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The geographies of encounter in community-based social action projects in West Yorkshire

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Sam Slatcher

Abstract

The question of how to 'live with difference' is at the forefront of public debate by policy makers, community organisers and those working in diverse communities. In the UK specifically, recent years of increased migration and rising socio-economic inequalities have prompted those working in diverse communities to cultivate cross-cultural encounters between different groups to improve our capacity to live with difference.

This thesis follows one such example of how practitioners working in diverse communities design and implement cross-cultural projects that aim to encourage encounters with difference. The Near Neighbours Programme was set up by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Church Urban Fund (CUF) to fund small-scale community action projects designed to improve local neighbourhoods and, in doing so, create 'encounters' between different ethnic and faith groups. Through 11 months of in-depth ethnographic research into the activities of Near Neighbours and some of their funded projects in West Yorkshire (northern England), this thesis contributes rich insights into: how projects are designed and practiced to shape the conditions of encounter; how people are equipped to engage with difference; the way in which projects are governed; and finally how practitioners reflect on their neighbourhoods through collaborative and participatory research.

In doing so, this thesis engages with contemporary debates within Human Geography around inter-cultural encounters with difference and critical governance studies on how difference is managed and negotiated. In debates within the geographies of encounter literature, this thesis advances understandings of how practitioners design, plan and implement projects of encounter. Engaging with critical governance studies, this thesis offers a more hopeful account of 'governance' as I argue that the unpredictability of encounter keeps open the possibility of partnership across difference. Through developing an account of the work of practitioners, this thesis contributes to those who are setting out to engage in community development in an inter-cultural context, by highlighting the role of space in shaping capacities to act, as well as how researchers and practitioners might work together to collaborate on participatory research into safe spaces for meaningful encounters with difference.

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Terminology

Practitioner – someone who practices their field of specialism, in this case community organising. Although the term is context specific, in the general sense 'practitioner' includes Near Neighbours local coordinator and project coordinator, as well as trainers (see Chapter 5).

Near Neighbours local coordinator – Near Neighbours employed staff who coordinates the activities of Near Neighbours (setting up awareness sessions, workshops and training). At the time of research Wahida Shaffi was the West Yorkshire Near Neighbours coordinator (named with permission).

Project coordinators – these are the coordinators of the specific local projects that are funded by Near Neighbours.

Near Neighbours Small grants programme – Near Neighbours initiative that administers small-scale grants (£250 - £5000) for communities working together on community engagement projects.

Near Neighbours awareness sessions – these usually took place prior to funding and held between Near Neighbours local coordinator and potential applicants for funding (who would become 'project coordinators').

Independent planning sessions – these usually took place either once the projects had been funded, or with significant plans to apply for funding, and typically took place between the key organisations (usually from different faith or ethnic groups, but not always).

Declarations

The material contained in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other institution. It is the sole work of the author who takes full responsibility for any errors contained.

Statement of Copyright

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Chapter 1 – Introduction: cultivating encounters across difference?

The question of how to cultivate encounters across ethnic, class and faith difference is an increasingly important one for community organisers and policy makers in diverse societies. There have been noticeable shifts in the diversity of European societies over the past few decades, alongside rising socio-economic inequalities (especially for the UK), new forms of governance in response to threats of extremism, a growing refugee crisis (and Europe's failure to respond), and a waning confidence in the post-war European project. The resulting social, cultural and political concerns of this have been ushered into the public light in recent years bringing into question our capacity to live with difference. In these complex shifting patterns, concepts of mixing (often referred to – in different ways – as contact, meaningful interaction, and encounter) have come to the fore in academia, government and local community. In the UK specifically, the desire for social interaction has made its way into government policy (DCLG 2008), public debate (Monbiot 2016) and educational strategies (Woolf Institute 2015) and have been taken up by faith groups, the arts and the community sector. Any analytical and practical response to the complex factors that underpin societal response requires imaginative thinking, collaborative action and an ethos of hope. This thesis makes a small but significant contribution to the responsibility of acting collectively in the face of social, cultural and political change, by highlighting *how* community practitioners working in diverse communities in West Yorkshire between September 2014 and July 2015 sought to bring people together from different backgrounds.

Undertaking a study into how community practitioners are bringing people together is no easy task, since both the extent of those who engage in communities and the different understandings of what we mean by 'together' is vast. A community practitioner is loosely defined as someone who works with communities enabling participation in activities that improve the local neighbourhood through engagement of different groups (whether different by ethnicity, age, social and economic background, etc.) to strengthen the bonds within and between communities. Social workers (carers, youth workers), faith leaders, community developers, community engagement officers all loosely fall into the category of 'community practitioner'. Furthermore, how community practitioners 'bring people together' depends upon a multitude of different rationales, motivations and types of belonging (which will be unpacked in more depth throughout the thesis). How practitioners 'bring people

together' – or practice 'togetherness' – is a phrase/term often found in the lexicon of community engagement and thus captures a current mood among policy makers, community practitioners, and others working in this field (Sennett 2012). Community practitioners 'bring people together' for a wide variety of different motivations: to create more cohesive communities, to renew political spirit or build alliances, to strength social capital, to increase the membership of one's social organisation.

In order to provide a focus for investigating how practitioners bring diverse people together for some of the reasons outlined above, this thesis examines one example of contemporary community engagement: a state-funded faith-based programme called the Near Neighbours Programme. The Near Neighbours Programme is a partnership between the UK's Department for Communities and Local Government and the Church of England's Church Urban Fund which funds small-scale community projects that seek to renew relationships across different ethnic and faith backgrounds in neighbourhoods through social action projects. Such an example is worth in-depth investigation of how encounters are facilitated and harnessed since it spans policy, the state, faith groups, community partners, and ordinary people whom it is hoped will get involved. Near Neighbours programme states its aim is:

> "To create first encounters that develop new relationships between people of faith and ethnic communities… These encounters can be key moments of transformation in a neighbourhood." (Near Neighbours 2014a)

Near Neighbours both develops inter-faith capacity as well as provides relatively accessible funding of £250 - £5000 to third sector organisations (whether charities, faith groups or other community organisations) to implement community projects in diverse contexts. The projects vary enormously from art and craft projects (such as weaving workshops), to gathering people together through food (for example the creation of a community café), to sports activities, music events, as well as one-off events such as religious festivals or national celebrations such as the Queen's Jubilee. There is a particular emphasis on funding projects that are co-planned with different partners who have not worked together before, since recent policy recommendation (DLCG 2008) suggests there is a lack of cohesion between different groups (particularly across ethnic and religious lines) carrying out similar activities.

While Near Neighbours does not, nor cannot, represent community engagement in its multiple diverse, and incoherent forms, it does highlight an example

of a contemporary initiative that spans the institutions of the state (the Department of Communities and Local government), faith-based engagement (Church Urban Fund), as well as regional coordination (Near Neighbours in West Yorkshire), local partners (neighbourhood schemes, youth groups, community organisations) and individuals (artists, entrepreneurs, activists and so on). As well as paying attention to the interactions between these spheres of governance, the thesis focuses on individuals who are involved in particular projects whom I encountered during 11 months of qualitative research (September 2014 – July 2015) in Near Neighbours activities in West Yorkshire, northern England (see appendix 1). Those I came to know were ordinary folk who had extraordinary visions for their communities. Some were deeply rooted and others recently arrived. Some were Jewish and some were Muslim. Some were young and idealistic, and others wise and measured. I met with those who had years of experience in bringing all manner of folk together, others who hadn't even met their neighbours just a few streets away. Some felt broken and betrayed, others frustrated by the empty promises of leaders and politicians. Some were held by the grip of responsibility for their own family story. And I would soon find myself in these stories. Held by a different grip: the responsibility of a researcher trained in social research skills, undertaking an important piece of research into how community organising in 2015 enabled ordinary folk to make a difference to their communities.

