able to observe artefacts such as photographs on the walls, buildings being pointed out and the interactions of other people in the same space. One method therefore informed another, and participant observation quickly moved from a way to negotiate field relations and access participants, to a central method of data collection, both during interviews and in other settings. Therefore in illustrating the case that observational and interviewing methods are not always separate and discrete stages of fieldwork, a discussion of both is brought together in the next section.

Securing and achieving interviews proved to be more difficult than anticipated throughout this research. Initial plans of using snowball sampling from

initial contacts had limited success and therefore a more proactive recruitment process was required. Several approaches were taken with varying results. Posters and flyers (see Figure 3.9 ) calling for those interested in taking part in research into what life was like in the Estate were produced and distributed around various shops and community buildings in and around the area, including the local library.



*Figure 3.9 Flyer for recruitment*

This had minimal success, even with the installation of a 'Comment-style' box in the local library for people to drop their details into. This approach soon transpired to be too detached from the field and more direct engagement was required. In tandem with this therefore, fieldwork was extended to include opportunistic meetings with residents during participant and non-participant observations at community groups. To avoid time being lost in the field, wherever possible and appropriate, interviews were carried out 'there and then' whenever the participant happened to be met. This seemed agreeable to the participants as they did not have to arrange a separate time to meet and also gave the process a further air of informality which helped the process. Whilst there was an opportunistic approach to the research adopted on my part, care was taken to ensure potential participants were able to give the necessary informed consent to be involved in the research. In most instances participants were familiar with who I was and why I was interested in speaking to them before I approached them for an

interview. Information sheets were provided in addition to a verbal explanation of my identity as a researcher, the purpose of the research and what it would involve. Participants were given the option of having the interview conducted 'there and then', scheduling it for another agreed time, or were given my contact details so they could let me know when would be convenient. Therefore I am satisfied that every effort was made to allow participants to be interviewed where and when they felt comfortable, or to refuse altogether.

In many instances, the opportunistic approach also served to highlight the importance of community groups and activities in the lives of some participants, and whilst this was valid and insightful information, there was a concern not to over represent the role of such groups, or the presences of those involved. Therefore a third approach to recruitment was adopted involving visiting local shops and retailers in the area and speaking with residents and former residents working there, as well as tracking down 'Creative Professionals' living in the Estate, many of whom have a visible internet presence.

In short, achieving interviews was not as straightforward as first anticipated and became something of a full time occupation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). As Bob Simpson (2006) describes, "you don't do fieldwork, fieldwork does you" (pp. 125) alerting us to the fact that however much we may wish to assume the identity of a social researcher:

"once we step into the complex flow of other people's social experience we are novices and bumbling incompetents, largely oblivious to the complex and multiple, layering of out informants' lives" (ibid).

However the varied and creative approaches to recruiting and interviewing people for this research that emerged as a result of these struggles, have, I feel, made the empirical findings richer and more diverse as a consequence. Although there were strategic choices and decisions made along the way, my experience confirmed Hammersley and Atkinson's conclusion that in terms of negotiating access, extensive 'hanging out' along with lucky breaks, is sometimes necessary (2007). I quickly came to the realisation that time spent in the community without gaining an

interview was not necessarily time lost. Not only was I able to collect vast amounts of observational data but it became an important part of building field relationships with a view to subsequently gaining interviews. It was also equally important afterwards in terms of not wanting to disappear in the eyes of the community groups once I had collected my data. Therefore longer periods were spent volunteering at different projects than was initially anticipated, as well as attending various community events I was invited to.

### **3.3.1 *Looking***

As explained, although initially used as a way of gaining access to potential interviewees, a vast amount of observational data was collected from volunteering, attending meetings and generally helping and 'hanging out' at various community groups and events. As the research progressed this proved to become an integral source of information on how people lived their lives in Byker. In order to understand my researcher position whilst collecting this observational data, typologies offered by Junker (1960) and Gold (1958) are helpful in understanding the variation of positions an observer can take. Their typology moves from complete-participant, characteristic of covert research, to complete-observer where the researcher has no contact with those they are researching at all, in many cases literally observing from behind a one-way mirror or observing activity in a setting the researcher may be in anyway, such as observing shoppers on a high street.

My own experience of participant observation ranged between these two poles, as recognised by the typology, and conforms more to observer-as-participant. Yet this role was not static and by moving my position between different settings and groups, I was able to make the most use out of each role in each setting. Therefore I would sit in on meetings of the local Community Safety Group as a complete-observer, but volunteering in the kitchen of a Pensioners Lunch Club I became observer-as-participant.

This type of activity was also helpful in providing both a cross-checking element of the research design, as well as helping to deepen my understandings of

the community and how it was experienced. For example, I had spoken with many members of the African Community Advice group who told me the Centre was used by both Black and White youths and had helped build community relations. However whenever I was there I was struck by the lack of White youths using the centre and the much more disengaged way they did when they were there. What I was observing did not correspond with what I was hearing. I was then told by another participant that there had been a large physical fight between Black and White youths outside the Centre the previous weekend. After this I spoke informally to one of the Centre managers who began telling me of his fears for the future of ethnic relations in the community in the wake of the government's benefit reforms and felt that in the need for some members of the White community to find a scapegoat for their concerns, relations would slip back to where they had been before the Centre opened in 2001. To me, this proved the need and value of observational data supplementing what I heard in interviews and further emphasises the constructed nature of narratives, and the need to understand the purpose behind their particular composition. Therefore the triangulation of methods functioned to corroborate and support the validity of the findings (Lever, 1981 and Hammersley, 2007).

In the majority of research situations, however, I remained on the margins, maintaining an 'external' view from the position of the participants (Junker, 1960, Gold, 1958) which required the complimentary use of interview data. Therefore it was essential to use an interview method that allowed the voice and narratives of the residents to come through.

In seeking to understand the meaning of relationship with place, interviews with residents appeared the most appropriate method of gaining this information. The nature of interviewing also evolved throughout my time in the field, from something that would be more readily recognised as a semi-structured interview (with a general list of topics and key questions I wished to discuss) through taking the form of an unstructured 'conversation with a purpose' (Eyles, 1988) (allowing the participant to talk about whatever they saw as relevant under the broad umbrella of 'how do you find living here?'), to collecting information from naturally

occurring talk on the subject. Therefore the collection of data from residents can be characterised as a narrative approach to interviewing, not focusing on the life history of a person but on the stories they tell about themselves and the place in which they live.

### **3.3.2 Talking**

The narrative turn within the social sciences has been emphasised by its conceptual links between constructions of memory and identity (Bird, 2002). Parallel to this has been a move towards oral history, and life history research (Bertaux, 1981) in an effort to account for the experiences of 'ordinary' people in history, as opposed to powerful groups or individuals (Chamberlayne *et al.*, 2000). From this, Jackson and Russell (2010) asserts that "oral history should be seen as a theoretical source and methodological tool for geographers interested in exploring place-based understandings of memory, identity and consciousness" (pp.173). In addition, Uprichard and Byrne (2006) specifically advocate the use of narratives as crucial for understanding complex urban spaces. Narratives therefore emplace everyday experience while at the same time are able to weave and meander between different geographical scales, different points in history and "connect the intimate details and experience, attitudes and reflections to the broader social and spatial relations of which they are apart" (Wiles, *et al.*, 2005: 98). This provides a vital methodological link to the theoretical framing of the research.

An understanding of narratives has been taken from Wiles *et al.* (2005) as being broadly defined as the telling of a story with elements of meaning, structure and content occupying relative positions of importance in their analysis. Narratives convey events and their consequences but are also connected to the way people learn about, explain and organise experience. Therefore an interview approach was taken with an emphasis on the stories and accounts people tell of place; *how* people talk about place became as important as *what* people say about place and provide an insightful way of understanding how everyday practice and sensory experience in place speak to feelings of attachment and belonging.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) stress the importance of the research interview being viewed as social events in which the interviewer is a participant observer. This raises some interesting points as it accepts the interviewer's role in the construction of knowledge within the interview, but also forces attention to how ethnographers use interview data. There is a view that interviews serve the purpose of a source of information about the participants and the world in which they live. An alternative view, and one to which this research prescribes, is that interviews and oral accounts are seen as social products whose analysis can tell us something about the socio-cultural process that generated them (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Narrative in itself is an everyday practice, people talk about their everyday experience all the time and people come to view themselves, the world around them and their position within it from the stories they tell about themselves or certain situations. Therefore the thesis harnessed this potential to focus on the individual agency of participants in how they understand their sense of attachment and belonging to the local. As Richard Sennet (2000) argues;

“in studying real-world narratives, we are interested in the question of the voice of the person who, in an interview, tells us a story. We ask ourselves how this person struggles with events beyond his or her own making and incorporates them into a story which implicates the narrator as an active participant. Technically, the study of real-world narratives focuses on *agency*- in other words, on the act of narrating” (2000:123, emphasis in the original)

As Somers (1997) writes, “it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand and make sense of the social world, and through which we constitute our social identities” (1997:83). Therefore how people make sense of their position within a community and how they might respond to urban change will be contained within the narratives they tell of themselves and of the community.

Within a narrative approach to interviewing the ability to direct the topic of conversation is more at the discretion of the interviewee and the more informal nature of the interview is conducive to the building of a rapport between the individuals (McDowell, 1998). The idea of a “conversation with a purpose” (Eyles,

1988) style of interviewing adopted by many social scientists to allow the participant to talk freely, and only slightly guided by the researcher, also goes some way to address the power-dynamics of the interview situation. Therefore “security and scope” (Jackson, 2010: 178) are provided by a narrative approach to interviewing for the interviewee to discuss complicated feelings that may not be afforded in more structured interview forms.

In this way, this approach is also found to be more conducive to eliciting emotional responses (Punch, 1998). This was reflected in my own experience as my interviewing style altered throughout the fieldwork in different situations, but this is also demonstrated within a singular interview episode. By starting interviews in a fairly structured way by asking the participant to tell me ‘facts’ about how long they had lived in Byker and where they had moved there from, responses fell in line with what Punch (1998) has argued, as providing rather more rational responses. People for instance would state in a quite pragmatic fashion how they had maybe moved from one place to another before arriving in Byker with definite dates, and in a chronological order, leaving the whys and wherefores of their moving out of the discussion. It was only when the interview broadened out to a more unstructured discussion of ‘how they have found living in Byker’ that responses became more emotional in character, with some choosing to ‘go back’ over the story of their arrival and fill out the details. One participant commented on this after telling me his rather complicated life story of where he had moved as a teenager. He went on to tell a story with a similar pattern for his girlfriend remarking;

*“Those two stories, sound so much alike, have so much similarities but individual experiences are completely different and there is a lot more toughness in each individual experience than what people know of”*

This participant’s awareness of how individual biographies can become glossed over by one of two key incidents, while losing parts of the qualitative detail, demonstrates the difference that an approach to interviewing made on the responses given, further confirming my decision to use a narrative approach to interviews.

There is of course the potential for such narratives to be *too* active, when interviewees construct a story with a particular bent or agenda for the purposes of the interview or conversely, too *inactive* when people draw on previously constructed narratives (Jackson, 2010). To take the first point, there were certainly experiences of participants using the interview as an opportunity to vent certain points of view they felt important to the research. However, adopting a contextual approach to narrative analysis, as discussed in more detail later, the context surrounding the narrative were of equal importance. Equally the research takes the approach that all talk is storytelling, used strategically (Cortazzi, 1993 cited by Wiles *et al.*, 2005) to present a certain framing of events for certain purposes, and therefore this type of narrative construction in interviews is viewed as being unavoidable. To address the second point of repeated or rehearsed narratives, being an everyday practice itself, the telling of stories about a place and experiences within that place is to be expected, especially amongst older respondents who are familiar with telling stories about the past and 'old Byker'. The act of 'telling a story' however achieves the level of the "familiar, the mundane, but that which remains misunderstood" (Lefebvre, 2002), while at the same time encouraging contemplation of an experience, creating a distance from its immediacy (Tuan, 1977). Within this space of reflection and distance, ways of how people understand and make sense of place can be expressed.

To summarise, narratives capture our understandings of the world, our place within it and the experiences we have of it (Wiles *et al.*, 2005). For the purpose of this project they allow us to talk about our experiences in a way which is place-based, not bound; enabling the participant to reach out to understandings and frames of reference outside of the particular spatial-temporal context in which they are situated. In this way the narrative approach builds on theoretical understandings of the production of space in Lefebvre's spatial-dialectic (1991a); concentrating on how space is produced and experienced by dialectic of perceived, conceived and lived space. A narrative approach allows for understandings of *how* these three moments of space are negotiated in people's everyday spatial practices.

In terms of the practical approach to interviewing, the research draw to some degree on the approach of the Biographical Interpretative Method (BIM) in taking a view of the interview as having various sub-sessions. This sees the interview process commencing with a 'non-interrupted initial narrative', followed by 'Internal questioning' of points raised during this narrative, and finally a third session focusing on all remaining questions and interests relevant to the research (Wengraf and Chamberlayne, 2006). The BIM approach views these sub-sessions as separate interview sessions, whereas in the experience of my research, they tended to conflate into one over all interview episode with a participant, with the occasional follow-up interview taking place. The following discussion highlights how the various sub-sessions identified by the BIM approach were operationalised during interviews in this project.

Although ethnographic interviewing does not hold that the same questions need to be asked of all those participating (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), for the purpose of exploring how individuals experienced their community and the nature of any attachments to it, some questions were replicated across all participants. One question in particular directly asked about their sense of belonging or attachment to place in an effort to avoid the possible misinterpretation of elements of their narrative that I interpreted as expressions of attachment to the local or otherwise. This question was usually posed towards the end of the interview or conversation, and took the form of a non-directive proposing question so as not to be too leading.

In the main, questioning remained relatively open-ended and exploratory; prompting for further information and explanation where it was felt appropriate and helpful to the research. There was however one area of the research interview that required a more directive approach to questioning and this was around the issue of regeneration. Being interested in how regeneration and urban change can influence feelings of belonging and attachment to the local it was important that this 'variable' was included in the discussion, especially as it was rarely mentioned spontaneously by participants. What this absence can tell us about the lived experience of regeneration is discussed in Chapter Seven but in reflecting on the

approach to interviewing taken by this research, it was necessary to ask a direct question as to whether there had been any regeneration in and around the community since the participant had been living there, and occasionally to prompt with specific examples.

Other interviews took a much more conversational approach, particularly those which were conducted opportunistically, as well as those conducted whilst walking. For the opportunistic interviews, they would generally begin with a question from the participant themselves, asking me what I was interested in finding out. The first time this was posed to me, I was taken slightly off guard. A member of the 'old' Byker community, one who had been engaged in several studies evaluating the architecture and design of the Estate, asked me whether it was "Byker the people or Byker the buildings?" I was interested in when I (perhaps naively) introduced myself as being interested in the area. This highlights two important points: one is the nature of doing research in a well researched field; and the other is the question of how to verbally introduce research and the purpose of the interviews themselves. To take the latter, I quickly learnt how to introduce the research verbally in a way that was accessible and (hopefully) interesting to the participant by simply saying I was interested in finding out what it was like to live in Byker and how the place had changed during the time that they had been living there. This way of introducing my research avoided using academic frames of reference that would have done more to create distance between myself and the participants, but equally made talking about that subject seem appealing to them, and something they could comment on easily and generate conversation.

For instance, when faced with a participant who had clearly had their fair share of interview experiences on the subject, I would introduce my interest as wanting to find out what it was *really* like to live in a place where the architecture was made so much of, or taking almost an hypothesis-testing approach, by telling participants I was curious to know whether people still did have attachments to their local communities as they had done in the 'old days'. Both approaches appeared to work well and were often helpful in initiating strong opinions from the participants, as well as debate if posed to a group. When wishing to begin the

interview on more neutral ground, I would introduce my research as simply wishing to find out how different people found living in the area; what they liked about it, and what they didn't.

### **3.3.3 Walking**

Latham (2003) argues that cultural geographers need to broaden the conventional cannon and recognise the plurality of research techniques that can help to access the lived experience of space. Wiles *et al.* (2005) argue that the 'cultural turn' of the discipline has been met with a timid response to embracing qualitative methods outside of traditional focus groups, semi-structured interviews and observation. Such methodological antithesis on the part of geographers has caused Nigel Thrift to proclaim that "cultural geography is not empirical enough" (Thrift, 2000:5 quoted by Latham, 2003:1998) and a challenging of the discipline to "approach studying the ordinary, the everyday, in ways that actively engage embodiments of social practice" (Latham, 2003:1999).

Therefore the fieldwork for this research incorporated an element of performance in its methodology by conducting some interviews whilst walking as a nested part of the overall methodology. Some walks were conducted one-on-one with the participant, usually as a second interview, while others were part of group heritage walks, led by one resident while I interviewed others. These were organised, resident-led walks, which originated from a series of Open Heritage events in the city and continued to run from time to time to coincide with other heritage projects in the area. The ones I became involved with during fieldwork were aimed at producing a walking tour map of the Estate as part of a collection of resources being put together by a community heritage group.

In the previous chapter, it was seen how the body of work of *Rescue Geographies* (Jones and Evans 2012) used walking interviews to capture people's attitudes and knowledge about their surrounding environment as a way of taking seriously the feelings of local people towards proposed development. The walking interviews used in this research were somewhat different in that the redevelopment that was often discussed had already taken place, being framed by those

organising them as 'Heritage Tours'. During one walking tour, an older member of the community stopped to have his photograph taken on the site where the house in which he was born once stood, now the middle of a mini roundabout. It is these intersections of narrative, memory and place that Tim Ingold (2008) argues are afforded by walking and in these particular instances has allowed for a plumbing of the depths of attitudes and feelings toward place, as well as traversing the surface (Macfarlane, 2012).

Self-directed walking interviews, where I asked individual participants to show me some of the places they had been speaking about in their interviews, were more contemporary in their focus but still would often touch on change that had occurred in the Estate since the participant had lived there and their perceptions of this. As Fink (2011) found in her photographic walking tours of a UK housing estate, residents often chose to include things in the photographs which researchers would have missed the meaning of, therefore demonstrating the value of being 'in place' and of appreciating how such details are "experienced, valued and more importantly, owned by local people" (pp.44). For instance, during my walking interviews I became sensitised to the difficulties of walking between various parts of the Estate, routes I probably would not have walked and therefore not been aware of myself. Therefore the use of walking interviews in this research highlighted de Certeau's assertion of walking as practiced narration (1984) allowing for a more intimate way of accessing the insights of resident engagement with landscape (Evans and Jones, 2011). Again this method provided a useful link between theory and practice of the research in allowing narratives of place to be collected as residents moved through the spaces they were talking about and recalling what was perhaps not there.

#### **3.3.4 *Listening***

Interviewees were aged 18 years old and upwards, partly as an ethical consideration and partly in recognition that the views of teenagers and children would require more independent analysis beyond the scope of this project. However during fieldwork I became involved in a Department for Communities and Local Government funded, City Council led, project addressing attitudes and

behaviours of the young people (aged 15-25) in the community towards alcohol. The project involved various community groups already working in the area speaking to their young members (usually in their teens) to find out why they were drinking in public spaces in the Estate and what intervention work could be done to reduce this. This information was collected via questionnaires, workshops and informal interviews. This presented itself as a potentially useful source of information as it was, firstly, accessing the views of younger people, and often 'hard-to-reach' young people, and secondly it was asking about what they wanted in their community which leads to questions of what they like and dislike about it, and what is 'in it' for them; all questions related to how young people feel about and relate to the places in which they live. Therefore the information gleaned from the Council-led Alcohol Project, with the project-owner's permission, became a helpful secondary source of data.

### **3.3.5 *Summary of methods***

In addition to the primary data collected, as outlined above, community archives of oral histories and personal accounts of living in the area provided not only a rich source of context but a further insight into how residents had witnessed the local area change over time. Although informed by ethnographic traditions of research, the decision was taken not to live within in the community, often considered a stipulation of ethnographic fieldwork. This decision was taken in an effort to avoid the project becoming an 'ethnography of Byker'. Despite drawing on traditions of community and locality studies, it was not the intention to replicate this type of study here. The first and foremost intention of the research was to explore the nature of local belonging and attachment in cities, not just to give a specific account of belonging in Byker, and to be able to use any theoretical understanding produced of local belonging in understanding the nature of belonging elsewhere. By living in Byker it was feared the research would become too much about my own sense of attachment to the place, and as I would have been living there for very different reasons and under quite different circumstances than the participants, this was felt to be inappropriate.

This is not to say however that my position as a researcher remained objective. This research takes the position prevalent throughout much qualitative research in geography that the researcher is part of the social world in which they study and cannot be separated from it. Therefore I did, throughout the research, reflect on my own sense of belonging to places I was familiar with and in which I had lived. When hearing resident's accounts of how they felt about living in Byker, it was impossible not to compare this to how I felt about the current and past places in which I had lived. In asking the question of whether a person feels any sense of attachment of belonging to where they lived, it was impossible not to ask it of myself.

### **3.4 Reflections**

Having discussed the methodological approach taken and methods used in this research, this chapter concludes by offering some practical and conceptual reflections of the nature of ethnographically-informed research in local communities. These reflections, echoing the issues at the heart of the research, centre on questions of people and place; specifically the influence of place on interviews and a consideration of the micro-geographies of the research site, and the impact of positionality on negotiating access and managing field relations.

#### **3.4.1 *Matters of place***

The 'where' of methodology is something Anderson and Jones (2009) argue is surprisingly absent from geographical study. They argue that the "material placing of methodological techniques ought to be deliberated over as systematically and reflexively as the choice of technique and the social positioning of the researcher is at present" (2009:301). This moves beyond a consideration of how the 'where' can impact on interview rapport and propensity to disclose certain information (Denzin, 1989) and towards a greater understanding of the 'connective tissue' (Davidson and Milligan, 2004) between people and place and how it can inform, and is informed by the everyday experience. Here space is viewed as a medium rather than a container for social action (Tilley, 1994) and therefore a

method of interview which allows for an understanding of how “physical spaces around us are deeply woven into the fabric of who we are” (Preston, 2003:XI) is required. This is critical to a study of local belonging and attachment in cities as it moves beyond the ‘empty abstractions’ of space, bringing into focus the cultural meanings of everyday practices and experiences within the particularities of a case study of the housing estate.

To begin to unravel this ‘connective tissue’, Elwood and Martin (2000) use the concept of the ‘micro-geographies’ of the interview site as a way of reading social relations and focuses specific attention on the varying roles, positions and identities in different sites and illustrates the social geographies of the place of study. Feminist scholarship has for a long time raised an awareness of the power dynamics of research interviews and a need to be mindful of the unequal power relations that exist between researchers and researched. However, Elwood and Martin (2000) argue such discussions are not specific enough that that few (with the exception of McDowell, 1998) isolate the site of the interview itself for a consideration of these issues. An awareness of micro-geographies forces attention to participants varying positions, roles and identities and allows the researcher to see them ‘in-situ’. For example, conducting interviews within the physical space occupied by different community groups often gave an insight into both their work and their constraints, and it was interesting to note the disparities of resources between community groups working yards away from one another. Therefore, through the ‘emplacement of methodology’ (Anderson and Jones, 2009) the social geographies of the place of research can be brought into focus.

The majority of interviews happened in semi-public, such as shops, community centres, places of work etc. instead of participants’ homes as initially expected. However, these locations still preserved the ‘in-situ’ element of the fieldwork, allowing for participants to draw on the context around them in their discussion, invite comment from others who were nearby and helped in managing the power dynamics of researcher and researched by being conducted on their own territory. Theoretically, this is important for research concerned with the relationship between people and place and allows a methodological expression of

the dialogical and negotiated ways in which people make sense of place, and it also offers a critique to the separation of interviewing and observation in ethnographic research. As discussed above, the researcher role of observer and interviewer become blurred and confirm Oberhauser's (1997) note that the interview is not only an opportunity to gather information from asking questions, but an opportunity for participant observation.

### **3.4.2 Positionality: Local, but not local enough**

In describing her fieldwork experiences in Indonesia, Sarah Moser (2008) concludes that it was aspects of her personality such as social skills, the manner in which she conducted herself and navigated the personalities of others which were the main criteria on which she was judged in the field. Although Moser recognised the importance of external meta-categories (in her case being a white, female, Canadian, middle-class graduate student etc.), she argues it was the above elements of her *personality*, rather than positionality, that had a greater influence on both the research process and product. Moser's experience in the field resonated deeply with my own, and therefore questions of both personality and positionality frame the final reflections on fieldwork for this chapter.

These questions are illustrated by the experiences of both gaining access to the field and, more specifically, access to individual interviewees, and when maintaining field relations with groups once initial access had been achieved. The later was a much easier process than the former. Gaining access to interviewees proved problematic as has already been discussed and came as what Feldman *et al.* (2003) describe as a 'rude surprise' to many researchers. In planning how to address the initial difficulty in gaining access I felt several possibilities were not open to me and this was in part due to positionality. However, Moser (2008) has a different take on this, arguing it may be more constructive to reflect on how researcher personality can act as a mediator in managing positionality, and how this aspect of a researcher's identity requires just as much attention.

At this point it would become pertinent to outline my own positionality regarding the local community which at times I often felt could be described as

'somewhat local'. Being from the North East and living in Newcastle I considered myself 'local' to some extent, but equally not so, in not being from or living in Byker. The rather essentialist category of 'local' as discussed by the community studies literature in Chapter Two, was neither an open nor shut door to my accessing the participants and serves to highlight the fluid and relational nature of such categories. However, this is not to say that perceptions of my being 'local' or otherwise were irrelevant, more that this positionality came to the surface in some situations and with some participants more than other. Therefore to some I was a "local lass" and to others I was "obviously not from around here".

In managing my positionality of being 'local, but not quite', I agree with Moser's assertion that elements of personality, rather than positionality, took over. Hammersley and Atkinson conclude that negotiating and managing field relations is often a combination of "patience, diplomacy...and occasionally boldness" (2007:64). This certainly helped me considerably during my fieldwork, and I would add interest, humility and humour played their part too.

### **3.5 Moving From Data to Theory and Back Again**

Wengraf (2000) argues "the function of the *researcher is held to be* to give *voice and the printed page* to those who require mediation to get their voices into the public arena" (pp.140 emphasis in original). Although not necessarily the case that the participants in this study *required* the mediation of this research in order to have their voices heard, the role of this research has been to mediate their narratives and accounts of life in Byker for the purpose of answering the questions of this thesis. Wengraf argues the "naïve or sophisticated recycling (of the text) does not produce understanding" and that in order to "understand the voice of the 'Other' as fully as possible, we must explicitly go beyond simple recycling of the verbatim text, and even beyond sophisticated formal text-analysis (Wengraf, 2000:141). Therefore some analytical order, as discussed in this chapter, was needed to be imposed on the data. Holding to the ethnographically-informed approach adopted by this research then, Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007)

assertion is recognised in that it is not enough to “merely manage and manipulate the data. Data are materials to think with” (pp.158) and in order to do so “we must be prepared to go beyond the data and develop ideas that will illuminate them, and this will allow us to link our ideas with those of others” (pp.159).

All interviews were audio recorded and some parts of the walking interviews were visually recorded using a small, hand-held video-recorder and all audio recordings were transcribed fully as soon as possible after the interview. In recognising that transcription forms part of the analysis, this method conforms to Hammersley and Atkinson’s argument that analysis in ethnographic research is not a distinct part of the research process, but a continual part of making sense of the data. It also shaped the research, prompting new and different lines of thought which influenced future interviews and observation recordings. For example, I became aware during transcription that one interviewee had referred to feeling ‘comfortable’ in Byker several times throughout the interview but that I had failed to question him further on this point as to why and to elaborate further on what he meant by this. Fortunately, not only was I able to speak to this participant again and put exactly those questions to him, but I was then alerted to this issue when other participants expressed similar sentiments and was able to probe further.

Following from a narrative style of interviewing, narrative analysis was used to interpret the data. This fundamentally accounts for how people talk about places and their experiences of them, as well as what they say. In doing so it draws mainly on the multilayered nature of talk influenced by Riessman (1993) and the contextual nature of talk using the work of Cortazzi (1993). Together these two approaches were used to analyse both the different levels at which interview talk operated; what functions talk fulfils and how an understanding of the social and political discourses frame and help interpret them, as well as the context of where and when it was said. This method of analysis asks questions of what spatial and social references people draw upon when talking about place. What vocabulary and language do they use when describing how they feel about where they live? And how do such narratives fit into broader discourse of community and regeneration? This follows a similar, although less prescriptive approach, to

interview analysis as the Biographical Interpretive Method (BIM) developed by the work of Chamberlayne and Wengraf (2006). Within this method, it is argued that two elements of the narrative must be separated out for analysis before bringing them back together at the end, the *life lived*, and the *story told* (Wengraf, 2000). In other words attention must be paid to what the interviewee tells the researcher about their life, as well as how they tell it, in order to understand how they are presenting themselves through the narrative. This research does not prescribe to the BIM of analysis, however- and as demonstrated above with the discussion of interview questioning- there are elements, such as these two elements of analysis, which are useful to this thesis.

The process by which I organised and analysed the data for interpretation followed a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 and Strauss and Corbin, 1998) prioritising the constant interplay between data and ideas throughout the research process. As discussed above, this was mostly focused at the transcription stage where I found myself adding analytical notes and memos of my own in red where a comment from a participant sparked an idea corresponding to the literature or theory. For example, where there was a disconnect between Henri Lefebvre's (1991a) representation of space and spaces of representation; where a participant was speaking about responding to or using a space differently from how it was intended and thus creating their own meaning from it. This would also have been noted as an example of a spatial tactic as referred to by de Certeau (1984). This helped ensure the empirical work being carried out was continually grounded in my understanding of the issues and debates surrounding place attachment and urban change from the literature and provided a useful starting point when going back over the transcript for more formal coding and analysing. In addition, I added a field journal element to my field notes, recording not only what I saw and heard, but how I felt as recommended by Coffey (1999), and some initial reflections that formed the basis for further analysis.

When beginning the coding and analysing process more formally, both interview transcripts and field notes were coded with both sensitising and analytic codes (drawing on Wolcott, 1994). This meant I would code information for what it

described, such as an incident of racism, speaking about family members or commenting on the state of the high street. This gave a basic understanding of what was being said; describing what narratives were being told. The second layer of coding involved analytic concepts, which added further analysis to what had been described earlier and were helpful in sensitising the analysis to connections and linkages back to the theory and literature. For example sensitising concepts were used to group together different ‘types’ of narratives, such as nostalgic stories or stories of community decline, then where possible, theoretical sensitising codes were added, indicating a link back to theory, such as a relational sense of place, or a tactic of giving meaning to space.

Sections of the transcripts and field notes with the same codes were then cut and pasted into new Word documents, so that the information could be compared with each other to see if any differences, patterns or irregularities existed between them. It was also helpful to note who was saying what, to see if there were any patterns in how different groups of residents expressed their experiences.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed to give what Silverman (2000) refers to as a “natural history of the research” (pp.236), meaning that instead of a formal account of the research process the reader has been offered “field notes on the development of one’s thinking”. Given the ethnographic and reflexive nature of the field work it was felt important that this element of process and negotiation was captured and that some of the key decisions and strategies employed highlighted and discussed.

To summarise, a narrative approach to both the data collection and analysis provided a useful fit between the theory and the data. It illuminated both the negotiated and achieved nature of place and place identity and was able to allow expressions of the affective dimension of individual’s relationship to place and urban change through the process of telling stories. The importance of place to these relationships were further emphasised by ‘emplacing methodologies’

(Anderson and Jones, 2009) methodologically in terms of addressing power-dynamics and providing tangible and intangible stimuli for conversations, as well as analytically in being able to 'read' the micro-geographies of the interview site for knowledge of the social geographies of a place. This 'emplacing' of methods, served to highlight the interview-as-participant observation approach of Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) which was helpful in providing flexible guidance on ethnography. What started out as a research project based mainly on interviews, quickly developed into one relying equally on participant observation.

Within the analysis of such material, some order needs to be imposed so as to make it manageable. In imposing any analytical framework there is always a fear that some of the messiness and 'noise' of ethnographic research will be lost in the need to produce coherent and useful research findings. The use of binaries, sensitising concepts, codes and categories of research participant data have been used in the analysis to do just that, as tools for grappling with the data, leaving connections to theory to draw out the complexities of place attachment in a more meaningful way.

Having established how the lived experience of place was researched and 'captured' empirically in this study, the following chapter turns to the representation of space (Lefebvre, 1991a). In other words it provides a critical account of the urban development context of Byker and how it has been imagined and re-imagined by planners and regeneration professionals.

## **Chapter Four: Representation of Space in Urban Development**

### ***UK Urban Policy in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Byker***

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the current and historical context of the case study of the Byker Estate. With an interest in understanding the nature of local belonging and attachment in cities, the chapter does this with reference to the specific debates in UK urban development policy and the cultural and social critique of such development. Essentially the interest of this chapter is focused on how urban development may influence the relationship people have to place.

Building on the theoretical framework of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991a) from Chapter Two, and with an interest in how urban change can influence place attachment through a structure of feeling (Williams, 1977), the urban development context of Byker is charted through an analysis using these two concepts. At each phase in the development of the estate, the chapter asks; what does this tell us about the representation of space (Lefebvre, 1991a)? And how can this representation of space; the developments and policies that are part of the historic and current context of Byker be interpreted for what they tell us about residents' relationship to place.

This chapter brings a sociological lens to the urban development context of Byker in discussing the possible local structure of feeling (Taylor, 1996) such developments have produced, and considering how they may influence local belonging and attachment in Byker. For example, what is the legacy of residents' experience of 'slum clearance' development in the 1970s? Or does living in Local Authority housing and potentially experiencing multiple social inclusion and area-based regeneration policies produce its own structure of feeling that we need to take into account? Finally, a broader question is asked about the role that regional and local identities may play in providing a particular structure of feeling in places like Byker. Being in the North East, and particularly being in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Byker brings with it a very particular set of circumstances around issues of local and regional identity. The strength of such subjectivities in the North East and Newcastle cannot be ignored and therefore this chapter will also briefly discuss

how this has been conceptualised in relation to development, and how it may be of relevance to understanding local belonging and attachment within this particular housing estate.

#### **4.1 Byker and transitions in UK Urban Policy**

Starting with the period of the Byker Estate redevelopment from the 1960s, the chapter charts the very particular geography of the urban planning context in Newcastle at this time and how the Byker redevelopment strived to do something different, whilst still operating with a modernisation paradigm. There will then be consideration of the period of Urban renaissance development in the UK from the 1990s. This saw a shift in focus towards a more full consideration of the role of culture as well as social inequalities. Nonetheless this was still bound up with the representation of space as projecting a certain imaginary of the city and what it should be. Finally the chapter brings the context of Byker up to the present date with a discussion of the context of Localism and austerity in the UK and what implications this has for how the space of social housing is perceived and conceived.

##### **4.1.1 *Modernisation and ‘The Brasilia of the North’***

The 1950s and 60s saw the State lead a nationwide effort to re-build the country not only in terms of bricks and mortar, but as part of a reimagining and rearticulating of what the country was and wanted to be. Lessons had arguably been learned from Post-War planners about managing the urban sprawl of inter-war housing estates and the focus became either the redevelopment of existing sites, or development of centrally planned ‘New Towns’.

Within Planning this became known as the period of modernisation and radically altered the urban landscape across the UK. Existing Victorian and Georgian architecture, in many cases badly bomb damaged, often poorly maintained and lacking in modern sanitation and heating were often demolished in the name of progress. Although sometimes saved and redeveloped, there was a

feeling amongst many Planners that this style and type of architecture was aesthetically and symbolically no longer appropriate for UK cities. In few places was this more evident than in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where city Councillor T. Dan Smith's vision for a 'Brasilia of the North' resulted in many of the modernist developments seen in the city today. The geography therefore of the modernisation agenda and what it looked like 'on the ground' is important to this study as it provides the legacy of the redevelopment but also signalled a point of departure in terms of how Byker shaped its own development pathway.