Through qualitative research into specific activities of Near Neighbours in West Yorkshire – its policy and community intervention, its educational programme, some of the small-scale projects funded through the grants programme, as well as a coproduction research project involving academics, scholar practitioners, and participants – this thesis examines *how* practitioners understand, facilitate and manage encounters to bring about transformation in communities. In doing so, I make a contribution to recent geographical writing on encounters, as well as offer critical reflections on contemporary practices of bringing people together across difference. In approaching the question of how practitioners bring people together from different backgrounds – in the context of contemporary interaction strategies – this thesis grounds its conceptual analysis in a broad body of geographical work around the 'encounter' that offers three contributions that I shall unpack in the next section. This thesis also makes a contribution to policymakers, community practitioners, and others coordinating projects that involve negotiating difference, by offering rich insights into how encounters are designed, practiced and harnessed to foster better ways of living with difference.

1.1 Contributions to geographical knowledge

An encounter can be as fleeting as a glance towards a stranger on a bus or the experience of walking down an unknown street on the other side of town. Alternatively, an encounter can be as deep and memorable as the discovery of a new idea, a person who holds a different perspective, or an unfamiliar environment which others call home. Sometimes encounters can throw up questions around our own sense of self, or our own place in the world. In other instances, encounters can enrich our experience of the world and offer new opportunities we had not previously thought about.

Encounters usher forward transformations between ideas, people and understandings within ourselves take place. They are moments of opportunity as well as moments of disruption. From the fleeting to the life-changing, from the life affirming to the violent, 'encounters' could be described as being everywhere. Helen Wilson (2016) warns, "without attention to how encounters are conceptualized, there is a danger that 'encounter' becomes an empty referent" (p.2). Hence, the need to clarify the terms of 'encounter', both in its everyday popular use, as well as its conceptual uptake in scholarly work. So firstly, I make an important distinction between a) encounter as a strategy to bring people together (as seen in the opening quote that "first encounters… develop new relationships between people of faith and ethnic communities", as articulated by Near Neighbours) *and* b) as a nuanced conceptual interest with social, political and philosophical implications. By drawing on practitioners' understanding of what "encounters" mean, and how encounters are managed, utilised and harnessed in practice, this thesis seeks to bring together both a) encounters as strategy and b) encounter as concept. In doing so, I both seek to deepen reflection on key issues around the spaces of encounter and the sustaining of encounters throughout community intervention, contributing to existing academic studies of encounter, as well as offer critical reflection on the contemporary use of encounter in community practice.

Although still relatively marginal within Human Geography, studies of encounter have grown in significance in recent years. Ranging from postcolonial writing (Wilson 2016), to tourism studies (Gibson 2010), to race, sexuality and urban cosmopolitanism (Valentine 2014), to more-than-human geographies (Ginn 2014), studies of encounter are invariably about difference, borders and antagonisms (Wilson

2016). Across these sub-themes, however, is an emerging collection of conceptually rich and critically engaging work on 'encounter'. In attending one of these scenes (urban encounters with social difference), this thesis addresses debates within urban encounters (the contact hypothesis, the importance of sustaining encounters and rethinking accounts of governing encounters) through contributing original material that conceptually advances work on encounters. Each of these contributions to the existing literature within Human Geography will now be unpacked below.

1.1.1 Contact theories and spatialising encounter

Work on urban encounters and social difference has a particular history, which can be traced back to studies of difference in the city (Young 1990; Sennett 1992) and cosmopolitan accounts of late capitalism (Thrift 2005) as well as recent work on how encounters are harnessed in communities (Askins and Pain 2011; Mayblin et al. 2015a). This recent writing on encounter attends to – questioning (and sometimes affirming) – the claim that contact with difference translates into respect for difference (Valentine 2008). Much of this work references theories of contact that derive from mid-20th century American social psychology, including Gordon Allport's (1954) 'contact hypothesis' that theorised contact with difference under certain conditions will reduce hostility. The contact hypothesis (and its various manifestations) underpins recent policy discourse and materialises in various civil society integration/cohesion approaches (Hewstone 2015), including many of the Near Neighbours' funded projects in this study. Critical contributions to these debates include highlighting how contact theories place unequal demands on majority/minorities in encounter (Valentine 2014; Amin 2013) and how encounters can harden prejudice as well as reduce them (Leitner 2012).

Within recent geographical research, the practice of encounter as a strategy to remedy social ills (segregation, lack of cohesion, social inequality) has been brought into question (Valentine 2008; Amin 2012). This has been illustrated in recent work by Ash Amin (2012; 2015) who argues that too much expectation has been invested in encounters (particularly interpersonal encounters), which have been examined at the expense of understanding the material, affective and symbolic landscapes that affects the ability of strangers to live with difference. Although Amin (2012) makes an important case for why encounters should be situated more widely, this thesis problematises a wave of distrust in theories of contact, that Amin and others illustrate

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(cf. Amin 2012; Valentine 2008). It does so by considering the agency of practitioners in using space creatively to shape the potentiality of 'face to face' contact. Put in other words, I argue practitioners who live and work in communities are deeply cognizant of the ways that space affects the chances of positive and meaningful encounters. The thesis highlights various examples of where practitioners utilise space to prompt particular encounters with difference, showing an awareness that a 'face to face' encounter always goes beyond the momentary. This is the **first contribution** this thesis makes to geographical knowledge on how, and in which ways, encounters might enable transformation in bridging different communities.

1.1.2 Planning and anticipating unlikely encounters

Within recent writing on geographies of encounter there has been a shift away from the fleeting encounters of the city (Laurier and Philo 2006; Swanton 2007; Thrift 2005) towards more sustained forms of engagement (Askins and Pain 2011; Valentine and Sadgrove 2014; Mayblin et al. 2015a; Mayblin et al. 2016). This has been justified both by Gill Valentine's (2008) seminal piece in *Progress in Human Geography* that suggested pleasant and banal encounters in public *can* coexist with negative attitudes in more private spaces. More sustained forms of encounter are required to chip away at the deeply held prejudices of different groups. Coupled with Valentine's concerns is Ash Amin's (2002) notion of 'micropublics', which seeks to shift the focus from the unlikely sites of the street in fostering meaningful encounter to sites in which "prosaic negotiations" are compulsory to everyday convivial living (p.969). This includes focusing on sites such as the classroom (Hemming 2011), the university campus (Andersson et al. 2012), neighbourhood schemes (Phillips et al. 2014) and inter-cultural sports activities (Mayblin et al. 2015a; Mayblin et al. 2016). These sites, it is argued, afford more chance of sustaining meaningful encounter that might then translate into other sites and spaces.

Yet, as recent research shows, the further practitioners prepare the ground for encounter in specific contexts (such as neighbourhood schemes) and hence *plan* for particular types of encounter, the more likely the chance for unpredictable and surprising outcomes are written out (Wilson 2016; Carter 2013, p.13). Although Wilson (2016) goes someway to highlight "the tensions that exist between the desire to design encounters and their inherent unpredictability" (p.15), she recognises this to be among particular "future lines of inquiry" when it comes to the geographies of encounter

literature[1]. The **second contribution** of this thesis, then, is to bring empirical material on the attempts to sustain and design spaces for encounter to bear on questions of the unpredictability of encounter. In doing so, I ask to what extent does design and planning for encounter impact the chance for unlikely encounters between strangers? Chapter 5 offers a concrete example of how practitioners are able to design spaces for encounter that, while on one hand set particular protocols (such as safe spaces) to regulate particular agencies in encounter, on the other hand operate to 'keep open' the chance for the surprising and the novel, as well as building in possibilities for future encounters.

1.1.3 Complicating narratives of governing through politics of encounter

Alongside the geographies of encounter literature, this thesis engages with another body of academic thought: the study of the governing of subjects *through difference* within political geography (Ahmed 2004; 2008; Fortier 2008; 2010). 'Governing through difference' describes a particular form of governance that takes place through cultivating the behaviours and norms of ordinary people to shape how they relate to difference and diversity. Such a perspective within Human Geography is part of a wider Foucauldian understanding of governance, known as 'governmentality'; which is about understanding the way societies are governed through "the self by the self" (Foucault 2003; Elden 2009). In the context of governing difference, this includes how different actors beyond the state (civil society groups, including faith groups, community development officers and so on) instil particular narratives of living with difference. The **third contribution** to geographical knowledge is to highlight, through empirical material, how critical governmentality accounts of governing through difference might better consider the multiple ways in which practices rework, subvert, or offer different imaginations than the desired policy intended (see Fortier 2010).

Although studies of governmentality arguably still dominate Human Geography, there are a few important critiques worth mentioning. Kim McKee (2009) for example suggests critical social policy can make visible the "messy actualities of the empirical world; the multi-vocal nature of governing practices and their consequences" (p.482). Her research focuses on how "strategies from below" show subjects to be

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[1] Since writing this thesis, Helen Wilson (2017) has further elaborated on the tensions between designing encounters and the unpredictability of encounters. I will refer to her most recent work in the conclusion.

"reflexive and accommodate, adapt, contest or resist top down endeavours to govern them" (p.479). In a similar vein, Chris Philo (2012) suggests a "new Foucault" is emerging that contains within it a "vitalist, affectual, even non-representationalist trajectory" (p.496). My reading of the encounters that take place within state-funded community projects contribute to these recent (post)Foucauldian debates by showing how such practices might not always be "always already coopted" (Gibson-Graham 2008) into particular norms of governing through difference. I am not necessarily suggesting that the practices of the projects in this study are therefore necessarily subversive (or revolutionary). Sometimes the affective relations that the projects made possible do indeed produce neoliberal ideas about mixing. Rather is it to resist assuming that they are "always already coopted" into neoliberal governing narratives (Gibson-Graham 2008). Additionally, the point is to hold back from the assumption that 'mixing' can only be a product of liberal thought (Amin 2012; Fortier 2010). By investigating the politics of encounter, then, I seek to complicate the assumption that mixing equates neatly with 'liberal' strategies of governance.

Instead, if encounter is the unfolding of something new and unanticipated, then there's a certain ambiguity with attempts to govern encounters, whether the 'new' is the repetition of prejudices, or the possibility of alternative relations (Darling and Wilson 2016; Anderson 2014). Through ethnographies of encounters, my empirical research points to the potentiality of encounter (in their unscripted, emergent, and performative nature). Through examining how encounters take place at a series of different moments through the coordinating of community projects – planning, preparing, practicing and participating – I seek to show the moments of instability, the affective openings in encounters, the surprising and serendipitous outcomes that disrupt more coherent narratives of governance. Additionally, I am interested in how those involved in projects to encourage encounters across difference in communities themselves understand and reflect on their own role (in relation to governance). Drawing on work from within participatory geographies (Kindon *et al* 2007; Kesby 2007), I highlight the inescapable nature of 'governance' in being involved in such projects and suggest we might cultivate the art of 'negotiation' as a more inclusive democratic form of governance. Following Kesby (2007), I take 'negotiation' to be the ability for diverse groups to make decisions about how they might work collectively, respect their differences, yet work towards common goals. This will be most evident in the last empirical chapter (Chapter 7) that explores a piece of co-production research (with partners from academia/community practice) that was set up to enable

participants to tell the story of their own encounters through a participatory film project.

In rethinking governance in projects of encounter, I take inspiration from Gibson-Graham's (2008) alternative way of thinking about academic practice. Gibson-Graham (2008) argue that "discerning, detached and critical" academic practice – that often taints Foucauldian accounts (see Philo 2009; Thrift 2000a) – misses experiments in alternative worlds (in their case new economies). By positing certain practices as "always already coopted" before a full exploration of "all their complexity and incoherence" (p.618), we fail to read for 'difference' (and instead look for dominance) as well as how "processes coexist simultaneously" (p.623). A full account of my academic approach is found in Chapter 2, but what I take from this is the following. In engaging with Amin (2012) and Fortier (2010) – although in different ways – we need an account of the shifting rationalities and emotions that are negotiated and mediated through the conflictual interests that arise in the uneasy alliances of state policies, civil social organisations and the individual capacities for integrating interpreted policy recommendations.

One way into this task is to foreground the complexity of subjectivity that is often missing in governmentality accounts of projects to cultivate particular behaviours. Here, I draw upon the term 'quiet politics', offered by Kye Askins (2014; 2015). Askins develops the term 'quiet politics' in her research into the geographies of care in a befriending scheme in the North East of England among refugees, asylum seekers, and those more settled, to reflect the "more-than-implicit actions" and the "political will to engagement that requires commitment" (Askins 2015, p.476). Although I am engaging with the term 'quiet politics' in a slightly different way, I use the term to highlight how agencies do nevertheless "ebb and flow across time [and space]" (p.473) when it comes to the governance of inter-cultural community projects. In the quiet politics of a community café (as Chapter 6 illustrates for example), the assumed binaries of host/guest, carer/cared are "quietly transformed" (Askins 2014, p.354) through emotional connections across difference. Such approaches give space for agency, political will and motivation; subjectivities that are often missing in Foucauldian accounts of governing difference. So from Gibson-Graham (2008) and Askins (2014; 2015) I take an insistence to explore the complexity of interactions, the shifting differences, and the ebbs and flows of agencies that cut beneath dominant narratives of coexistence, that Fortier (2010) and Ahmed (2008) expose in critical accounts of governance.

In summary so far, then, this thesis grounds its analysis within both the geographies of encounter literature and political geography writing on recent policy attempts to govern multicultural societies through difference. The thesis is organised in order to develop the three contributions listed above by the following. The first half of the empirical exploration in this thesis (Chapter 4 and 5) explicitly addresses concerns around encounter and transformation by documenting how Near Neighbours designs interventions in community engagement in West Yorkshire (both in policy and preparing for projects, and in education and training). While the purpose of this section is to show the ways in which practitioners bring people together, in doing so I also show how practitioners are cognizant of the ways that space (and relation to space) affect the chances of positive and meaningful encounters. Secondly, these chapters help tackle the paradox of designing spaces for encounter and keeping open the chance of surprising encounters. The second half of the empirical material (Chapters 6 and 7) offer insights into the practices that open up, subvert, and sometimes reinforce particular strategies of governance. While Chapter 6 shows how encounters contain both the potential for disclosures and exposures (which includes exposing the wider structural conditions for encounter), Chapter 7 offers a different approach to questions of governance. By highlighting the inescapable nature of governance in co-production research where practitioners and researchers work together, we might attend to moments of negotiation where competing interests might be reconciled and worked out, in order to promote more inclusive and democratic forms of governance. Having now situated my thesis in the wider academic literature, I will offer an overview of the research aims, research questions, contributions to community building, and an outline of the thesis.

1.2 Overview of the thesis

1.2.1 Aims of research

The aims of this thesis are threefold. Firstly, the thesis aims to investigate the ways in which those involved in developing cross-cultural community engagement think through, design, practice and harness encounters to bring about transformation in communities. Secondly, in doing so, insights into how practitioners are working with ideas of encounter, then, contribute richly to recent geographical debates around encounter by showing specifically the strategies deployed to harness encounters, the

possibilities encounters entail, as well as the limits in organising encounters to prompt change. The third aim – which goes hand in hand with the first two – is to design an approach to research that engages both practitioners and academics to investigate together how particular spaces might enable certain sorts of encounter. These aims are addressed through a series of research questions that were developed in the early stages of the research, and revised throughout the process of research design, analysis and write-up:

1.2.2 Research questions

1) How do practitioners create the conditions for encounter?

   a. How do practitioners enable people to come together?

   b. How do the different spaces utilised and created affect the chances for meaningful encounter?