In 1972, Jon Gower Davies published a book which captured the culture of planning in Newcastle during this period. *The Evangelistic Bureaucrat* argued that a sense of constantly being misunderstood and being unpopular made planning fiercely defensive of its professional status and thus took on a "evangelistic bureaucrat mantle"(pp.5) as way of insulating themselves against persistent criticism. This meant the 'futurism' of progress and a modernisation agenda came to characterise planning ideology at this time, often couched in rhetoric of stewardship. In a speech by a senior official at Newcastle University, one planner declared their aim was to "make men (sic) happier and to maximise human potential and happiness" (pp.119). However this type of stewardship often lacked consultation with those whose lives the planners were trying to improve. Although the Skeffington Report had been in existence since 1969 and the Town and Country Planning Act of 1968 before that, both emphasising the requirement for public participation, Davies' empirical work in the community of Rye Hill in the city, argued that although residents were able to air grievances, they were not able to influence planning decisions in any meaningful way. This is a pattern which has become indicative of the debates within participatory planning. As a result, Davies highlighted the need for community studies to act as antidotes to the descriptions and prescriptions of planners who in an effort to satisfy the "middle-class notions of modernisation and affluence" of other officials often failed to meet the needs of highly specific situations they were working in (pp.226). There was therefore as Lefebvre would describe, too much "theoretical and abstract reflection" and not enough attendance to the "lived experience" (Stanek, 2011)

The evangelistic bureaucrat approach to planning allows us to understand the context of urban development in which the Byker Estate came into being and how space became imbued with certain normative assumptions and semiotic meaning through abstract perceiving and conceiving of housing space. Labour council leader (1960-1965) T. Dan Smith rejected the environment of rows of Tyneside flats, preferring instead to “create a housing environment that was a visual symbol of modernity” (Cameron and Crompton, 1988: 128) and Newcastle Town Planner Wilfred Burns expressed similar views in his book *New Towns for Old*;

“In a huge city, it is a fairly common observation that the dwellers in a slum are almost a separate race of people; with different values, aspirations and ways of living...One result of slum clearance is that a considerable movement of people takes place over long distances with devastating effect on the social groupings built up over the years. But one might argue, this is a good thing when we are dealing with people who have no initiative or civic pride. The task surely, is to break such groupings even though the people seem to be satisfied with their miserable environment and seem to enjoy an extrovert social life in their locality” (quoted in Konttinen, 1983:125).

This exemplifies what Davies alludes to as the “impersonal proficiency of officials” and the stereotypes widely held by them. It also demonstrates again the abstract representation of space which Lefebvre provided much critique of in relation to French urbanism during the same period (Stanek, 2011). However, despite the political and policy context it was operating in, the Byker development team did manage to take a different approach than that adopted by the planners in Rye Hill.

In 1968-69, two events occurred which “effectively signalled the end of a particular era of planning in Newcastle” (Johnson 1975:21). Wilfred Burns left his position in the council and the Labour Party lost control of the council to the Conservatives. To further add to this context and as a result of growing calls for more effective community participation in planning the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act stipulated that “people must be able to participate fully in planning and their rights must be safeguarded”. Therefore the culmination of these events is

important for the thesis in providing the context in which the Byker Redevelopment emerged.

#### **4.1.2 *Redevelopment in Byker: 'Byker for Byker people'***

Byker was earmarked for redevelopment from 1960 due to lack of indoor sanitation, central heating, as well as some bomb damage and reports of overcrowding. Although many aspects of the design- such as the perimeter wall block of flats- were inherited from the plans of the city architect, many of the distinctive aesthetics of Byker such as the building materials and colours are due to the humanistic approach to architecture taken by Ralph Erskine. His concern was to make the estate a positive place to live and to consider the impact of the built environment on how people lived their lives. There was also a strong emphasis in community retention:

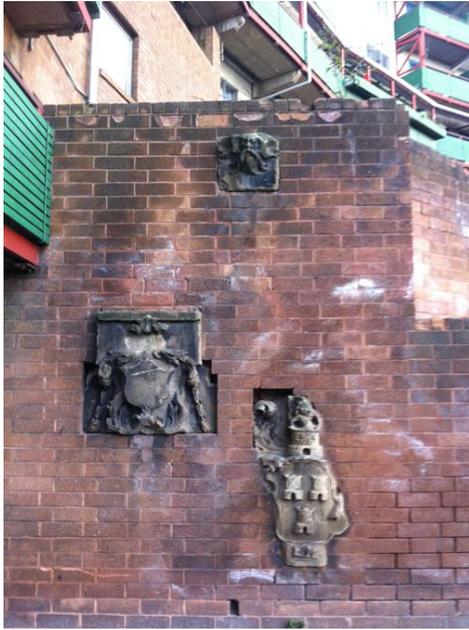
“to maintain, as far as possible, valued traditions and characteristics of the neighborhood itself...The main concern will be for those who are already resident in Byker, and the need to rehouse them without breaking family ties and other valued associations or patterns of life” (Erskine, Statement of aims to Council in 1968, quoted in Malpass, 1979).

Peter Malpass and Alan Murie undertook detailed research in Byker during the redevelopment and are helpful in giving a more critical account of this time. Their main emphasis was that although the redevelopment moved through various policy stages these needed to be seen in terms of sediment of policy and not one stage eradicating another. From the 1950's the public health approach was emphasised focusing on the need to replace unfit housing, then in the early 1960's the Byker redevelopment became part of T. Dan Smith's city wider modernisation plan for Newcastle to become the 'Brasilia of the North'. It was only in the late 1960's that the redevelopment policy become reoriented towards the community, emphasising the need to retain the valuable social fabric of the area (Malpass and Murie, 1990). As the redevelopment continued commitment to community retention faded to the background and the longer standing goal of physical redevelopment took priority. However what Malpass and Murie point out throughout their report is

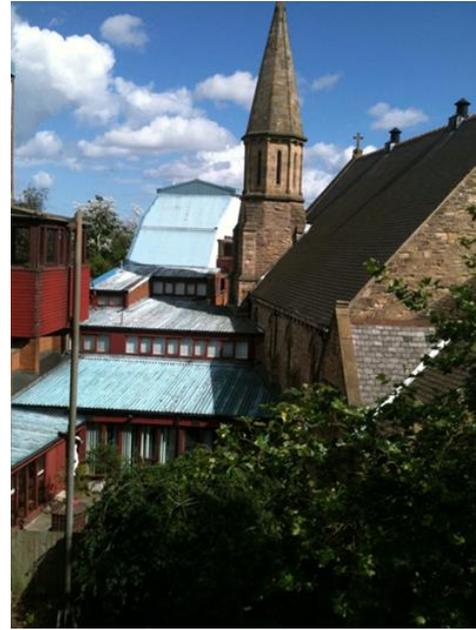
that it was not the sincerity of these aims that were in question, but rather the developers' hands were tied by commitment to previous policy. Despite these discrepancies over the lived experience of the redevelopment, the rhetoric remains today that it was to be 'Byker for Byker people'.

A concerted effort was made to retain the existing community using a rolling programme of demolition so that residents could remain in their old homes until their new one was complete. This marked out the approach taken in Byker as significantly different from many other national as well as local approaches to housing redevelopment at the time. When residents were moved there was again an effort to keep the all-important social ties, moving residents from the same street into the same new block or corridor with an attempt to allocate housing six months ahead of time so as allay anxieties and to give people the opportunity to change if they wished. In terms of public participation, a pilot scheme was used to gain feedback from residents who had been selected to 'trial' the new properties and Vernon Gracie, one of the main members of the development team lived on the estate for some time, using a former funeral parlour shop front as a site office so as a "demystify the architect" and provide a space for residents to speak directly to the development team (Gracie, 1980:41).

The design was innovative too. Although severely restricted in being bounded by a proposed motorway to the North and the River Tyne to the South, Erskine, in developing existing plans for a perimeter wall to block noise pollution from the road, was still able to exercise his humanistic approach to architecture. Relics from the community and from other buildings under demolition elsewhere in the city were preserved and can be seen today, scattered throughout the Estate, often without much in the way of description or explanation of where they are from (Figure 4.1). Some community buildings were also retained including; pubs, the former wash house, churches, bowling greens and community centres (Figure 4.2) as well as original street names, all making some attempt to maintain a link to the past and a sensitivity of local heritage.



*Figure 4.1. Byker 'ornaments'*



*Figure 4.2 Retention of buildings*

Therefore it appears that from 1968 at least there was recognition on the part of the architects, the planners and the City Council, of the importance of the social fabric of a place; the social ties and bonds that existed between people and place and the level of attachment to the local that existed in such communities. Much has been written within architecture and planning literature to celebrate this in Byker. However, turning again to the work of Peter Malpass (1979) shows disagreement over this claim, and goes some way to qualify some of the 'myths' of the Byker redevelopment.

Malpass discredits the Byker story as a successful example of community-based redevelopment on two counts; firstly that the community was retained and secondly that residents were closely involved in the formulation of policies and their subsequent execution. On the first point of community retention, he urged researchers to go and speak to those living in the Byker Wall and ask how many of them had lived there previously. Malpass reported that by 1979, 4 years before the redevelopment ended and 10 years after it had begun, the population in Byker had fallen from 12,000 to 4,400. Since 1968, when the plan to retain the community was announced, the population fell by 64%, as Malpass concludes; "one is left to

speculate about what would have happened had the policy not been to retain the community” (Malpass, 1979:964).

The extent to which community participation can justly characterise the redevelopment is debated also. Tony Hills, the Community Development Officer remarked at the time, that although consultation at various stages and the listening to the wishes of local people was admirable and in many ways successful, “it is not participation” (Hills, 1974, quoted in Glynn, 2011:4) echoing Davies concern that although residents may have been able to “air grievances” participation stopped short of their being able to substantially influence decisions.

To summarise; in the context of Planning in the 1960s and 70s in the UK, and the particular geography of this in Newcastle under the direction of T.Dan Smith and others, the redevelopment of the Byker Estate between 1969-1983 can be seen as “something special” (Malpass, 1979). However there still remained a desire of the planner to impose from above, top-down development in the name of modernisation and the desire to make a statement of progress. Despite critiques of the process of community participation and retention, this is a rhetoric that is still evident in area-based regeneration policies aimed at Byker today as will be discussed.

The importance of this context for the thesis is how the *spirit*, in which the Estate was developed, can help us understand resident’s sense of belonging or attachment to the community. We have seen from this discussion how the representation of space during this period took on certain values of progress and aesthetics of modernisation without always a full consideration of the social production of space. Erskine tried to think about this differently. There was in Byker an effort to bring a sociological lens to spatial planning that was sensitive and responsive to the needs of the community and this provides an important legacy of ‘Byker for Byker people’ (Gracie, 1980) in how the space of this particular housing estate has come to be imagined. It would appear, from the recognition of the importance of community and family ties in the area, that the planners in Byker did, to an extent, have residents sense of local belonging in mind, and that their efforts to retain and enhance it were largely constrained by influence beyond their control.

However other accounts (Malpass and Murie, 1990) point to a sense of disconnect felt between residents and the redevelopment and the dislocating effect this may have had on their relationship with where they lived. The planning of 'mass' social housing can be read as operating at too distant an level of abstraction to take seriously the appropriation of space, and how people actually dwell in space. This is important as it brings into focus the type of tensions within the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991a) that this thesis is interested in and starts to pose questions for what such tensions may mean for individual residents sense of local belonging and attachment.

So far the chapter has outlined how space was represented (Lefebvre, 1991a) by planners in Byker, but what of the spaces of representation? How is space lived and experienced in places like Byker, undergoing huge upheaval and how can this help inform the context of this research in Byker today?

#### **4.1.3 *Lived Experience of Urban Planning***

Experience of 'slum clearance development' in the UK and of the transition that many experienced to new estates have been carefully documented both by those interested in planning studies as well as locality or community studies traditions. Some, such as Young and Willmotts' (1957) account of the residents of Bethnal Green have already been discussed in Chapter Two, and Jon Gower Davies research with those living in Rye Hill in the 1960s have been discussed above. Although this thesis is not an historical account of the experiences of those in Byker who lived through the redevelopment, in drawing on Raymond Williams 'Structure of Feeling' (1977) it is useful here to briefly visit the analysis of how 'slum clearance' and urban change of this era have been experienced in order to set out the context which may shape older residents sense of local belonging and attachment in cities today.

Experience of those moving to new estates as a result of housing clearance can often be categorised as varying between lack of attachment to their new locality and pleasure and delight in the modernised home. Regarding the former this is not to say residents of such estates were wholly unhappy; but that a lack of

familiarity, social and kinship ties and community facilities were often found to undermine their ability to forge the same sense of belonging and attachment to the local they may have previously had in their old communities. Many accounts from the Bethnal Green study (1957), spoke of a lack of 'friendliness' of neighbours; of people preferring to 'keep themselves to themselves'. For many of the women in particular there was often a complaint of isolation and loneliness, both from being moved away from their existing social networks as well as the physical isolation of many of the new estates which often lack local amenities and services in their early years. Of course it is not possible to attribute such expressions of isolation and lack of local attachment solely to the modernisation of housing and communities; societal shifts were being negotiated as well. One woman, speaking specifically about the new Byker Estate described a difference in the nature of the people living in the 'new' Byker which reflected the individualisation of society that commentators such as Giddens (1991) often speak of as being characteristic of modern society;

"It's a different class of people in Byker now. They are never content around here. If one gets a bottle of milk, the other gets two. That's the way they go on. And they can't bear you to have anything. 'So and so's got the telly, and so and so's just had the phone put in, I wonder how she does it.' ...In the days gone by it wasn't like that- but then nobody had anything" (extract from Konttinen, 1983:126)

From this, as well as the accounts of Bethnal Green, we can begin to see how the modernisation of housing for many during this period began to be very closely bound up with wider changes in society; the autonomy of the nuclear family, the role of the welfare state in more and more aspects of daily life and gradual spread of the value of individualisation. Therefore for many who witnessed such substantial change in their physical and everyday surroundings; the change in architecture became very difficult to separate out from change in society more broadly.

The immediacy of living within a redeveloping community, as it is actually going through that process, is also pertinent. In examining housing redevelopment

in Sunderland, Norman Dennis (1972) draws attention to the harsh realities of living under 20 years of planning blight for the residents. In these circumstances, Dennis argues, residents were forced “to live simultaneously in the real world and in the world of the planners fictions” (pp.148), and found themselves having to negotiate their lived experience of their communities and homes as “little palaces” (pp.148), with the designation of their homes by planners as ‘unfit for human habitation’. This dissonance in the lived experience of development opens up questions for this thesis as to what extent legacies of these conflicting conceptions of space pay a role in shaping a structure of feeling in such communities and how this may affect local belonging and attachment to place in communities such as Byker today.

Despite scepticism over claims that “for every one where it is a case of hardship, there are one thousand that benefit” (Dennis, 1972:335), it is far from the case that all those who experienced housing redevelopment during this era were unsatisfied with the new situation they found themselves in. Reports on Byker suggested that the majority of residents wanted new housing but to retain their community and both the accounts from Davies and Dennis cite many examples of residents preferring newly built homes in newly built estates. For many owner-occupiers this was often largely to do with the physical condition of their home and the inability to fund the relevant work themselves, and for private-tenants the social status of moving to a new council estate was held in high esteem (Hanley, 2008).

From a contemporary perspective, one which considers the longer term effects of living in social housing after it has been redeveloped, Lyndsey Hanley (2008) in her book *Estates: an intimate history* discussed the idea of a ‘Wall in the head’ as a particular structure of feeling developed from growing up in council owned housing. Based on her own experiences of growing up on a 1960s built council estate in the suburbs of Birmingham, she describes the ‘wall in the head’ as an invisible fortress, “existing unbroken around every estate in the land” (pp.149). ‘The wall’ is about “*not* knowing what is out there”, and even if you did, “knowing it is not for you”. Hanley accepts that this feeling of ‘knowing your place’ comes not only from housing, but interestingly describes the potential of social capital, being

the social networks a person has within and outside the housing estate, as instrumental in being able to “find a crack in (the ‘wall’) and whittle out a little escape route...going where you’re not supposed to go” (pp.149). This suggests that a strong sense of attachment to the local based on the presence of close social ties may be detrimental for an individual’s development and social mobility as the structure of feeling from growing up in place such as a council estate prevents one from looking beyond. As the review of literature on the ‘predictors’ of place attachment (Lewicka, 2011) in the previous chapter suggested it is interesting to ask in the context of this research whether social capital influences a sense of belonging to the local. Therefore taking Hanley’s idea of the ‘wall in the head’ into account this, along with the legacy of ‘slum clearance development’, may be a structure of feeling important in understanding the nature and extent of belonging and attachment to the local in Byker.

A review of the ideology behind many of the ‘slum clearance’ developments gives an indication of the representation of space (how it was perceived and conceived, Lefebvre, 1991a) during this period, allied to what were considered socially progressive and modernising values at the time. Much of Lefebvre’s critique of the post-war production of space in France can have purchase in the UK context. The ‘abstract rationality’ of planners, developer’s and the local authority in many of the instances discussed here contrast sharply with the ‘concrete rationality’ of the practices of dwelling embedded within social reality (Lefebvre, 1991b). The Byker redevelopment did attempt a different approach, recognising existing practices of dwelling in the community and trying to retain these. The reality however, for Maplass at least, fell short of the goal. Drawing on the lived experience of such urban developments, both during redevelopment and afterwards, we can start to understand how the representation of space may have influenced how people lived within it. This gives an idea of the context of the structure of feeling in such communities, those capable of both undermining and enhancing local attachment and belonging.

#### 4.1.4 *Urban Renaissance*

The next important period in UK urban policy, for the context of Byker is a period often referred to as the period of 'urban renaissance'. This approach, in the 1990s and early 2000s in the UK, had a politics of social inclusion, partnership and a particular spatial approach which not only identified the role of cities in regional development, but sought to re-orientate or redefine how spaces within cities were conceptualised and ultimately experienced and lived. This largely came about in reaction to concern that the private-led regeneration of the 1980s and the influence of Urban Development Corporations had largely failed to take a holistic approach to regeneration and there was building concern at a national level over the growing social inequalities between the richest and the poorest in society and within cities (Mawson, *et al.*, 1989). Pockets of deprivation and social exclusion were identified, primarily in inner city communities, that although being geographically connected to the city were socially becoming more and more excluded and disenfranchised (Imrie and Raco, 2003). This presented a problem not only for those communities concerned but also for the plans of many cities to re-imagine (and therefore market) the city centre as a place where, young professionals, young families and ultimately the 'creative class' (Florida, 2005) would choose to relocate, returning from the suburbs to which they fled in the 1970s and 80s. In short something had to be done about the inner city in many UK cities. This was particularly acute for post-industrial cities such as Newcastle, faced with reimagining itself in a service-based economy and more practically, searching for what to do with the post-industrial land that industries had left behind.

In 1999 the Urban Task Force, set up to recommend practical solutions to causes of urban decline, produced a report stressing "the need to create the quality of life and vitality that makes urban living desirable" (UTF, 1999:7 cited in Punter, 2011:4). It aimed to attract the affluent middle classes back into the city by enhancing urban vitality through design quality of privately developed housing, flagship city developments and cultural venues. At the same time the *New Deal for Communities*, overseen by the Social Exclusion Unit, addressed social exclusion in deprived neighbourhoods by focusing on issues such as anti-social behaviour and

poor housing. As a result, urban renaissance became firmly established as a defining feature of contemporary urban policy in the UK as part of a narrative that saw cities changing from liabilities to assets for economic competitiveness (Lees and Melhusish, 2012)

Bringing with it new ways of incorporating arts and culture into urban development within a very place-based approach, the policy of urban renaissance is important for this thesis in that it demonstrates further the way planners and developers represent space to attract different audiences via the symbolic capital of 'cultural quarter' for example, or 'Riverside apartments'. These representations of space carry with them certain assumptions about aesthetics, practices and value all of which will have certain implications for how the space is actually appropriated and lived on the ground (Lees, 2003). They offer very different representations of space than, for example, 'socially excluded neighbourhoods' and these ways in which space is perceived and conceived in urban development, represent the discourse of the urban renaissance approach taken during this period. The question for this thesis is how these representations of space influence the lived experience of developments on the ground and in turn, affect local belonging.

What then, did urban renaissance look like in Newcastle? And, in particular what implications does this context of urban policy have for questions of local belonging and attachment in communities such as Byker? Once considered the 'workshop of the world' and one of the birth-places of industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century; global competition, failure to diversify and periods of fiscal upheaval resulted in the North East of England becoming a "marginalised and near-bust periphery by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (Hudson, 2005: 581). The product of "carboniferous capitalism, industries of coal, iron and steel drove the development of the North East in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, making the banks of the River Tyne central to its economy. As these industries were eroded service sector economies began to emerge and Newcastle, like many other post-industrial UK cities, looked to redevelop from "coal city to cultural capital" (Byrne and Wharton, 2004:191) with an orientation towards consumption and leisure in place of industry and manufacture.

Despite many of the regeneration initiatives in Newcastle, such as the Quayside redevelopment, Going for Growth Housing Market Pathfinder (Cameron, 2006) and the renovation of Grainger Town (Madanipour, 2010), already underway at the time the Urban Task Force's Urban White Paper was published in 2000, the language of urban renaissance nonetheless informed the city's urban plans for the remainder of the decade. The focus was on attracting capital with capital, providing lavish consumption quarters, aimed at a particularly young, upwardly and geographically mobile demographic of professionals (Hudson, 2005). This saw the city take on various identities of 'Party City' in the 1990s, bidding for 'Capital of Culture' in 2008 (Miles *et al.*, 2004) and the designation of Newcastle as one of six 'Science Cities' in the UK in 2005.

In order to achieve these various mantles, major investment was focused on bringing the largely derelict post-industrial land along the banks on the River Tyne back into use. In Newcastle this has produced the cultural regeneration of the NewcastleGateshead Quayside, with flagship developments such as Baltic art gallery, The Sage Gateshead Music Centre and the Millennium Bridge. These developments are seen as being largely successful (Miles, 2005b) in turning a previously unused site of industrial heritage into a high profile destination for visitors and residents alike and played an important part in the re-branding of the city

However many of these and other iconic flagship buildings, whilst displaying 'design excellence', have been criticised for often stand in isolation to their surroundings; both aesthetically and culturally (Madanipour, 2010, Imrie and Thomas, 1999). In many cases the mentality of parachuting in well-known architects and ideas still seems evident, ideas which bear little relation to the heritage and culture of the environment they are working in demonstrating a 'just add culture and stir' approach to development (Gibson and Stephenson, 2004) and a universalistic approach of top-down regeneration (*Raco et al.*, 2008). This was argued to produce tensions with how the industrial legacy of cities such as Newcastle are to be re-imagined for the future; whether it is harmonised with new developments, or eradicated all together (Middleton and Freestone, 2008). Just as

people were physically displaced from their local communities during housing redevelopment in the 1960s and 70s, accusations of social, cultural and economic displacement followed the urban renaissance period as developments increasingly spoke to a particular set of middle-class tastes and values (Imrie and Raco, 2003). This speaks to a widening of the gentrification debate which is not solely concerned with the displacement of people, but more a matter of the potential to displace culture, heritage and a sense of belonging (Lees, 1994)

In summary, the culture-led and arts-based regeneration that came to be a hallmark of urban renaissance in the UK was caught between providing caricatured and inauthentic representations of place at one end (Wright, 1985, Hewison, 1987), and formulaic appeals to 'middle-class tastes' at the other (Short, 1989, Zunkin, 1992). The 'selling of places' raises vital questions about the representation of regions (Colls and Lancaster, 1992) and if the over-arching remit of urban regeneration is to transform urban landscapes and the image of place, does that mean local identities also become transformed in the process? Therefore, the question of whose culture is being represented and responded to in such urban regeneration attempts, becomes bound up with the question of local identities. Or, as David Byrne and Chris Wharton argue, drawing on the work of Raymond Williams, are their residual cultures of industrial heritage which seep through the gaps in the 'new' emerging cultures (Byrne and Wharton, 2004), mounting a challenge to the narratives of local identity seen in the place-making and branding exercises accompanying regeneration? In short, do some local residents get left behind by this type of urban regeneration? And how do they respond to this?

Building on a critique of whose culture is reflected in the regeneration of cities, is the more specific question of whose heritage? With critiques of some of the developments under urban renaissance policy lacking in authenticity, the role of heritage, both tangible in the form of preserved buildings and intangible regarding cultural memory, became an important way for regeneration practitioners to deliver developments that were of the places they sought to regenerate (Evans and Foord, 2002)

Heritage however also became a tool in the resistance of unwanted forms of regeneration. Concerned by the character of the developments gathering pace along the Newcastle Quayside, the Ouseburn Trust was set up in 1996 in an effort to preserve the historic buildings and 'sense of place' seen as vital to retaining the character and identity of the area adjacent to Byker. Today, The Ouseburn Trust describes its work as:

“working with others to achieve a vibrant, diverse and sustainable future for the Ouseburn Valley, supporting the improvement of the physical, social and economic environment for all its communities, and promoting and preserving its rich heritage. Its focus is to enable all facets of the community to participate and engage fully in what the Ouseburn Valley has to offer. It aims to improve the economic and social capital of the area for the benefit of those communities by creating the strongest, most sustainable and vibrant arts, creative and cultural cluster in the region” (Ouseburn Trust Website)



*Figure 4.3 Ouseburn*



*Figure 4.4 Renovated Toffee Factory*

Source: [www.ouseburnfestival.org.uk](http://www.ouseburnfestival.org.uk)

This has had important implications for the development of the Ouseburn area of the city, which, considering its close proximity to Byker (and disputes as to whether it is actually part of Byker) makes it an important part of the context for this thesis.

With such interpretations of culture and heritage being articulated in small scale development on the doorstep, it begs the question of how far such initiatives go in shaping local identities in communities such as Byker?

However the issue of heritage is one which is also much closer to home in Byker, as in 2007 the entire Erskine redevelopment was granted Grade II\* listed building status. As English Heritage explained, “The Estate’s ground-breaking design has been influential across Europe and has provided a pioneering model for its approach to public participation” (quoted in Glynn, 2011:1). Such articulations of heritage in the listing of post-war buildings, in particular those which are social housing, challenge traditional understandings of authorised heritage (Smith, 2006) but leave the question of what they actually mean to the people living in them? Critics of the listing of Park Hill in Sheffield, another iconic 1960s social housing estate, have criticised English Heritage for treating the building like a monument, and failing to recognise it as people’s homes; homes often in urgent need of renovation and modernisation (Kain, 2003).

However, the use of heritage in urban development can have positive implications. Research examining the relationship between historic built environment, sense of place and social capital conducted on behalf of English Heritage (Bradley *et al.*, 2009) found robust evidence that living in a more historic built environment is linked to a stronger sense of place, and that *interest* in the historic built environment in which you lived was a key determinant of this relationship. Evidence such as this has interesting implications for places such as Byker, recently represented as a space of built heritage. For the purposes of their research Bradley *et al.* define historic built environment as buildings, streetscapes and landscapes. This focus on tangible heritage draws a line between the built environment and the intangible heritage of memory. In relation to Byker it also poses the question of whether an estate that in parts is less than 30 years old was considered historic by residents or whether ‘old Byker’ referred to a built environment which was no longer there.

While the listing was still at the proposal stage, a study by John Pendelbury *et al.* (2009) carried out interviews with residents and other stakeholders of Byker

to assess whether the recognition of the Estate as special, through statutory listing, in anyway captured how the estate was valued (2009). What they found was that although there was a strong sense of pride from residents and a universal feeling amongst those interviewed that Byker was 'different' or 'special' this did not equate to instant acclaim of the proposed listing. Although there were acknowledgements of the potential benefit of the listing, it was mostly met with suspicion and misunderstanding. The conclusion of the research was that ultimately, the listing was not important to the residents. The context of the listing of the Byker Estate and the role that narratives of heritage have played in this, add yet another dimension to the complex representation of space (Lefebvre, 1991a) of this local community and a further facet on which identities can hinge or become unhinged.

As described in the introduction of this chapter, the urban renaissance period of urban policy in the UK was not solely concerned with ironic and flagship cultural developments. Regenerating deprived neighbourhoods also became central to urban development in the UK during this time. Like many communities in the wake of de-industrialisation, the ward of Byker suffered high unemployment rates in the 1990's of 27%; in the ward at one point became the third most deprived ward in the city. The Estate itself, similar to much social housing at this time, faced social problems of anti-social behaviour and crime leading to high numbers of void tenancies, with a Community Appraisal of Byker in 2001 reporting it as having the worst and most accelerated termination of tenancies in Newcastle (Cited in Kain, 2003) Along with the general physical decline and stigma that often accompanies such processes; Byker was described as nearly becoming a 'sink estate' in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Robin Abrams (2003), an architect re-visiting the estate in 2001, found the following:

"A visit to Byker in 2001 produced a shock. Throughout the community, upper and lower, there were burned, boarded up houses. The incidence of untended gardens far outnumbered the tidy ones. All shops in the lower shopping precinct were boarded up. Portions of the Byker Wall appeared to be abandoned – previously secured entrances were open, the lobbies covered with graffiti. The landscaping was ragged or in some cases missing

altogether; litter and graffiti were rampant. The entire community, not just the lower areas, projected an image of desolation and despair” (2003:126-7).

What Abrams found in Byker are many of the indicators of deprivation and social exclusion which the Social Exclusion Unit under New Labour set out to address.

In arguing for the importance of this stage in the Estate’s more recent history, a quote from a resident reported in the 1997 Community Appraisal for Byker sums up the impact such an environment had on local identities;

“It’s about jobs, income, self-respect and a stake in the future of our community. I don’t own anything. I don’t belong anywhere. I don’t have any say in what happens to me or my family, my kids or anything” (quoted in Glynn, 2011:7).

This sense of hopelessness and disenfranchisement is of course more than the concern of the local and is a statement on wider reaching, societal conditions. However the references from the resident above, of not belonging anywhere and not having a stake in the future of “our” community, serve as reminders of the way such social processes are lived out in local communities. It also gives some sense of the local structure of feeling that may or may not be found in Byker today.

However, as well as a physical decline, Abrams was shocked by a decline in community, describing a division between ‘respectable’ areas and clusters of ‘problem families’ on the Estate;

“The older residents clustered themselves near the top of the hill (they are nearly all by now in the purpose-designed elderly housing cluster which is immaculately maintained and vandalism-free), and they patronized the shops in the high street. They left the lower neighbourhoods and the new shopping centre to fend for themselves, apparently their sense of community did not extend that far either geographically or socially” (2003:128).

Set against a background of needing to preserve the strong community bonds that were seen to exist in Byker during the time of the redevelopment the

above comment is disheartening, although perhaps not surprising. It does pose the question, as raised above via the discussion of community experience of 'slum clearance', of how far the physical design of change in the urban landscape can be apportioned the blame (or the credit) for enhancing a sense of place and community, or whether there are other factors involved in the forging and negotiation of local attachments. Perhaps the most illuminating comment from Abrams re-visit to Byker is of him being pulled aside whilst touring the Estate by an elderly woman who stated, "you architects think this is such a great place to take pictures, but you should hear what it is like to actually live here" before proceeding to reel off a list of complaints she had about the neighbourhood.

Although indicators of multiple deprivation still persist, improvements in quality of life in the Estate appear to be indicated by the stabilising of tenancy lengths, with the average length of tenancy standing at 7.54 years in 2011 (statistics from Byker Community Trust). However the legacy of this particular period of the Estate's history still remains. A visit to the Newcastle City Library archives finds that amongst the newspaper cuttings covering Byker over the years, coverage of 'Rat Boy'- the so-called juvenile delinquent who "terrorised the neighbourhood, evading police by hiding in the heating vents"- comes second in volume only to the newspaper coverage of 15 years of the 1970s redevelopment. This begs the question of how people living in Byker today relate to such a narrative of community decline and how this has influence over local belonging and attachment.

The physical regeneration that occurred directly in Byker during this period is modest when compared with other areas of deprivation in Newcastle, especially areas to the West of the city. The main site of regeneration in the ward of Byker has been Shields Road, which sits just outside the boundary of the estate, running alongside the perimeter wall. Regeneration here has mainly focused on leisure and retail, with two major supermarkets at either end of the road, one within a large retail park, and the redevelopment of the East End Library to house a community swimming pool and fitness centre. Despite this, Shields Road continues to have a

low occupancy rate for smaller retail space with many, including a former 'destination' department store standing vacant.

Efforts of accessibility and improving leisure facilities were also central to regeneration plans to enhance resident quality of life. This largely focused on the development of Newcastle's section of the Hadrian Wall Path national trail, Hadrian's Way. Upgrading of the existing path and cycle track running along a disused railway line known as 'Byker Link' was intended to provide a direct link to Shields Road from the Estate. In addition major investment to individual properties has been ongoing throughout the estate under Decent Homes Standards programme, aimed at bringing the housing stock up to the standard of being warm, weatherproof and having reasonably modern facilities.

Large amounts of government money were also channelled into tackling problems of unemployment and lack of training opportunities, particularly focusing on young men in the area. Community Capacity Building was focused on, with the appointment of a Community Resource Worker intended to provide support to Community Representatives as well as providing local-based training for residents and contributing to the development of a voluntary sector forum. There were also a number of Working Groups established including, the Community Support Working Group, Community Safety Working Group and the Shields Road Regeneration Working Group (Interview with local councillor).

#### **4.1.5 Summary: From Modernisation to Renaissance**

As has been discussed here, urban development has always been about transforming the physical and the social space of cities. The work of Lefebvre on the production of space (1991a) allows us to think about what impact the representation of space, through 'slum clearance', urban renaissance and the listing of buildings, has had on how we appropriate and dwell in space and ultimately how we experience urban change and regeneration at the grounded level of the everyday in urban communities.

The environment in which we live will affect how we *be* in a place; how we experience it and our relationship to it. However there has been relatively limited

engagement with a serious, and nuanced understanding of how urban regeneration affects local identities and to what extent it can enhance or undermine local belonging and attachment. This thesis addresses this gap by exploring the nature of local belonging and attachment in the very particular context of urban transformation and change. In doing so however, this chapter concerns itself not only with the urban development context of Byker, but the local identity context also.

## **4.2 Northern Identity**

The chapter now briefly turns to the very particular context of local identity in the North-East and how northern or 'Geordie' identity might inform response to regeneration and their influence on local identities. 'Northern' identity is more generally referred to as encompassing the whole of the North of England, therefore including the North West as well as the North East. However 'Geordie' is more often used to describe the cultural identity of those from Newcastle-upon-Tyne or the surrounding Tyne and Wear city region. Northumberland however often becomes enclosed in the mapping of 'Geordie' identity also and therefore literature on regional identity provides a more inclusive coverage of understanding the particular structure of feeling of cultural identity in the North East (Colls and Lancaster, 1992). Therefore without wanting to align with essentialist notions of regional identity and culture, there still remains a need to engage with the particular 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1977) of a place to understand how urban change may influence a relationship with the local. The particular elements of Northern or 'Geordie' identity are not set out here to be either confirmed or denied, but to provide the context of the discussion of local identities in communities such as the Byker Estate.

A common feeling, expressed by Fred Robinson (2002) is that Northern culture and identity grew out of the industrial economic base. These cultures have lasted longer than that industrial base and David Byrne argues for the need to recognise the industrial structure of feeling that exists in the North East which

shapes and influences a 'northern identity'. Crucially, Byrne isolates the significance of immigration and maritime heritage as key characteristics of this industrial structure of feeling suggesting a more 'globally reflexive' (Savage *et al.*, 2005) self-awareness than local identities are often thought to possess.

The key question here, in the context of this research, is what happens to local identities expressed through such an industrial structure of feeling, when those industries are (not only) no longer there? The urban regeneration of Newcastle and communities such as Byker, mobilised as result of industrial decline, not only alters the physical landscape and use of such space, but dismantle and reinterpret in the imaginary as well. Questions have therefore been asked of how far does urban regeneration go in responding to these identities; does it draw on it, as promotion of the region often does (One North East, *Passionate people, passionate places* campaign), or does it seek to transform it in an effort to move away from industrial connotations of "flat-caps and whippets"? (Robinson, 2002).

#### **4.2.1 Local identity in Byker**

As well as the particular context of 'Northern' and 'Geordie' identity, the Byker Estate itself is considered locally as having a strong sense of identity. The Estate is unique in being able to lay claim to two high profile photographic exhibitions and subsequent books, referred to in the Introductory Chapter, produced by Finnish photographer Siirka Liisa Konttinen. Photographs taken in the 1970's during the redevelopment, and again in the mid 2000's, have presented an image of the residents as intensely proud of their community, dispelling stigma of the 'slum' association, and the 2009 book in particular shows the social and cultural diversity of the 'new' Byker. This of course is one artist's impression of the community, however it has to some extent become part of the imaginary of the community which may enhance, or undermine, senses of identity and belonging amongst residents.

From the redevelopment onwards then, there has been a recurring discourse that echoes that of the 'Byker for Byker people' discourse during the Erskine development. Most recently this has been articulated in the 'Backing

Byker' Campaign for the Housing Trust. In contrast to this and in common with many other areas of predominately local authority owned housing, Byker has had to contend with the stigma of being designated a 'slum' in the 1960's and a reputation approaching a 'sink estate' in the 1990's and the image of 'decline' or reputation as 'dangerous' could also have an impact on local identity and feelings of belonging and attachment. All this juxtaposed with the listing of the architecture in 2007 and the burgeoning cultural and creative cluster of the Ouseburn on its doorstep.

#### **4.3 Contemporary Byker: 'The embodiment of the Big Society'?**

Today there is yet more change on the horizon for Byker in form of the Byker Community Trust. The Trust took ownership of the Estate in 2012 in a stock transfer from Newcastle City Council after 64% of residents (out of 44% that voted) returned a 'yes' vote to the transfer of the ownership to the Estate. Set up as a charitable organisation the Trust is now a registered social landlord able to raise money for improvement in the Estate from tenant's rents and was referred to by the then Housing Minister Grant Shapps as "the embodiment of the Big Society" (article published on Communities website, 10 March 2011)

Although originally proposed in 2009, organisers of the 'Backing Byker' Campaign for the 'Yes' vote situated their campaign in the context of the current austerity cuts from central and local government in the UK as well as a continuing trend of localism within urban development, re-envisaged most recently by Prime Minister David Cameron's 'Big Society'.

Continuing a two decade trend of localism in urban policy in the UK (Raco, Turok and Kintrea, 2003), the Localism agenda underpinning the idea presented by Prime Minister David Cameron in 2010 of the 'Big Society' seeks to put "residents, civic leaders, local businesses and civil society organisations in the driving seat" (2011:3). Although the rhetoric of the 'Big Society' has since fallen somewhat into the background, the politics of localism remain. In contrast to some of the critiques of top-down policy and planning discussed earlier, this would seem a welcome and

worthy ambition. However with regeneration firmly located within the agenda of economic growth, the opportunity for 'the local' to define their needs and wants starts to become somewhat more difficult to achieve.

Although some resident scepticism over the role of the Trust and management of the 'Yes' vote campaign, at the time of this research there appears at least a general optimism that the Trust may be able to restore the sense of stewardship and ownership of the community originally intended by Erskine. Yet it remains to be seen whether this latest iteration of regeneration in the community will bring the changes it has promised. Specifically for this research, 'Backing Byker' campaign and the resulting stock transfer to the Trust serve as a contemporary reminder of the ethos of community and engagement the Byker Estate originated from under the direction of Erskine and others in the 1960s and 70s. Despite disagreement and dispute over the realisation and successes of this, the urban and social change Byker has witnessed from the redevelopment to the Community Trust provide a rich and fertile context in which to begin to ask questions of the nature of local belonging and attachment in such a context of urban change.

Throughout the various waves of community regeneration under the continuing localism agenda of present and past governments in the UK, conceptions of poorer communities have remained more or less the same. Rogaly and Taylor (2009) have described this conception as reinforcing prevailing stereotypes of such communities as "bounded and poor" and hide the "ambiguities and fluidities of people's understandings of their area" (pp.70). What Rogaly and Taylor demonstrate in their research on social housing estates however is that far from being outposts of deprivation, the lives of people living within these estates are intimately tied to structural changes at the local, national and international scale. This is important for an understanding of how the representation of space, as deprived, as heritage or as industrial, becomes appropriated both in the perception of residents as well as the lived experience. This research aims to give 'voice' to these understandings, by adopting a theoretical and methodological approach grounded in the lived experience of cities today and which allows

residents to tell their story of their everyday live in community and how it has been influenced by the urban change and transformations described above.

#### **4.4 Conclusions**

“Byker is a special place. It is special because of what it is today, and it is special because of how it was created” (Peter Roberts, Byker Investment Task Force Final Report, 2010)

Throughout its lifetime Byker has been described, imagined or represented (Lefebvre, 1991a) as a ‘slum’; a part of an emerging ‘Brasilia of the North’; a strong social community in need of retaining, an area of multiple deprivation; a building of national architectural importance; and an “embodiment of the Big Society” and much more besides. The product of a very particular planning culture in Newcastle in the 1960s, it has continued since then to respond to urban transformation in and around it. Byker is also subject to a particular local structure of feeling around questions of local identity. Drawing on wider influences of ‘Geordie’ and Northern identity based around the legacy of heavy industry, these influences have taken a particular shape in the Estate itself, moulded further by its architecture, geographical location within the city, and most recently as a result of its changing demographics. In the complex, transforming and multi-layered cities we live in today, what is the nature of local attachment and belonging? How is it negotiated and expressed and what if any, is the influence of some of the urban changes born out of the UK context? This thesis seeks to address some of these questions by looking at the characteristics and circumstance which inform the nature of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities. Having outlined the various representations of space (Lefebvre, 1991a) of Byker over its lifetime in this chapter, the following three chapters turn their attention to the spaces of representation (Lefebvre, 1991a) by drawing on the empirical findings of everyday experience in Byker.

## Chapter Five: Comfort, Commitment and Critical Distance

### *The Characteristics of local belonging and attachment*

“Topophilia takes many forms and varies greatly in emotional range and intensity. It is a start to describe what they are.” (Tuan, 1974: 247)

Referring to the affective bond between people and place or setting, Yi-Fu Tuan draws our attention to the starting point of understanding what form attachments to place can take. Therefore this chapter concerns itself with that question; what are the characteristics of attachments and how do they vary? In short, what does belonging and attachment to the local *look* like? In starting to think about how we might begin to theorise the nature of local belonging, this chapter attends to this very question by drawing on the empirical work of this research in the Byker Estate to offer some characteristics of local attachment and belonging.

bell hooks (2009) provides us with the idea of a *culture* of belonging, a way of understanding how people belong to a place, which emphasises the supporting and affirming capacity of such a sense to our very way of being in the world and of viewing our own identity. It helps us make sense of the Self. hook's exploration of belonging is made through reference to her own biography describing Kentucky, the place where she was born and brought up, as “her fate”. This, despite the difficulties and trauma she faced growing up in this place as the result of racism. hooks describes how these feelings of ‘fate’ did not subside when she left to study at University, and only fleetingly subsided before flaring up again when she returned to Kentucky for short periods. There is a complex narrative presented here of patriarchal suppression and white-supremacy, the intersections of race, class and gender on a persons' sense of belonging which are not in the scope of this thesis. However, what can be taken from hook's work is “the meaning and vitality of geographical place” to attachments and the *ways* (or forms, to quote Tuan above) of belonging which are uncovered by hook's thinking on the place she called home.

Ways or a culture of belonging for hooks are intimately related to her upbringing and the connection she felt with the environment during this time, however it is still useful to think of ways of belonging during all life stages or in any relationship with place. Therefore the discussion of the nature of local belonging and attachment, in this and the following chapters, does not divide the discussion into one of 'migrant' and 'local' belonging to place. There were differences between different 'types' of residents living in Byker regarding how they experienced and expressed their relationship of course, but there was no single, unified way of belonging as either a 'local' or a 'migrant' and these classifications in themselves offer little analytical value beyond a starting point for discussion and entering the world of the participant. Therefore characteristics of belonging and attachment have been identified that appeared to span different groups of participants. To reiterate the classification of resident participants outlined in Chapter Three; residents were firstly classified as being 'old' or 'new' Byker and then divided into further subgroups depending on generation for 'old' Byker and 'entrance route' to living in the Estate for 'new' Byker residents (see Table 5.1). All names referred to in the following chapters are pseudonyms.

<b>OLD BYKER</b>	<b>NEW BYKER</b>
Original Residents (OR)	Asylum Seeker and Refugee (ASR)
Subsequent Generations (SG)	Creative Professional (CP)
	Housing List (HL)

*Table 5.1 Categorisation of Research Participants*

Often these characteristics presented themselves in different ways, and details of the background of the participants is given where appropriate for the analysis, however the main focus for discussion is building a broad framework from which we can start to make sense of how people express belonging and attachment to the local or otherwise by exploring its characteristics.

Returning to the concept of topophilia, Tuan provides some useful starting points from which to begin to think about the characteristics of local belonging. Following on from the quote above, he suggests the following ways of describing the form and intensity of attachments to place:

“Fleeting visual pleasure, the sensual delight of physical contact, the fondness for place because it is familiar, because it is home and incarnates the past, because it evokes pride of ownership or of creation; joy in things because of animal health and vitality” (ibid)

These descriptions provide some insight into how attachment to the local may be felt and expressed. Pride, familiarity, memories of the past and fleeting visual pleasure would all be apt descriptors of the forms of attachment found in this study. However in moving towards a way of being able to theorise belonging and attachment to the local, the main contribution of this chapter is to draw upon the expressions of local belonging within this research to outline three broad sets of characteristics. These sets of characteristics of local belonging and attachment are; *comfort and confidence*, *commitment and contribution* and *irony and critical distance* and the argument is made here that these can be used in deepening and extending our understanding of attachment to place.

These three ways (hooks, 2009), forms (Tuan, 1974) or characteristics of a culture of belonging to the local that have been identified by this research, form the basis of the discussion of this chapter. Each of these three traits help build an understanding of what belonging and attachment to local communities *looks* like and how people belong in the particular context of this research whilst also providing a framework for contemplating more generally, how people live in cities today. Drawing on the ontological foundations of belonging outlined in Chapter Two, that belonging to place is not fixed and static and therefore there can be no authentic notion of belonging or otherwise (Bell, 1999), the analysis presented in this chapter draws on the dialectic framework of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991a) viewing place and any attachments to it as part of a process of negotiations, with identities being characteristic of both mobility and a sense of place (Easthope, 2009). Therefore, each of these three characteristics of local belonging will be explored in this chapter by reference to both everyday practice and affective dimensions of place noting various ways in which everyday activity in place and felt experiences can contribute to feelings of attachment to place or otherwise. In reality these characteristics often overlapped, informed and at times contradicted

one another, however in an effort to impose some order on the analysis, each characteristic is initially separated and discussed in-turn before a fuller discussion of what these characteristics can begin to tell us about the nature of local belonging and attachment towards the end of the chapter.

## **5.1 Being Comfortable and Feeling Confident**

In discussing expressions of being comfortable in place, there could be a normative assumption made of feelings of contentment, tinged with a sense of resignation to one's place in life, or of 'knowing your place'. This was not found to be how comfort in place was expressed in this research. Having comfort and feeling confident in place tended to be viewed as something of an achievement, a capacity which gave a sense of pride and satisfaction. For many participants there was a sense of accomplishment in feeling able to claim a place in the community, and to feel you have a place.

'Feeling comfortable' is cited in much of the literature on belonging as one of its most normative components. Fenster (2005) used comfort as one of her three 'notions' of belonging in the everyday experience of place in relation to the building up of knowledge in an area to reinforce this feeling and overcoming alienation. Yuval-Davis (2006), drawing on the work of Ignatieff (2001), has conceptualised comfort as feeling 'at home' and feelings of 'safety' and 'security' and Antonsich (2010) referred to the 'feeling of warmth' feeling comfortable in place can engender. Therefore the fact that being comfortable (also expressed as being confident) in place emerged as one of the central characteristics of belonging in Byker, amongst a cross section of different participants, is perhaps not surprising, but illuminating nonetheless.

Being comfortable or confident to be in a place was something commented on by a number of participants from differing backgrounds. It was felt as an affect or atmosphere, as well as practiced through the spatial practices and appropriation of the Estate by residents. Therefore, it is a characteristic of

belonging to place that has a particular local geography of its own which is central to understanding the nature of local belonging and attachments in this research.

A 'comfortable feeling' or 'friendly atmosphere' was often alluded to by participants in relation to their experience of living in Byker. This often went hand in hand with a feeling of being 'settled'. However this was not solely associated with older members of the community or those who had been living there for some time as might be expected. Sam (HL), who had been living in the Estate for the past two years, used the adjective of being and feeling comfortable in Byker repeatedly in his narrative. This, he told me, had taken a few months but despite "*all its problems*" he concluded that Byker was still "*a comfortable place to be*". He had no family connection to the area when he moved from elsewhere in Newcastle, but when asked what he meant by 'comfortable' his answer alluded to traditional tropes of community. He felt there was a family 'feel' to the area but also a feeling of potential which gave him a certain confidence to "*get up and do things*". Feelings of a comfortable atmosphere in Byker in turn made Sam feel comfortable due to a 'settling' effect as well as an encouraging feeling of potential to 'do more'. There was therefore an element of personal security of Self implied in a confidence to be in place something spoken of by bell hooks (2009) as the supporting and affirming properties of place.

However comfort and confidence should not be thought of as static characteristics of belonging. They are dynamic feelings of an individual's relationship to place which are shaped via everyday spatial practices and the affect of particular places. In other words there is a process of becoming comfortable and gaining confidence in place which the discussion now turns to. On-going negotiations for newer Byker residents in establishing a feeling of comfort in place were often evident through the everyday practices in place used to achieve this. For Sarah (CP), there was an importance of becoming familiar with where she lived so that she was able to feel comfortable in her surroundings;

*"I do believe that wherever I live I want to feel that I am aware of what goes on, the street I live on, I say hello to the shop keepers and the café owners and the older people, I think it is good to be friendly, just that simple act of*

*being friendly with people who you see a lot of is a good thing and I think that it does make a difference that there are people who you know and who know you, and that you know and recognize who lives there. Just the small things but the basis for some small feeling of community”* (Sarah, CP)

Sarah had spent 11 years living in Byker, having moved from elsewhere in Newcastle. She now lived in the Netherlands and had been living there for just over a year. During her interview she spoke in intimate detail about her time in Byker; her relationship with her neighbours, the changes she witnessed, and the various community and resident groups she had been involved with. The above quote shows her belief in the virtues of belonging (Tomaney, 2013) in a local community; the need to feel familiar with the people and surroundings, and the role of this in facilitating a feeling of being comfortable in a place. She put great weight in the “*small things*” of saying ‘Hello’ and “*being friendly*”. Of particular emphasis in Sarah’s account is the responsibility placed on the individual to do these “small things”. This is illustrative of much of the literature surrounding living with difference such as the importance of conviviality and meaningful contact (Valentine, 2008, Amin, 2006, Amin, 2012). However the findings from this research serve to highlight the very situated nature of these practices both in terms of where Sarah did them (her locally defined neighbours) and why she did them (her importance placed on being familiar and comfortable with where she lived). This is demonstrative of the ‘gravity’ of social networks and relations that Hall (2013) uses to critique some of the abstract theorising found in some of the living with difference literature. Sarah wanted a sense of attachment to the local wherever she lived and went out of her way to establish a sense of comfort in a place, albeit only by means of small acts of conviviality. The agency demonstrated by Sarah and Sam and required in achieving comfort and confidence in place points to more than the simple passing of time and length of residence in place, as is often described by some community studies, and suggests the need to cultivate these attachments as a way to facilitate confidence in place.

Many of the African community members who had been moved to Byker as part of the Asylum Seeker dispersal programme expressed a similar desire to achieve a sense of comfort and familiarity with the local. This was often expressed in normative terms of settlement, couched in a language of ‘cohesion’ and ‘integration’. Paul (ASR), an African man in his 40s who had been living in Byker for 5 years spoke about his process of being housed in the Estate and of trying to feel ‘at home’ in his new surroundings;

*“Feeling at home means I came here, I found people and I want to feel at home, not to feel like a stranger, I mean I am a foreigner, I just came, but I have to feel that I am part of the community, I have to contribute to the community. That is what I call to feel at home”*

Sophie : And do you feel at home here?

*“Yeah, I feel at home at the moment because I feel I have my place. Sometimes when I am traveling abroad and I am coming home...by the time I have landed in Newcastle I say I am home. Because outside of the country, if I am outside of Newcastle I feel that I am not at home, but when I come back I feel at home” (Paul, ASR)*

There are two important points to draw from this dialogue, the first being a reiteration of the agency involved in achieving comfort in place by ‘being part of the community’ and the ability to ‘contribute to the community’. Paul speaks openly about the need to create a home in the new place in which he and his family found themselves, the steps taken to achieving a sense of confidence in place, and how these were often realised through the practice of community work. Secondly, comfort and “feeling at home” is expressed relationally referring to when he is out of the country, when he is not at home, and returning to a place where he feels some level of comfort from the familiarity he has with Byker and the people around him;

*“You have to feel like this is my place, this is my home, this is my country when I see them (the people who use the community centre) I know they are my brothers and sisters” (Paul, ASR)*

*“You can feel comfortable with your brother or sister, but if it is someone you don’t know you are not comfortable”* (Paul, ASR)

The need to contribute and the want to ‘make a place’ in the local community is illustrative of the agency involved in feeling a sense of necessity; *“you have to feel like this is my place”* of forging attachments to the local. This need to see oneself as having a place in the community is demonstrative of Neil Spicer’s (2008) argument on the close linkages between neighbourhood places and Asylum Seekers’ and Refugees’ experiences of social inclusion and exclusions and the supporting capacity of social capital in residents being able to feel a sense of “security, freedom, opportunity and empowerment” (ibid).

A similar sentiment was also evident amongst domestic migrants as demonstrated by Sam earlier, who having moved from an estate in Newcastle described by himself as *“much worse than Byker”*, found himself also having to make a sense of home and be able to feel comfortable in his new surroundings. Throughout Sam’s account of when he first moved to Byker he talked of how, as a newcomer, he would be approached by the ‘locals’ with suspicion; of ‘curtains twitching’ if a person was seen in the area who wasn’t recognised as ‘being from around here’ and, as a result, being approached directly to be asked his reason for being there. The overtly territorial attitude of the ‘locals’ described in this account was not something I myself experienced having spent a lot of time as ‘an outsider’ in the area. However on further discussions with Sam it became clear that when he spoke of ‘locals’ he was referring to the very particular demographic that he identified himself with; young, white, working-class males.

In order to feel more ‘comfortable’ in Byker, Sam decided to get to know the people within the community whom he identified as being similar to himself in terms of age, gender and also background. This made Sam feel less of an outsider in the community and more safe as a part of it:

*“So having a relationship with them (other males his age on the estate) is good, it’s comforting and it’s good security kind of thing”* (Sam, HL)

Accounts from Sam, Sarah and Paul regarding making yourself familiar and comfortable in a new place highlight not only the agency required in achieving comfort in place, but the role of building social networks to support and facilitate this everyday practice in the community. This demonstrates mostly the importance of bonding capital (Putnam, 2000), as both residents sought out people similar to themselves in order to do this, indicative of a 'people like us' approach described by many community studies. For Paul, 'people like us' were about fellow African migrants and was reflected by his use of the term 'brothers and sisters'. For Sam, it became clear he was talking specifically about young, white working-class men (and occasionally women) like himself.

The building of bonding capital gave participants a competency to lay claim to a feeling of attachment to the local community by asserting the confidence they felt to be within it. This type of bonding capital was found to be an important part of being comfortable in very particular places and parts of the estate especially for many of younger people in the community. There was therefore a very local geography to the spaces in which people felt these feelings of comfort and confidence, especially for example, for the younger people in the community.

During a programme of workshops looking at the incidents of youth binge-drinking in Byker, many young people spoke of there being 'nothing for them'. This 'nothing for them' rhetoric had a number of facets to it. On one dimension it referred to a perceived lack of alternative activities or places to socialise in the Estate itself however a second aspect of this statement referred to a broader concern that there was no 'place' for them in the community and nothing for them in society more widely as this excerpt from a community group report on its young members demonstrates;

"Most (or our members) have underachieved in education and have little or no self-esteem, confidence levels are very low and they have no sense of belonging and feel they are on the outside of society"

However, this sense of there being 'nothing for them' was often in tension with a very strong sense of attachment when it came to their immediate neighbourhood.

During a conversation with one of the local youth workers in the area, who was also a resident, she referred several times to the territorial nature of the young people in Byker, and how those from certain parts of the estate would not go to events held in other parts.

This demonstrates a concern over an exaggerated sense of confidence in place which was geographically quite small and hints at the 'darker-side' of ultra-local attachments and parochialisms which may be more limiting than liberating. This could be taken as evidence of an 'insiderness'; physical, social and autobiographical, which Rowles (1983) developed in his study of place attachment in old age. Rowles identified this as something which could sustain a sense of personal identity and security of Self in old age however this does appear to be the sentiment referred to by the above report from youth workers.

One newer resident, Kate, commented on the potentially constraining nature of territorial attachments and heightened sense of confidence in place for some young people:

*“When you see people’s families growing up with that same lack of opportunity, or lack of...having the choice I guess. And just having the confidence to look beyond”* (Kate, CP)

Both Kate and the discussion of the youth project above, use territorial attachments to make a judgment on how the young people feel about their position in the community and what impact this has on their view of themselves in relation to the wider world. They saw the bounded nature of attachment and confidence in particular roots as limiting their ability to 'leave' Byker (either literally or figuratively) to seek opportunities elsewhere. This was not indicative of all the young people heard from during this research. Many spoke passionately about where they wanted to live when they left home, aspiring to live in other parts of Newcastle as well as abroad, the types of careers they wished to have; all with a recognition of the need to step outside the comfort zone of what was familiar and 'safe' to them in order to make these aspirations a reality. However there was a sense from some of the adults interviewed that this overtly bounded sense of confidence in and

familiarity with the local in such a specific sense was holding some of the young people of Byker back. This indicates that territorial attachments of this nature were not accepted uncritically. The example of some of the younger people in the community demonstrates the fine balance often needed to be struck between having a sense of attachment to place that facilitated self-assurance and a feeling of being comfortable where you lived (as demonstrated by residents Sam and Paul earlier) with an overly-bounded sense of confidence as only being related to the particular territory in which it is practiced and felt (Reynolds, 2013). These examples of the 'territorial' nature of attachment for some young people hint at the potentially exclusionary nature of local belonging if based too reliantly around bonding capital to the exclusion of anything else.

Awareness of the importance of bridging capital (Putnam, 2000) however was also recognized as part of a process of achieving comfort and confidence in place. Having gone through the process of making himself feel more comfortable and familiar in his surroundings, there was an expectation from some participants that other newcomers were responsible for doing the same:

*“Myself with the football team there were a lot of people from the estate that were coloured from a different culture and they got involved. Once they were involved they found it difficult but they stuck at it and they learned from what we were doing and they made an impact then they were part of us. They were getting their friends involved too so just having that one foot in the door made the difference and as soon as you learn to do that you're fine. Confidence. They now feel that they have a confidence to be here and stuff, not like when they first came” (Sam, HL)*

There is a normative assumption here made by Sam about who has the right to welcome and who has the responsibility to adapt and assimilate their practices in order to be able to feel comfortable in a new place. However, in the context of the rest of Sam's interview this may be more indicative of a lack of an alternative way at his disposal of discussing these issues than an assumed sense of superiority. It can certainly be regarded as a long way off an exclusionary sense of 'local ownership' that sees tight boundaries around who can and who cannot belong to

the local (Young, 1990, cited by Harvey, 1996). However there was an assumption here of the need to build bridging capital between different community members and that the onus was on the newcomers to make the first move.

This brings us to consider the everyday practice of building bridging social capital in communities as a way of forging a sense of confidence to be in place and expressing an attachment to it. One way this was practiced in Byker was via the Community Safety group, set up by the African Community Advice Centre North East (ACANE) in conjunction with the local police. Many of the African community members had spoken in their interviews about the difference in civilian relationship with the police in the UK, pointing to how it would not have been considered appropriate or expected to report certain crimes to the authorities in Africa because of fear of corruption or reprisal. Therefore it had taken many of the African community in Byker some time to accept that reporting a crime to the police and to expect it to be dealt with effectively was appropriate. This perception was also hampered by some incidents of negative experiences some had already experienced in dealing with the authorities in the UK. The gap in feeling a sense of belonging to a community created by fear of crime and lack of support from authorities was not restricted to the African population. One Victim Support Officer told me how a Farsi man she was supporting had been repeatedly victimized by his neighbours, yet was reluctant to report the incidents because, in his words, he was *“just a visitor”*. In response to feelings such as this and in an effort to address misconceptions of the police, the Community Safety Group was set up, holding regular meetings with Police and Community Support Officers to discuss some of the difficulties people were facing and to provide a safe space to report crimes to the police. As a result many participants reported their perceptions of the police started to change, leading to an enhanced sense of confidence for them within the community;

*“Because it was very difficult for me to contact the police or for them to take me seriously but when they are there (at the meetings) you can talk to them face to face and its different than being on the phone, so it has made it a lot easier for me”* (Elizabeth, ASR)

This demonstrates an emphasis on the role of active engagement in a community in becoming confident and comfortable in a place. For the Farsi man mentioned above, the bridging capital offered by the Safety Group was about recognising the potential and legitimacy of his belonging to the community, allowing him to view himself as having a status as more than “*just a visitor*” and as a result, realising the capacity and right to lay claim to feelings of security and comfort where he lived. Therefore, for many of the ethnic minority groups, the building of bridging capital through projects such as this were a key part of the process of forging an attachment to the local. This was both in the contribution they were able to make to it, as well as the supporting effect it had on giving them the confidence to feel they had a place in the community; a place which, amongst other things, gave them the right and the confidence to report crimes against them.

However there was not always a linear relationship in having confidence in a place and outwardly expressing a sense of local belonging as the following quotes demonstrate;

*“Hmm...I don't feel very attached here, I have moved quite a lot, so maybe that is the reason why. I have been in this country for about 9 years but have lived in different places. But I still feel confident in Byker”* (Matthew, HL)

*“I have been around in that many different places I don't know what is home. I try my best where I am living to make that home; to make a house a home so to speak”* (Wendy, ASR)

Interpreting these types of accounts of ‘non-belonging’ is difficult as these residents appear to accept and reject local belonging at the same time. For both residents it was difficult to make any overall claim to belonging in Byker as they experienced moving between places too often in their opinion to claim belonging anywhere. This would appear to confirm thinking within traditional community studies, that length of residence in a place is required for establishing a sense of belonging, and the fragmented experience of place caused by repeatedly moving, living with an extended sense of temporality, undermines the capacity for forging local attachments.

However there are elements of attachment within their narratives of feeling confident to be in a place such as desiring to, and working towards, 'making a house a home'. Therefore the conclusion from these types of statement may be that people's understanding of local belonging differed according to their past experiences as suggested by Rowles (1983) as well as the expectations of what they actually thought belonging to the local was supposed to be. Achieving confidence in a place is therefore not an end point in 'becoming' attached to a place, but part of a broader and longer process.

So far, this section of the chapter has focused on the agency involved in actively carving out a 'place' for oneself in the community through the practices and affects of everyday life which helped instill a sense of comfort and confidence in place. Normative assumptions of a resignation towards place were acknowledged in the introduction. However, there were more pragmatic views of local attachment expressed as a 'just because' sense of belonging from some participants. 'Just being' has been explored as a component of working-class habitus by Chris Allen (2008) in his study of resident response to Housing Market Pathfinder redevelopment in Liverpool. In the study he found a pragmatism in neighbourhood attachment based on form of 'being' that is formed by being close to economic necessity. He argued the economy of the working-class housing consumption is a practical one:

"that is to say, working class people, who are faced with an economic world that urgently demands to be dealt with on a very practical day-today level ('you just try to get by from day to day. I can't see beyond tomorrow'), relate to houses in a practical and matter of fact way and are therefore basically unable to perceive houses as anything other than a dwelling space, that is, a place to live" (2008:7)

This type of sentiment was often heard from 'old' Byker residents who when talking about a sense of attachment to the local, would often appear quite un-reflexive in their responses, citing 'just being born here' or 'this is just where I am from' as indicating a sense of reasons for local attachment. This was often in the face of quite strong dissatisfaction with the area, as shown by Sally, who after recounting

the many problems she had encountered with anti-social behaviour in the area was adamant she did not want to move:

“Well it’s my home; it’s my nest you know? I couldn’t imagine not living here. My hubby says he’s not leaving until he goes out in his box, and if he doesn’t behave himself it could be sooner than he thinks!” (Sally, HL)

Sally took comfort in having her ‘nest’, which gave her a sense of shelter and calm from the negative experiences she had from the wider community and this was strong enough for her to not consider moving away. There was evidence in Byker pointing to people ‘just getting on’ with things and of attachments being made based on having always lived there, or though having little choice in living there. The ‘just being’ orientation towards the world described by Allen captures a kind of pragmatism in local belonging and attachments of ‘making the best of things’. However as will be discussed later in the chapter, in relation to the ironic character of local belonging, this pragmatism did not always equal un-reflexivity and as the discussion of the agency involved in forging attachments shows, neither was it passive.

‘Just being’ however was not always expressed in a comfort of ‘knowing your place’; sometimes it was out of necessity of *needing* to know you had a place. This was seen to be the case for some migrants. Daniel, in describing the process of his settlement in Byker, having been moved there by the Asylum Seeker Dispersal Programme, talked about how once he had become familiar with the area, he felt comfortable enough to feel settled and call it home;

*“I just feel like I know everybody and everybody knows me, so I just decided. This is home”* (Daniel, ASR)

With so much emotion invested in the word ‘home’ and having a sense of home, the day-to-day pragmatism of living in a place can sometimes be forgotten. For some, the nature of local attachments and belonging can be quite a straightforward one, yet one which is needed as a necessity and desired to build a sense of home in a foreign place.

Despite providing the first of the unifying characteristics of local attachment to be discussed in this chapter, comfort and confidence in a place were experienced differently by different participants and reasons for this, depending on habitus and circumstance, will be discussed in Chapter Six. However what was evident throughout, and a point of commonality, was the agency involved on the part of residents to make themselves feel a sense of comfort and confidence as part of a process of becoming. This requires firstly, a want to be comfortable and secondly, to take steps to achieve this through practices of everyday life in place which helped build bonding and bridging capital (Putnam, 2000). This reminds us of the caution from Bell that one does not simply or ontologically 'belong' to the world or to any group within it (1999) and that belonging is the "achievement at several levels of abstraction" (Probyn, 1996:3). Local belonging has been shown here to be part of a process of becoming comfortable and confident in place. There was an achievement on the part of the agency involved in forging these attachments and the tangible results they produced but this should not be confused with seeing comfort in place as being the 'end point' in a process of belonging, for many it was a set of achievements, as well as an end in itself.

## **5.2 Commitment, Care and Contribution to Place**

Throughout the above discussion of the importance of feeling comfortable in place in order to be able to assert an attachment to it, there is the recurring idea of 'making yourself feel at home', of actively working to establish a sense of "having a place" in the community by demonstrating your commitment and contribution to it. This idea therefore warrants further investigation and brings us to the second of the three sets of characteristics of local belonging and attachment; contribution and commitment to place.

The majority of participants demonstrated some form of commitment to place, or wanting to make a contribution to it, as a way of forging and maintaining a sense of belonging. The shape of these commitments varied, as did their intensity and motivation; however what they did show was the grounded nature of local

belonging and attachment in the materiality of place and the everyday. Capacity to participate in and actively shape the environment has been identified as important by a range of studies to facilitate belonging (Fenster, 2005). The centrality of commitment to an active process of forging attachments to place is noted by Fenster in her study of belonging in London and Jerusalem;

“Commitment is the driver, the motivation for people to act, to change or maintain elements and dimensions in their environment that make them feel comfortable and feel they belong. To feel committed to act is to feel that you care about your environment” (2005:187-188)

Here, Fenster establishes a link between commitments to place, and facilitating a feeling of comfort in it, as a central characteristic of belonging. This connection is borne out by this research, particularly in identifying practices of care for both people and place in the local.

Away from a romanticised image of ‘community spirit’, place mattered and it mattered enough to participants to have some sense of commitment to it, whether this meant a fleeting acquaintance, or life-long relationship. A commitment to the local is seen, by much of the literature surrounding diverse communities, to be something that can offer possibility for social inclusion and cohesion as well as facilitating civic engagement (Lewicka, 2005) and has been particularly influential in UK policy surrounding social inclusion (Forrest and Kearns, 2001) and most recently localism. However at the same time it is seen as something elusive and problematic in a globalised city characterised by mobility and fluidity. Richard Florida (2005) in particular has been influential in portraying an image of a creative city being made up of cultural professionals who prefer weak social ties to strong community and family bonds and who prioritise their freedom, individuality and the ‘smorgasbord’ of cultural possibilities that living in a creative city can offer them. This research questions these assumptions by arguing that social and geographical mobility and the cultural capital associated with this do not necessarily translate into lack of commitment, or lack of desire to contribute to place. Many residents in Byker did demonstrate a commitment to where they lived and for some it offered a form of social inclusion in fostering attachments to place.

Therefore a more nuanced appreciation of these commitments is helpful in forming an understanding of the nature of belonging and attachment to the local.

Within this research a more individualised sense of commitment and practices of care of place were identified, although not without potential for social inclusion. A sense of commitment was found to be as much for the individual resident as for other people, and in fact was rarely talked about in terms of an expectation from others, being more commonly seen as something you would do for yourself as part of a settling in and maintaining process. In this section of the chapter, the empirical work of the thesis is drawn upon in exploring the various practices and affects of everyday life in the local which expressed the characteristic of care and commitment in belonging and attachment to place.

Commitment to a place sometimes appeared to come from a belief that you should “*start where you live*” (Sam, HL). This idea has been widely theorized in geography as well as planning and development. It is reminiscent of an ethic of the local as described by Gibson-Graham (2003) and has also been discussed in terms of ‘scaling up’ small acts of conviviality in relation to social cohesion. The politics of belonging in the UK, based on social and community integration since the early 2000s has had a continual emphasis on civic engagement, and has most recently manifested itself within localism debate, particularly around the ‘Big Society’ guise of the current coalition government. However, as was discussed in Chapter Two, much of the literature surrounding living in diverse communities and their possibilities for social inclusion, discusses these issues without a clear conceptualisation of the role of place, or the local more specifically. Empirical findings from this research seek to address this gap with an elaboration on how participants were shown to be practicing care towards others, but also towards place itself and how this had a role in facilitating local belonging.

### **5.2.1 *Love thy neighbour***

“*I love my neighbour as I love myself*” was the response from one recent migrant to the estate in answering the question of what their relationship was with those living in immediate proximity to them. The religious sentiment was perhaps

overstated in this statement and in reality served to avoid the fact that, as was revealed later in the interview, this particular Asian resident had experienced racism and hostility from his neighbour. This research in no way seeks to paint a rose-tinted picture of neighbourly relations in Byker but what this research found was that the experience of living in Byker was neither “a test of endurance” (Amin, 2006:1016) nor a rose-bed of cohesion. For most, it varied between the two.