2) How do practitioners equip people to engage with encounters?

   a. How does design and planning for encounter impact the chance for unlikely encounters between strangers?

   b. How do practitioners harness the potential for encounters?

3) How do practitioners negotiate the governance of projects?

   a. How are encounters practiced, lived and negotiated?

   b. What sorts of belonging do encounters make possible?

4) What can be learnt from participating together in projects that enhance belonging in neighbourhoods?

   a. How can practitioners and researchers collaborate through research to deepen reflection on how difference and diversity are encountered?

   b. What can be learnt about the negotiation of encounters through participating together in a participatory project?

1.3 Contributions to community building

So far I have outlined three specific geographical contributions of the research (in which research questions 1 – 3 particularly help address). The fourth research question – what can be learnt from participating together in projects that enhance belonging in neighbourhoods – refer specifically to a co-production piece of research that I participated in with the West Yorkshire Near Neighbours' coordinator (and that informs Chapter 7). This fourth research question explicitly helps address the third research aim listed above (to design an approach to research that engages both practitioners and academics to investigate together how particular spaces might enable certain sorts of encounter). In participating together on a collaborative research project, this thesis makes a number of contributions to the practice of community building. These include:

- Highlighting how encounters 'within' projects can never be disconnected from the wider structures, framings, and governing mechanism at work. Even the most banal everyday encounters are more-than-implicitly political, even if 'quietly' transforming binaries of host/guest, caring/cared, as well as other essentialisms of difference (Askins 2016).

- Highlight the positive examples of how practitioners respond to the challenges of bringing people together, through changing narratives of participation, harnessing the potential of encounter, and facilitating the sorts of interactions to prompt better ways of living with difference.

- Offer critical reflection on Near Neighbours' strategies based on the perspective of those who have been involved in community organising.

- Develop an approach that engages both practitioners and academics through participatory research on how safe spaces might enable certain kinds of encounter. Realising that method is itself a contact zone, the piece highlights the moments in which practitioners and researchers working together were able to cultivate ethical sensibilities and attunements to the art of living with difference (see Chapter 7).

1.4 Outline of the thesis

The next chapter (Chapter 2) sets out existing conceptual work on encounter within Human Geography, exploring the context in which 'encounters' have become a significant focus of academic study. As such, it seeks to clarify the terms of encounter as espoused *both* in public policy debates *and* in conceptual geographical terms. It begins with a rationale for why encounters are vital to study in the context of community practices. Following that, I cover recent debates in the geographies of encounter literature tentatively outlined in this introduction, before offering a way into complicating recent critical political accounts of the governance of mixing. I do so through repositioning the 'politics of encounter' to enable an approach that takes seriously the multifaceted practices of encounter that complicate attempts to govern the complexity of relations that encounters open up. The last part of the chapter gives a specific contextual overview of Near Neighbours in West Yorkshire and further details the context of 2014 – 2015 in which the ethnographic research took place. By exploring both recent changes in relationships between state and faith groups, as well as how Near Neighbours is positioned with regard to the controversial Prevent policies, I offer some context to the projects that appear throughout the rest of the thesis.

Chapter 3 outlines the epistemological and ontological understandings of the encounters that shape three different (yet interlinked) ways of researching encounters (ethnographies, oral histories, participatory methods). I then explore four phases of research that capture different moments of the research: a scoping study, shadowing Near Neighbours, participating in the projects, and finally engaging in a piece of co-production research with participants from one of the projects. Throughout these phases, I touch upon questions of positionality, reflexivity, and the methodological limitations affecting the research process.

The next four chapters (Chapters 4 – 7) detail the analysis of the research and the main argument of this thesis. As mentioned above, they are organised by different moments throughout community organising: from planning, to education/training, to grounded examples of community projects, to participatory research projects to deepen reflection around safe spaces and encounters. Each chapter draws on a range of different examples from ethnographic and participatory research, which will be introduced in each chapter.

Chapter 4 begins by addressing how practitioners in community projects bring people together from different backgrounds by exploring the importance of policy

intervention and planning for projects. I begin by outlining one of the inherent problems of work in fostering encounters which is the difficulty of predicting and guaranteeing the outcomes of encounters (which I further outline in Chapter 2). The chapter explores how practitioners create the conditions for engagement, given the difficulty of guaranteeing certain outcomes from encounters. I do so by firstly examining the policy approach of Near Neighbours; including how Near Neighbours engages with different faith groups, where the Near Neighbours focuses its capacity building, as well as the (faith) narratives of encounter that enable participation in Near Neighbours. The chapter then explores two particular activities of planning projects of encounter: firstly the Near Neighbours 'Awareness Sessions' that local coordinators put on to provide opportunities to develop projects together, and secondly 'Independent Planning Sessions' that enable groups to develop ideas around how they might engage their local community through interaction and encounter. Chapter 4 highlights some of the challenges of working relationally, exposing some of the contested narratives of 'inclusion' that emerge through setting the conditions for encounter.

Having addressed how practitioners prepare for projects of encounter, Chapter 5 takes a different approach in the preparation for diverse community engagement. The chapter explores how practitioners shape, cultivate and equip (young) people to utilise the possibilities of encounter. The argument is illustrated through a four day Near Neighbours funded and run residential which was set up to empower young people who have recently begun volunteering in their community to become leaders in diverse communities. Through attending to the spaces created, the facilitation of the trainers and the activities that were encouraged, I explore the work that goes into sustaining encounters and how encounters are harnessed to prompt future engagement. This chapter combines ethnographic insights from participating on the residential with recent writing in the geographies of encounter literature (Wilson 2016; Mayblin et al. 2015a). In doing so, I argue that contrary to scepticism around the designing out of risk in intervening in spaces of encounters, the research suggests practitioners are able to design in surprise and unknowability.

Both Chapters 4 and 5 in different ways prepare the ground for participation in Near Neighbours projects. While Chapter 4 shows how groups come together to plan and design projects to tackle social issues in their neighbourhood, Chapter 5 documents the equipping of skills and cultivating of capacities required to go onto apply for funding to carry out local community projects with people from different

backgrounds. Chapter 6 then explores one such project aimed to create associations between people from different backgrounds in a multicultural inner city region of Leeds with high levels of ethnic diversity (including those have recently arrived and seeking asylum). Specifically, it explores how the café works to create spaces for different people to belong, interact and gain experience, build confidence and repair social isolation and loneliness. In order to understand how the café works to create association, I introduce the inter-related concepts of 'exposure' and 'disclosure', which work to highlight how encounters both enable sharing (disclosures) as well as expose people in different ways (whether the educational exposure to the structural conditions that affect forms of inclusion and belonging or the vulnerable exposure of people's stories to wider publics). Attending to disclosures and exposures helps account for the ebb and flow of agencies that people experience in and through encounters. In doing so, it is possible to critique some of the premises of the contact hypothesis, as well as respond to Amin's (2012) scepticism that projects of encounter do not tackle the wider structural conditions that render certain people strange, over others.

Chapter 7 explores a different approach to the question of how practitioners bring people together from different backgrounds. This chapter explores how practitioners and researchers might work together in participatory research to *learn together* about how to negotiate different experiences of diverse neighbourhoods. The chapter engages with a coproduction film project that enabled practitioners themselves to design and implement a project to deepen reflections around safe spaces for encountering difference. This chapter returns to some of the discussions around governance outlined in Chapter 2. Through reworking the concept of 'governance' – drawing on Kesby's (2007) reformulation of power in participatory geographies – we are able to understand better the way those participating in projects negotiate their different interests, priorities and experiences. In doing so, the art of 'negotiating' is discussed as one way to help practitioners work within and reform the expectations and practices of diverse community engagement.