For some participants, the ethic of care of the local was very much a political one and reflected the influence of Socialist politics in the area since the 1960’s (Zutshi, 1978). There was much rejection, particularly amongst the older residents, of the individualization of modern society:

*“I just can’t get on with this attitude of ‘I’m alright Jack screw you’, it just doesn’t seem right to me”* (Henry, OR)

Although the idea of there being a ‘community spirit’ as it is normatively understood in Byker, was often mocked by the same participants:

*“I’ll tell you a cock-and-bull story shall I? There is a wonderful community spirit here and everyone looks after each other. It’s just not true.”* (Henry, OR)

Despite this, there remained strong signs of a commitment to the local, demonstrated by an ethic of care, which echoed a community spirit of sorts. In her analysis of belonging in Australia, Kathleen Mee (2009) identified care as being a “crucial practice that enhanced or enabled belonging” (pp.842) for public housing tenants. In this analysis Mee takes Conradson’s definition of care as;

*“The protracted interest of one person in the well-being of another and the articulation of that interest (or affective stance) in practical ways. Care may be thus presented in everyday encounters between individuals who are attentive to each other’s situation, who perhaps provide practical assistance or who simply make the time to listen to what other has to say”* (2003:508 cited by Mee)

This very much conjures up images seen in the traditional community studies literature from *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957) and *Coal is Our Life* (1956). However there was evidence of these types of practices of care continuing in Byker and forming an important part of having some sense of commitment to the local:

*“My neighbour Anna, well we are friends on Facebook but I only really know her from here (the corridor they live on in the Wall) but I know she loves chocolate and the other night she put a status on Facebook saying how she was dying for some chocolate but the shop had closed, so I went and put a bar of Galaxy through her door for her. I didn’t knock or anything, I wouldn’t want to impose, but it’s nice being able to do things like that”* (Craig, CP)

*“You’re not frightened to knock and say ‘have you got a bit sugar or milk?’, coz we knew them, it’s like in the olden times”* (Jenny, SG)

The above examples of a ‘practice of care’ sometimes took the form of the traditional ‘cup of sugar’ example as referred to by Jenny and demonstrated by Craig in its modern iteration. The ontological basis of a sense of belonging that emphasises the ‘be’ part, as instructed by Probyn (1996) means that we can come to view many of the practices of care in everyday life in a local community as crucial experiences of belonging. They both demonstrate examples of what could be considered as ‘neighbourly behaviour’ (Burrell, 2012) practiced as a way of forging attachments to place as Yuval-Davis points out:

“specific repetitive practices relating to social and cultural spaces, which link individual and collective behaviour, are crucial for the construction and reproduction of identity narratives and constructions of attachment” (2006: 203 cited by Mee, 2009).

There was acknowledgement of many different ‘communities’ within Byker, yet at the same time there was a sense of shared territory which connected the residents in some way, providing them a setting for the sharing of stories and experience. This is very different from the understanding of place within much of the literature surrounding diverse communities. Gibson-Graham (2003) cites

Lingis (1994) in describing the local as “not needing to be a parochial enclave (but) a crossroads where those who have nothing in common (all of us) meet to construct community”. This is useful in helping to think about how the shared territory of the local provides the setting for ‘practices of care’ in building a relational understanding of community spirit but which is shaped by the immediate local environment. In reflecting on Conradson’s definition of care being the practice of someone “simply making the time to listen to what other has to say” (2003 cited in Mee) as demonstrated by these participants:

*“Community spirit I think, or a sense of belonging happens when you share experiences and stories with others, so people will have a sense of belonging to the people have shared their stories and who they have shared stories with. So Byker in that way will have a lot of meaning for them”*  
(Francesca, CP)

*“You just learn by talking to people don’t you, you hear one story from someone and you tell them something else, that’s how you get to know a place isn’t it?”* (Sam, HL)

Both Sam and Francesca commented on the importance of the telling and sharing of stories in building a relationship to place both past and present.

### **5.2.2 Stewardship of place**

These ‘small acts’ of care for place and the people in it can start to be understood as part of the process of attachment making for individuals and part of a wider ethos of commitment to place. As well as an ‘ethic of care’ in the practices of ‘neighbourly behaviour’, care of *place* also formed a significant part of how participants demonstrated a commitment to Byker and a ‘care of place’:

*“I was already into photography, but after living in Byker and hearing about Sirkka (Liisa Konttinen) and it was very inspiring. I don’t know much about the architecture development but I was more interested in the people and photographing them so that there was a document of the people living there”*  
(Francesca, CP)

Here, Francesca spoke of fostering an attachment to the history of place through the practice of its preservation in photographic archives. Her photography went on to become part of a much wider community project based around collecting stories of the area and demonstrate the practice of documenting and archiving as an important practice of belonging for this resident.

Therefore an idea of care of the local emerged that was premised on the notion of a shared territory and the ability to be a part of that. The governance of a shared sense of territory in the shape of the newly operational Byker Community Trust (BCT) was referred to here in relation to an ethic of care and influential on shaping attitudes and towards this:

*“to be owned...cared for and developed by the tenants, it’s not just about having ownership of it, it is about caring about it and developing it and making sure it is sustainable for the long term” (Gordon, OR)*

This is perhaps best understood by a sense of stewardship of the local, as it implies a commitment that this not all encompassing and possessive, but fluid and responsive to the needs and circumstance of each individual. Here, is it is helpful to turn to bell hooks’ (2009) discussion of having a fidelity to place. In discussing her desire to return to the place of her childhood, Kentucky, hooks speaks of returning with “a vital sense of covenant and commitment” (2009:65). Here, she expresses a sense of belonging to a place “which needed me and my resources” (ibid). Being able to enact stewardship, to care for and contribute to the local was a supporting agent in the residents own sense of identity. This also reflects Lefebvre’s conception of dwelling, as not about processing something, but marking it and making it your own (1970 cited in Stanek, 2011). A sense of themselves was able to flourish for some participants by acting on attachments they had to where they lived, and how they lived there. Many participants referred to the Byker Community Garden as an example of a successful community-led initiative which had involved young people in particular. It was commented on that in relation to young people drinking in public spaces, although this behaviour continued in the garden, the young people involved in the project still maintained it well, looked after it and made sure their peers did also. Graham, who had been involved with youth

work in the community since he moved to the Estate from overseas 5 years ago, spoke of how important a sense of stewardship was to the young people in the community in particular;

*“Well it’s a natural thing I suppose where everybody wants to be identified, so if it becomes a thing for everybody then it means there is no antagonism, no damage in terms of vandalism, graffiti and all that stuff. If it is owned by somebody they feel then it is ours so there is no need to destroy it because it belongs to us, so the sense of identity is important so you can identify yourself as an element of something”* (Graham, HL)

Here, Graham weaves together the reciprocal relationship between people and place; that having a sense of stewardship and care for something can be fed back into a sense of your own place in the world and your own attachments to it.

However this notion of care and commitment to place was fluid itself. It was not seen as something stagnantly rooted to one place at the exclusion of all others, but became a moral imperative to look after your own ‘plot’ as a grounding point for your own sense of place and identity:

*“If I had the opportunity truthfully to have moved up to Northumberland and stuff of course I would, don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. If I won the lottery tomorrow I would be away, truthfully. It doesn’t mean I don’t care about the area, I love it, but people have to understand we are stuck here, trapped in that although I still have aspirations for myself and for my daughters”* (Henry, OR)

In a similar fashion, Craig, who had only just moved away from the Estate after 4 years living there told me:

*“I think it’s a wonderful place, I really do, and I’ll always defend it, but for now, I just want to live somewhere normal!”* (Craig, CP)

These quotes from Craig and Henry demonstrate the fluidity of local attachments and that the commitments to place they produce do not have to be blinkered and overly introspective. For Craig in particular the relationship between local

attachments and actually feeling a sense of local belonging were complicated by the fact that he felt great attachment to the place and of loyalty (*I'll always defend it*) but stopped short of expressing a sense of belonging to the place with the insinuation that he didn't consider the people he had lived amongst "*normal*" and therefore couldn't identify himself with the place.

Geographical imagination amongst the participants was therefore not rooted to Byker. There were aspirations to move away, yet for Henry, being 'stuck' (as he saw it) for the time being in the community, was therefore resolved to make the best of it he could. This shows a type of working-class habitus of 'just being' as described by Chris Allen (2008) as pragmatic yet at the same time can be emotionally charged with the potential of what care, commitment and contribution to place can mean in being able to establish a sense of your own place in the world, starting with where you live.

Equally however, new migrants to the Estate with more choice in living there also expressed a sense of social responsibility toward their new environment. As discussed above this was often articulated as a way of "making a place" for oneself or making oneself more comfortable and familiar with the area. Moreover it was expressed as a sense of feeling compelled to do something;

*"I knew I wanted to do something for myself but I wasn't sure what...I have always had a social conscience since I was in my teens, I gained it from my history teacher when I was doing my A-levels and it has just sort of stuck with me that there should be a right and a wrong. I think it's about showing an interest in people, particularly the elderly people, it's not something we do very well in this county I don't think"* (Louisa, CP)

Particularly, within this social group of 'Creative Professionals' that Louisa was a part of, the need to contribute to place, to almost prove some form of commitment to the local, speaks of a very particular way of managing and expressing attachments. Greg Madison (2009) in his study of existential migration developed a theory around the need in some such individuals to fight social injustice and promote freedom as a way of preserving their own threatened freedom and

individuality. He defined existential migrants as those who did not want to belong and actively sought to free themselves from environments where they felt they had little or no sense of attachment, through frequent travel and regularly moving place of residence to the 'new' and unfamiliar. Where this was not possible, he described the fight for the freedom of others, as a way of managing almost an anxiety over feeling rooted or attached to place. Whilst I do not feel the participants in Byker reflected this type of existential search for 'belonging in not belonging', there are elements of Madison's concept that help understand the propensity to contribute to place amongst this group of participants as part of a managed sense of their own identity in relation to place. In other words, these participants often wanted some sense of attachment to the local, but as part of a middle-class habitus, which prioritises mobility and global reflexivity (Ley, 1994) they are reluctant to express it in such straightforward terms. Therefore their desire to 'do something' in the local allows them to form a sense of attachment and belonging, without having to fully internalize and acknowledge it.

The stories of some of the residents in Byker, of what it means to them to be able to forge a commitment to place and establish these local attachments, serve as a sobering reminder of how economic and social privilege can too easily overstate the value of fluidity and mobility. Nowhere was this demonstrated more so than by Mark, who came to Byker as a political refugee from Africa and had been living in the Estate for seven years. He took the contribution he was able to make to the local community very seriously. This was not only for the benefit of the young people he worked with, but also for his own sense of place in Byker and own process of settling in the UK

*"You do feel you have a sense of identity living in Byker, when things happen in Byker...my voice, I am free enough now to pick myself up and speak out and that is really important in a small community like this because you end up knowing everybody"* (Mark, ASR)

For Mark, the very opportunity of being able to make a contribution to the place he lived, using his 'voice' and being able to pick himself up and speak out, gave him a sense of attachment and belonging to place. This speaks to a sense of respect for

Self as well as capability that Gibson-Graham (2003) sees as essential to an ethic of the local. It also reminds us of Craig Calhoun's (2003) observation that "the idea of escaping particular solidarities into greater universalities may look very different for elites and for those with fewer resources" (pp.537)

As discussed in Chapter Two, a cosmopolitan ethic is one which prioritises looking outward, and being a 'citizen of the world'; interested in exploring and knowing other cultures and taking advantaged of increased geographical mobility. However, as this section of the thesis has shown, this does not need to translate into a lack of commitment to local ties, nor does a lifetime in a place or a feeling of being "stuck" in it, mean loyalties become blinkered and tightly bounded to place. Therefore not only does a binary between 'local' and 'migrant' attachment to place become blurred but so too are individual commitments and attachments to place.

A helpful way to think about these attachments, which are sometimes brought to the surface and other-times lie dormant, is David Harvey's (1996) understanding of place as a set of "conditional permanences". Drawing on Whitehead, Harvey explains this as how "such permanence's come to occupy a piece of space in an exclusive way (for a time) and thereby define a place-their place- (for a time)" (Harvey, 1996: 261 drawing on Whitehead, 1920). This very much reflects commitment to place as a characteristic of belonging of many of the participants in this study, those who could be considered both 'local' and 'migrant'. They felt commitment to place "for a time", or at a particular time, and this came to define (for a time) their relationship to the local but this could not always be thought of as a permanence. Extending this analysis to the nature of local belonging itself, Harvey again is helpful in providing a way of thinking about the reflexive nature of such sentiments toward place and the active process of negotiation and management that mobilises them. He argues that these "permanence's – no matter how solid they may seem are always subject to time as "perpetual perishing". They are contingent on the processes that create, sustain and dissolve yet based in everyday practices in place.

In summary, being able to make a contribution, demonstrate care and have a sense of commitment to the local are not relics of a romanticised and parochial

sense of community. These are visible elements of the practices and affects belonging in contemporary urban communities and are more helpfully thought of as processes of conditional permanences, of forging attachments which are fluid and relational, yet always based in the materiality of place. With that said, the notion of a 'community spirit', which these elements lend themselves to, was not accepted uncritically and it is this level of criticism and awareness which the chapter now turns to, in exploring the third characteristic of belonging identified by this research.

### **5.3 Irony and Critical Distance**

Despite evidence of feelings of comfort and confidence in place premised on being able to make a contribution and express a sense of commitment to the local, it is important that the territoriality of belonging does not become overstated. To do so, as MacLeod and Jones (2007) state, would be to fall foul of a caricature reading of this approach to place. Within territorial belonging to place, there were also relational elements premised on relationships to other people, other places and other periods in history as well as an ability to exercise critical reflection and set outside of the immediate situation. The third set of characteristic of belonging to the local, found by this research, was that of irony and a critical distance to place which functioned to balance the territorial dimensions to local attachments and situate them in an awareness of 'elsewhere'.

In addressing the irony in and towards local attachments, the chapter picks up an earlier point regarding the reflexive nature of local belonging and the need to avoid assumptions, that a pragmatic orientation to the world as demonstrated by a sense of 'just being' (Allen, 2008), eclipses everything but immediate local. On the contrary, there was evidence in Byker of Greg Noble's notion of belonging as being "deeply ironic and self-aware of its own limitations" (2011:160) which, Noble argues, is perhaps not surprising in a postmodern age that is characterised by an awareness of "the collision of competing meanings" (ibid). It should also be recognised that irony could be seen as forming part of a defensive strategy for dealing with talking about personal or emotive issues of attachment; a mediating

strategy for how far an individual was willing (or able) to recognise and express such attachments. This irony allows reflection on the local and a critical self-awareness which was often a point of overlap for how many of the migrants and newcomers, as well as the 'old' Byker locals viewed place.

### **5.3.1 Nostalgia and 'the good old days'**

One of the most common emotions to be expressed during interviews and ethnographic experience amongst older participants in Byker was that of nostalgia. The deliberate treatment of nostalgia within a section addressing irony as a characteristic of local belonging takes a conscious step towards a more considered analysis of the term. Building on arguments from Alistair Bonnett (2013) regarding the need to make a more serious inclusion of the progressive potential of nostalgia, the discussion in this chapter seeks to contribute to this by moving discussion of nostalgia on to attend to the concepts mobility and forward looking potential (Bonnett and Alexander 2013).

Despite being originally conceptualised as longing for a lost sense of home, nostalgia was felt most keenly by those residents whom had never actually moved far from the place they were born. The sense of displacement however was palpable. One does not have to look far to find nostalgia in many traditional working-class communities up and down the UK. Community archives of local libraries, 'Bygone era' publications of photographs and stories, and a continual lament of the 'the lack of community' in the popular press and wider public arena, all suggest an element of collective 'yearning for yesterday' (Davis, 1979). In Byker this was heightened and physically represented by the memory of the redevelopment in the 1970's. For many members of the community that had lived in Byker before this, in 'old Byker', this represented a "*destruction of the community*" and the end of a more "*friendly*" and sociable way of life, where everyone knew everyone and you could leave your front door open. This type of nostalgia can be too often dismissed as romanticized and conservative, longing for something that was never there in the first place (Bonnett and Alexander, 2013). Dismissal in this manner is not helpful to understanding local attachments. What is helpful is a critical and inquiring look into why people continue to hold onto these sentiments

and how this wealth and intensity of feeling can be better harnessed to understand people's relationship with place. Therefore a more nuanced look at what this sense of nostalgia means in terms of belonging and attachment to the local is required.

Does a longing for something, which in the case of Byker has physically ceased to exist, stunt contemporary local attachments? Or make them exclusive to those who can remember, drawing a line excluding those who cannot? This research has found this not to be the case. Nostalgia and memory was a much more active and dynamic process that contained an awareness of irony and a capacity for accepting difference, change and progress. Therefore, there are suggestions of the potential of inclusivity and empowerment, within nostalgia, that makes it accessible to more than those who have access to this collective memory and who 'were there'. For example, the wealth of knowledge, stories, photographs and other memories some of the 'old Byker' community members possessed often saw them placed in a position of very high esteem within the rest of the community. Older members of the community often appeared to take great enjoyment in being able to explain to people like myself and others interested in the history of the area, about how Byker had changed physically since the 1970s redevelopment. This practice of telling and retelling stories emerged as a central way members of this section of the community practiced and maintained their sense of belonging in the area, despite obvious 'displacement' that was sometimes expressed in no longer recognising the place around them. However this sense of nostalgia was rarely left as a surface level expression of attachment. It was more reflective and ironic than this:

*"People will tell you you could leave your doors open in those days, of course you could. There was nothing to nick!" (Bob, OR)*

During some volunteer work I was involved with at the local community centre, a group of women, all over 70 years old were discussing, partly for my benefit, 'the good old days'. Based on these particular narratives, the good old days seemed to entail scraping ice off the inside of your windows in the winter, sharing an outside toilet with at least one other family; and at 5 years old finding comfort in a sympathetic school teacher who pointed out to jeering classmates that the reason

you had odd shoes on was because you 'had no mother at home' to dress you. These and other stories ranging from the comical to the heart-breaking, were rounded off by the ringleader of the group turning to me, and declaring ironically "*ee, but they were the good old days!*"

There are several points worth drawing from this example. The first is the high level of critical reflection and ironic sense of awareness in this story. This allows the teller to claim an attachment to place, whilst at the same time holding it at 'arms-length', maintaining a critical distance from it which acknowledges the realities of hardship and deprivation, but holds onto the personal meaning and the importance of this in articulating a sense of Self. Secondly, the story acknowledges both the mobility of nostalgia, as discussed by Bonnett and Alexander (2013), as well as its situated nature in the materiality of everyday life in the past, therefore highlighting the importance of the everyday lived experience. This demonstrates an attachment that, although longing for another time, is inextricably linked to place and the physical environment of Byker.

### **5.3.2 *Community? what Community?***

Therefore, attachments to a sense of a 'bygone Byker' can be understood as being laced with irony and critical awareness. However the characteristic of irony can also be used to interpret a sense of longing for contemporary Byker. As was seen earlier in the mocking of the idea of a 'community spirit', there was a uniting distrust of the word 'community' amongst many residents. There was also a sense that the word 'community' had become an overused, and over politicised phrase within policy discourse, as both an explanation for some of the problems of a community such as Byker but also held up as the source of its salvation. Reasons for this scepticism and critical distance from discussions of 'community' were varied and will be discussed more in Chapter Six.

These common contemporary examples of irony in local belonging were demonstrated by the acceptance of failings or shortcomings of the area, of problems within it which may in some instances pose a threat to local attachments and undermine their intensity.

*“I don’t know why I feel like that, (referring to a sense of belonging) I just do, I mean there are a million of places better than here, I wouldn’t move back, I would never move back. But I have an attachment to it nonetheless.”* (Jack, SG)

This illustrates further the findings from Chris Allen’s (2008) study where residents of a community earmarked for regeneration would use a pragmatic orientation of “well this is just my home” to negate the very real and present problems with the area.

There was also a need, evident in some of the domestic migrant’s interview accounts to maintain a distance between themselves and the locals, as they saw them, which was handled with a sense of irony. This was done by making fun of themselves where they realised it wouldn’t have been appropriate to make fun of ‘other’ people. An example of this is provided by Lousia whilst talking about what she did not like about living in Byker;

*“The spitting! Have you seen Byker Metro station? It is disgusting! Never put your bag down there the spitting is terrible. I don’t know why they do it, maybe it’s a male nervous thing or a territorial thing or something, but either way it doesn’t sit well with my middle-class sensibilities does it?!”* (Louisa, CP)

Louisa spoke this last statement, about middle-class sensibilities in a mock well-spoken accent, full of irony and was one of the only times a class difference was specifically mentioned by residents as something which made them feel more, or less part of the community. Louisa indicates that there was something holding her apart from the rest of the community as she saw it, but she also recognised the subjectivity of this and how it maybe said more about her than those she was describing. Instead, she deals with this sense of disconnect with irony and humour which therefore renders the gap between her “*middle-class sensibilities*” and the “*male nervous...territorial thing*” manageable.

To summarise, the ability to claim a sense of local belonging, whilst at the same time being able to stand back and evaluate these attachments based on

experience of an area, highlight the ironic nature of belonging discussed by Noble (2011). Understanding the ironic nature of local belonging begins to move away from a conception of a 'long internalised' sense of place (Massey, 1991), which relational views are mistrustful of. Being able to stand outside of this, reflect on the negative as well as positive elements of a place and form an attachment which takes these into account, troubles this viewpoint. Recognising irony and the self-awareness of local belonging allows for a relational dimension of place attachment, as communities are compared and contrasted with others; what they could be and what they once were, but one which is always grounded in an everyday understanding of the lived experience of place. It allows for the adventure of the cosmos and the security of the hearth (Tuan, 2001) to be thought of together as complementary facets of local belonging. As such it highlights the dynamic agency involved in creating and maintaining attachment to the local and the way these can be altered and changed.

#### **5.4 Territory *in* Relational Constructions of Place and Belonging**

Based on the above analysis of the characteristics of belonging identified in this research, the chapter now turns to what this can tell us about the nature of place and attachments to place and how people make sense of and negotiate a sense of belonging. As discussed in Chapter Two, this thesis takes a complimentary view of place construction, as advocated by Pike (2007) and in this following section the chapter explores the various relational and territorial elements of expressions of local belonging. In doing so this brings the thesis closer to an understanding of whether the nature of local belonging and attachment can be understood as something parochially bounded to place, or cosmopolitanism and free from territorial anchoring. This thesis in fact found evidence of neither. What there was however was evidence of a highly localised belonging and attachment to place that was expressed in Byker through everyday social and spatial practices and felt experiences in different spaces of the Estate.

Belonging was rarely expressed in relation to the whole of the Estate. What

was more common was attachment to particular streets, blocks or landings, as well as specific landmarks and public or semi-public spaces around the community. There was a relational element to this territoriality however expressed through comparisons with other places and other parts of the Estate. Therefore this section of the chapter demonstrates the working out of the relational and territorial production of space and the attachments they produced as a result.

Analysis of the ways in which participants drew on other places to express local attachments calls for attention to how far their 'geographical imaginary' (Appadurai, 1993 cited in Savage *et al.*, 2005) stretched. Mostly, this extended only so far as the rest of the city of Newcastle. There were exceptions (to be discussed later) but the most often cited places tended to be other neighbourhoods in the city that respondents had either lived in or had heard of.

Other neighbourhoods in Newcastle were compared to Byker either favourably or unfavourably. For example disparaging remarks were made towards the West End of Newcastle; an area which has suffered similar effects of deindustrialisation but has been subject to noticeably more substantial regeneration in terms of its housing stock (see Cameron, 2006). This tended to go hand in hand with the 'othering' of people, as 'people from the West End' were often characterized as "*alcoholics*", "*druggies*" and "*criminals*" who were often cited by older members of the community for 'bringing the area down'. Interestingly, those residents who had no pre-existing connection to the local area and who had moved in since the redevelopment tended to speak more warmly of the atmosphere in Byker as being relatively friendly, neighbourly and welcoming. Again this was usually expressed in comparison to previous places they had lived and was often seen as having as much to do with the architecture and design of the Estate as the other people living there;

*"I lived in one of the tower blocks in 10 for years, never met my neighbours, here you have to walk past each other's front door so you are all on top of each other and you get talking. It makes it more of a friendly place to live"*  
(Steph,HL)

*“As soon as I moved in I had people knocking on my door coming to see how I was and if I was alright, it’s a bit nosy really but I quite liked it”*  
(Francesca, CP)

Comparisons here tended to hinge on a lack of community and ‘friendly’ or ‘neighbourly’ atmosphere experienced in areas such as Jesmond; *“I never knew any of my neighbours when I lived in Jesmond, and here I know everyone around me”* (Sarah, CP). For many residents, particularly those such as Louisa with more social mobility, the perceived community spirit and evidence of neighbourly behaviour they found in Byker was one of the main reasons they stayed, giving them a sense that they were part of something. This often translated into a different behaviour on the part of the resident when living in Byker; *“I now get involved in things where as I would have never joined a group like Byker Lives (community archive project) before”* (Kate, CP). There was a feeling that the ‘sense of community’ found in Byker was lacking elsewhere, and this gave these participants a sense of commitment to the local in a way they had not experienced in another place.

Importance of immediate neighbours was apparent for a number of participants in being able to express a sense of attachment to where they lived. This drew on feelings of comfort and security explored earlier in the chapter, as well as a notion of reciprocal care seen in the expressions of commitment and contribution to place. It also demonstrates the much localised boundaries that attachment sometimes operated in, hinging on their social relationships, networks and ability to identify positively with those around you. Nuances in different parts of the Estate or different levels of attachment expressed in relation to different places were often seen through a discussion of the different atmospheres of these spaces and places.

Everyday practices in these much localised spaces within the community, produce what Edward Casey (2001) defines as ‘thick places’, replete with atmosphere and affect. These ‘thick’ places tended to be the focal points for everyday life of the community; places of residence but also community spaces and spaces of communal activity. They included: the African Community Advice

Centre; the Community Centre; the bowling green; the YMCA youth group; and a more divisive place, Shields Road. Putting the latter to one side for a moment, these other community spaces mentioned were done so in terms of the felt experience of these places for participants and how they interpreted and drew on the atmosphere there, in articulating a sense of attachment of belonging toward them. This draws on the work of Ben Anderson (2009) who has looked at the role affect and affective atmospheres play in the production of place. Anderson argues affective atmospheres produce place as much as the practices of everyday life do, and therefore offer the means through which people can form attachments to these produced spaces, or otherwise. In the case of the much localised 'thick places' referenced in this research, attachments were forged through the recognition of 'friendly' atmospheres; those that were helpful, supportive and 'safe' in respect to being amongst peers. This was talked of most in relation to the space of Community Groups which ran many of the youth projects as well as of the bowling green, where many of the older men from Byker continued to meet nearly every week. For these men the affective atmosphere of the bowling green and the practice of meeting and bowling there, provided a hook to the past and a sense of belonging to place. Younger members of the community also commented on the different atmosphere in this part of the Estate, known interestingly as 'old Byker village' as having more of a village feel and feeling more 'traditional'.

Many participants noted a difference between 'their bit' and 'other bits' explaining that there was a different atmosphere in certain parts of the Estate which made them feel less at ease and less welcome.

*"There is defiantly more of a community atmosphere here, everyone mucks in and helps, doing things for the kids and that"* (Jenny, SG)

*"I live in Byker, the Posh End. I tell people this bit is the Posh End"* (Jenny, SG)

*"Don't go down Raby Street though. You'll get shot"* (Jack, SG)

Expressions of attachment (or otherwise) such as these ones to particular spaces within the estate was usually put down to either not knowing anyone who lived on

that particular block or street, or conversely actually knowing who lived there and knowing stories of crime or anti-social behaviour that had occurred there. These examples then highlight the affective dimension of local belonging and attachment situated in very particular local places but also its relational nature with regard to different physical spaces within a community.

Shields Road was more divisive in terms of the affective atmosphere felt there and therefore also in terms of how this facilitated feelings of belonging and attachment as discussed above. Some felt an atmosphere of decline and forgottenness, others felt an exciting mix of diversity and atmosphere of cultural change; others again felt an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Whether positive or not, these affective atmospheres demonstrate the production of 'thick' places that provided either a pull or a push in terms of forging attachments to the local, and something to be negotiated with in terms of residents own positioning of themselves with the place where they lived.

Atmospheres created by urban and community regeneration will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven, however an atmosphere of creativity and arts was very important for many of the newcomers to Byker and aligning themselves with this was one of the ways some residents found of forging an attachment of belonging to the local community. 'Creative spaces' provided another 'thick' place of affective atmosphere that contributed to the production of place as well as something to either relate to or distance yourself from in terms of local attachment. For some, these cultural heritage developments were one of the main reasons they had wanted to move to Byker in the first place, for others it came as rather a pleasant surprise:

*"I see Newcastle as an arts- centre; it is a blessing that we have moved here"*

(Mark, ASR)

Interestingly here, Mark refers to the city of Newcastle as a whole, but he is specifically talking about the Ouseburn area of Newcastle and how lucky he felt in having this right on his doorstep in Byker.

Casting the geographical imaginary more widely, London and the South of

England more generally was occasionally expressed as a way of positioning Byker (as well as Newcastle and the North East more generally) in relation to elsewhere in the UK. This positioning was not always a straight forward better/worse comparison, but an assertion that it offered something different. For example many of the African migrants and Refugees had spent some time living in London before being moved to the North East. They often spoke of the multi-cultural nature of the capital city; how you could get everything you wanted there; *“It’s like a little Africa there, you can get all the same things, and my hair, they would know how to cut afro hair in London, not here”* (Elizabeth, ASR). However the perception of these benefits was often weighed up against the intensity of this experience; *“London is fully loaded, too much for me”* and an appreciation of the different pace and smaller scale of Newcastle. This was seen as offering the opportunity for a greater sense of settlement through the ability to be able to contribute and make a mark on the community. This echoes what other more socially as well as geographically mobile residents felt as discussed above; that the ability to contribute and ‘do something’ led to a greater sense of attachment and belonging in the local community and became an important consideration in the negotiation of belonging.

There were however instances of ‘the South’ being used to articulate a particular set of politics which served to reinforce a sense of belonging and attachment to the local that was rooted in opposition to central government. Martin, a man in his 50s, who had lived in Byker all his life, was a staunch supporter of social housing and a self-proclaimed socialist. His narrative of life in Byker was one of deep attachment although one which was not blind to its faults; *“I love my community, I care for it deeply but it does need a lot, a lot of help”*. His narrative was deeply political, particularly around the issue of housing and welfare. The following quote presents his discussion of the riots that occurred in London as well as many other cities around the UK (although notably not Newcastle) in the summer of 2011:

*“When we had the riots, the North east responded different and you know why? Because it was done down there and we were going yeah, up yours! Truthfully, we have our riots in the past, Meadowell, the West End and that*

*and if it came down to it it would happen again. At the time it was seen as being a southern thing and ha ha ha! Stay down there! If it needs to though it would happen. You have to care you have to give a damn, whether it is locally, nationally or internationally” (Martin, OR)*

Martin uses ‘the South’ here to stand in for central government and the Tory politics he viewed as being actively against him and his community. He did acknowledge civil unrest in the North East in the past (although both examples offered are spatially as well as socially distanced from Byker) but makes a point that in the case of the summer of 2011, the absence of riots in the North East was a point of political solidarity against the South and a rejection “*stay down there!*” of the politics he saw this as representing.

Taken on its own, this type of sentiment could be viewed as they kind of territorial and provincial attitudes that often lead to the scepticism and mistrust of local identities. However this would be to take it out of context. Within this narrative Martin spoke of the future potential of the community, embracing energy saving technologies from across the world and engaging with a politics of localism directly from the central government he was so opposed to earlier. This demonstrates an ability and willingness to step outside of a singular frame of reference and see universal in the particular and to exercise a sense of critical reflexivity on his attachments.

In summary, this discussion of the use of other places in negotiating belonging to the local demonstrate a geographical imaginary which was largely undifferentiated between ‘locals’ and ‘migrants’. Residents drew on previous lived experience of other neighbourhoods and neighbourhoods near-by in making comparisons with Byker. Imaginaries of other places and awareness of other cultures factored in how they expressed a sense of attachment to the local. However what was more pertinent in the characteristics of local belong expressed here, was the use of territoriality in their nature. Expressions of ‘my bit’ were common and demonstrate the importance of understanding the highly localised geographies of belonging and attachment to the local as forged through everyday spatial practice and the felt experienced of different spaces within the local.

So what do these levels of global reflexivity amongst residents tell us about how belonging and attachment to the local are expressed and negotiated? It points to a sense of being relational but also rooted in biography of personal, or near personal experience and importantly, informed by how their everyday lives in a place were impacted upon. Therefore we can say these territorial attachments are based in place (in their everyday experience and practice) but not bounded by it, as it remains relational to other experiences and other place. Yi-Fu Tuan wrote that “topophilia rings false when it is claimed for a large territory” (1974:101). In any local community, especially one which is so physically large and diverse as Byker, perhaps it is to be expected that part of the process of forging local attachments and negotiating a sense of belonging, necessarily demands mentally carving a place up and the drawing of imaginary boundaries around individual space that offer attachment and spaces which don't.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to highlight some of the characteristics of attachment to place which serve as points of overlap between different groups of residents in a 'culture of belonging' (hooks, 2009) to the local in Byker. In doing so the characteristics of being comfortable and having confidence in place, making a commitment and contribution to it via an ethic of care as well as maintaining a sense of irony and critical distance from 'community', have been explored. This was not undertaken in the way of providing a uniting sense of collective identity however. As Miller (2003) points out, we do not need to belong to each other and that recognition of this, in fact, is a sign of a 'mature belonging' identified by Read (2000). However these characteristics of how people belong to the local, what attachments to place actually look and sound like in the grounded experience of the everyday do provide some points of commonality. This challenges the presumption of an 'authentic' sense of belonging to the local as well as a notion of the attachments to place of 'locals' and 'migrants' existing as ontologically separate entities. This then opens the potential for a discussion of a nuanced understanding

of belonging to the local as socially and spatially constructed which is expanded in the concluding chapter.

These characteristics of belonging and attachment to the local then can be understood as being expressed and forged via the spatial practices and affective dimensions of place and serve to highlight the intimate geographies of belonging and attachment to the local. In this respect they demonstrate the negotiated process of belonging (Bell, 1999), of “the practices of probing and working out” (Hall, 2012:5) in the everyday lived experience of place. All of which point to the socially and spatially constructed nature of local belonging and the active process involved in residents forging attachments and asserting them in relation to their own sense of identity.

From this first empirical chapter we can conclude therefore that belonging and attachment to the local is complex, fluid and contingent (Savage *et al.* 2005) on a set of ‘conditional permanences’ (Harvey, 1996) ‘weighted’ by some sense of ‘gravity’ (Hall, 2013) in everyday spatial practices and affects. In everyday expressions and negotiations of belonging there were elements of the territorial in the relational social construction of place and the attachments to these spaces and places. Everyday practices in, and the affective dimensions of, the local grounded these attachments to some degree in the materiality of everyday life in the local. People, buildings, spaces and activities in the local were just as important as broader ‘geographical imaginations’ and relational understandings of place to how participants saw themselves within the local community. They were important in providing a hook in the ground experience of the everyday experience of place in the forging of attachments to the local.