Finally, the conclusion (Chapter 8) returns to the overarching question in this thesis: how do community practitioners working in diverse communities in northern England bring people together from different backgrounds? The conclusion consolidates the learning from each empirical chapter and in doing shows how the thesis addresses the research questions outlined above. As such, it shows specifically how practitioners create the conditions for encounters across difference, as well as harness the potential for encounters with difference in future contexts. The conclusion

also brings together the arguments made in relation to the geographies of encounter literature. Despite recent scepticism into contact with difference as a site of transformation (Valentine 2008; Amin 2012), this thesis concludes that practitioners are able to design in surprise, possibility, and future sustainability by careful facilitation and ensuring participants genuinely own (and collectively govern) the spaces in which they come together in. In this chapter I also propose future academic projects that could be developed upon the findings of this research including understanding the affective nature of encounters as well as how 'narratives' (in relation to encounter) might become the focus of further study (Slatcher 2017). The chapter then concludes with a note of hope suggesting that amidst challenging times of living with difference, the stories in this thesis point to, and make visible, the conditions of possibility for transformative encounters with difference.

Chapter 2 – Contextualising and conceptualising encounters and the governing of difference

This chapter sets out existing academic analysis of UK integration policies, community engagement projects, as well as exploration of 'encounter' as a strategy and concept to understand such processes. As such, it seeks to clarify the terms of encounter as it surfaces both as a *strategy* to bring people together (as seen within community practice and policy debates) and as a nuanced *conceptual tool* with social, political and philosophical implications. The first part of the chapter offers a rationale for why encounters are crucial to the study of inter-cultural community practices, particularly in the rise of policies of interaction across difference. Focusing in on themes of encounters within these policies, the second part of this chapter offers a conceptual overview of recent writing on the geographies of encounter, drawing out key issues that this thesis will respond to. The third part of this chapter then brings the geographies of encounter literature into dialogue with recent scholarly writing on the governing of difference (Ahmed 2004; Fortier 2010; de Wilde and Duyvendak 2016). However, in order to attend to the messy and contradictory practices of encounter, I shall borrow from Gibson-Graham (2008)'s call for alternative academic praxis when engaging with "other world-makers" (p.614). I will argue that a different mode of engagement is required to understand the ungovernable nature of encounters as they take place in community projects and draw upon Kye Askins' (2014) 'quiet politics' as one way into this task. The last part gives a specific contextual overview of Near Neighbours in West Yorkshire where the ethnographic research took place.

2.1 A rationale for encounters

2.1.1 Multiculturalism and the contested politics of difference

In the second half of the 20th century, many western neoliberal societies underwent significant changes in the forms of sociality, belonging, and the increasing inequalities under so-called 'advanced' capitalism. The British (and also Dutch and Canadian) models of multiculturalism of the 1980s – 1990s that guaranteed the rights of minority groups gradually waned influence in the 2000s as a settlement for the managing of different ethnic minorities. The critiques of multiculturalism vary enormously; with

different reasons among policymakers, academics, and community practitioners, both on the political left and right (Picher 2009). In many policy circles in the UK, multiculturalism as a set of policies lost attraction in the early 2000s. After the northern race-related riots in former mill towns in Lancashire and Yorkshire in 2001 (introduced in more detail below), and the subsequent policy review about the integration of ethnic minorities, 'multiculturalism' received much blame for harbouring enclaves of separate ethnic communities, in a policy of separate funding based on self-appointed leaders (Sodha 2016). In academic studies of multiculturalism, scholars emphasise the need to study the forms of multiculturalism that exist "beyond the realm of the state" (Nagel and Hopkins 2010, p.9). Although more recently the language of multicultural *policies* of the 1990s has been replaced with the language of cohesion and integration, multiculturalism as a form of sociality continues to infuse social and cultural life.

In 2013, both then UK Prime Minister David Cameron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel famously declared the failure of multiculturalism, proposing "less of the passive tolerance of recent years and a much more active, muscular liberalism" (Cameron 2011). From this perspective, multiculturalism resulted in unmanageable differences to foster in the absence of a shared narrative (Fortier 2008). Academic debates on multiculturalism range from its defence from the works of Charles Taylor (1994), to those who oppose the foundations of multiculturalism as a form of (post)colonial surveillance and management of difference (Bhabha 1994). In the former, liberal democratic societies should recognise the equal value of difference, securing the rights of minority faith and ethnic subjects in the law (Taylor 1994). In the latter, difference becomes essentialised in order to enable the post-colonial governance of racialised subjects, according to the terms of the established state (Bhabha 1994). Although multiculturalism is not the focus of this thesis per se, understanding the different contested forms of belonging tied up with different ideas of multiculturalism frames some of the context of debates around living with difference in the UK.

2.1.2 A brief history of UK government policy from 2001

In the UK specifically, 2001 became a turning point in policy discourse around the management of minorities. The 'problem' of the cohesion of society was framed by ethnic segregation, replacing social or economic mobility and equality as casual factors (Gill and Worley 2013). Much of the language of contemporary UK integration policy

can be traced back to the turbulent events and subsequent policy discussions around the turn of the 21st century. In the summer of 2001, civil disturbances reported as 'race riots' (Fortier 2010, p.20) rippled through the northern mill towns of Bradford, Oldham and Burnley that involved socially and economically disenfranchised young Asian men, the police and members of the British National Party and the National Front. Stoked by an initial group of white young people attacking the police and Asian businesses, a group of Asian young people retaliated with petrol bombs, bricks and other hand-made missiles. The police responded heavy-handedly and the resulting sentences for public disorder totalled 604 years from 297 arrests (BBC 2007), with Bradford young Asian men sentenced proportionately longer than white people, and other south Asian people in other towns and cities associated with the northern riots (Bagguley and Hussain 2008). Bagguley and Hussain (2008) suggest the disproportionate sentencing includes previous histories of riots (events in Bradford in 1995, for example) as well as providing a softer sentence for those who rioted (however incoherently) about "English national identity" over those who, the police feared, would incite anti-British sentiments (p.146).

The events received considerable public debate about the cohesion of particular regions of the UK, particularly among minority ethnic groups in multicultural towns and cities of Britain – with the blame attributed in particular to Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities (Phillips 2006). In response to the unrest, the government commissioned the Community Cohesion Review Team, chaired by Professor Ted Cantle, to investigate the factors underlying the disturbances as well as strategies to improve community cohesion (Cantle 2001). The report contended that British Asian people and British white communities were living in a series of "parallel lives" (p.25). The report concluded:

> "Many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives. These lives often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges." (Cantle 2001, p.9)

The report went on to highlight how 'parallel lives' functioned through separate education, employment, places of worship, cultural networks and the barriers of language. There has been much critique of the Cantle Report, including Phillips' (2006) argument that while the report itself did recognise the complexity of the social, cultural, economic and political factors that gave rise to minority ethnic segregation,

the discourse of Muslim self-segregation became the dominant public debate. Other academic work has highlighted how the responsibility for the lack of integration fell with non-white subjects, particularly newly arrived immigrants (Nagel and Staeheli 2008; Kundnani 2009). In the policy review, factors such as resentment over exclusion, unemployment, youth alienation, as well as racism and discrimination in the police force and the housing market, were pushed aside. This is particularly the case in the context of the northern corridor of post-industrial mill towns (Bradford, Oldham, Burnley) that suffered high levels of divestment and economic restructuring during the 1980s, resulting in high unemployment and urban decline (Phillips 2006). The report also marked a departure from a previous independent review of race relations chaired by Bhikhu Parekh just a year earlier that placed more weighting on racism for the lack of integration of minorities (Runnymede Trust 2000). This report *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* was set up in January 1998 by the Runnymede Trust to reimagine Britain as a 'multicultural' society. The report spoke of "confronting and eliminating racism" as well as "reducing material inequalities" (Runnymede Trust 2000, p.105 - 107), foregrounding the contexts in which community relations become fraught.