From the discussion in this chapter several seeds are sown of questions still yet to be fully addressed in exploring the nature of local belonging and attachment in cities. In identifying the territoriality in many expressions of attachment to the local and the different practices and feelings these spaces evoke, what impact does the redevelopment or re-imagination of these spaces by other actors, outside of the community, have on local belonging? Some discussion has already been

had around the impact of the 1970s redevelopment of the area and in Chapter Seven this, and more contemporary regeneration projects are explored for the extent to which they can undermine or bolster the sense of local belonging. Secondly, there was a certain level of agency involved in people being able and willing to forge attachments to place, belonging was not a possession and it was not fixed and static, it was constructed through people's narration and practices of dwelling in place and the references they draw upon in expressing it. Therefore what circumstance facilitates or constrains these capacities and propensities to forge and express a sense of belonging to the local? This is the focus of the next chapter.



## Chapter Six: The Capital to Belong

### *Local Structure of Feeling and the circumstance of belonging*

So far in this thesis we have seen how local belonging and attachment is an “achievement at several levels of abstraction” (Probyn, 1996:3), expressed and negotiated via spatial practices and the affective dimensions of place. From this we have established the relational and territorial nature of local belonging. Participant’s sense of belonging was shaped relationally by their sense of position within broader networks and processes, yet at the same time, this was made sense of in the grounded experience of the everyday in Byker. The social and spatial construction of belonging had a sense of “gravity” (Hall, 2013). Thus the importance of a dialectic process has been established between the environment and the Self in taking an active part in establishing a sense of place and what this might mean for local identities.

Three key sets of characteristics of belonging and attachment have been identified from this research; of comfort and confidence, commitment and contribution, and irony and critical distance, and a discussion has been had of the various ways these characteristics are expressed and negotiated by different groups of residents within the Estate. In expressing a sense of attachment of belonging to the local, there are always forces that are either pushing or pulling in one direction or another. There were circumstances which made residents feel attached, and circumstance which undermined this. This chapter looks at what some of those circumstances were and what the negotiated process was like between them. Why did some participants express a sense of comfort and confidence in place, why did some choose to commit to the place they lived and why was irony and the ability to be critically reflexive of attachments such an important characteristic of belonging to the local?

The purpose of this chapter is to understand some of these questions and to look at the circumstances surrounding why people do or do not express a sense of local belonging and attachment in cities. In doing so it puts some of the assumptions from the literature regarding this under empirical examination.

Continuing an argument concerning the social construction of the process of belonging, this chapter makes the case that people do not ontologically either belong or otherwise to a place. Therefore the chapter builds an argument that local belonging and attachment is subject to a number of different capacities and propensities to belong, best understood through the theoretical lens of habitus and the procession and deployment of various capitals. In order to achieve such attachments requires firstly a desire on the part of the individual to want to belong and a willingness to recognise those attachments and secondly the capacity to go about forging and expressing them. This chapter discusses some of the elements and circumstances which influenced the propensity and capacity to belong in Byker.

In doing so it highlights the role of social, cultural and symbolic capital and therefore Bourdieu's notion of habitus is instrumental in understanding how this gives people a certain competency in place. Habitus can be understood as an array of inherited dispositions and competencies that condition bodily movements, tastes and judgments according to class position (Bourdieu, 1984) and is useful to this thesis as it allows for a more subtle analysis of the circumstances influencing how a person experiences the place in which they live. Therefore it is helpful in getting between the circumstance of individual decision making and the supra-individual structure that may determine these decisions and helps look at a broad definition of 'dispositions'. This has been harnessed by a range of researchers, looking specifically at the process of gentrification (Bridge, 2006, Ley, 1994, Lees, 1994 ) and specifically in a defence of middle class habitus (Savage *et al*, 2005, 2010) as well as Chris Allen's (2008) work focused on working-class habitus in the context of urban regeneration.

The analytical framework of habitus is used in this field of studies to understand how individuals show a certain orientation or disposition towards the world, based on a cultural understanding of class position, shaped the way in which they expressed an attachment or sense of belonging to where they lived. Middle-class residents in Savage *et al*'s (2005) study deployed their cultural capital through a process of 'elective belonging' whereby certain cultural tastes for housing, suburbs and lifestyle gave them the capacity to form a sense of belonging to the area they

had chosen to live. Living in a particular suburb was then seen as a way of them being able to achieve a certain lifestyle choice therefore permitting them certain 'legitimacy' to belong. The habitus of middle-class home buyers in areas undergoing a process of gentrification also demonstrate how cultural tastes for heritage properties of a certain period and of a certain aesthetic. In an area supplied with retail and leisure opportunities catering for certain tastes provide the propensity and capacity for those processing this cultural capital to electively belong to such areas as part of a broader lifestyle choice. And finally Chris Allen demonstrated via the concept of 'just being', the way in which a working-class habitus forms a particular relationship toward a place as being 'just because' I live here, able to overlook certain failings of a place in order to form an attachment based on being 'just my home.'

Use of habitus in this way draws on a substantial move within the social sciences away from class being defined solely by relation to the labour market and by economic capital, instead looking more towards elite culture and taste. For the theoretical reasons outlined above and the empirical discussion to follow, cultural and social capital and Bourdieu's notion of habitus is used to understand differences in both capacity and propensity to feel and express local belonging and attachment.

## **6.1 Can we Predict Local Belonging?**

Taking the view from Probyn that belonging is "an achievement at several levels of abstraction" (1996:3), belonging is not a 'status' or 'result' (Read, 2000) that can be quantified or predicted. This understanding of belonging to place is borne out by the findings of this thesis and thus diverges from the environmental psychology literature on place attachment which uses the language of 'predictors' (Lewicka, 2011) to analyse why attachments to place are formed. Despite being useful to this research in providing a general direction of enquiry into why people belong, this thesis does not take the view that relationship with place is something which can be predicted. Instead, this chapter uses the language of circumstance to

capture the contingent and fluid nature of belonging to the local (Savage *et al.* 2005) found by this research, as always in a process of becoming, open to interpretation and reinterpretation based on circumstance.

With regards to socio-demographic factors, Lewicka (2011) found by far the strongest predictor of place attachment to be length of residence, conforming to many of the arguments from community studies. This relationship has not been found to be as straightforward in this research and this may be, as Lewicka herself argues, that many studies fail to examine in more detail the shape or form of this relationship and whether or not place attachment develops quickly in the first few years of residence or is built up more slowly. This research found a changing nature in the relationship to the local that was not easily mapped onto length of residence but equally was not entirely divorced from it and therefore there are other circumstances to be considered. As a result, this study found that this relationship with place could be better understood as a non-linear process of attachment making, unmaking, and remaking, and as part of people's own biography and the lived experience of place, as will be discussed.

Other socio-demographic predictors such as social and economic status, education or age were found by Lewicka to show erratic patterns of relationship with place, suggesting that any relationship that does exist is mediated by other factors. While social class itself was rarely mentioned explicitly by participants in this thesis, indicators of it were evident. These included demographics such as tenure, background, culture and aspirations, all of which point to a usefulness of the concept of habitus, and the various combinations of capitals individuals embody, in understanding the circumstances in which people may express a sense of belonging to place.

Taking the example of tenure first, the majority of participants were renting their homes from the social landlord (now the Byker Community Trust) with only a few participants identifying themselves as owner occupiers. This split reflects the wider population of Byker with 90% of the Erskine-part of the Estate being socially rented. Closely linked to tenure is the question of social mobility and of choice. Fenster (2004) argues people are more likely to feel they belong if they chose to

move to where they are living. The nature of social housing meant that the majority of residents had been allocated housing in the Estate by the local authority with limited choice in their housing allocation and therefore an assumption might follow that these participants would be less likely to express a sense of belonging to the area. This was not found to be the case. There were in fact variations in the degree of choice exercised by social landlord residents, with some people requesting to be housed in Byker, some choosing to stay when they would have been eligible to be moved, as well as those who had bought or rented privately. However, even when little or no choice was exercised in moving to the Estate, this did not always amount to a negative relationship with place, and tenure itself was found to make very little difference to capacity to belong as this cross section of participant attitudes shows:

*“I don’t think it matters if you own it or not” (Amy, Homeowner, SG)*

*“Well I suppose I must have some attachment coz I bought a house here, but I don’t feel like I do” (Bob, Homeowner, OR)*

*“I always try and make a home wherever I live” (Sam, social renter, HL)*

*“I’m pleased I don’t have that millstone (mortgage) around my neck to be honest” (Sarah, social renter, CP)*

For the small number of participants interviewed who did own their home, this status did not feature particularly highly in how they articulated their relationship to where they lived. It often went unmentioned, unless prompted. For those participants who did not own their homes, most of whom rented from the social landlord, there was a feeling that their experience of place would be unaltered, for better or worse, if they were homeowners. This was largely regardless of whether the participants reported positive or negative experiences of living in the community. The final example from Sarah contradicts what would be considered a typical middle-class aspiration. However Sarah, considered more middle class by her background and occupation as an artist, represents a tendency within a certain middle-class habitus towards social renting; firstly as a political act in support of public housing and secondly to avoid being ‘tied down’ by a mortgage and

accompanying financial responsibility. A conclusion can be drawn that tenure has very little impact in the capacity to form attachments to place; people were just as likely to express some form of attachment by renting as they were to reject it as homeowners.

Therefore the above socio-demographic indicators as 'predictors' of place attachment have been further troubled by this research pointing to the need for a more complex understanding of how the accumulation of certain capitals intersects with place, when it comes to the nature of local belonging and attachment. To this end inspiration is drawn from Casey (2001) in his proposal that Bourdieu's notion of habitus can be used to gain a better understanding of the relationship between people and place. As economic status, defined broadly above in terms of tenure and socio-economic group, were not found to be strong elements in shaping the capacity and propensity to belong the remainder of the chapter focuses on the influence of social and cultural capital, and the way this was used to express a sense of belonging with 'people like us' and lack of attachment to 'the other'.

Certain capitals such as social capital, in particular bonding capital, are most commonly associated in the literature with 'locals' as a competency cultivated over years of familiar residence in a place. Cultural capital on the other hand is viewed as the domain of the 'migrant' and it is often assumed this migrant will be middle class, as opposed to the working class identification of the 'local'. Contemporary locality and community studies have pointed to the increased blurring of these oppositional binaries, as part of a broader cultural turn within the social sciences, and in the way in which they analyse class differences. Habitus, and the procession of certain capitals, therefore becomes a more nuanced way of understanding what circumstance may shape a person's propensity and capacity to express a sense of belonging and attachment to a place. Therefore it is important to this thesis to identify whether the traditional binaries of 'local' and 'migrant' stand up to empirical scrutiny when faced with the questions of why someone has an attachment to place or otherwise.

## 6.2 Biography and Extent of 'Roots' in a Place

Everyone had a story of how they came to live in Byker and such narratives can be useful in understanding why people expressed a sense of belonging to the local or otherwise. Entrance stories ranged from quite pragmatic statements such as "*I was just born here*", to personal dramas of relationship breakups and disagreements with landlords, to the trauma of fleeing political persecution and violence. Equally, participants often referenced key events or moments in their lives that had occurred since they moved to the Estate as something which made them feel they "*had a place*" there, and could express a sense of belonging to it. Being able to relate your individual biography to a place was a factor identified by Antonsich (2010), as facilitating the capacity for place-belonging, and it is to this set of circumstance that the chapter now turns.

'Just being born here', was cited both as a reason for returning, as well as for staying. This was obviously exclusively the preserve of the 'old Byker' participants, many of whom had connections to the area going back several generations. Although this group seemed to have the most pragmatic expressions of their relationship to where they lived, it was not always straightforward. Their relationship to Byker was expressed in terms of their family history; they were born in Byker, they grew up in Byker, their parents were from Byker. It was often prefixed with the word 'just': 'I was just born here', which is similar to the ways of expressing a relationship to place found by Chris Allen (2008). Allen describes this relationship of 'just being' orientation in a place as part of a particular working-class habitus based on a closer proximity to survival and 'getting by'.

'Just being born' in a place such as Byker was enough for participants to feel some sort of attachment to the community, without always being able to explain or justify why this was, when their relationship with the place was not always a positive one "*there are a million better places to live than here*" (Jack, SG). This demonstrates that a 'just because' sense of attachment to a place was not a blinkered one, reflection was made on the shortcomings of Byker and the merits of other places, but the importance of being "*born just around the corner*", "*growing up and going to school*" in a place often provided enough of an attachment for 'Old'

Byker participants to express some sense of belonging even if this did not appear obvious on the surface. Therefore, a 'just being' orientation toward the world is premised on a particular working-class struggle for survival rather than for position (Allen, 2008). According to Allen this orientation provides the circumstance to be comfortable in "*my nest*" because it is just that, your home, rather than trying to search for an additional cultural and social meaning for your home in a sense of the symbolic capital it can afford. Therefore failings in the area can be overlooked as long as "*my nest*" (Sally, HL) is not compromised.

Where symbolic capital of 'the home' did play an important role in why people formed attachments to place, it can be demonstrated via the use of elective belonging as described by Savage *et al.* (2005). Elective belonging articulates senses of spatial attachment, social position and forms of connectivity to other places and highlights how individuals use a place of residence - their choice to move to and continue living there - as part of an ongoing process of identity construction. In other words, it is useful to look at how participants spoke of their choice to move to Byker (where there was a choice) and how their living there was used as symbolic capital to say something about themselves. In this respect individuals can be seen to be creating their own circumstance to belong to the local or otherwise.

Examples of this circumstance of belonging, the symbolic capital of place, comes mainly from the new Byker residents who would be considered as part of a group of 'Creative Professionals' for the purpose of this study and more middle-class residents who have moved into the estate, usually from elsewhere in the UK. This is a group that, although not always having access to the levels of economic capital often assumed by writers such as Richard Florida (2005), did have higher social and geographical mobility by definition of their employment- often in the arts and leisure sectors- as well as by virtue of their educational capital, as most of these participants held a Bachelor's degree. Despite having the capital, socially and culturally to move from Byker, this acknowledgement of the temporary nature of their residence did not deter the forming of local attachments whilst they were there:

*“At this time in my life I can’t see myself moving, maybe if me and my boyfriend decided to move in together, the flat is a bit small for two people I think, but for me, for what I need now I am quite happy here. I have great neighbours, a lovely flat, great views! So close to everything going on in Ouseburn. No don’t think I would move for now”* (Kate, CP)

For Kate, her neighbours and the lifestyle of being near cultural venues in Ouseburn allowed her to form an attachment to Byker for what it enabled her to do with her life *“at this time”*. This provides an example of the elective belonging used to force attachments to place via cultural and social capital discussed by Savage *et al.* (2005), but it also shows that despite her ability to leave the area, more or less whenever she wanted, this was not something which prevented either her capacity or propensity to express a sense of belonging to the local.

Of course, the political status of UK or EU citizenship for this group of participants was also a crucial differential in their geographical mobility compared to others, such as, the Refugees and Asylum Seekers. However the empirical findings of this research do not support arguments from Fenster (2004) that choice in place of residence fosters greater attachment; nor arguments based on Florida’s (2005) ‘Cultural Class’ that social mobility necessitates weak rather than strong social ties. Therefore it is difficult to see the issue of choice in living in Byker as determining factors in the capacity and propensity to belonging either.

However although there are differences in the circumstances of social mobility, many participants who had less (or no) choice in moving to Byker still created the circumstance in which to forge an attachment to the local based on what it allowed them to do. Therefore many of the Asylum-Seeker and Refugee participants found they were able to express a sense of belonging to the local because of the commitments and contributions the local allowed them to make:

*“I feel this is home because I have done a lot of work myself to make it feel like that”* (Jamie, ASR,)

*“You have to work at it, to make yourself familiar, and now, I feel I am a friendly face”* (Paul, ASR,)

Again, this speaks to the importance of the level of the local, for groups such as Asylum-Seekers and Refugees, in being able to forge very specific attachments to place as part of a broader settlement project in a new country (Spicer, 2008). Attachments were forged to the local as a way of gaining symbolic capital to achieve comfort and confidence in a place.

In this respect then it becomes not the length of residence in a place that provide the right circumstance in which to forge attachments to place, but the ability a place gives you to exercise elective belonging, the circumstances presenting themselves, which allow an individual to make the place important to them and provide the symbolic capital to shape their understanding of Self.

'Firsts' were often an important expression of elective belonging which allowed participants to relate important moments in their biography to Byker, therefore providing the circumstance in which to forge attachments to it. For overseas migrants in particular, having a first child born in the area was expressed as a significant moment that made them feel a sense of belonging; for others, Byker being the first place a person had their own home when moving out of their parents household; or the first time they lived on their own, was often cited as a key point in their biography which was inextricably linked to place. This demonstrates a degree of what Rowles (1983) identifies as autobiographical "insiderness", where attachment can be articulated to several different places on the bases of a significant life event in that place that renders them a certain sense of being on the 'inside'.

Being able to put down roots in an area therefore, either in terms of genealogy (*"the sense of belonging is already there because this is where I had my first child"* Anthony, ASR) or as a result of significant life events (*"this was the first place where I had a place of my own, so it's very important in that respect"* Francesca, CP), provided a very important circumstance for 'new Byker' participants in having the capacity to express an attachment to the local. This relates to Hazel Easthope (2009), in her exploration of the relationship between mobility and place attachment in identity construction, she critiques contemporary theories of sociology and socio-historical approaches to identity for holding mobility

and place attachment in contention with each other, and instead calls for a more complimentary understanding, where neither one is prioritised over the other. Being able to articulate a sense of belonging to several different places is a central part of the migrant or diaspora identity. Studies have shown the mosaic effect different places have on belonging for migrants, rather than an attachment to one place eclipsing attachment to another (Fortier, 2000)

The value of having roots in a place is something often looked upon disparagingly by those who prescribe a more cosmopolitan and relational view of the world (Amin, 2004). However here, certain sections of the migrant population often expressed an appreciation for the value placed on roots and lineage in a place that they felt a community, such as Byker demonstrated. This sentiment was most often demonstrated by members of the African community, the majority of whom had come to the UK as Asylum Seekers. This was usually as a result of a similar experience elsewhere, so can be thought of relationally as well as having roots in the local. For Anthony, being brought up in Africa, he found a sense of continuity through family lines in Byker very comforting;

*“The Geordie culture fits in more widely with other cultures, my culture where there is a sense of family in some areas. Where you see the Father has been staying, the son, the grandchildren, there are extended family connections in some areas and Byker still holds that concept of extended family. The lineage of people being here in Byker for a while, that in itself is a similarity so I find that exciting”* (Anthony, ASR)

This was something expressed in terms of making some members of the African community feel more ‘at home’ in Byker and helping them to settle; *“This culture, the way families stay around, it is what I am used to”* (Anthony). This again demonstrates the importance of being able to put down roots and establish a family connection to a place, which challenges traditional notions of what it is to be a ‘local’ and the narrow understanding of attachment and belonging that can be associated with this.

There is evidence from this research that traditional understandings of the

term 'roots' in relation to a connection to a place may need to be rethought in light of the idea also being used to form attachments by newcomers or 'migrants' to the community. For 'migrant' participants in this study, 'roots' were found to be of literal (in terms of 'putting down roots'), and imaginary (in terms of having an appreciation for a sense of family heritage in a place) importance for the capacity to express belonging to the local.

As discussed in Chapter Two, a focus on mobilities in social science in recent years has been seen to undermine 'prescribed' place-based identities in favour of 'achieved' mobile ones (Urry, 2000). In this research a sense of belonging to the local was found to be expressed via a negotiation of experiences and values of a place elsewhere, yet related to very local circumstance and individual biography. This still satisfies the need to understand belonging to place as achieved but does so at "several levels of abstraction" (Probyn, 1996:3), recognising the importance of the territorial in the relational circumstances of belonging. Evidence from this research then can be seen as supporting the claim made by Easthope (2009) in her study, that "people can and do draw from both facets of identity construction simultaneously" (pp.75) and that having personally significant life events take place in a locality were an important circumstance in supporting 'migrant' capacity to express a sense of belonging to the local.

There is an agency in evidence here, in participants wanting to recognise the local as linked to key events in their biography and expressing a certain propensity towards wanting to claim some sort of attachment to the local. This is negotiated as an ongoing process of attachment making, it was not static, or 'given' but selectively articulated as part of individual biographical- narratives and expressed within the social context.

In summary, the emphasis placed on biography, especially the importance of 'first' for residents in a community, points to a need to re-interrogate the meaning of 'roots' in a place, and to who we are referring when we use this expression. Traditionally community studies has divided residents into 'locals' and 'migrants'; those who have roots in the area and those who do not. For those who have roots, there is an assumption that these act in the botanical sense; as an anchor to place,

a point of fixity that renders both the resident and their sense of identity as rooted in the local in a static and historical sense. Migrants to the community, it is assumed, do not have access to this 'sense of roots', as their roots lie elsewhere. Whilst acknowledging there may be a difference in the shape and form of these local attachments, this research argues that local roots are not the preserve of the traditionally viewed local or indigenous community, but can also form an active part of the internal negotiation in the process of belonging and attachment making for a wider group of community residents.

Here it is helpful to turn to the distinction Yi-Fu Tuan (1988) makes between rootedness and sense of place. Rootedness for Tuan was being at home in an unselfconscious way; whereas sense of place implies a certain distance between Self and place that allows the Self to appreciate place. This discussion has argued it is this distance and the agency involved in placing yourself in relation to the local, that allows the reflexivity to understand local belonging and attachment in a more progressive way. A way which does not focus solely on a long internalised understanding of place (Massey, 1991). What is evident in the narratives here is creation of a sense of place based in some part, on roots, but not in a sense of rootedness. Although this troubles a traditional community view from studies such as Young and Willmott (1957) and Norman Dennis (1956, 1970, 1972), that belonging to the local is built up through generations of living in a place, it does maintain the importance of place to local attachments. The idea of having roots in a place is given new meaning and re-interpretation by a migrant population sharing the same local space and reinforces the importance of the territorial in the relational understanding of place and attachments to place.

Therefore the divisions between why 'locals' and 'migrants' might have attachments to a place have been troubled by this research. In this study both 'old' and 'new' Byker participants drew on a sense of roots and the importance of biography and memory in place in creating the circumstance in which they felt comfortable and confident in asserting a sense of belonging. This symbolic capital in imbuing a place with personal significance, did however take different forms depending on the individual habitus of the participant and the different levels of

capitals they possessed and were able to deploy, and this is why an awareness of habitus is more useful in allowing a cultural and social understanding of positionality of participants than a narrow socio-economic one.

### **6.3 Social Networks and Cultural Capital**

If belonging to the local is characterized by a sense of feeling comfortable and being confident in place, as discussed in the previous chapter, what circumstance *allow* this level of comfort to be achieved? The use of the symbolic capital of roots has been discussed already in this chapter, in providing the circumstance for both 'old' and 'new' Byker residents to forge attachments and the varying levels of commitment to place based on individual biography this can provide. But what of the levels of social capital this creates? How far do 'other' people in a place; friends, neighbours, and extended family, influence belonging and attachment for individuals? This research found that 'other people' were instrumental in providing the circumstance in which a resident would feel able to look at the people around them and be able to say they were amongst 'people like us' or whether they felt displaced by the presence of an 'other'. Therefore a discussion of how the procession of a certain level of social capital, and the presence (or absence) of social networks provide the circumstance in which an individual would express a sense of belonging to the local, or otherwise.

As discussed in Chapter Two, both Lewicka (2011) and Antonsich (2010) in their respective reviews of what 'predictors' and 'factors' effect territorial attachments, identified social capital gained through the presence of social networks as being highly influential. Despite the sustained critique and discussion around the concept (see Chapter two), social capital can be best understood from Robert Putnam's definition as "the connections amongst individuals – (the) social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (2000:19), was found to play an important role not only in the ability of participants to express comfort and confidence in Byker, but also in their want to invest some level of commitment to it through local practices of care, to both people and place

(as discussed in Chapter Five). Therefore, why social capital, as it is understood and used by this thesis, is important for local belonging is the focus of the following discussion in this chapter.

### **6.3.1 'The Other'**

During general conversations with participants regarding their everyday experiences of living in Byker the overall tone, of whether this was a mostly positive or negative experience, was largely contingent on the presence of other people, and of course who this 'other' was, depended on the participant being spoken to. However, just as there were found to be a series of overlaps in how people belong pertaining to the characteristics of belonging found in Byker, as outlined in Chapter Five; the 'other' and the 'othering' of individuals and groups in the Estate provides a similar overlap in why people expressed an attachment to the local or otherwise, regardless of which 'other' of which they speak. This research found that residents used taste and symbolic capital either consciously or unconsciously, while marking themselves out as different from an 'other' within the community or aligning themselves with 'people like us'.

Social identity theory is premised on the identification of yourself against an 'other'; what you are and what you are not and the extent to which you can identify with others around you (Lawler, 2013). The in-group/ out-group mentality demonstrated in Byker was not indicative of any 'local'/ 'migrant' binary; instead it was much more predicated along the lines of habitus and cultural and social cues. Therefore based on the perception of the behaviour of others living around them- "people like us"- participants were more or less likely to express feelings of local belonging and attachment depending on whether what they perceived in others fitted with their own values and aspirations.

Floya Anthias' (2002) concept of narratives of location or positionality are instructive here, in providing an analytical sensitivity to the individual agency involved in the positioning of the Self in relation to other people and other places. However, her concept also recognises the particular role of context (or location and

translocation) in shaping these attachments and belongings. Therefore the following section of this chapter looks at how people *place* themselves in relation to others and how this serves as a way of expressing and negotiating belonging and attachment to the local.

For 'old' Byker residents particularly, more senior members of the community who could remember moving into the Estate as a 'new' redevelopment, these 'other' people were often from outside of the area, but not from outside the UK. Migrants from overseas were very rarely discussed explicitly as being problematic. For members of the old community, newcomers from other parts of the city, notably 'the West End', were viewed as more troublesome and this was often passed on as a generalised narrative *"People say it's due to people being moved from the West End? But I don't know about that"* (OR). The moving of *"the wrong sort of people"* (OR) into the area served to displace many of the old Byker participants from recognising the community they had grown up in; *"I used to know everyone on this street, now they have gone, I don't think I know anyone living over there anymore, it doesn't feel the same anyway"* (OR) and there was a sense that the 'social glue' which was once perceived to 'hold' the community together, giving it a strong and cohesive sense of identity from which to form a sense of attachment to place, had significantly shrunk, if not disappeared all-together:

*"It's not what it was, we just to have great parties you know, in the back lanes. Us kids used to have a whale of a time, there was always something going on, some mischief to get into, I was never bored growing up."* (Bob, OR)

The community *"not being what it was"* in relation to the people who were now living in it, undermined the capacity for some of these old Byker participants to express a sense of belonging to the local, as the sense of community and familiarity that had acted as a source of attachment in the past, was viewed as no longer being there. This was usually discussed in terms of modernity and individualisation, with the most imposing symbol of modernity, the Byker Wall itself,

often receiving more than its fair share of the blame; *“people were friendlier when it was the terraces”* (OR).

This sense of a fading sense of community often led to a very particular geography of belonging in Byker for ‘old’ Byker residents, as one such resident, Nathan, commented:

*“There is a lovely sense of community here, on this balcony, we all look out for one another. I can’t speak for the rest of the Estate though, I don’t really know about that, I don’t go there. I know where the rent office is and that is about it. I don’t think it is safe really to be honest with you.”* (Nathan, OR)

Here Nathan, having moved into the Wall part of the Estate as a young man when it was first built in 1975, considered himself ‘Old Byker’ expressed a local geography of the Estate that was found often by this study concerning the difference in perception of ‘The Wall’ being respectable and *“The rest of the Estate”* being considered less so. This lack of respectability, perceived by Nathan in the *“rest of the Estate”*, prevented him expressing a sense of belonging to the whole of Byker, and in fact strengthened his attachment to ‘his bit’.

The blame for the decline of the community wasn’t put squarely on newcomers, there was an admission from many who had some experience of ‘old Byker’ that the community spirit of old had disappeared, but this was often difficult to separate out in the narratives of these participants from the ‘other’ they saw as embodying this decline. This decline, however was not always seen in such historic terms; second generation ‘old Byker’ participants who often had little or no recollection of the ‘good old days’ their parents often spoke of, as well as ‘new’ Byker residents of a similar age who have moved from elsewhere, also described a feeling of living amongst an ‘other’ which undermined their ability to fully align themselves with the community they were living in. In defining this ‘other’, participants often drew upon social and cultural differences, again demonstrating the role of habitus, and was of “being in a place”. This varied in strength, but value judgments on lifestyle, morals and behaviour were all passed on those deemed ‘different’ and ‘not like us’. This was sometimes to do with different ethnic groups,

some of whose behaviour was seen as alienating and therefore making it difficult for the resident speaking to feel comfortable:

*“there is a group of Chinese mothers who go (to Sure Start Child Centre) and they don’t speak very good English and just all talk amongst themselves in their own language, I find that quite unhelpful” (Amy, SG)*

*“I don’t know if it’s a cultural thing, but they (Eastern European migrants) are not very sociable with anyone else but always have people coming and going from their house and can be very noisy at times.” (Sam, HL)*

However, it was mostly members of the white working class that were seen as the ‘other’, even by those who would self-identify as being part of the white working class. This is where notions of an ‘underclass’ (Murray, 1999) would creep into narratives. This provocative frame of reference, and a discourse of worklessness, benefit dependency and difference in social norms that accompanies it, and has seen something of an unfortunate revival in the UK in recent years, were often reached for by participants in explaining why these ‘other’ people were not like themselves.

Interestingly, it was not the labour market that was the main source of contention, but the way people conducted themselves in the local community that was seen as problematic. Therefore there was little discussion of the ‘others’ employment status or dependency on welfare and much more focus on cultural and social norms:

*“people don’t look after their homes, their gardens are a tip, they let their kids run all over the place, I’ve seen kids around here at 4am in the morning, their parents can’t know where they are, spitting, dog muck, people don’t care” (Sandra, HL)*

The idea that people didn’t care about themselves, the community or other people came up time and time again when residents were describing their experience of living in Byker. This can be understood in contrast to the ethic of care and stewardship of place which allowed participants to express a sense of commitment

to place as discussed in Chapter Five. Care and commitment to place were seen as having a high value in Byker, a source of attachment for many participants, therefore when some of those around them did not demonstrate the same stewardship, belonging to the local was undermined. This lack of care, seen around personal appearance, conduct, and the bringing up of children, served to fix problems within the community and therefore undermined a sense of attachment to it on certain bodies within the community.

However, actual appearance and the 'bodies' of the other were often overlooked as being the main problems, instead it was the spatial practices of the 'other' that made them visible. This was often most passionately articulated in relation to lack of care of properties and, in particular, as found by Rogaly and Taylor (2009), lack of care for gardens.

Gardens were often cited as the most obviously outward example of difference between groups of residents in the Estate and used as a basis on which to make assumptions about the rest of the household:

*"This family down here, they must have about 10 kids, look at the garden, full of toys, and they are so loud. I can't keep track of who belongs to the house and who doesn't"* (Kate, CP)

*"You walk around and you see the state of some people's gardens and you think my god, it's like something of Shameless! (T.V Programme). All the settees in the gardens and rubbish everywhere. It just looks so uncared for and untidy. It's quite depressing really"* (Graham, HL)

The above descriptions of unkempt gardens; 'furnished' with settees, rubbish and the toys belonging to large households of children, read very much like a popular stereotype of council estates in Britain, with the latter resident making this connection back to popular culture. This again shows the normative cultural and social assumptions being made in the defining of an 'other' and how this worked to undermine the capacity for the participants making these claims to feel a sense of belonging to what they saw around them.

There was a general feeling that finding (and keeping) work was hard and a certain empathy that most people living in Byker had some degree of experience of this. However this empathy was not extended to those who were seen as demonstrating a kind of 'learned helplessness' or the often referred to attitude of "*oh the council will sort it for me*" (HL). Here a distinction was drawn between; those who care for and about where they lived and who contributed to it by volunteering, in "getting involved" and generally keeping their gardens, children, pets' social life etc.in-check; and those who did not. A judgment here was often made of others in relation to their commitment and attachment to place.

With the experience of other people often having a negative effect on the quality of life for some of the participants, I would sometimes pose the question of whether they had considered or wanted to move out of the area. One instance in particular is supplied by Sally's narrative, showing that an inability to identify with those living in the same community as you do, did not always equate to a complete undermining of attachment to the local. In this instance, she was adamant in her attachment to the local but expressed it more through attachment to her immediate neighbours than the estate as a whole; "*Why would I leave? This is my nest. I don't see why I should leave*".

Responses such as this from Sally, a 40 year old women living in the Estate from just after the redevelopment was complete, were typical of a defiant statement of ownership when the question of 'would you ever consider moving' was put to residents in the wake of such a catalogue of community decline, as described above. The assertion that it was not up to her to move, for Sally, demonstrates a level of attachment that goes beyond the rational attitude of wanting to live amongst those who are most like you. Sally saw little evidence of living amongst those who shared the same norms and values as she did, yet why should she leave? It was her 'nest'. So despite the 'other' being articulated as an expression of belonging (or not belonging), on closer inspection these types of 'othering' narratives should not be taken as a lack of attachment or even affection for a place. This highlights the emotional dimension of belonging and that it is not necessarily a rational or straightforward feeling.

A similar demonstration of the complex negotiation of belonging is demonstrated by Heidi, an Eastern European woman in her late 20's living alone with her young child, who had only been living in the community for a little under a year and, although her experience was mainly positive, her narrative continually defaulted to the perception and experience of others. She talked about how she had "dreaded" being re-housed in Byker from the homeless refuge she was living in because of its reputation:

*"they are all poor people here, they are quite rough over there, in the Byker Wall (as opposed to the part of the estate where she lived) so I have heard...even my support worker says when she gets on the bus to come here and see me, that the people who live here are very strange"*(Heidi, HL)

Heidi spoke openly about wishing to live somewhere around "nice" people, people who *"dressed nicely"* and who were *"educated and intelligent"*. When asked about why she felt little attachment to the area, she pointed to her lack of friends in the community and explained her difficulty in making new friends with some of the other young mothers living in the areas she had met through her son:

*"They always say to me, Heidi, you should come with us, come and hang out. But they are only going to go and get drunk- in the middle of the day! I don't want to have friends like that I don't think"* (ibid)

Heidi's use of cultural and social markers for people with whom she didn't identify, who she didn't want to have as friends despite this being a key reason she felt little belonging in the area, speaks of her own habitus and the way she viewed herself. Marking people out by the way they dressed and their perceived lack of aspirations she created an 'other' in her mind that undermined her capacity as well as propensity to form an attachment to Byker.

Heidi was quite forthright in her distancing of herself from others around her and claimed that she did not belong in Byker because *"they are all poor people here"*, which is not how she viewed herself. However there were examples from some of the other 'new' Byker participants of finding an attachment to the local in precisely this sense of not belonging, based on being unable to identify with those

around them.

Those who made up the group of 'Creative Professionals' in this study, who had some degree of choice in living in Byker, were often both excited and repelled by the 'other'. They often spoke of knowing that Byker was a "*rough*" area before they moved there and therefore had expectations of crime and anti-social behaviour but they also spoke of a friendliness and charm of a close knit, more traditional community that was quite often romanticised. There was a certain element of fixing the existing community both in time and space, as 'always being there' and "always being like this' (Lawler, 2013). This was evident in the terms of reference some participants in this group used to describe the existing community as "*the permanent community*", the "*traditional community*" and the "*older community*". This provides examples of the more generic ways these participants referred to 'others'. However there were elements of a narrative of an underclass here too, although it was sometimes more politely framed as; "*I think people have a different culture here, different than what I am used to*" (CP), however this was still done in a way that worked to deny the agency of those they were speaking about as a population who existed 'out there' and were 'done to' as opposed to 'doing themselves'. Sometimes this was spoken with irony, in a similar way to how older residents used nostalgia, "*Spitting! the spitting at the Metro station really gets to me; it doesn't sit well with my middle-class sensibilities!*" (CP), whereas at other times they were less self-aware, "*I don't think it is in (the nature of) the people in Byker to oppose things like that (retail development at the bottom of Shields Road)*" (CP).

One newer resident belonging to the 'Creative Professional' group, Jason, who had moved to the Estate as part of his studies in architecture, provides an example of the type of internal negotiations that sometimes took place within the feelings and experience of participants in being able to place themselves within the local. Jason spoke of the slight "*thrill*" of living somewhere that had "*a slight atmosphere of danger and excitement*". Although he went on to explain it was precisely this atmosphere which made him feel like he didn't belong, "*I don't think it matters how long I live here I don't think I would ever belong*", the juxtaposition

between his sense of 'danger' in Byker and his "*rejection of middle-class pathway of life*" that had intrigued him to move to the Estate, and created an attachment that both attracted and repelled him. He spoke of the cachet of moving to Byker amongst his architectural friends, who he viewed as envious that they did not have the "*bottle*" to do what he had done, but also of his sense of unease about his property and personal safety, as well as always feeling slightly on the outside as he was not "*part of the permanent community*".

This is somewhat reminiscent of Madison's (2009) concept of belonging in not belonging for a group of migrants he defined as existential migrants who seek comfort in the unfamiliar and sense of dislocation. Some of the above examples from participants in Byker do demonstrate a certain 'longing' to *be* somewhere they see themselves 'as not belonging', and they tend to define this 'not belonging' in cultural and social terms. Therefore there is a particular middle class habitus here which identifies the symbolic capital of living somewhere 'edgy', "*rejecting the middle-class pathway of life*" that for some gave them a sense of attachment in Byker, via their elective belonging. This had significance for their individual biography, yet saw them stop short of claiming an actual sense of belonging to Byker based on their sense of difference from the "*permanent community*". Therefore, for this group of participants the ambiguous circumstance of their being in Byker conversely did allow them the capacity to belong, but only if they chose to recognise this. The characteristic of irony, identified in the previous chapter, is demonstrated most strongly here in its use by these participants to create a distance from an 'other' in the first place, and then, in turn, use the nature of irony itself to form an attachment to this distance created.

For Pete, there was a lack of desire to recognise belonging and he constructed a critical distance between himself and place. After almost two hours of discussing the many and varied problems with the community; lack of care from residents, politics of community groups and mismanagement by the council, myself and Pete walked outside of his house on the Estate where he pointed out the various types of trees planted by Erskine's team during the redevelopment. Stopping at a cherry blossom, Pete told me; "*this is where I fell in love with Byker*",

taken aback I ventured that he did have an attachment to Byker after all, to which he responded:

*“of course I have a sense of attachment here, it’s just whether I want to recognise it or not isn’t it?” (Pete, CP).*

The above shows a reluctance to acknowledge an attachment to a geographical sense of community specifically, whilst others were keen to create some sort of distance between themselves and the ‘rest’ of the community in Byker. By displaying their level of self-awareness, residents were able to “escape complicity” (Noble, 2011:160) and relieve an anxiety of a bounded sense of community which many middle-class participants seemed concerned about.

*“It is not a geographically bound community, obviously people do not always live in the places they were born, so I don’t think you can think of it like that anymore” (Emily, CP).*

There was an assumed sense of permanence with local solidarities which, for some participants, did not resonate with an appreciation of other cultures and places so often taken as the cornerstone of a cosmopolitan outlook. Therefore a reluctance was sometimes shown in recognising a geographical local community as it was not seen to fit with a more cosmopolitan and ‘worldly’ outlook. Rhetorically at least the idea of a geographical community was maligned by some residents as not having any relevance to their sense of identity or positionality.

### **6.3.2 Good Neighbours**

Despite a perceived decline in ‘community’ as understood in terms of social networks for some, and an absence of the relevance of geographically bound community for others, there still existed in Byker a discernable presence of social capital, as both networks of relations and the norms of trust and reciprocity governing them (Putnam, 2000). In short, there was a ‘gravity’ (Hall, 2013) to these social networks which provided the circumstance in which people could forge and maintain attachments to place. However, in order to make this connection, the social relations and norms in question here need to be considered as situated

practices of the everyday. Therefore a 'spatial consciousness' (Harvey, 1973) needs to be brought to bear on the analysis. Many participants did recognise a certain level of social capital in the local community as providing the circumstance in which they could form local attachments via these networks and secondly, so there was a very particular local geography to this social capital.

The importance of 'roots' and family connection to place has already been discussed above. Therefore, with an understanding of this geography of local attachment; the importance of immediate neighbours, those living in the same landing, short row of terrace houses or square, became apparent. Many participants rejected a sense of belonging to Byker as a 'whole' (based on the dis-identification with the 'other' discussed above) and instead a more localized sense of neighbourhood was expressed through first-hand experience of 'good neighbours'.

Not only did 'good neighbours' create social capital as a form of network and structure which residents could actively draw upon, they also helped create the norms of trust and reciprocity which govern them (Putnam, 2000). Taking the former, social capital in the form of a network of resources a person can access (Reynolds, 2013) often came as a surprise for 'new' Byker participants moving to the area from elsewhere:

*"When I first moved in a woman came knocking on my door and said she heard I just moved in. It turned out her brother lived above me and wasn't well. He was having to go into hospital and basically she was packing up his house, so she gave me loads of crockery, cutlery, a coffee table, an old radio coz she knew I didn't have much. She was nearly crying, but she was so lovely and that made me feel so welcome"* (Francesca, CP)

In speaking about her former home in the more affluent part of Newcastle another participant, Kate, drew a positive comparison with Byker to assert the vibrancy of community in Byker compared with how she experienced Jesmond;

*“You get a sense of community (here) which you just don’t get in Jesmond at all, not at all. I wouldn’t have known who my neighbours were. You can hardly buy a pint of milk in Jesmond on a Sunday, you can only buy antiques!”* (Kate, CP)

This shows a slightly mocking attitude and critical awareness towards Jesmond, seen as only catering for a certain lifestyle and certain class tastes which may be quite far removed from the realities of needing to *“buy a pint of milk”*. This was typical of a use of middle-class tastes and cultures by many residents and provides illustration of the use of cultural tastes and social capital by residents to mark out class distinctions.

Like many of her peers in Byker, Kate was very self-aware of her class position and how it put her at odds compared to the majority of the community. However this was rarely expressed in monetary or asset terms and more in relation to culture and taste. Like many of the other professionals living in the Estate with an arts or student background, Kate stressed the precarious nature of her income and the limitations this meant for her in terms of access to housing and tenure. In this respect she aligned herself with much of the rest of the population of Byker in having to rely on reduced rents and social housing. Kate’s use of cultural references provide a window into her own class position and how she viewed this in relation to the rest of her immediate neighbours;

*“I think we’re very lucky here to have Tim on the end, as soon as someone moves in he comes around and says hello. It’s just so friendly, (people) looking out for your house while you are away, taking in parcels for you. We have Stuart at the other side who is an older guy who does the plants, he is a similar type, so with those two characters...I think they are both born and bred Byker, so we get quite a lot of people coming and going, it’s just a really funny situation. People are always knocking on my door and asking; ‘do you have any ginger, Kate? I’m making Jamie Oliver’s sweet potato such-and-such”* (Kate, CP)

Consciously or otherwise, Kate uses distinctions of taste to classify herself and her immediate neighbours. Sweet potato, ginger and Jamie Oliver recipes can all be read as representing middle-class taste and the fact that this is a shared and social element of the particular part of the 'Wall' in which Kate lives reveals her perception of those she lives amongst. Interestingly, she bookends her stretch of corridor metaphorically with Tim and Stuart, both older residents who she describes as being a 'similar type', going on to say they were both born and bred in Byker. Although she doesn't specifically say these two neighbours are a different social class from her, it is implied. Here then, we have an example of Kate asserting middle-class tastes as part of the bonding of social capital between herself and some of her neighbours.

Therefore, the presence of 'good' local neighbours provided the circumstance for belonging by, as one participant described, "*putting peace in my heart*" (HL), in a very localised and often quite small 'patch' around where they lived, they then could say they were 'at home'. 'At home' in this context was often used more in relation to feeling a sense of security and comfort (as described in Chapter Five), but also in the capacity it gave people to mobilise a sense of attachment over 'their patch'. Returning briefly to the controversy of gardens in the Estate; the communal gardens or walkways that architect Ralph Erskine designed into the redevelopment often provided the focus for outward expressions of these attachments;

*"this balcony has won awards for its flowers. It's myself and him and the end who does it mainly but I like to keep it looking nice. We painted all this you know, all the banisters and the walls, got sick of waiting for the council to come and do it so we just did it ourselves. You get people walking along this way just to admire the flowers I think"* (Nathan, OR)

Here, a sense of pride, care and commitment are all expressed through the capacity to be able to appropriate the small space outside his front door. This relates to Henri Lefebvre's theorising of the concept of *dwelling* (discussed by Stanek, 2011) and how the appropriation of space via spatial practices such as gardening speak to a certain disposition (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986) of being-in-the-

world that can provide the circumstance from which to forge attachments to the local.

By focusing on the relational dimension of local belonging and how people *place* themselves within the local community in relation to other spaces and other people, this discussion demonstrates Anthias's (2002) call for belonging to be thought of in terms of a process, rather than a possessive property of individuals. Participants who expressed belonging to the local did not feel this all the time, in all parts of the Estate for all the time they have lived there, its expression and articulation was relational, and its nature fluid and contingent. However that is not to say it was without any anchor at all. The experiences, memories and emotions that fostered belonging and attachment to the local happened somewhere, they happened in place. Here the research again turns to the critique of everyday life by Henri Lefebvre in arguing for the importance of this level of social life and practices of dwelling to be understood. This reminds us of the importance of understanding the different geographies at which local belonging and attachment were operating and highlights the importance of immediate neighbourhoods; on landings, streets and blocks. This demands a more nuanced understanding of the local, an appreciation of differences in various spaces within it which give a better understanding of the texture and form of local attachments. Immediate neighbourhoods were often very important for residents in terms of their experience of Byker and it was these spaces which were cited most often and in the most detail of narratives of belonging in the local.

#### **6.4 Local Structure of Feeling**

As outlined in Chapter Two, there are difficulties in transferring the concept of 'structure of feeling', described by Raymond Williams as "a particular quality of experience and relationship" (1977:132), from the "level of a national society to that of a city or region" (Taylor *et al.*, 1996:6). However, there is evidence of a local structure of feeling in Byker in the way people appropriate and experience space. This is understood by Taylor's application of the concept in Manchester and Sheffield as "features that define (a place) and endow it with an identity

which ...can perhaps be thought of as a 'local structure of feeling'" (1996:32). In this final section the chapter will look back over the circumstances found in Byker which enabled a person to express a sense of local belonging (roots, social capital and use of symbolic capital) and try to make sense of this via a concept of a local structure of feeling.

This research identifies three elements of a local structure of feeling which are important in understanding why participants may or may not form attachments to the local and how they become expressed as the characteristics discussed in the previous chapter. This local structure of feeling is comprised of: a discourse of respectable working class and the deserving poor; a perception of a strong community spirit, and an affective atmosphere (Anderson, 2009) of 'prestige'.

The legacy of Byker as a 'slum clearance area' (albeit one which fiercely fought this label), combined with the residual position of local authority housing and a current climate of welfare restructuring, came together in informing the first identified local structure of feeling in Byker. This was most commonly expressed in a discourse of the respectable and unrespectable working-class. The influence of a legacy of the label of 'slum clearance' has been found in research in similar communities (Rogaly and Taylor, 2009), and Hall (2012) has commented on the persistence of the workhouse on working-class collective memory in areas where such institutions had been situated. Therefore it is not difficult to imagine the resentment, felt by many of the older generation of some of the 'old' Byker participants, in feeling that the hard fought for respectability of Byker was being undermined by "*moving in the wrong sort of people*". As alluded to above, there was often a geography to this imagination of 'respectable people' with the West-End of Newcastle (where such undesirables were often believed to be moving to Byker from) having a legacy of 'less respectable-working class', more often associated with 'social-slums' of the 1960s, than Byker and the East of the city more generally, which were considered more respectable and a 'slum' in bricks and mortar only.

A discourse of the 'deserving and undeserving poor' has its roots in *The New Poor Law* of 1834, discussed by Hall (2012) in relation to its legacy on the

conceptualization of 'poor' areas and functions to divide those into who 'deserve' State assistance and those who do not. By the fact that the majority of participants in this study (reflecting the majority of residents in the Estate) were in receipt of some form of state welfare, by 'othering' people in the community who were not deemed to 'deserve', participants were able to differentiate themselves between them and 'the other'. The residual position of local authority housing- a discourse of 'sink estates' in the 1990s, and mainstream discourse of 'strivers and shirkers' surrounding welfare claimants in today's political discourse - meant participants were often eager to distance themselves from this. By articulating an 'other' they then afforded themselves the agency of dissociating themselves with 'Byker' (as a social housing estate) all together: *"I don't think I share the same culture as the rest of the people here"* (CP) or forging attachments to very particular spaces in the Estate, *"This is the Posh-End"* (SG). Therefore the creation of an 'other' used the characteristic of critical distance from the local (as discussed in the previous chapter) to create the circumstance in which to express a belonging to or displacement from the local.

A second local structure of feeling, that can be identified in shaping the circumstance in which to form local attachments, is that of a perceived community spirit. Rogaly and Taylor (2009) and Janet Fink (2011) have both discussed the tendency to 'fix' areas such as Byker with a particular set of characteristics; social networks and 'community spirit' being two of them. Although there was much scepticism around this term (*"I'll tell you a cock-and-bull story shall I? There is a wonderful community spirit here"* OR), there was a perception that there was *"a lot going on"* in Byker and that the opportunity to 'get involved' was there if you wanted to. For some of the newer residents this oscillated between wariness of neighbourly intrusion and romanticism of 'old fashioned' or 'traditional' communities. However the perception of a 'community spirit' (whether this was seen as a positive or not) was often enough to provide the circumstance in which people *wanted* to form some degree of attachment to place via an expression of a commitment to it. Therefore social networks, no matter how small, were very important in fostering attachments to very particular and immediate spaces in the estate.

Finally, the symbolic capital that Byker afforded 'Creative Professional' participants in the 'prestige' of being 'cool' and iconic in terms of its architecture has parallels with the symbolic capital it afforded 'old' Byker participants when they first moved to the Estate immediately after the redevelopment. At that time, moving into a new council flat signalled a certain level of social achievement for the residents, today choosing to move to somewhere 'like Byker' carried with it a similar level of symbolic and cultural capital for some of the members of the 'Creative Professionals' in the Estate.

As a result of the individual capacities and propensities to belong (or otherwise), the concept of habitus (how people embody and deploy certain competencies based on social, economic and cultural capital) has proven useful in understanding how people relate to the places in which they live. Therefore it can be seen that although there were differences in why individuals expressed a sense of belonging to Byker, there was overlap in the circumstance for why people were able to forge attachments. Thus a revised understanding of roots, awareness of the importance of social capital and networks as well as an awareness of the way in which symbolic capital is deployed in elective belonging, are all important findings from this research in understanding why people may express belonging to the local.

## **6.5 Conclusions**

In identifying these points of overlap the research has troubled traditional assumptions from community studies about 'local' and 'migrant' binaries in how places are experienced. As a result it has sought to understand this as a much more complex process of negotiating both capacities and propensities to belong to the local. Drawing on contemporary understandings of how habitus is played out in local communities (Bridge 2008, Allen, 2008 Savage *et al.*, 2005), this chapter has explored the influence of the competencies gained by various capitals in the willingness and ability for people to forge local attachments. In doing so it was found that social capital, feeling secure and familiar and having social networks in a place enhanced the capacity to belong for the majority of residents. As such,

social capital was a key part of the circumstance of belonging and reason for commitment and contribution towards it. Cultural and symbolic capital had a more complex relationship to the experience of place, often providing a source of tension in how much people wanted to belong, or had a willingness to recognise it and become a source of distinction between the Self and the 'other' and a mediating point for when belonging was and wasn't recognised.

Why people do or do not express a sense of belonging to the local cannot be reduced to whether they are considered a 'local' or a 'migrant' to the community. Neither were cosmopolitan attachments or parochial belonging determined by the socio-economic or class position of the resident in their traditional relationship to the labour market. Reasons for belonging or attachment to the local in Byker proved more complex than this. Negotiations were involved between competing capitals and the access residents had to both social and cultural capital in allowing them to forge attachments to where they lived if, that is, this is something they wished to do.

This chapter has primarily considered the role of cultural and social factors in identifying the circumstance which can foster local belonging and attachment. In the next chapter, the context of urban change is considered in a similar way. By looking specifically at what happens to local belonging and attachment during processes of urban regeneration, the thesis makes its final substantive contribution to understanding the nature of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities.

## **Chapter Seven: From the Tangible to the Intangible in Urban Regeneration**

### ***Local belonging and attachment in the context of urban change***

The previous two chapters have firstly, looked at how local belonging and attachment is expressed in the everyday experience of place, the characteristics of belonging and secondly, why might people express a sense of belonging to place; and secondly, the circumstance which provide the capacity and propensity in which to belong. In considering the circumstances in which people are able or otherwise to express a sense of belonging to the local, social factors of roots, social networks and symbolic capital were considered as important reasons emerging from this research as to why people may have attachments to place. This chapter turns to consider the specific influence of urban change and how local attachments may be shaped and altered in the context of urban regeneration. In doing so it draws partly on literature from environmental psychology in understanding how the physical environment can contribute to place attachment but also makes use of urban and human geography in analysing how urban transformation is made sense of and given meaning to, by those who live amongst it. As material landscapes are transformed, this chapter looks at how this in turn, quite explicitly, transforms the social and cultural associations of urban landscapes as well (Jones and Evans, 2012).

On the subject of urban change and transformation Jones and Evans (2012: 2321) write:

“In urban regeneration, there is often wholesale destruction of existing landscapes, with new developments frequently targeted at a different user group. Changing both the bodies and the environments, therefore, resets the clock on place association. Little wonder then that so many UK regeneration schemes can be characterized as bland and soulless- there is no pretence of paying attention to the identities that informed attachments to the places they were before.”

This was written in the context of a method referred to as 'rescue geographies', which seeks to "capture the embodied relationship between communities and urban spaces prior to redevelopment" in an effort to provide "existing place associations (that) can help create more authentic regeneration schemes" (pp.2315). Urban change, as it is broadly understood, is continual, however urban regeneration in its more formal sense has moved through several distinct iterations in Byker, as outlined in Chapter Four. Therefore this chapter does not provide an account of 'rescue geographies' *prior* to development, as Jones and Evans do, but instead looks at how the accumulation of decades of urban transformation (some dramatic, others more subtle), and contemporary re-imaginings of urban space, have contributed to a distinct local structure of feeling which can be used in understanding the nature of local belonging and attachments.

Previous research attention to how urban regeneration can affect local belonging and attachment has been limited. As Chapter Two showed, concern over local resident response to regeneration has been mainly focused on quantitative counts of behaviour such as visitor numbers, perception and recommendations (Evans, 2005). Where a qualitative dimension to this understanding has been introduced it has been done at a mostly superficial level. Consideration has been of pride in a development, approval, and a perception of what it might mean for the city or the area more generally (Miles *et al.*, 2004, Miles, 2005a), as well as influencing the *aspirations* of local residents (Raco *et al.*, 2008)

Studies of individual communities subjected to regeneration have often focused on the class dimension of gentrification (May, 1996). Working-class residents in such studies will often talk of their communities radically changing both socially and physically before their eyes; rocketing housing prices, 'yuppie pubs' and competition for services and resources. In a return to the traditional split in community studies between 'locals' and 'migrants', newcomers are often discussed in terms of the cultural and economic capital they bring, their valuing of local heritage and sense of place, as well as a more 'global outlook' which comes with the ability to be mobile. However, what is rarely addressed explicitly by such gentrification studies is the impact this urban transformation has on the capacity

and propensity to belong in the local and to feel some sense of attachment to it. Therefore by asking the question of “*what do these regeneration spaces mean to you?*”, the discussion in this chapter starts to contribute to a gap in the literature in the understanding of the impact of urban regeneration on local residents.

Such questions of how regeneration impacts on belonging and attachment tap into broader and more normative questions of who urban regeneration is for (Pike *et al.*, 2007) and what it should look like. As discussed in Chapter Four, the ‘New Urbanism’ which emerged in the UK in the 1990s, saw urban development characterised by an ‘urban renaissance’ approach. This focused primarily on revitalising derelict post-industrial spaces and re-orientating local economies towards leisure and culture in a reimagining of their identities. However it also looked to tackle social exclusion in deprived neighbourhoods. Urban spaces were redesigned, not only to be visually appealing as part of a spectacle of the city, but also to provide a whole new experience of urban living that took into account the role of *place* as something defined by those who inhabited it. ‘Urban renaissance’ then was supposed to attend to how people lived in and experienced cities taking seriously the associations of heritage, community and social justice and involving communities in regeneration initiatives. Although not wishing to provide a whole-scale evaluation of the extent to which this was achieved, the analysis in this chapter does, to a degree, test the claims of ‘new urbanism’ to engage more fully with local culture and heritage.

Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space (1991a), the above outline of urban change in the 1990s and early 2000s is part of a much longer context of urban change, described in Chapter Four as providing the representation of space in Newcastle and Byker specifically. The previous two empirical chapters have focused mostly on sketching the space of representation in Byker, how space has been appropriated, used and experienced at the grounded level of the everyday. This chapter brings an analysis of these two levels of abstraction closer together in a discussion of how the representation of space in urban regeneration can impact the expressions and negotiations of belonging and attachment to the local in the everyday experience of place.

The chapter will therefore explore how urban regeneration was understood and given meaning to in the everyday experience of Byker. This is done through the lens of spatial practices and affects, and what this can tell us about the nature of local belonging and attachments in contemporary cities. In doing so it highlights the importance of considering both the tangible and the intangible effects of regeneration, so not only how residents may use space but how they image it, and what affect both physical presence as well as atmosphere of regeneration can have on local belonging and attachment. Through an intertwining of both the physical and social aspects of regeneration, the tangible and intangible, the local structure of feeling in Byker is again contributed to in helping to understand the nature of local belonging. But first, the chapter looks more broadly at what urban regeneration meant to the participants in Byker.

## **7.1 The Meaning of Urban Regeneration**

The overwhelming finding of this research was that participants' accounts and understanding of regeneration were often quite different to that of urban regeneration practitioners and 'experts'. When initially asked to talk about their experience of living in the community, the subject of regeneration was rarely raised. This may or may not be surprising in an area subject to significant and continual waves of regeneration over the years, but with the exception of the 1970s redevelopment for those who could remember it, regeneration did not appear as an area of immediate concern in the everyday life of Byker. The absence of reference to regeneration does not necessarily point to its lack of significance more generally for residents, but does give an insight into their relationship with it. When compared with what *is* mentioned as being important- immediate neighbours, location, and crime for example as discussed in the previous chapter- regeneration appears immediately to have a distance from the lived experience of a local community. It is something 'out there' or 'done to' a place, not an intimate and everyday part of it. This could be seen as the first source of tension between local residents and regeneration, that it is not part of the community experience, but operates outside of it at a different level of abstraction. This is often the criticism levelled at top-down

approaches to regeneration which fail to involve or engage with the local community.

Secondly it is useful to note what types of regeneration projects and spaces were mentioned in participant accounts, both spontaneously and when prompted. Specific examples tended to differ from the usual regeneration examples cited in policy and academic literature on Newcastle, such as the Quayside and Grainger Town (Madanipour, 2010, Miles, 2005a, Miles *et al.*, 2004, Minton, 2003). Some reference was made spontaneously by participants to more recent physical improvement to the Estate, under the city wide Decent Homes programme, with participants usually referring to this when talking about how the Estate had improved since they had moved there. They cited examples such as improved fencing, cleaning up of parks and public spaces, and some mention of improvements to individual homes such as the fitting of new kitchens and bathrooms. Although the examples of only a few, these accounts of very specific, concrete and tangible examples of regeneration suggest an immediacy to everyday life that may be required if members of a community are to refer to them with any kind of significance to their lives in a place. By contrast, regeneration of the Newcastle and Gateshead Quays, Ouseburn and even Shields Road, although in close proximity to their everyday life, did not feature significantly in many participant accounts of regeneration.

In turning to look at *how* participants spoke about regeneration, there remains the same detached approach evident in *what* regeneration is spoken about. Here, there were examples of residents 'taking on' or appropriating popular and policy discourse of regeneration, what de Certeau (1984) refers to as second-order thought. This meant that when asked about regeneration in the area, or what regeneration was perceived to be needed in the area, popular and public discourse around development was often reached for. "*More open spaces and parks*" (HL), for example was often cited as something that the community would benefit from, particularly for the local children. Ironically, Byker as an inner city estate is unusual in that it boasts a large amount of such open spaces and public parks. Despite this there was a commonly held perception amongst many residents that open space

was something Byker lacked. Objectively what was lacking was *usable* open space or *accessible* open space.

Similarly, some participants spoke of the need for more housing to be developed in Byker, pointing directly to the large amounts of open space that were available. When pushed, participants were not often able to clearly articulate why more housing would be beneficial. There was no objective problem of lack of housing in Byker itself, however despite this, the building of more housing was felt by some participants as a way to improve and develop the area further. Again, this can be interpreted as participants taking on second-order thought (de Certeau, 1984) in their accounts of regeneration and were in fact articulating the popular trend they would have witnessed throughout the city in the past decade, of relying on property-led regeneration to 'improve' local areas.

Decline of the local high-street, Shields Road, was another often cited example of being in need of regeneration. Redevelopment on this site had taken place in the early 2000s with the opening of a new Local Authority Swimming Pool and Health Centre housed within a community library. However for many participants this was not considered regeneration 'of Shields Road', as it was at the back of the site, set back slightly away from the road, and also because it did not involve local retail. There was strong concern from many participants about the decline of Shields Road, signalled by the high number of vacant properties and decline in independent retailers (Figures 7.1 and 7.2). Again, decline of local high-streets and the blame focused on large supermarkets is a common contemporary urban narrative and the desire to see this space revitalized was prevalent in Byker.



Figure 7.1 Decline of Shields Road



Figure 7.2 Closed department store

There is a tendency in these accounts of regeneration to focus on physical development- buildings, environmental upgrading etc.- separately from social and political issues such as cuts to services and lack of opportunities for young people. Something tangible, physical, that can be *seen*, such as more buildings, open spaces and shops were given as examples of regeneration the community needed. However, with the exception of local shops, there was little objective reasoning behind many of the participants' call for such development.

This could mean one of two things. Firstly, it could mean participants are resorting, consciously or otherwise, to second-order thought as described by de Certeau (1984) in articulating the priorities of developers as priorities as their own. Secondly, participants could be articulating a deeper rooted need for *something* to be done, something visible that *makes sense* at a commercial level but also signifies as a certain amount of attention being paid to the community that has been visibly focused elsewhere. Within the traces of a localism agenda in these narratives, there was a desire for stewardship, for ownership, recognition and inclusion, all elements of the characteristic of commitment to place, discussed in Chapter Five, and a very definite sense of place which started with the local.

Concerns were of Shields Road and the neighbourhood parks; there was an immediacy to the everyday grounded experience of local communities which was lacking in some other regeneration projects discussed earlier, which suggests the 'lure of the local' (Lippard, 1997) looms large in questions of regeneration for those residents involved.

There was an overwhelming sense in Byker that this was a community with a long history of central and local government policy being 'done to them'. This was certainly apparent in the current climate of welfare reform and reductions in government and council spending. This was significant in the way residents would often talk about local developments in terms of 'they did this' or 'they are going to do that';

*"They closed all the parks off" (Gordon, OR)*

*"They put a Morrison's at one end and an Asda at the other. What did they expect to happen to Shields Road?" (Steph, HL)*

This type of rhetoric of 'them and us', "they did this" and "they did that" serves as a reminder of the top-down nature of local development and the lack of community engagement with it, resulting in an abstract way of making meaning of it for some participants. Community participation in development was often a sensitive subject in Byker. For many of the older residents it went back to the "mythology of Byker" (Interview with academic) and the very particular local structure of feeling of having the Erskine development held up a shining example of community engagement; something many residents disputed.

For one resident in particular, Sandra in her 50's who had moved to the Estate 20 years ago from elsewhere in the city, community engagement (or lack of) in the regeneration of the area was a source of personal grievance. As part of the local authority Housing Market Pathfinder projects in the late 1990's and early 2000's, small-scale demolition of 1950's houses in the non -Erskine part of the estate took place to make way for new housing. A Design Competition was held by the local contractor to gauge residents' opinions on a number of different plans and Sandra, amongst others, was heavily involved in attending meetings,

communicating with developers and consultation of various plans. After a time, as Sandra described, this *“all came to a shuddering halt”* and she was *“left waiting and wondering what was going to happen for a very long time”*. The development did not go ahead due to financial reasons and as the view of the developer is not represented in this research further speculation and comment on this would not be appropriate. What is however important is the affect this had on the residents involved.

In Sandra’s case, she spoke at length at the *“injustice”* she felt at having given up her own time to be involved in something which for her had *“all been for nothing”*. In terms of how Sandra was left feeling about the local community, she talked about suddenly feeling apart from it, as if suddenly displaced somewhere else that she had no control over and interest in:

*“It took a while for me to feel happy about the place again, I would walk past it (the development site) and think of what it could have been and what it would have looked like. It all felt a bit hopeless really”* (Sandra, HL)

Sandra was left feeling disenfranchised and powerless over place by the experience of this redevelopment and although community engagement in regeneration will always be a question of managing expectations, what is important to note and be aware of is the impact of such engagement on residents. Sandra’s case demonstrates the emotional and material commitment invested in regeneration by community members and the way in which the management of such engagement can have positive and negative impacts on residents’ relationship with the place in which they live. She made a commitment to her place by this engagement and this was subsequently undermined. Sandra expressed feelings of displacement from her local community in the fact that she was no longer able to have a say or be involved in what might happen to it. What mattered to her was that she was able to feel involved and her opinion as a local resident valued. The outside influence of development (or, in this case, failed development) ruptured this and her relationship with the place.

This, and the previous discussion of the adopting of 'expert' discourse in talking about regeneration in their communities, poses some important questions for how planners and practitioners go about consultation work and engage with the people they are planning for. It appears from this research there was a difficulty, for some participants, in being able to break away from 'expert' or dominant discourses of community. This may have limits for the insights we are able to gain regarding what communities actually want and need from regeneration as there can be difficulty separating this from what they may be unconsciously conditioned to say.

In discussing the abstract accounts of regeneration and reflecting on the experience for residents such as Sandra, the importance of tangibility, local involvement and the influence of the immediate everyday lived experience of a place have come to the fore, as some of the aspects of regeneration which may have more positive potential in responding to and engaging with place and its local cultures as a *lived space*. Immediacy and tangibility in local regeneration clearly matter. However, despite the somewhat detached way regeneration was spoken about in participant accounts of the community, a closer analysis of the lived experience of community reveals something different. In attending to the way in which people  *dwell* in a place, as Lefebvre asserts, we can begin to understand how place is directly lived through its associated images and symbols, hence (becoming) the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users' (1991b:38-39). In other words, how people use and feel about regeneration spaces can help us understand their relationship to place, and what happens to this relationship in the process of urban change.

## **7.2 Importance of the Lived Experience**

Based on the summary above, the rest of this chapter concerns itself with how participants inhabited regeneration space, "making it one's own, marking it, modelling it, shaping it" (Lefebvre, 1970:222 quoted in Stanek, 2011:87), not just in terms of their spatial practices of dwelling, but their own representations of it in memory, perception and affect.

This builds on a conceptualization of the two aspects of regeneration discussed above (the tangible and the intangible) but also attends to the way in which belonging to place has been understood in this thesis, as having both practices and affective dimensions. In using this same framework for understanding, it is hoped to highlight the tensions between the representation of regeneration space by “scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers” (Lefebvre, 1991a:38) and how it is lived as “an affective kernel or centre” (pp.42).

Despite the importance of the lived experience, this research has found that this does not have to mean *physical* appropriation in itself, neither does it have to mean appropriation and acceptance of the strategies of urban development (to use de Certeau’s terminology) without some form of adaptation or re-making of a space by those who use it. By looking at the tactics employed by participants to; make sense of, give meaning to and in some cases, make usable, different regeneration spaces, this chapter adds an empirical understanding to the spatial dialectics of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991a). The remainder of this chapter will look at the use of regeneration space by participants (both in terms of spatial practice and affect) to tease out how they made sense of and gave meaning to it, and what this can contribute to the understanding of local belonging and attachment in cities.

### **7.3 Appropriation and Affect of Urban Regeneration Space**

De Certeau’s interest in the tactics of spatial practice come from a critique of ‘totalising urbanism’ and a quest to “trace out the use of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop” (1984:xviii). There were multiple examples of where the tactics of spatial practice would be seen to subsume the, perhaps intended or ‘planned’, use of space in Byker, which also give insight into how such urban developments may have informed belonging and attachments to these spaces.

Much reference was made to the way the physical structure of the Byker ‘Wall’ cut off the community from the traditionally important commercial centre of

Shields Road. In an effort to address this, as well as upgrading some of the open space in the area, the Byker Link was developed from a disused railway line into a right of way through the North West part of the Estate onto the West end of Shields Road. During a walking interview with Pete, he showed me the Byker Link as an example of *“everything the Council gets wrong with planning in Byker”*. Pete had lived and worked in Byker for 15 years, having moved from the South East, and his main argument (which was substantiated by other residents interviewed) was that the right of way came out of the Estate into a public car park on the other side of the Wall (Figure 7.3). There was then little indication of which direction one should cross the car park to get eventually to Shields Road on the other side. Issues of pedestrian safety, particularly in icy weather when there was some confusion over which of the businesses surrounding the car park was obliged to grit it, were raised by several participants but there was a larger grievance than this. There was a sense that this would not have happened in any other community and that Byker had, once again, drawn the short straw in terms of receiving well thought out and considered development.

*“I didn’t honestly think they would make such a horrible mess of it, and I didn’t think they would jeopardize people’s access to that extent either. They just didn’t care about that”* (Emily, CP).



*Figure 7.3 Exiting of Byker Link*

The example of the Byker Link and lack of access to and from Shields Road more generally was often told with incredulity, that the council had even considered it. This was further demonstrated by a story concerning a smoking shelter which was erected by one of the Bingo Halls bordering the car park (Figure 7.4).



*Figure 7.4 Site of former smoking shelter    Figure.7.5 Use of Byker Link*

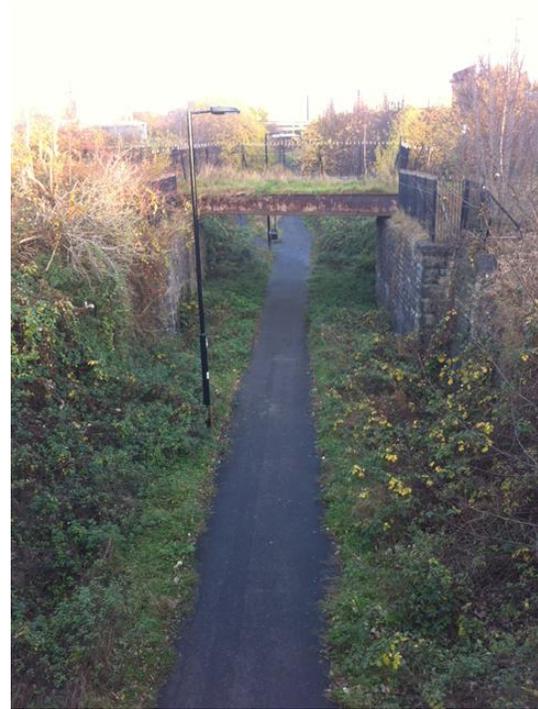
Several participants told the story of walking to Shields Road one day and finding the whole width of the pavement outside the hall taken up by a customer smoking shelter, some participants also told me the shelter contained electronic gambling machines. “*Ridiculous*” (Emily, above) was one of the adjectives used to describe this, “*typical*” (Pete) was another and within these two words a sense is gained of the extent to which communities such as this can be subjected to local development on a continuing basis, which, for many, appears to come out of nowhere and have no logical and useful reason for building it. As a result, an inspection of the Byker Link itself shows that many who use the right of way do not physically use the space in the way in which it was intended. This is evidenced by the many ‘informal pathways’ or ‘desire-lines’ created by people cutting grassy corners and taking different routes from it (Figure 7.5). The result, was that walking on this site as practiced narration in De Certeau’s view, became either avoided all

together by some participants, or re-appropriated via the re-marking of informal 'desire-lines'.