Yet, focusing back on the Cantle Report, Phillips (2006) suggests that the blame towards ethnic minorities consists of "withdrawing from active citizenship, sustaining cultural differences, and choosing not to mix" (p.34). Subsequent government policy around integration (DCLG 2008) begins on this particular premise suggesting a series of policy implementations in schools, housing design, and local community services to encourage interaction across difference as a remedy to 'parallel lives' (Wood and Landry 2008). Today, many contemporary strategies of integration rely on this logic of interaction across difference. Much of the contemporary theory justifying the need for interaction in government policy on community engagement is supported by recent social psychology affirming the contact hypothesis, particularly the work of Miles Hewstone (for example, see CIC 2007; DCLG 2009, p.15, f.n.9)[2], which I will introduce.

2.1.3 Contact hypothesis

As well as in UK policy, the 'contact hypothesis' has also been taken up in other western societies to encourage interaction particularly between people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Pettigrew and Tropp 2008; Fincher et al. 2014). First

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[2] Including a paper given by Miles Hewstone at the Commission on Integration and Cohesion Forum in 2006 – see DCLG (2009, p.15, f.n.9).

proposed by Gordon Allport (1954) in the context of US racial segregation, the contact hypothesis is based on the assumption that under equal conditions of participation, in cooperation rather than competition, and with institutional support, face-to-face encounters with out-groups (those who are different from one's group identity) will reduce prejudice. Writing today in the UK context, proponent Mike Hewstone (2015) goes further to suggest:

> "Contact does not merely change attitudes on a microscale, in the case of those people who experience direct positive contact with members of the outgroup, nor do interventions on that micro-level offer the only means of reducing prejudice. Rather, contact also affects prejudice on a macrolevel, whereby people are influenced by the behaviour of others in their social context." (Hewstone 2015, p.431)

It is important to note how differently concepts of mixing would have been seen in the 1950s, in the context of US segregation. Unlike the endorsement of mixing policies under New Labour in the UK, Allport's contact hypothesis was seen at the time as revolutionary, and unfavourable by the government of public policy makers. Hence, we need to account for the importance of context in how ideas of 'mixing' become 'progressive'.

The promise of encounter to enact transformations in other sites and spaces has been called into question by social and cultural geographers, as I will explore in the next section (Valentine 2008; Amin 2012). There has been much social psychological research to suggest that the contact hypothesis does work in various, largely western, contexts (Tropp 2003; Hewstone 2015). However, the contact hypothesis has been criticised for losing sight of the structural conditions that regulate the inequalities of different groups (Saguy et al. 2009, see also Amin 2012). Other research suggests the contact hypothesis only 'works' for the majority group, easing the prejudices of the majority (Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins 2006) whilst disabling minority groups leaving them unable to engage in collective action to re-dress the structural inequalities that render them unequal in the first place (Wright & Lubensky 2008; Dixon et al. 2007). The research in this thesis contributes to these discussions by cautiously suggesting that through careful facilitation and utilising of different spaces, contact between groups *can* point towards the structural inequalities and work to expose those in places of privilege and authority (see Chapter 6).

2.1.4 The war on terror, community cohesion and integration

Theories of contact continued to underpin UK policy on integration throughout the 2000s, although augmented by particular global and national events. The US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 after the 11th September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and the ensuing War on Terror saw western government policies become more suspicious over Muslim subjects. In the UK, this was heightened by the London Bombings in July 2005 (7/7), in which 56 people were killed (including the four perpetrators who were born and grew up in West Yorkshire) through suicide attacks on public transport. Not only did the events once again place towns in West Yorkshire (Leeds and Dewsbury) on the map for their association with conflict and violence, the realisation that the security threat was not only 'out there' but "within from 'home-grown terrorism'" (Fortier 2008) shaped the community cohesion agenda aligning it with 'tackling violent extremism'. The government sponsored "Commission on Integration and Cohesion" in 2006 suggested that events of 7/7 were directly linked to the failure of integration through ineffective community cohesion policies (Heath-Kelly 2013). The report *Our Shared Future* remained committed to the segregation analysis of the Cantle Report, but with the understanding that segregation fuels misunderstanding as well as suspicion, which creates the conditions for extremism (CIC 2007). In 2007, the government launched its counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST, which included a strand titled *Preventing Violent Extremism* (or Prevent) which focused on tackling the behavioural causes of violent actions (DCLG 2007). In the early days of Prevent, governance of security relied on a number of public institutions and 'community-based' approaches (Briggs 2010) that targeted "local authorities with sizeable Muslim communities" (DCLG 2007, p.6).

The Prevent agenda received heavy criticism and there was strong consensus that these policies were detrimental to the building of trust among grassroots community organisers, particularly from faith leaders (Muslim and non-Muslim). Rather than addressing 'extremism' through empowering local faith groups, as the scheme had initially intended, Kundnani (2009) argues it has been divisive for a number of reasons: forcing faith-groups to conform to state-led agendas, restricting their ability to speak out for fear of disqualifying them from funding, as well as using Muslim community projects to spy on individuals and organisations. For others, these policies marked a shift in the government's more cautious engagement with Muslim

groups, granting them 'partners' in rooting out extremism (Davey and Graham 2011). The impact of these policies was to deepen fear around segregation, reinforcing a form of orientalising of certain communities who were incapable of integrating.

2.1.5 Recent theories of contact

The contact hypothesis remained integral to the Department of Communities and Local Government throughout New Labour (DCLG 2008; 2009), as well as for the Coalition Government of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats in 2010 (DCLG 2012). The 2008 document *Face to Face and Side by Side* (DCLG 2008) and the 2009 document *Guidance on Meaningful Interaction* (DCLG 2009) require some exploration, since the content of these particular documents informs the development of Near Neighbours design and strategies (Near Neighbours staff, personal communication).

Firstly, in 2008 DCLG issued a white paper titled *Face to Face and Side by Side: a Framework for Partnership in our Multi Faith Society* that borrowed the phrase 'side by side' from the former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sachs (see Sachs 2007). In 2012, Sachs explained the term 'side by side' with the following:

> "When people of faith, instead of talking together, do social action together, recognising that whatever our faith we still need food, shelter, safety and security. Our basic humanity precedes our religious differences." (Sachs 2012)

In the report, the sociologist Robert Putnam's social capital thesis is drawn upon to support 'bridging' social capital, over 'bonding' social capital:

> "Cohesion can be undermined if communities bond, bridge and link together in an unbalanced way – for example where there is strong 'bonding' social capital within different communities but little 'bridging' social capital to bring them together." (DCLG 2008, p.27)

Bonding capital raises anxiety among policy makers as bonding is seen as an antithesis to being connected across difference. Writing on UK community cohesion policies Fortier (2010) argues that bonding is seen as undesirable because "differences within become invisible and thus unmanageable" (p.26). Bridging, on the other hand, is

desired because it is seen as a form of assimilation, which results in belonging to the local, which can then be scaled up to become a form of belonging to the nation. In the 2009 DCLG policy document, the quality of the interaction between people of different backgrounds is further qualified through the term 'meaningful interaction'. Meaningful interaction is defined as positive, "beyond surface friendliness", interactional, that consolidates identity and values, belonging, and "good community relations" (DCLG 2009, p.9). As before, the principle of 'meaningful interaction' is underpinned by Hewstone's (2009) articulation of the contact hypothesis in which he argues "[i]nter-group contact breaks down prejudice by changing how we *feel* about the other group" (DCLG 2009, p.11). Moreover, the report outlines how 'meaningful interaction' can be embedded into existing networks, relations and associations in neighbourhoods, schools, places of worship, sports clubs etc. The report suggests:

> "[E]ncouraging interaction is about making it easier for people to do all the things they would do naturally, but feel unable to – whether that's about the design of public space, supporting volunteering and clubs, or supporting people who bring others together." (DCLG 2009, p.14)

By 2012, government policy frames cohesion in terms of 'integration', with a strong emphasis placed on the implementation of British Values as an attempt to hold the two strands of policy – integration and security – together (DCLG 2012; personal communication). Finally, the Casey Report launched in December 2016, despite much optimism among community practitioners of a different approach to integration, has received criticism for entrenching the responsibility for the lack of integration on "religious and cultural practices" (Casey 2016, p.5, see Taylor 2016). The report, however, does go further than previous government-commissioned reports to stress the multiple reasons for the inequalities of opportunity that exist, as well as making more attempts to include far-right extremism as a cause of division[3]. The language of 'community cohesion' disappears explicitly from these more recent policy documents, although local authorities often still use the term 'community cohesion' (Thomas 2014, p.11) and bridge-building projects to promote cohesion are still very much endorsed (Phillips et al. 2014). Within debates on community cohesion, terms such as association, contact and interaction feature to describe the sorts of 'encounters' across difference.

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[3] At the time of writing (April 2017), this is the last policy document on the UK government's approach to integration/cohesion

These terms are explicitly used in public policy engagement, think tanks and other third sector interpretations of the government policies outlined above (Near Neighbours 2014a; Woolf Institute 2015).

This section highlights how theories of contact (as a form of encounter) manifest at different moments in the brief history of community cohesion I have outlined. Beginning in 2000/2001 as a response to the failure of multiculturalism (illustrated in the race infused riots in northern England in the summer of 2001), theories of contact take prominence as a strategy to remedy the segregation and parallel lives that former multicultural policies caused. The rationale for encounter – as manifest in policies – then undergoes different transformations when considering the different social, cultural and political shifts (including the War on Terror, shifting anxieties around citizenship, immigration and belonging). These debates will be returned to shortly. However, first I will interrogate what I mean by 'encounter' by introducing critical academic studies on encounter, as well as introduce the governance of difference.

2.2 Critical scholarly work on encounter

As introduced in the brief history of integration policy outlined above, there is a lexicon of words that refer to 'encounters'; bridging, contact, interaction. It is important to stress again that encounter surfaces both as tool or strategy to bring people together (as seen within community practice and policy debate above) *and* as a nuanced conceptual tool with social, political and philosophical implications. Indeed, there is often considerable crossover, with Valentine (2008; 2013b) arguing that recent geographical and cosmopolitan accounts of the city (c.f. Laurier and Philo, 2006; Thrift, 2005) are underpinned by a romantic (and taken for granted) notion of Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis with a "potentially naïve assumption that contact with 'others' necessarily translates into respect for difference" (Valentine 2008, p.325). Within these academic debates, however, there is a substantial variation in use of the term 'encounter'. These include empirical enquiries into the evaluation of contemporary uses of encounter in policy (Gill and Worley 2013; Wilson 2013; Dwyer and Parutis 2013), more normative proposals for how encounters might enable transformation (Wise 2016; Askins and Pain 2011), as well as works conceptualising encounter as an ontological method in critical social enquiry in recent writing on affect (Ahmed 2000;

Swanton 2010; Wilson 2011; Anderson 2014). I will state which position on encounter I am referring to throughout the thesis in order to avoid confusion.

Firstly, what do we mean by encounter? From the etymology, Wilson (2016) suggests that encounters are historically coded as a "meeting between adversaries or opposing forces" (p.2). Wilson (2016) usefully offers a genealogy of the encounter that highlights the (post)colonial roots of the term 'encounter'. Wilson (2016) shows how the etymology of encounter as a "meeting of opposites" (p.2) cannot be divorced from Europe's history of colonial dominance of exploration, cultural imperialism, and economic exploitation. Within these processes, narratives of encounter emerge around encountering 'non-Western others' (Pratt 1992; Livingstone 1992; Carter 2013). Here, constructions of difference as otherness is produced in encounters that range from the seemingly 'candid' to the violent. Said's (1978) *Orientalism* documents how the construction of the Occident is always in relation to the Orient, on the terms of the Orient, and helps secure the identity of the Orient (Said 1978). Orientalist discourses shape knowledge construction as well as contemporary imaginative geographies of the present (Gregory 2004). These imaginations filter into everyday discourses and practices, including contemporary race relations (Bhabha 1994; Gilroy 2004) and the management of difference and regimes of racial coding in the governing of strangers (Amin 2012).

Writing on borders, boundaries and constructions of otherness in postcolonial theory "carries over" into another body of work that centres on the urban as made up of encounters (Thrift 2005; Isin 2002; Closs Stephens 2013; Darling and Wilson 2016). Much of this work derives from Massey's (2005) sense of the "throwntogetherness" of place, always consisting of multiple, unfolding trajectories, attachments and belongings. While much work imagining the city as a melee of difference dates back to the early 1990s (Young 1990; Sennett 1992), in the 2000s work by Thrift (2005) and Laurier and Philo (2006) place hope in encounter to renew geographies of kindness and compassion. For Thrift (2005), a new politics of hope based on routine 'friendliness' was imagined as a 'base-line democracy of urban encounters' (cited in Laurier and Philo 2006, p.193). Such writing inspires Laurier and Philo's (2006) account of the "momentary, situated and improved" (p.204) conviviality and character of café spaces, to contribute to an emerging "ecology of hope" (p.20, see also Thrift and Amin 2005, p.236).

2.2.1 Critiques of the romanticism of encounter

If the 2000s inspired optimistic accounts of conviviality and a new urban ecology of hope, later writing on the city and encounter cautioned against such hopefulness. Valentine's (2008) much cited piece in *Progress in Human Geography* 'Living with difference: reflections on geographies of encounter' makes an important intervention in this context, particularly cosmopolitan accounts of encounters. In her article, Valentine (2008) raises concern with the romanticism of encounters that do not necessarily translate into geographies of respect. Through research into white majority Britons, she highlights how the banality of pleasant encounters in *practice* can co-exist with negative attitudes towards those of different backgrounds (in terms of race, sexuality etc.). Through drawing on Allport's (1954) 'contact hypothesis' (as outlined above), Valentine shows how much of the new urban cosmopolitanism (cf. Laurier and Philo 2006; and Thrift 2005) is underpinned by Allport's thesis. Her work ushers forward a wave of research that revisits assumptions of encounter in social policy and everyday practice (Matejskova and Leitner 2011; Wilson 2011; Andersson *et al* 2012; Amin 2012; Valentine and Sadgrove 2014; Mayblin et al. 2015a). I draw out three significant contributions from this work for this thesis.

Firstly, the recent wave of writing on encounter within geography has paid attention to the sites and spaces of encounter. Much of this work draws on Amin's (2002) notion of "micropublics", sites in which "prosaic negotiations" are compulsory to everyday convivial living (p.969), as opposed to the more fleeting encounters in the street, on the bus, at the market for example, that do not provide the basis for the sustaining 'meaningful' encounters across difference. For Amin (2002) micropublics include community centres, colleges, schools, workplaces and sports clubs and have been the empirical focus of recent writing on encounter: including public transport (Wilson 2011), the classroom (Hemming 2011), the university campus (Andersson et al. 2012), places of worship (Andersson et al. 2012), as well as neighbourhood schemes (Phillips et al. 2014), community centres (Matejskova and Leitner 2011) and inter-cultural sports activities (Mayblin et al. 2015a; Mayblin et al. 2016). Within this work, there has been an insistence on how spaces of encounter are not merely face-to-face, but also "structural [and] socially and spatially mediated" (Leitner 2012, p.833, see also Amin 2012).