After several complaints and investigations on behalf of two of the residents, the smoking shelter was found not to have planning permission and the council instructed the Bingo Hall to dismantle it. In this example, it was the development of private business as opposed to regeneration attempts by the local authority that caused some residents to speak out. However, for many of the participants, the actors behind developments in and around the Estate, was not the central concern. What mattered more was the feeling that regeneration and development was something 'done to', rather than 'done for', the community and indeed this top-down and oftentimes universalistic approach could be the reason it was often absent from initial narratives of community experience. It quite simply did not often touch the lives of the residents in a way that they thought was part of their grounded experience and that was 'their own'.

The exiting of the Byker Link onto Shields Road offered little physical mobility in terms of alternative routes and pathways; the most common response was to avoid this stretch of the Link altogether. This contrasts with the stretch of path running away from Shields Road towards South Byker and the River (Figures 7.6 and 7.7) as demonstrated by Kate:

*"The Link is great for running, I quite often run there and cycle sometimes. You get a real sense of the past of the area, you know, as you are following the old train line, and the way they have left the hedges too, sort of overgrown and not all manicured, like a English hedgerow! But then at the end when it comes out there (Shields Road), I'll not run that way, I would rather go all the way around. It's depressing coming out into a car park and the first you see is that!" (CP)*



*Figures 7.6 & 7.7 South of Byker Link*

Demonstrated here, is the ability to appropriate space ‘as one’s own’ which participants responded to much more favourably even if the same top-down process of development was evident. The Newcastle Quayside is an interesting example of this. One of the major sites of culture and property-led regeneration in the North East, the Newcastle and Gateshead Quays have been extensively written about in academic as well as policy literature (Minton, 2003, Macpherson, 1993, see also discussion in Chapter two). In the wider literature much has been written about this and similar arts-based and waterfront developments as being exclusionary to the local communities around them, offering little in the way of engagement, economically, socially or culturally (Bassett, *et al.*, 2002, Owen, 1993, Harvey, 1973, 1989). Certainly it could be argued in the case of the NewcastleGateshead Quayside that the economic benefits to the city have not reached much further down the Quayside to communities such as Byker (Middleton and Freestone, 2008). This is often followed by a charge of such developments reflecting particular middle class tastes and cultures, to the

exclusion of the culture and heritage of surrounding communities (Evans and Foord, 2002).

Considering the profile of the Quayside, within the regeneration of Newcastle as well as its proximity to Byker, it was surprising that it was seldom mentioned by participants. It was certainly mentioned much less than the redevelopment of the Byker Estate which took place over 30 years ago, again confirming the immediacy in relation to everyday life for residents. Local residents live within the legacy of the 1970's regeneration every day, the Quayside regeneration was felt by some to be something 'out there' (spatially as well as culturally) that is not engaged with in such a direct way. However, when asked about the regeneration of the Quayside directly, there were some interesting responses.

Some participants such as Jack, had a strong sense of displacement from the Quayside. Jack, in his 60's had been born in Byker and moved away aged 20 to another part of the city but had returned several years ago to relocate his business there. He claimed the Quayside had been "*killed off*" and that it "*has lost all of its identity*". Explaining further Jack described how "*the heart had gone out of the Quayside when they took that Boat away*". The 'Boat' he is referring to was the local name for the Tuxedo Princess, a 'floating nightclub' on a permanently moored disused car ferry. It's removal, in 2002 was seen as part of the re-imaging of the Quayside in order to better fit with the cultural developments of the Sage Music Centre and Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts, and to also move the brand of NewcastleGateshead away from the party city image of the 1990's. For Jack, the removal of 'The Boat', in an effort to 'clean up' the image of the Tyne and the city as a whole, was symptomatic of a removal of any trace of the working-class heritage he identified with. He also made reference to the Sunday Quayside market in a similar vein. The market had been a traditional focus of Sunday shopping for many of the communities along the river, including Byker. Over the years, as the demographic make-up of the Quayside changed, so too did the market, reflecting more and more middle-class taste for handcrafted goods and farmers market produce. For many, including Jack, this was another example of

the 'yuppification' or gentrification of what had been a traditional working-class household market and a source of cultural distance between him and the regeneration.

However not all participants took this view, and for many others the often most pleasing element of the Newcastle Quayside was the ability to walk along the river and take advantage of the views. Although this was not mentioned by all participants, it was unique in being one of the only uses of space that those from a cross section of backgrounds in the community tended to agree on. Old and newer Byker participants alike, although not uncritical of the developments here, were often united in the pleasure taken of the views afforded down the river now that it had been opened up and people were offered the potential for walking along it.

*"It's lovely to be able to walk along there now"* (Sally, HL)

*"The views are amazing, we're very lucky to have them on our doorstep"*  
(Jenny, SG)

*"I'm pleased they did all that. It looks so much better now"* (Andrea, SG)

When asked about why being able to walk along the river and take advantage of the views was important to these residents, their responses revealed some expected findings of *"pride"* and *"like to show off the river"* to visitors as found by Miles *et al.* (2004). However there was something more than this. There was a sense of 'openness' about the Quayside and an imagined space that seem to invite its own interpretation and meaning. This could be down to the topography of the site or the previous inaccessibility of it but it was also about the connection the river and the Quayside made between Byker and the rest of the city.

*"I always walk or cycle that way into Town"* (Kate, CP)

*"We have views of the river and the bridges from here (the flats in the wall) that other people in Newcastle are paying a fortune for"* (Sandra, HL)

What was interesting, however, was the lack of engagement with many of the cultural venues or bars and restaurants along the Quayside. Aside from a couple of

mentions of attending concerts at the Sage and one-off visits to Baltic, most participants who had experience of the Quayside only appropriated the 'free space' of walking and view gazing. However again, both older and newer community residents were united in a rejection of the mainstream middle-class tastes on offer on the Quayside and critical of a lack of authenticity and industrial heritage. They preferred, instead, to produce their own space though their own meanings and usage of it.

The importance of the River Tyne to the social history of the communities which run along it, is something explored by local writer Michael Chaplin in his illustrated book, *Tyne View* (2012) as well as his 2013 play *Tyne*. Here, he explores how the place the Tyne occupies in the hearts of many local residents speaks of both its future as well as the importance of its past. Therefore the focus of the River Tyne, as a 'locus' of belonging to place for many in Byker, is perhaps not surprising. What is perhaps unexpected is the continuity in these attachments despite the changing use and image of the river. Its transformation from a post-industrial space to one orientated towards a service and leisure economy driven by middle class culture and taste, far from displacing participants who may not identify with this, may actually have re-placed them in a section of the landscape integral to the development of Byker in the first place.

Therefore by looking at how people appropriate space and how they use it, this research has highlighted a dissonance in many of the actual critiques of iconic waterfront developments as being socially and spatially excluding (Middleton and Freestone, 2008). With the proviso that this type of development leaves 'space' (both psychical and imaginary) to appropriate it as one's own; the example of Newcastle Quayside has demonstrated there can be the potential for reaffirming of local identity and belonging from a broad spectrum of 'locals'. This confirms Miles (2005b) that the meaning of culture-led regeneration can be open to the negotiation for local residents and well as Lynch's (1960) earlier theorising on the need for 'plasticity' in the urban environment.

### 7.3.1 *Architecture or Society?*

The discussion of the River Tyne as a 'locus of memory' and a way of fixing memories and narratives of place brings the chapter to a consideration of the dialectic between the tangible and the intangible in urban change. Urban regeneration will always consist of some physical transformation and the appropriation of these transformations via spatial practice solidifies this. However there is an intangible dimension to regeneration not only for what it says about a place in terms of an image or brand, but also what memories and narratives of place they may inspire.

A common pattern in the accounts of many of the participants who could remember 'old Byker' and the redevelopment, was to begin by talking about the architecture, essentially blaming it for the decline of their community. However, towards the end of their narrative, the participant would often come around to talking about social aspects of the community that were seen as lacking. When then asked again whether they thought it was the architecture or society that had changed Byker their evaluation tended to be more reflexive and balanced.

An example of this comes from Martin, who had lived in Byker most of his life. He started the narrative of his experience in Byker by lamenting the loss of the old community and fixing the blame squarely on the 1970's redevelopment:

*"They destroyed this community when they built that eyesore, it completely cuts off Shields Road from the rest of the community. It's like the Berlin Wall."*

When asked what he would like to see happen in the community to change it, architecture was the main target again:

*"We need to regenerate to go back. Bring back the houses, bring back the terraces. People were more friendly in the terraces, when everyone had their own doorstep and back lane. Now you never see anyone, everyone is inside doing their own thing, nobody talks"*

There are several things to note in Martin's narrative. Firstly, there is evidence of the idea introduced above that within physical and social regeneration issues, the

tangible and the intangible are, at first, separated and dealt with independently in residents' accounts. Martin identifies architecture as both to blame for the decline of community in Byker as well as a source of its renewal. Interestingly again, when talking about future generations he would like to see in the area, he said; "*we need to regenerate to go back*". This at first would appear an oxymoron as regeneration, in an urban development sense, is about moving forward and away from what already exists. When asked further about this comment, Martin continued then to talk about "*bringing back the old houses*", referring to the terrace streets, back lanes and individual doors and front doorsteps; physical remnants of the past community which he viewed as being so important to a very material sense of being 'at-home' (*with your own front door*). However despite this focus on the physical, societal change also creeps into his narrative. He refers to people not being as friendly and "*being inside doing their own thing*", hinting at the type of individualism which has come to characterize modern society and a lack of neighbourly behaviour. Towards the end of his account, the physical and social elements of regeneration have become much more difficult to separate; "*I suppose it's 50/50*" (Martin).

This demonstrates the way participants were often unable to clearly separate the impacts of the physical redevelopment from wider societal changes when talking about their experience of the community. A distinction between the two was often used in structuring the narrative, and in making sense of their experience, but the weaving of the two together demonstrated how these two different aspects of regeneration were experienced together in the grounded experience of everyday life. At the end of this type of narrative, it was often difficult for the resident to pin down the cause of decline in Byker to either physical regeneration or social factors, when in reality the two were experienced more as a dialectic than a binary. This analysis shows a tightly woven dialectic, suggesting the lived experience of such interventions does not neatly separate these two approaches out as is often done in urban regeneration policy and planning literature.

The dialectic between soft and physical aspects of regeneration was observed in more positive narratives also. The community garden was often cited as a successful example of where the physical environment of the Estate had been upgraded whilst also engaging with young people in the area who had worked on the garden and later became its informal custodians. The views and natural light afforded into the properties were also a source of enhancement of the residents' sense of wellbeing in the Estate. The 'Wall' itself, described earlier by one resident as "*The Berlin Wall*" (Martin, OR) had a mixed response. Some, in agreement with the latter saw it as an eyesore, back to front and cutting the Estate off from the rest of the Byker area. Others however described it as having a sheltering quality; protecting the estate, and for one resident, "*like forming two protective arms around the estate, giving it a hug*" (Andrea, OR).

This intangible affect brings attention to a number of important points to be developed in this chapter. Firstly, the importance of the lived experience in understanding regeneration. By looking at this grounded level of experience we can get a sense of how regenerated space is produced not only from the top-down, in terms of planners and practitioners, but also by the social actors who use and appropriate this space. This production of a space of representation (Lefebvre, 1991a) brings us to the second point, that by asking questions of local belonging and attachment in relation to the appropriation of space, we can get a sense of what they *mean* to residents, therefore adding the affective dimension of regeneration into the relationship.

### **7.3.2 Role of Memory**

This brings the chapter to a discussion of the role memory played in making sense of urban change and how this can influence local belonging and attachment. Andrea, born in Byker, had left when she was 18 and returned in her 50s to look after her elderly mother. Since her mother passed away, she had decided to stay in Byker and had been living there for the last 5 years. During a walking interview I asked what she enjoyed about being back in Byker, she answered: "*I suppose everything is just familiar, comforting, memories of my childhood I suppose*", therefore displaying many of the characteristics of local belonging identified in

Chapter Five. When challenged on the idea of familiarity, given that the physical fabric of the place in many ways looked so different, her answer pointed to the ideas of streets and buildings having the ability to be a locus of memory, even if they were no longer tangibly there:

*“It looks so different, it does I know, but just across this bridge here to the left is Albion Row and my aunties had a pie shop, so I always remember the pie shop, just full of smells, being in the kitchen. Even though it is in my mind’s eye, I fill in the blanks.”* (Andrea, OR)

The memories of places, buildings, smells, emotions and people which came alive to Andrea during the walking interview illustrate the importance of local heritage and the concept of ‘elective belonging’ (Savage *et al.*, 2005) explored in the previous chapter, allows us to see how people blend this with their own biographies. In the case of Andrea, being once again in the physical surroundings of her birthplace, she was able to express a belonging and attachment to the local by seeing in her “*mind’s eye*” through and between the gaps in the build heritage of the estate and “*fill(ing) in the blanks*” with memories on which to forge her sense of belonging to place.

Andrea described feeling as if she “*was walking on the bones of her ancestors*”. This demonstrates walking as practiced narration (de Certeau, 1984) and the affect of place bringing back memories of her childhood (hooks, 2006). Andrea’s eloquent phrasing of local belonging and attachment, in the context of physical regeneration, reflects Jones and Evans (2012) call for Rescue geographies as being the need for regeneration to be more mindful of the memories that communities and individuals have invested in places which are facing significant transformation.

As Andrea and other residents have demonstrated in this study, these memories linger on, long after the materials of places and locations they are anchored in have gone, resulting in some instances of a narrative of nostalgia becoming part of the collective memory of a place. Alice Mah (2010) has taken up this sense of ‘lingering’ memories in places in an idea of haunting, in the context of

unused buildings and post-industrial landscapes in and around former ship yard areas of the Tyne. This brings attention to the atmospheric and affective dimension of what happens when landscapes and buildings lose their original purpose, but are left physically occupying space in the communities they once supported as 'thick places' (Casey, 2001) replete with affective atmospheres ( Anderson, 2009). There were examples of these types of buildings in Byker; the former wash and bath house which is now an indoor climbing wall, the Library which occasionally serves as office space and the pubs which have gone through various names and landlords.

During heritage walking tours of Byker it was striking that the purpose of the tour, to celebrate the listed heritage of the iconic Erskine development, was subsumed by a desire on the part of many residents joining the tour to remember 'old' Byker, thus practicing the process of 'seeing through the gaps' in the built environment, as Andrea did, and creating a place 'in their minds eye' to which they could forge a deeper sense of attachment. There was often good natured bantering between participants of the walking tours on the extent to which claims of belonging in 'old' Byker could be substantiated; by remembering the names of various shops, and the 'authenticity' of these attachments, in who knew the shopkeeper intimately by their first name or as a customer by their last. This challenges the authorised heritage discourse (Smith, 2006) of the listing of the architecture, and although this was not strictly used as part of a regeneration strategy, still informs the context of urban change.

The above discussion shows that transformation of the urban landscape in itself does not always equate to an undermining of attachments to place. In the case of Andrea and others on the walking tours, it meant they had to work a little harder to forge and maintain a sense of belonging, but it was still there nevertheless. Witnessing urban change as a result of the process of regeneration, and a sense of 'being-there' whilst it was occurring, was also seen to enhance a sense of belonging to the local. Elaine had come to the UK 15 years ago from the Netherlands as a student and moved to Byker 3 years ago after living in several different neighbourhoods around Newcastle. She had always been familiar with

Byker, describing going past quite often on public transport and occasionally attending music events and socialising in the Ouseburn. She talked at length about what an improvement the physical upgrading of the Ouseburn and Quayside had been, enabling better access to it and *“something for everyone”*. Central to her approval of these developments was that she could remember what these spaces had been before, *“inaccessible”, “wasteland”, “and quite dangerous”*. Despite being relatively new to the estate she claimed a sense of ownership over these developments. This was not because she felt they had necessarily been done *for* her, but there was a certain level of quiet satisfaction in knowing that she has *seen* these developments take place and that she could remember and reflect back on what these places had been like before.

Daniel, in his 30s and who had come to the UK from Africa 10 years ago, expressed a similar sentiment when talking about the regeneration of the old Maynard’s Toffee Factory (Figure 7.8) into a creative and dynamic office space, and a former Shipping Office into a boutique hotel;

*“I think it is great what they have done down there. Before it was just an old building nobody used it and now, look at it! You can see the change happening and this is exciting”* (ASR)

Witnessing change in the area then became a key way of ‘new’ Byker residents, in particular overseas migrants, fostering a sense of belonging to Byker:

*“The Library, on Shields Road? I can remember that being built. I can say I was there. I saw it. And that makes me feel like I have a place here because then I can share my story with others. I can tell them about the library and they can tell me about other things, other parts of the history that happened before I got here.”* (Jamie, ASR)

The participants above take a certain pride and comfort in processing some sense of ‘insider knowledge’, that they hold memories of what a place was like before the developers moved in. This in turn gave a sense of ownership, which despite the often limited appropriation of these sites, enhanced their sense of belonging to the local community. Tim’s narrative moves further in expressing a pleasure in seeing

change 'in itself' and the hope and vitality that he sees these developments bringing to the area.

Again this does not necessarily go hand in hand with the practical use of those spaces. Daniel admits in his narrative that the boutique hotel is "*nice, but a bit posh for me*", admitting a discrepancy in economic or cultural capital but not one which seemed to undermine his sense of local attachment. Again this relates to the need for regeneration spaces to be 'open' enough for residents to bring their own memories and meanings to bear on them, which may not conform to the anticipated uses or affects of the developers. Drawing on the spatial dialectics from Lefebvre's *Production of Space* (1991a), this provides an example of tensions in the spatial triad that might actually be beneficial in creating new spaces of local belonging and attachment for residents. It also continues to highlight the dynamic nature of local belonging and attachment, in its ability to bend and respond to changes in the urban landscape, as a result of the active agency of the forging of attachments by local residents and contributes a more nuanced understanding of how pride (as observed by Miles, 2005a) can be articulated through regeneration.

Memory of the past, and witnessing perceived positive change in the present, can therefore be seen as fostering a sense of local attachment. So, too as demonstrated by Daniel's narrative, can hopes for the future. In this respect it was often the spirit in which regeneration was done, and what hopes and values it was seen to enshrine, which produced affective spaces of belonging or otherwise for some residents.

### **7.3.3 *Atmospheres of regeneration (or degeneration)***

The 'spirit' of a regeneration site or strategy can be understood by what its aims were, and how this was carried out. Therefore those regeneration processes that were perceived as having a more bottom-up approach were seen as having a more favourable and positive spirit about them, compared with the top-down 'done-to' approaches discussed earlier. Spirit of regeneration also comes to signify the aspirations of urban change, whether for example a strategy was seen as trying to encourage local arts or attract inward investment. Therefore, in this respect, the

success or failure of regeneration at this stage was less important than its overall ethos. To help explain this, the concept of affective atmospheres (Anderson, 2009) is helpful in thinking about the collective affects which can produce a certain mood, feeling or ambiance about a place, or the transformation of a place. How individuals interact and give meaning to such atmospheres was found to play a role in how they related to a space (or development) and how this in turn impacted upon their sense of attachment to it.

An example of the enhancing potential of an atmosphere of regeneration for local hopes and attachments comes from Mark, who had been living in Byker for 7 years after coming to the UK as an African Asylum Seeker. He spoke at length of the excitement of moving to Newcastle, as he saw it as an “*arts-centre*”, going on to refer specifically to the Ouseburn area directly next to Byker and talked about how important the optimism and dynamism of that area was to the community:

*“There is a lot more people doing creative stuff there, trying to build the community and feed back into the community that is regenerating ourselves as individuals but also the place as a whole. That sense is coming and there is a lot of encouragement for it”.*

Similar to Tim above, when asked how often he visited Ouseburn, Mark’s answer was very rarely. To him, the Ouseburn offered an example of what Byker could become, the potential for development from the ground up which could benefit local people not just materially, but in terms of raising hopes, aspirations and pride in the area. Sam, having moved from elsewhere in the city and shared a similar sentiment. He never visited Ouseburn himself, but spoke proudly about the changes he had seen there since his time in Byker;

*“It’s good to see change there, to see something happen positively. I’m all for it”* (Sam, HL)

A very different interpretation of the ‘spirit’ of the Ouseburn generation was offered by Jack. Unlike Mark and Sam, Jack, now in his 50’s, had lived in the area all his life. His response to the regeneration of Ouseburn was strikingly different. He saw it as a potential threat to the preservation of social housing in Byker and

spoke with some distrust of “*the different kinds of people*” that arts-led regeneration was attracting. Another often cited example of a slight dislocating effect of the regeneration in Ouseburn was the renaming of Byker City Farm as Ouseburn Farm, which many of the residents in this research, who had lived in Byker for a long period of time were against. This was often talked about in terms of the local politics of ward boundary definition and the negative reputation of Byker in relation to other neighbourhoods.

Despite their different outlook, the examples here show that as well as appropriation of space, perception of meaning of the affective atmosphere of space matter also in understanding the impact regeneration can have on a community, and the ability of the residents of the community to identify with it. What this particular regenerated space – the Ouseburn valley- produced in different participants, was a feeling or emotion as to what it *could* mean for them in their community; in other words the potential, or risk they saw it as holding. Pride, optimism and distrust were responses produced in each of the residents and related to how they felt about their own community, and these emotions become part of the affective dimension of belonging and attachment to the local in providing a source of identification or otherwise. For Sam and Mark the Ouseburn development offered something intangible but none the less it was felt it was something that could potentially be ‘for them’, whereas Jack saw it as a potential threat to something that he already, on some level, considered ‘theirs’.

However, the ambiguity of atmosphere, for Anderson (2009) means it is always characterized by absence as well as presence, and regeneration was often talked about in this study in terms of what *wasn't* there and what the community was seen as in need of. These narratives tapped into a contemporary discourse surrounding funding cuts, and reduction in local services in drawing on an atmosphere of decline, particularly in relation to the local high street. The discourse of austerity and cuts, at times spilled over into a discussion of the impacts on the local economy, and the need for more shops and businesses within the Estate itself, but also on Shields Road. For the older generation in particular there was nostalgia for the loss of family and small independent businesses in the

area, but there was also a growing feeling amongst many residents that a more active local economy would help regenerate the whole area.

*“More money in the shops, re-circulating back into the community, that is what Byker needs. Look at Shields Road; it is bookended by Asda at one end and Morrison’s at the other. There is no space for the local retailers any more. And the Post Office, that went (from Raby Cross in the centre of the Estate) that used to bring a lot of the people who worked around the area into the Estate and now they have no need to come in here anymore” (Pete, CP)*

Closure of Post Offices and the dominance of large supermarkets over smaller businesses on British high streets is a common narrative that draws on ideas of community decline and offer very different prospects for local belonging and attachment.

Narratives of community decline and degeneration formed a type of community-led narrative, that often took on a form of ‘passed on’ or ‘learned’ nostalgic discourse, that while not being based on first hand lived experience, was based on the lived experience of others. The following are quotations from ‘Subsequent Generations’ of ‘old’ Byker residents, who had either lived or had family who lived in the community before the 1970’s redevelopment;

*“They never consulted me or my family, although I was only 5 years old at the time”*

*“The developers used to help us skip school, they can’t say they were there to help the community if they were doing things like that?” (Martin)*

*“Those houses were fine, nothing wrong with them. I think they could have been saved, like in Heaton” (Jack)*

*“There are stories of the Council actually proposing to sell the old cobbles they took up back to the developers to use in the new estate!” (Andrea)*

The above extracts all describe an element of the 1970's development, however they are all from the point of view of residents who did not experience it first hand, or at least were very young at the time and are drawing on the experience of others to fill gaps in their own knowledge. This troubles de Certeau's (1984) notion of first and second order thought, as these narratives did not come from direct experience, but neither did they come from top down discourse of regeneration. They came from a critique of the latter, which had become so ingrained in the popular discourse of the community that it formed a common narrative of its own.

The creation of certain affective atmospheres around various sites of regeneration in Byker can be seen as drawing on very particular local structures of feeling, which may help make sense of how they may influence and alter local belonging and attachment.

#### **7.4 Local Structure of Feeling**

A local structure of feeling has emerged from this research that can help explain residents' relationship to the local in the context of regeneration and community development. As David Harvey explains, the real materiality of a place, such as Byker, including the changes and transformations within it and the socio-spatial relations contained within these old and new spaces, shape both opportunity and constraints for social justice (1973). It is this geography of difference which gives form to alignment, experience, commitment and loyalty to place. Therefore understanding how local structure of feeling helps residents make sense of urban change is useful in understanding the nature of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities.

Local attachments in Byker can therefore be understood in part as a structure of feeling based on trajectories of regeneration and community development, which in turn have become closely associated with a narrative of community decline and lack of engagement and use of indigenous potential. This structure of local feeling is vital to acknowledge if urban planners and regeneration

practitioners are to understand how to effectively engage with communities during development.

To demonstrate further the influence of a local structure of feeling, in how local residents respond to urban change and what this means for local attachment, the most contemporary example of regeneration in the estate is discussed; the example of the Byker Community Trust (BCT).

Feelings towards the BCT amongst participants in this research was mixed. Some staunchly supported, and/ were actively involved in, while others were extremely sceptical and took issue with both its agenda and motivations. However other participants remained ambivalent about the organisation. What was clear however, was how the BCT became a vehicle through which common local structure of feeling was asserted and reproduced. Pride was one such feeling; the idea that nowhere else in Newcastle had a Trust like this, one working on behalf of the residents, which tapped into a traditionally strong sense of local identity in Byker and of Byker being “special” (explained in more detail in Chapter Four). This was seen as something that distinguished Byker as ‘different’ in a positive way;

*“It is a unique place, not many places get to have such a set up, it means there is positive change happening” (Mark, ASR)*

This is reminiscent of the ‘Byker for Byker People’ rhetoric of the Erskine development. However this type of response rested on the assumption that the Trust was indeed acting on behalf of the residents, with their interests in mind, and an acceptance of the nature of ownership residents now had over the Estate. For those whom remained sceptical about its plans and motivations, the Trust was often talked of as “*yet another tier of administration*” (HL), and a sense that the change of ownership model would not make any real difference to the people living there.

Optimism and scepticism were two of the main adjectives used to describe residents’ feelings towards the Trust. There was an optimism of the Trust being able to ‘get things done’, either by way of having access to more funds, or by being freed from the bureaucracies of local government. This ‘getting things done’

reflected a sense of stewardship and ownership of the Estate that the transfer of assets from the City Council to the Trust had fostered for many of the residents.

This relates to the discussion of community engagement and participation in regeneration outlined earlier in the chapter, as well as the importance of a sense of stewardship and care of the local, as a characteristic and circumstance of belonging, discussed in Chapter Five. For some, there was a sense that control of the Estate had been taken into their own hands, and they were in a position to influence responsive and place specific changes which would benefit their community. The capacity for this dimension of regeneration to affect local belonging and attachment for these residents is clear. For these participants it fostered a closer engagement with place and a sense of stewardship and commitment to it:

*“It’s yours, you know? When we pay rent we will know where it is going and have some say on how it is spent. Hopefully then people will look after things more. Because it is yours, there is no incentive there to destroy it”*  
(Paul, ASR)

For others however, familiar feelings of being subject to top-down regeneration were expressed in relation to the handling of the campaign for asset transfer, as well as the initial stages of setting up and governance of the Trust.

*“Some of us tried to find some information for the other point of view, you know, against the Trust happening. But we couldn’t. That in itself makes me suspicious”* (Elaine, HL)

*“You know Dan? (Another research participant) well he tried to go to one of the Trust meetings, but couldn’t find out where it was being held! Honestly there was no clear information on any of it. I mean if you are doing a PhD at university and still can’t find a meeting heaven help the rest of us!”*  
(Craig, CP)

This is reminiscent of discussions of other regeneration projects in the area, particularly around Shields Road, being top-down in nature and ‘done to’ the

community rather than 'for them'. Despite rhetoric of Localism and a Big Society stamp of approval from central government (although it should be noted this was not something which was not accepted uncritically by those involved in the Trust either), there were still concerns over the extent to which the Trust was an example of 'community-led' regeneration. Accusations of information withheld and misrepresented were rife amongst those whom remained distrustful of the Trust, with some even commenting on the irony of the name. In terms of local attachments and belonging, it was very difficult for these participants to align themselves with a community development which they saw as being run from outside, or at the very least, reflecting the needs of a handful of community residents.

The Trust provides an interesting illustration then of how regeneration can impact on local senses of attachment and belonging, as the Trust itself is something intangible; not a physical development or regeneration project to be attended but as either a promise of possibilities or a threat of uncertainty, depending on residents' point of view. As the work of the Trust gets underway there will be physical manifestations of this, including environmental works and upgrading of existing buildings, but at the time of this research the only tangible evidence of the BCT were the Trust offices located in the Estate, and the Backing Byker Campaign events and materials produced in the lead up to the ballot for the asset transfer in 2011. Therefore this research provides an insight into the hopes and fears of participants while the Trust is still in its infancy and, more importantly for this chapter, is an example of how intangible affects of regeneration can impact on feelings of local belonging and attachment. The ability of the Trust to either unite, in a sense of shared stewardship, or divide in a tussle over competing needs is yet to be seen. For now, however, it is illustrative of the ability of regeneration activities to have an affective consequence on how people are able to identify with developments in their community and enhance or undermine local attachments and feelings of belonging.

## 7.5 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has drawn attention to the importance of the lived experience of regeneration in understanding the relationship between people and place, both in terms of its appropriation and the meanings ascribed to it. The use and meaning of regeneration spaces for participants had an often complex impact on local belonging and attachments. The tensions they produced in relation to the representation of space and spaces of representation (Lefebvre, 1991a) did not always lead to an undermining of local attachment, and in some cases produced a different imagination or perception of space which actually had an enhancing quality on these feelings. As a result of this, the chapter argues that the affective dimension of regeneration spaces- the memories, atmospheres and emotions ascribed to them- need to be understood as part of a production of spaces of belonging and local attachment. In doing so, attention needs to be paid to the structures of feeling which may provide the framework through which local residents understand and make sense of their position in the local and their relationship to it.

Within this relationship between appropriated and imagined space, there was a dialectic within the lived experience of space which added further complexity to the spatial triad which Lefebvre views as producing social space. Participants' use of tactics and meanings ascribed to regeneration space illustrated the tight interweaving of the tangible and intangible which was also present in many of the narratives of regeneration which shifted from the physical to the social and back again. It was here that abstract or imagined spaces of belonging and attachment had the potential to be produced. This was also evident in both the use of tactics to create and re-shape space, as well as the meaning ascribed to it to re-enforce the agency involved in the production of space, and the forging and producing of attachments to place discussed in the previous chapter. Following from this the bringing together of the tangible and the intangible in both the narrative and the experience of regeneration adds further weight to other ideas, also developed in the previous chapter, regarding the territorial and relational nature of place and attachments to place.

Narrative use and affective dimensions of regeneration in communities demonstrate a nature of local belonging and attachment that was based in but not bounded by a sense of place. This draws on a progressive sense of place that looks outside of itself but these global influences are given 'local colour' in place. Crucially this is different from the quite bounded notion of place that planners and urban regeneration practitioners tend to take. This highlights the relational, yet still very much based in a place expression of belonging from the previous chapter, as it was embedded in their everyday lives whilst also looking outwards and forwards.

## Chapter Eight: Becoming 'Native' to Byker

In this concluding chapter, empirical findings from the research are drawn upon to provide answers to the research questions exploring the nature of belonging and attachment to the local. In drawing together the main theoretical and empirical contributions of the thesis, the two main research interests are pulled together; that of understanding the nature of local attachment, and their negotiation within the process of urban regeneration. Therefore, not only are conclusions drawn for how we can theorise belonging to place, but also about how urban development might be better thought through within a paradigm which takes a holistic view of development and that takes individual's relationship with place into consideration.

After revisiting the main findings of the research in relation to the specific research questions, the main part of the chapter makes the argument that the nature of belonging and attachment to place needs to be understood as both relational and territorial and as a fluid process that unfolds in the everyday practices and affects of place. On this basis, the chapter concludes with a restatement of the original contributions of this thesis, some reflections on the research and suggested directions for further work in this area.

### 8.1 Characteristics of Local Belonging and Attachment

Firstly, in asking *how* people belong to the local, Chapter Five addressed the characteristics of belonging and attachment to place. In Byker these were found to be; expressions of comfort and confidence; commitment and contribution; and irony and critical distance. Comfort was taken from a familiarity of place, "*being a familiar face*" and a feeling of "*having my place here*". This was often premised on the building of confidence in place through establishing social networks, "*it's a good security kind of thing*". In establishing the importance of having comfort and confidence in place, as a characteristic of local belonging, a second characteristic is informed; commitment and contribution in place and the sense of belonging as being a sense of achievement; "*I now have a place here*".

Participants in Byker were found to demonstrate a certain level of commitment to place and a desire (although varying) to contribute to it, "*I just have*

*a sense that I wanted to do something*". This was often demonstrated by an ethic of care in the local, towards both people and place, viewed particularly important for newcomers; *"I just came, but I have to feel that I am part of the community, I have to contribute to the community. That is what I call to feel at home"*. This was not in an overly romanticised sense of 'community spirit' but instead a stewardship of place which was seen as encouraging a sense of attachment and fidelity to place (hooks, 2009), *"I think it's a wonderful place, I really do, and I'll always defend it, but for now, I just want to live somewhere normal!"*.

The third characteristic of local belonging identified by this research was one which succeeded in claiming attachments whilst holding it at arms-length via the use of irony and a critical distance towards place which afforded an awareness and reflexivity of it. This feeling of irony in local attachments was most often demonstrated through the use of nostalgia *"but they were the good old days"*, and a scepticism towards 'community' in a normative sense, both historically and today; *"People will tell you you could leave your doors open in those days, of course you could. There was nothing to nick!"*. However critical distance was also demonstrated towards 'others' in participants' negotiations of whom they could identify with in the Estate, and who they couldn't, for example in *"not being part of the permanent community"*.

These characteristics crossed the binaries of 'local' and 'migrant' participants and therefore trouble assumptions of 'authentic' and exclusionary attachments to place. Instead, they highlight the negotiated process of belonging. They also serve to question concerns over the exclusionary and reactionary nature of place-based attachments, as these characteristics demonstrate both a deep understanding of Self, as well as of wider networks and processes. A focus on the ways in which these characteristics of belonging were expressed and negotiated highlighted the practiced and affective dimensions to belonging (Probyn, 1996, Fenster, 2005 and Bell, 1999). These practices and affects occurred *in place*, in the situated grounded level of the everyday, and their analysis demonstrated the very particular geographies of belonging to the local. Attachments were forged to specific streets or landings, as well as specific community spaces, but not in a

manner that was blinkered to anything else, but in a way which drew on relational understandings of where one felt comfortable and where one did not.

## **8.2 Circumstance that Influence Local Belonging and Attachment?**

In addressing why people may express local belonging and attachments, notions of being able to predict such sentiments were rejected in favour of an understanding which attended to the fluid and conditional nature of the characteristics of belonging discussed above. Therefore it was found more helpful to think about the circumstances in which an individual may have the capacity *and* propensity in which to express attachment to place. In analysing this circumstance, the concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986) was used in teasing out the particular array of inherited dispositions and competencies that shape how an individual responds to place. Global awareness, or a certain level of 'global reflexivity', cultivated through symbolic and cultural capital and geographical mobility, do not as a rule, dispose a person to be less likely to express local attachments. It can mean they are less likely to acknowledge them, however. Equally, a limited amount of education, choice or global travel does not translate automatically into strong local attachment; however a 'just being' (Allen, 2008) element of this habitus does often mean these attachments are formed in a more pragmatic relationship to place.

The importance of good neighbours came to the fore as informing a capacity to belong, *"they put peace in my heart"*, as well as the use of elective belonging (Savage *et al.*, 2005) in establishing place as important to personal biographies, *"the sense of attachment was already there because my first child was born here"*. Both social and cultural capital emerged as a way of identifying with 'people like us' or disassociating from an 'other' therefore helping to establish social networks via bonding capital. For some, the perceived presence of *"poor people"* or *"the wrong sort of people"* drew on notions of social and cultural capital in distinguishing themselves from the 'other', and therefore forging attachments within very particular local geographies of where they felt more comfortable; *"I call my end, the Posh-end"*. For others, a sense of disconnect with the symbolic capital of 'others' encouraged an impression that local belonging was not an option; *"I don't think it*

*matters how long I live here, I don't think I would ever belong*". However, even this sentiment held out the opportunity for attachment to residents who chose to see themselves as different from the perceived "*permanent community*" in Byker, by using the symbolic capital of 'cachet' and 'danger' of living in Byker as part of an elective form of belonging.

An exploration of the circumstances which may shape a sense of belonging to the local began to build a sense of a local structure of feeling (Taylor *et al.*, 1996) which, as described in relation to Byker in Chapter Five, points to a set of broader circumstances that individuals in Byker were drawing upon in negotiating their own sense of belonging in place. This appeared to draw mostly on a discourse of 'respectable' working class and a distinction between the 'deserving' and underserving 'poor', relating to both the particular history of Byker as a slum clearance area and the more recent discourse of 'council estates' and welfare dependency.

The circumstances shaping local belonging and attachment identified here demonstrate further the need to understand belonging as a non-linear process of attachment making, unmaking and remaking contingent on particular circumstances. As identified by the characteristics of belonging discussed in Chapter Five, there was a blurring of the binary between 'local' and 'migrant' attachments and a need to re-think traditional understandings of 'roots' as both the preserve of 'locals' and something less capable of a broader awareness of place. Above all, an understanding of why people belong emerged as a question of capacity and propensity, that was both based in a set of local and spatially aware circumstances, but which also spoke to a relational understanding of place.

Therefore both the circumstance of local belonging discussed here, and the characteristics in the previous section form the part of the theoretical contribution of the thesis in offering conceptual tools for the study of belonging to place.

### **8.3 Local Belonging and Attachment in the context of Urban Change**

As material landscapes are transformed, so too are their cultural and social associations and Chapter Seven saw the thesis focus on the specific circumstance

of urban change and regeneration and asked what consequences this held for local belonging and attachments. The appropriation and affect of regenerated spaces in and around Byker pointed to the potential for urban change to both undermine and support local attachments in complex and often unexpected ways. There was evidence of top-down models of urban transformation, often orientated around a particular set of middle-class tastes and cultures, having a dislocating effect on local attachment, *“the heart had gone out of the Quayside when they took that Boat away”*. However there was also evidence of this type of transformation offering the opportunity to rearticulate attachments of place; *“It’s lovely to be able to walk along there now”*. The key appeared to be where regeneration left enough ‘imaginary space’ for local residents to appropriate it as they saw fit.

Memory and individual biographies emerged again as an important way for participants to make sense of local developments, *“It’s like walking on the bones of my ancestors”*, and where long historical memories or place were not available, the witnessing of change by ‘being there’ when transformation occurred and being able to relate this to personal stories of being in Byker, became important ways of negotiating a sense of belonging to place.

A local structure of feeling around regeneration emerged as important in Byker for understanding the impact of change on local attachments. Legacies of top-down initiatives and feelings of both a tangible and intangible sense of dislocation from the local in the form of the 1970s redevelopment, *“was it the architecture or society that ‘ruined’ the community?”*, contributed to the spirit of regeneration, its aims and applications; being just as important as alterations in the physical landscape. Such affective atmospheres (Anderson, 2009) or moods and feelings of regeneration and spaces, as ones of *“arts and creativity”* or *“decline”*, were seen to become of increasing importance if they articulated something of being *for* the community, and of offering a sense of hope and potential for the future; *“trying to build the community and feed back into the community that is also regenerating ourselves as individuals”*.

In focusing on the urban change of the environment, the dialectic of space came to the fore. There was a dialogue between how people used space and how

they felt about it which informed their understanding of its meaning to *them*. Thus a very concrete sense of territory was reinstated into the relational way people understand the world, providing a 'gravity' (Hall, 2013) of attachments within wider networks of relations. This provides insight into how attachments are continually produced and reproduced as part of an ongoing process, that both has roots in the immediacy of place and materiality of the urban fabric, but also maintains connections to broader social networks.

#### **8.4 The Nature of Local Belonging and Attachment in Contemporary Cities**

The thesis began with a statement from Antonsich (2010) that "Belonging has no place in geography" (pp.645). This deliberately provocative statement was based on its absence from the fifth edition of *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Gregory, 2009). Antonsich continues after that sentence to outline the very prominent place of belonging in geography, an argument to which this thesis has sought to contribute. This section of the chapter attends to firstly what can be concluded about the nature of local belonging and attachment based on the empirical findings of this research and secondly, in response to Antonsich's contention, what *is* the place of belonging in human geography.

To begin, in drawing together the above three research questions, this section of the chapter attends to answering the overall question of the thesis; *what is the nature of local belonging and attachment in contemporary cities?*

Based on the exploration of local belonging and attachment in Byker, two important contributions to the understanding of this question have been made. The first is recognition of both the territorial and relational nature of local belonging and attachments. The second is the agency involved in the fluid and negotiated nature of local attachments as they unfold in places. This research strengthens the understanding of belonging as a process, showing how it is worked out and unfolds in the everyday practice and affects of place. Thus the fluidity of the process of belonging and forging attachments to the local had a sense of gravity in the materiality of everyday life in place.

Therefore the nature of local belonging and attachment found in this research supports Bell (1999) in her claim that people “do not simply or ontologically belong”, but that it is a process of becoming. In highlighting the commitment and contribution required in place to achieve a certain sense of ‘comfort’, whilst at the same time being able to maintain a critical irony of such attachments; this thesis again finds confirmation in the work of Fenster (2005) and Probyn (1996) that belonging is an “achievement” with both practiced and affective dimensions. Therefore this requires an understanding of how we both ‘be’ in a place as well as ‘long’ for place (Probyn, 1996).

The practices and affects of belonging, are based in something, woven into the texture of the local by ‘gravity’ (Hall, 2013) in place, but not necessarily bounded by it. Belonging in Byker was practiced in an ethic of care of ‘being a good neighbour’, looking after your garden and “*doing something*” to demonstrate commitment to place. It was practiced by walking in certain spaces and not others, of sharing stories about the place and in contributing to ‘community life’ no matter how small, socially or geographically, these acts where. These practices of dwelling, as referred to by Lefebvre, all speak of an appropriation of space that seeks to ‘make it one’s own’ (Lefebvre, 1970:222 quoted in Stanek, 2011:87). In doing so the capacity to forge attachments to these spaces becomes realised. Belonging was also felt, or sensed, in relation to the affective dimension of place. The feeling of “*walking on the bones*” of your ancestors, sensing a ‘friendly atmosphere’ from the local football team or the “*thrill of danger*” from living somewhere you ‘were not supposed to be’. These practices and affects had a very grounded sense of reality in the everyday lived experience of a city neighbourhood.

However this did not mean attachments were blinkered by place. A local structure of feeling in Byker had reflexivity and drew very much on its relational position to other neighbourhoods, its reputation in the area, as well as its history and contemporary position as a space of ‘relative deprivation’. In establishing a sense of belonging, participants compared themselves with others, seeking out a relative understanding of their position in a place and forming attachments around the local geographies of belonging they produced. People held multiple

attachments to place too, and a sense of belonging to Byker was not necessarily at the exclusion of having a sense of belonging elsewhere.

Therefore the nature of belonging was not bounded by place but it was *based* in it. To borrow from Suzanne Hall's (2013) critique of Ash Amin's 'hub-and-spoke' analogy (2012:17), there is a *gravity* to individuals' relationship to place. This sense of gravity did not act as a force which tightly rooted it in position however. It provided a sense of attachments being lightly weighted in territory, yet remaining responsive and agile enough to flex and move, sometimes across vast distances, when and if required. A sense of local belonging having a gravity to it, allows us to think about attachments as being committed to and in a place; a commitment which serves a purpose of creating and enabling comfort and confidence to 'be' in a place, yet one which does not act as a set of blinkers to anything outside of it, retaining a sense of critical reflexivity of the self and place through a contingent sense of critical distance and ironic awareness.

The fluid and socially produced nature of belonging to place is therefore best understood as a non-linear process of attachment making, undoing and recasting and encompassing both commitment to, and critical distance from, place. The agency individuals had in expressing this sense of belonging can be understood in relation to the particular circumstance of individual habitus and local structure of feeling. Findings from this research regarding the circumstances acting on both the capacity and propensity to belong supports Savage *et al's* (2005) concept of elective belonging and are further understood by reference to Taylor *et al's*. (1996) adaptation of Raymond Williams 'structure of feeling' (1977) to the scale of the local. There where particular circumstance of individual habitus; the ability to construct place as part of an individual biography via elective belonging, and to be able to identify with and draw upon social capital of support networks and shared norms, that helped answer the research question of *why* people may express a sense of belonging to the local. Therefore this finding of the research supports the contribution of the relational and territorial nature of local attachments as well as the agency involved in their becoming.

The crucial contribution of this thesis then is support for the need to understand places, and attachments to them, as both relational and territorial in nature. Attachments are neither rooted to place, nor floating above it but they do have agency and are created as part of a process, unfolding through the practices and affects of everyday life in place. This research found that although places are not bounded and sealed containers of social relations, this is often how people perceive and relate to them, and a better appreciation and understanding of the imaginary practice of drawing lines around a place is needed. Returning to the discussion in Chapter Two of the need for a way of theorising the local, that saw relational and territorial approaches to place “not as competing ‘either/or’ choices but seen from a ‘both/and’ perspective“(Pike, 2007:1147), the findings in this research appear to reinforce the worth of this approach. Place, and attachment to place, were found to be characterised by both “depth as well as width” (Lippard, 1997), in terms of their being based in the materiality of everyday experience in place but also a way of reaching across space in relation to other people and other places.

In establishing the nature of local belonging and attachment in place as both territorial and relational, and as being part of a process, realised through the everyday spatial practices and affect of place, the last substantive task of this thesis is to ask what this understanding of belonging to place may mean for addressing the position of such debates within human geography. In short, and to borrow from Antonsich; what *is* the place of this understanding of belonging in Geography? And can it occupy conceptually, a complimentary position between territorial and relational theorising?

Drawing on similar debates surround the conceptual position of place in human geography, Doreen Massey’s (1992) argument for a progressive sense of place is instructive as a starting point as to addressing this question. Massey argues for a progressive sense of place in response to Heideggeran concepts of place, which she views as being based on a notion of singular essential identities and a requirement to draw boundaries around place and an introverted sense of history. Massey therefore poses;

“(a progressive sense of place) would fit with the current global-local times and the feelings and relations they give rise to, and one which would be useful in what are, after all, our often inevitably place-based political struggles. The question is how to hold on to that notion of spatial difference, of uniqueness, even of rootedness if people want that, without it being reactionary” (Massey, 1992: 65).

The questions posed here by Massey, of how to understand place as having a dimensions of rootedness, without this becoming reactionary, has been at the heart of attempts to understand attachments to place by this thesis. Therefore in attempting to answer this question, empirical findings from this research become helpful in thinking about how we can understand attachments to place in a similar way. Massey outlines some specific elements of a progressive sense of place; awareness of the multiplicity of place identity, an extroverted sense of consciousness of its links with the wider world and a conception of place which does “not have to have boundaries in the sense of divisions which frame simple enclosures” (Massey, 1992:68). There is much of Massey’s progressive sense of place which can be identified in the expressions of attachment and belonging to the local found in this research. Firstly there was not a simple ‘authentic’ sense of attachment found in Byker. There were many different expressions of belonging representing a multitude of differing relationships to place. There was a recognition that this relationship was not a fixed one, but something which has agency and that changed and developed over time and through different experiences of place. There was also a recognition of links to the wider world in these expressions and a consciousness of broader networks and processes which Byker was a part of. Although it would be misleading to say that these weren’t at times met with concern and insecurity, there was little evidence of a sense of retreat from it and at times even an embracing of it.

The third dimension of Massey’s, progressive sense of place not having “boundaries in the sense of enclosures” (ibid), is more problematic. Massey expresses great disdain for the “most painful times as a geographer...spent unwillingly struggling to think about how one could draw a boundary around

somewhere like 'the East Midlands'" (1991:65). This critique of 'boundary drawing' is an interesting one for this thesis. Elsewhere, Massey describes academics such as David Harvey as having an increased awareness of the insecurities of time-space compression precisely because this is what they choose to occupy their scholarship with. Perhaps Massey's dislike of "drawing boundaries" may be part of the same problem. Perhaps these struggles she experienced with drawing boundaries around places are precisely because she is doing so as a geographer, and an academic one at that. Geographical literature spends a great deal of time reminding us that places are not hermetically sealed containers of spatial relations (Amin, 2004 Massey, 1991, 1992). There was little evidence that any of the participants in this study would think so either; the point remains, and which has been demonstrated empirically by this research, that people do still tend to *think* about them in this way. In this research, participants drew imaginary boundaries around very particular (and important to them) parts of the Estate in order to make sense of how they felt about it and in order to articulate a relationship towards it:

*"This is the posh end"*

*"Don't go down Raby Street. You'll get shot"*

*"They moved in the wrong sort of people, from the West-end".*

This is not wholly reflexive but in the everyday business of "probing and working out" (Hall, 2012) of everyday lives, it is how people *make sense* of place. People talk about 'rough' estates, 'up and coming' areas and 'posh' neighbourhoods. This is not to say there is no recognition of the factors that make a place 'rough' for example, are 'stuck' there forever, incapable of moving or uninfluenced by anything around them; yet drawing boundaries around a place is how people make sense of it, and how they make sense of themselves in relation to place. These boundaries were subjective, porous and responsive, (Passi, 2002, Morgan, 2007) thereby lending themselves to an understanding of local belonging as both territorial and relational.

Therefore the place of local belonging in human geography based on empirical findings from this research is one which confirms to some degree the

“current global-local times” which Massey refers to (1992:65) but which remains based on an understanding of the persisting importance of boundaries and the subjective meaning given to them by individual agency. Massey says little about any element of a shared understanding which could operate as a basis from which to weave together the various overlaps in the expressions of attachment to place found in this research. In finding ways of avoiding the problematic term, human nature, we can turn to Rebecca Solnit’s (2009) discussion of human response to disaster. Here, she recognises the dangers in an assumption of a stable, universal human essence, but instead uses the study of disaster to make the case for an understanding of plural and contingent human *natures*. In her study, she identifies prevalent human natures in disaster of resilience, resourcefulness, generosity, empathy and bravery. The empirical research presented in this thesis points also to prevalent or overlapping characteristics of comfort, commitment and irony which form a starting point from which to think about how we might better consider the position of local belonging within human geography going forward. Based on these common elements of belonging, identified in this research, across a range of participants and in various different circumstances, a position of local belonging that is aligned with neither solely the cosmos or the hearth (Tuan, 2001). Instead a conceptual position which takes a complimentary understanding of the two, begins to come into focus.

Taking these characteristics, is it possible to begin looking at the beginnings of a shared element of belonging within this research? One which may speak to a broader understanding of human *natures*, as identified by Solnit? Loss, and a shared sense of loss, has been explored by Australian scholar Peter Read (2000) in such a way, in an effort to provide a shared sense of belonging between Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians. For Read, there is something about loss of place, or the *threat* of loss of place, that motivates the expression of attachment and something which has resonance with the expressions of local belonging found in Byker. Although critical of Read’s work, this contingent understanding of belonging and loss for Miller (2003) is helpful in suggesting that so long as we all have the *capacity* to experience loss or fear of loss; belonging can be universally enabled by displacement. Ideas such as these may provide a

useful point for future work from which to further develop the debates introduced here on the nature of local belonging and attachment.

The three characteristics of local belonging identified in Byker; a desire to be comfortable and confident in a place; a need to contribute and demonstrate some sort of commitment to it whilst also maintaining a critical distance through the use of irony, could all be understood as resulting from either the experience of, or the fear of loss of place. Loss or fear of loss made participants acutely aware of the importance of having a place and what was entailed in achieving this, but also the possibility that places are not fixed and static, and an awareness that they can be 'lost'. This loss can be feared and experienced in different ways. It can mean physical loss of place by having limited control over where you live and your ability to stay in or leave a place as you wish, or it can mean the loss of an one's own understanding of place as changes occur in the physical surroundings, community demographics or meaning of place held by others which may contradict your own. As discussed, this sense of loss did not always present itself in a simplistic 'yearning for yesterday' (Davis, 1979), nor does nostalgia have to be seen as regressive and exclusionary.

Alistair Bonnett suggests it might be this sense of loss within nostalgia that unites both 'locals' and 'migrants'; "we are all trying to save, to preserve, to protect, against the acids of modernity" (2010:170). Within the empirical context of this thesis, this speaks to the case Michael Kenny (2011:172) makes for a progressive politics of recognition that "reflects an abiding desire to be rooted, to have a sense of continuity, and to feel part of a larger whole" within many working class communities. Within this context, Kenny argues this is a position which understands such demands as "cries for recognition, rather than forms of parochial pleading" (2011:180). Kenny speaks of working class communities which have become disenfranchised from centre-left politics in the UK and of a relationship between sections of this community and the Labour Party that has come to be characterized by a deepening mistrust and misunderstanding on both sides. The communities Kenny speaks of have experienced a sort of *in place*-dispossession as discussed in the White Australian context by Read, which, although "less

concrete, nevertheless...still involves the same feeling of loss and grief" (Miller 2003:411, commenting on Read, 2000). The places and communities they once felt connected to and drew on for a sense of identity, may physically and socially look very different, even if people have not been displaced themselves. This was highlighted in Byker through the dialectic of how both the architecture of the redevelopment, as well as broader social processes, had left many participants feeling displaced whilst not having actually moved themselves:

*"They destroyed this community when they built that eyesore...It's like the Berlin Wall"*

*"You never see anyone, everyone is inside doing their own thing, nobody talks"*

The above quotations are from the older generation in the Estate of 'old' Byker residents who often lamented the loss of their 'old' community. However, the need to *"have a place"* and to demonstrate some sense of commitment amongst some of the 'new' Byker residents also suggests a sense of loss or, more often, a *fear* of loss. For those with a background of forced migration this is not surprising, however the desire to commit to place for the more affluent and mobile 'cultural professionals' may speak more directly to a *fear* of loss. Therefore a shared *understanding* of loss, from whatever context, may go some way to explain the finding of this research; that people were able to express a great sense of comfort and confidence in place when they felt able to identify with those around them, make a contribution to place and see place as part of their individual biography but would also maintain an ironic awareness of their own attachments and their limitations.

Having, or understanding, a sense of loss therefore could be useful in understanding the sense of local belonging identified in this research, one within which a common yearning for recognition is seriously engaged with. This does not however mean that the sense of loss itself has to be shared between people; as Miller argues again drawing on Read, we do not have to all belong to each other, and the recognition of this in itself is a step towards a 'mature belonging' (Read,

2000:208), capable of recognising and appreciating difference. Turning again to Kenny to summarise, “a progressive politics of recognition (is needed) that is plural and outward-facing, but also sufficiently engaged with poorer communities to have depth and durability” (2011:181). In essence, these are attachments which are worked out and accommodated at the tensions within place, within a sense of locality and wider networks. An understanding and appreciation of loss may provide an element of this type of local belonging that is both relational and territorial, accommodating both inward and outward looking perspectives. By doing so it goes some way in reconciling the position of local belonging within debates in human geography seeking a complimentary understanding of place as both relational and territorial.

## 8.5 The Virtue of Belonging?

A case has been argued for an a more nuanced understanding of local belonging to place, but why should we wish to belong in the first place?

In Byker, people took comfort in being able to say “*I have a place here*”, “*this is my nest*”. It gave them a sense that they had a “*voice to speak out*” and a confidence to “*do something*” or say something about themselves which they felt important. In this respect belonging to place becomes very important in establishing a sense of self. If we lose the capacity to dwell, Heidegger (1971) argued, we find ourselves cut off from all sources of spiritual nourishment:

“Love of place and the earth are scarcely sentimental extras to be indulged only when all technical and material problems have been resolved. They are part of being in the world and prior, therefore, to all technical matters.”

(Heidegger, quoted in Harvey, 1992)

But belonging is also important to place itself. In extolling the ‘virtues of belonging’, Tomaney (2013) points to an ecological argument. A fidelity to place, he argues drawing on the work of bell hooks (2009), does not need to be romanticised, but relates to the virtues of commitment, husbandry and nurture of

place, of “care for one’s parish” (Tomaney, 2013). This was seen in a sense of commitment through contribution and stewardship of place in Byker and is symptomatic of a understanding of belonging, which is not predicated on ownership and land rights, “or bestowed as a privilege” (Miller, 2003:415), but something more conditional, ebbing and flowing and changing with time; sometimes heightened and on the surface, sometimes denied, and sometimes altogether ignored. In short, something which has agency and both territorial and relational elements.

This value in stewardship of place, is demonstrated eloquently by Wes Jackson, during his 1993 E.F. Shumacher Lecture at Yale University in which he recounted his experience of acquiring several buildings in the town of Matfield Green, Kansas, on behalf of a project worked on by The Land Institute he co-founded. He described discovering a collection of old programmes from the ‘New Century Club’ from 1923-1964, where each month the women of the club were asked to comment on a named debate. The topic of these debates ranged from ‘Coping with the Heat’ (1936) and ‘The Disease I fear Most’ (1929), to ‘What do you consider most essential to Good Citizenship’ (1929) and ‘Birds of our County’ (1929).

“By modern standards these people were poor”, Jackson concluded, “There was a kind of naiveté among these relatively unschooled women...Some of their ideas about the way the world works seem silly. Some of their club programs don’t sound very interesting; some sound tedious. But the monthly agendas of these women were filled with decency, with efforts to learn about everything from the birds to our government and to cope with their problems, the weather, and diseases. *And here is the irony:* they were living up to a far broader spectrum of their potential than most of us do today!” (Jackson, 1993 lecture transcript, emphasis added)

What Wes Jackson meant by this was that these people, at this time, in local communities such as Matfield Green, “were further along in the necessary journey to become native to their places, *even as they were losing ground*, than we are today”. Although conscious of not wanting to advocate returning to the past, Jackson does advocate a new ‘major’ of “homecoming”; “of validating and

educating those who want to be homecomers- not to return, necessarily, to their original home, but to go some-place and dig in” (ibid).

I would argue this sentiment was evident from the expressions made by many of the residents involved in this research in Byker. Belonging to place was important for many of these individuals. It was not important all day, everyday and it was not important to the exclusion of everything else. But it was there whether understood as evidence of topophilia, (Tuan, 1974) place attachment (Lewicka, 2011), insidersness (Rowles, 1983), or place-belongingness (Antonsich, 2010) whether it was performed, practiced, embodied, lived or felt. The participants in Byker clearly demonstrated the ability to hold attachments that were plural, committed and reflective. Through a sense of commitment, practice of care along with a healthy dose of irony, many were able to find value in attachments to where they were;

*“Ok I spent half my life in Congo, but right now this is where I call home, this is where my wife and kids are, my daily activities. This is my home”*

## **8.6 Reflections on the Study**

As demonstrated by the quotation above, the experience of local attachment of the Asylum Seekers in particular has proved helpful in looking for a relationship to place. In many ways these were expressions which were highly localised and physically restricted, yet which were used in a way that speaks outwardly in terms of co-operation and forging of connections, as much as it does inwardly as a way of finding inner balance and strength. Many of the expressions of local belonging found in this research, while speaking with members of this group, clearly demonstrated the value of finding the universal in the particular. This is therefore an area which I feel could be developed by further empirical study. Equally, I will watch with considerable interest the development of the Byker Community Trust as well as the Neighbourhood Young People and Alcohol project, as I feel both were beginning to unearth useful and illuminating insights into residents’ relationship to place which I would have liked to have explored further.

Were I to carry out this research project again; I would like to be bolder with my methodology. Some walking interviews were carried out, although I would have liked to have carried out a lot more, including group walking interviews to capture differences in perspective and sense of experience. On reviewing my field photographs, I realised I had taken photographs to show Byker at its best; interesting architectural features, greenery, and more often than not under blue sky. If I were to conduct this research again, I believe an element of photo elicitation would not only provide a visual way for participants to express their relationship to Byker, but would have added to the depth of multiple experience of a place, showing different, competing perspectives and from view-points I would have missed myself. Finally, in terms of output, it is regrettable that those who helped make this research so rich empirically will probably never read this thesis. Therefore had I the opportunity again, I would have liked to have thought through from the outset, ways of communicating my research outside of the academy, by way for community exhibitions or events, to allow for the fuller participation of the participants.

## **8.7 Contributions**

In conclusion, the original contribution of this thesis has been made through providing empirics to questions of how people live in contemporary cities as well as a theoretical contribution in how we understand place and attachments to place.

To take the latter, identifying the nature of local belonging and attachment as having both relational and territorial dimensions has provided empirical support for a complimentary understanding of place advocated by Pike (2007). It has shown the value in recognising the role of territory- “however permeable” (Escobar, 2001:147)- and a need to interrogate further the dominance of a relational view of place and the mistrust of territorial attachments this can create. Empirical support has also been added to understandings of attachment and belonging to place as negotiated processes, unfolding in the everyday practices and affects of place.

The thesis has also made a theoretical contribution to the understanding of local belonging and attachment by suggesting three sets of characteristics; of comfort and confidence; commitment and contribution; and irony and critical distance, and exploring the circumstance of social and cultural capital which may explain such sentiment for place. In doing so conceptual tools are offered for further studies of belonging and attachment to place therefore these findings and analysis have wider worth as conceptual and theoretical contributions.

In exploring the nature of local belonging and attachment in cities, several issues have come to light regarding the work of urban regeneration. This provides a further substantive contribution of this thesis. What has emerged from this research is an understanding of the potential of urban regeneration to contribute positively to supporting and creating local attachments to place. However there are certain issues that need to be taken into consideration. The first relates to broader debates of 'what kind of local and regional development and for whom?' (Pike *et al*, 2007). Calls for a progressive, holistic and sustainable version of local and regional development (Pike *et al*, 2007) would seem to be debates ripe for questions of local attachment and raise normative concerns about whom developments are for. If, as argued by Sen (1999), development should be about removing the barriers to people being able to realise and achieve their full capacity and potential, in respect to quality of life issues, then the ability of urban regeneration to speak to existing local attachments, whilst also fostering new ones, would seem an important one.

Therefore, the empirical work of this research indicates that those who work in the representations of space (Lefebvre, 1991a), could better engage with an understanding of the influence of urban change on the feelings of belonging and attachment to place for those who live amongst it. In achieving this, some more concrete lessons from this thesis would be that urban regeneration professionals need to appreciate and engage more with local structures of feeling, and not to dismiss them as tropes of a narrow understanding of nostalgia or reactionary conservatism. 'Space' needs to be allowed for community residents to appropriate regeneration on their own terms, bringing their own interpretation to them via their tactics of spatial practices (de Certeau, 1984) (how they use them) as well as their

own understanding of their affective atmospheres (Anderson, 2009) in how they 'remember' in them, and *feel* in them. In short, regeneration activities should be sensitive to the multiplicity of uses and meanings given to them. This would seem particularly pertinent as urban development moves further in the direction of re-imagining space and seeks to engage more sustainably with local cultures and their sense of place.

On a methodological note the depth of information on the use and meaning of regeneration in Byker would not have been achieved were it not for the methods employed. The ethnographically-informed nature of this research allowed for a deeper exploration of how people use space and what it means to them, sometimes in very intimate and personal detail. Therefore a need to attend to the everyday dwelling practices of a community would seem essential if a greater appreciation of local attachment in urban development is to be realised.

Finally, as stated earlier in this chapter, this thesis has sought to rescue local belonging from "a sort of error that educated people will move beyond" (Calhoun, 2003) and provide an empirically grounded understanding of its nature and potentially progressive position within human geography. It is hoped that the narratives, experiences and hopes of some of the residents of Byker conveyed in these pages can remind us of the importance of the seemingly humble statement;

*"I have a place here".*

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## Appendices

### Appendix A Profiles of participants

Pseudonym	Sub-group	Description
Sam	HL	Living in the Estate for 2 years. Moved from West end of the city. Working as an apprentice
Sarah	CP	Now living in Netherlands, lived in Estate for 11 years having moved from elsewhere in the city.
Paul	ASR	Living in Byker for 5 years. Originally from Africa. Part of management at ACANE and Community Pastor
Kate	CP	Living in Byker for 7 years, from elsewhere in the city. Sound artist.
Elizabeth	ASR	Originally from Africa. Wife of Paul above. Occasionally helped out at ACANE. College student
Sally	HL	Moved to the Estate 20 years ago, just after the redevelopment. Husband volunteered at Community Centre
Daniel	ASR	Originally from Africa. Lived in the Estate 6 years
Henry	OR	Lived in the Estate all his life. Regular at Community Centre
Craig	CP	Lived in the Estate for 4 years, has since moved away to a neighbouring ward. Originally from Co. Durham
Jenny	SG	Volunteer at community Youth project. Parents moved from terraces to a house in the new development just before she was born
Francesca	CP	Originally from Italy. Photographic student. Lived at various addresses in the Estate for the past 10 years
Gordon	OR	Lived in the Estate all his life. Involved with BCT

Graham	HL	Involved with youth project. Lived in the Estate 5 years. Originally from Ireland but had lived in several countries in Europe before coming to Byker.
Louisa	CP	Lived in the Estate 6 years, from elsewhere in the city. Musician
Mark	ASR	Political Refugee, originally from Africa. Lived in Estate 7 years. Student and music producer
Jack	SG	Born in 'old'Byker, moved away during the redevelopment. Now operated his business from Byker but lived elsewhere
Martin	OR	In his 50's, lived in Byker all his life
Amy	SG	Homeowner in her 30s, lived in Byker all her life.
Bob	OR	Homeowner in his 70s, live in Byker all his life.
Jamie	ASR	Originally from Africa. Involved with ACANE project and NCC Alcohol and Young people project.
Anthony	ASR	Originally from Africa. MA student
Heidi	HL	Eastern European, late 20s moved from village in North Tyneside.
Pete	CP	Moved from South East. Lived there 15 years. Involved with local heritage project.
Emily	CP	20s moved from elsewhere in the UK. Part-time student
Steph	HL	Lived in Byker 10 years. Moved from Walker
Sandra	HL	50s moved to the Estate 20 years ago from elsewhere in the city
Jason	CP	Architecture graduate. Moved to the Estate from Northumberland
Andrea	SG	Born in 'old' Byker and moved in early 20s. Now in her 50s, moved back to the Estate to live
Nathan	OR	One of the first residents to move into the new flats in the 'Wall' no family connection to Byker but considered himself 'old' Byker

Elaine	HL	Living in the Estate for 3 years, having lived in various places in Newcastle. Originally from NE.
Matthew	ASR	Full time student. Originally from Africa
Wendy	HL	Originally from Eastern Europe. Full time mother. Lived in Estate 4 years

## Appendix B Profile of community organisations

	<b>Members</b>	<b>Aim and activities</b>	<b>How they contribute to belonging</b>
<b>African Community Advice North East (ACANE)</b>	<p>Mostly members of the African community living in Newcastle but also draws in people from across the North East.</p> <p>Used by many young people, both African, British and other nationalities living locally who use the space as a place to socialise after school.</p>	<p>Ran mostly by male volunteers, it was primarily set up to offer advice and support to African refugees and asylum seekers housed in the North East.</p> <p>Functions as a community centre mainly focused on youth engagement with the aim of community cohesion and understanding between residents of different backgrounds, ethnicities and religions.</p>	<p>Community Safety Group- regular meetings between Police Officers, Community Support Officers and the community to discuss issues surrounding crime, and fear of crime, as well as encouraging members of the African community to support racially motivated crimes. Encouraged a sense of safety and security for members living in Byker.</p> <p>Promotes regular contact and engagement between African and British members of the community and promotes common goals and understanding.</p> <p>For the African volunteers who set up and ran the centre there was the added sense that they were forging a commitment to place which helped in their own sense of belonging to the local.</p>
<b>YMCA Newcastle</b>	<p>Children, teenagers and young adults living in the vicinity of the centre in Byker.</p>	<p>Provide support, information and guidance to young people around a variety of educational, social and health related topics. They have regular groups based around a particular interest or problem (i.e. CV writing and job application, dance groups, awareness</p>	<p>Giving the young people who attend a sense that they have a safe and non-judgemental place to go for advice and somewhere to raise any concerns they may have.</p> <p>Peer support in the form of the tight bonding capital that exists between the young people attending this</p>

		<p>around health etc) but also provide a space for drop ins and one on one support. They have recently also set up a local food bank serving the wider community.</p> <p>We involved in the Council-led Young People and Alcohol Project looking at alcohol miss-use amongst young people in the community.</p>	group.
<b>Byker Lives Community Heritage Project</b>	<p>Both current and past residents. Originally attracted older members of the community with its focus on the history of the redevelopment.</p> <p>More informal membership based around drop in sessions and particular interest projects.</p>	<p>Set up by Northern Architecture and ran by community volunteers, the aim was to establish a community archive and house a physical exhibition and research resource in the community.</p> <p>They operated a drop-in session, two afternoons a week giving the opportunity for current and past residents of the Estate to drop in with stories and artefacts to donate to the collection as well as explore to existing archive.</p> <p>Oral histories where collected as well as training sessions in how to conduct oral history interviews.</p> <p>Community gardening projects.</p> <p>Developed the 'Byker Discovery Walk' based around resident led community walks gathering personal stories and interesting facts about Byker and the redevelopment to produce a visitor and</p>	<p>Allowed sharing of stories between older and newer residents. Established a sense of pride in the history of the area and also allowed individuals to connect their own biographies to place.</p> <p>Served as a place to inform newer residents (especially overseas migrants) about the history of the area.</p>

		<p>resident guided walk.</p> <p>The space also functioned as a place where younger children would come after school and over the weeks turned into an informal after schools club offering activities for the children around archiving and local history</p>	
<p><b>Byker Community Centre Lunch Group and Tea Dance</b></p>	<p>Older members of the community, both current and past.</p>	<p>Regular lunch clubs and tea dances held at the community centre.</p>	<p>Provided a space for older members of the community to meet and socialise with friends. Many had grown up together in Byker but had moved elsewhere in the city during some point in their lives.</p> <p>Provided peer support through strong social networks.</p> <p>Also gave many of the volunteers (some of them part of this demographic themselves) a sense of purpose in the community and that they were able to contribute something.</p>