Secondly, these debates about sites and spaces of encounter are tied closely to debates about temporality. While there is much work on encounter in the 'momentary'

and everyday sites and spaces of public life (Swanton, 2010; Wilson, 2011; Lawson and Elwood, 2014), there have been critiques that the momentary only affords temporal moments of learning about difference (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). Subsequently, there has been a move towards examining more sustained encounters (Mayblin et al. 2016; Matejskova and Leitner 2011; Wilson 2013b) and the importance of incentive and motivation (Mayblin et al. 2015a) to deepen participation in projects of encounter. Recent work by Mayblin et al. (2016) suggests that how "particular types of space and micro-spatial dynamics" could be mobilised to cultivate particular encounters with difference has been "largely neglected" (p.68). In this thesis Chapter 5, in particular, works to flesh out how the different spatial settings might enable more sustained – and positive – encounters with difference that have lasting transformation.

Much of the tension between sustained and fleeting, however, is arguably down to the contrasting understandings of encounter, outlined at the beginning of this section. Wilson (2016) – in response to Valentine and Sadgrove's (2012) critique – suggests that sustained encounters are "more often than not, about multiple or routine encounters" (p.12) that accumulate over time (and fold in multiple temporalities). In making this case, Wilson (2016) addresses an affective understanding of encounter in its potentiality, as well as makes the case for debates about the sustaining of encounters for transformation. Here, Wilson (2016) explores "questions about what comes to bear on one's encounters with others" and how these become "significant in different moments" (p.12), suggesting an importance on momentary or 'fleeting' encounters.

It is important to highlight that Wilson's (2016) understanding of encounter that *makes* difference, enacts ruptures and surprises, is influenced by a Deleuzian theorisation of encounter (see also Swanton 2007; Ahmed 2000). For Ahmed, in this vein, "[t]he subject comes into existence as an entity only *through* encounters with others" (p.7, emphasis mine). Of course these encounters never lie outside the histories of violence and past conflict that press upon bodies – something that Ahmed herself recognises – rather, as she goes on to write, an encounter is "premised on the absence of a knowledge that would allow one to control the encounter, or to predict its outcome" (p.8). The anticipation of encounter is particularly notable in such account. Anderson (2014) suggests in encounters "life is opened up to what is not yet determined or to be determined" (p.82). Such writing on encounter foregrounds surprise, anticipation and emergence in the encounter. How community engagement practitioners then create the conditions for encounter (given the unpredictable and unguaranteed nature of encounter), becomes a crucial question. Chapters 4 and 5

particularly attest to this tension between the need to sustain encounters on the one hand and the unpredictability of encounters on the other.

Thirdly, and relatedly, the geographies of encounter literature shows the complex relationship between encounter and transformation. Questions here include the ability of an encounter to 'scale up' (Valentine 2008), "leveraging everyday practice" (Wise 2016, p.37) and shape competencies for future encounter (Darling and Wilson 2016). Wilson's (2011) ethnography of everyday bus travel, for example, highlights how propinquitous encounters are "intrinsically political" that produce affects that "project into future encounters" as well as re-orientate identity and difference into "new constellations and moments of engagement, attraction, and aversion" (p.646). For Askins (2015), although encounters in befriending schemes can "reiterate socially constructed difference", they also have "the *potential to shift* how we see and how we feel about others" (p.473, emphasis original). Chapters 4 and 5 specifically address the potential of an encounter for shaping competencies for future action (Darling and Wilson 2016).

Others are less optimistic, however. Ash Amin's (2012) *Land of Strangers* boldly questions whether encounters at all should be the focus of social investigations into questions of togetherness, creative practices and the politics of diversity. Amin (2012) pushes Valentine's (2008) critique of romantic cosmopolitan accounts of the city further and suggests a too narrow focus on the human (and specifically an obsession with inter-personal ties) stems from "an overly humanist framing of contemporary social ties" (p.12). Amin (2012) locates the failed analysis of sociality down to the "shared assumption that living with diversity requires interpersonal and intercultural encounter" (p.62) and questions altogether whether "urban sociality can be reduced to properties of the encounter" (p.62), contrary to earlier work (see Amin 2002). While his repositioning of subjectivity within a material, affective and symbolic phenomenology, is important, and indeed necessary, I argue his argument somewhat limits the possible agency of the encounter. As such he argues, "the worthy ambition to foster empathy between strangers through, say, local multicultural or multi-ethnic projects… is likely to flounder" since only the "very young or the already cosmopolitan" are likely to be persuaded by a politics of care (Amin 2012, p.33). Amin (2007) subsequently calls to search for urban communities beyond "neighbourliness, inter-personal ties and civic engagement" (p.109) as we should "not expect too much from spatial juxtaposition" (Amin 2013, p.107).

Amin's *Land of Strangers* has prompted renewed debate into the role of the encounter (Wise 2013) and the importance of situating practice in habits and capacities (Noble 2013a). Amanda Wise is more optimistic than Amin about the "gains that can be won from everyday intercultural exchange and encounter" (p.39). In her response to *Land of Strangers*, she highlights how it is possible to scale up sentiments and capacities from the encounter to affectively and symbolically change the narratives that render certain subjects strangers. In a similar fashion, Greg Noble (2013a) also feels Amin "moves too quickly away from the importance of encounters with others" (p.33). From Noble's perspective, Amin is quick to question the distinction between 'interpersonal ties' and 'human objects relations', suggesting it is the "recognition of the heterogeneous nature of a network of relations between multiple humans and non-humans that *facilitates* a sophisticated belonging or strangerhood" (p.33 – 34, emphasis mine). However, Noble's main critique is the lack of empirical grounding for his conceptual arguments made around the key sites of his exploration, for example in the workshop. Empirical research, Noble (2013a) argues would enable the way in which commons are built, in both a relational and affective mode. Specifically, he argues that in the context of the workshop – for example – grounded empirical research would give detail to the "antagonistic rivalries, passing and infrequent relations with those who aren't our immediate colleagues, ephemeral encounters with customers and visiting tradespeople, and so on" (p.33). This thesis follows Wise's (2013) optimism about the gains of encounter, whilst grounding evidence for this in empirical research (Noble 2013a).

There are, however, two important contributions that Ash Amin makes in reforming *how* encounters might enhance existing politics of interpersonal contact (Amin 2013). Firstly, he writes, "[a] politics of interpersonal contact should be treated as an experiment without guarantees" (p.17). This understanding of the encounter as emergent, unexpected, fits neatly with Wilson's (2016) and Ahmed's (2000) notion of encounter mentioned above. Secondly, Amin (2013) points to where in such projects minorities are often "expected to do the engaging and reconciling, while majorities and the mainstream are treated as the unchanging core that does not need to shift far in its cultural practices" (p.17). His arguments resonate with critiques of the contact hypothesis outlined above (Dixon et al. 2007) to which I return in exploring the practices of encounter in a community café in Chapter 6.

Having outlined three themes within social, cultural and urban geography, which feature prominently in current debates on geographies of encounter, I shall now

turn to openings in these debates, specifically with an aim to link up debates around the *politics* of encounter, with recent writing on the governance of difference. As I shall show, there is much productive potential (and resonance between) these two distinct but overlapping fields in debates about encounter/difference. Where 'politics of encounter' has been considered, cases of overt political struggle and urban protest has been the focus of such debates such as the Occupy Movement (Merrifield 2013; Halvorsen 2015), as well as environmental activism (Chatterton 2006) and squatting politics (Vasudevan 2015). Consideration of the more implicit politics of encounter within existing governmental policies, practices and associated third sector agencies has been less the focus of attention (Askins 2015, as a notable exception). Hence, there is an opportunity to re-position debates around the politics of encounter in existing debates about the transformational qualities of encounter (as outlined above).

One way into reconceptualising a politics of encounter is through engagement with recent work by Kye Askins (2014) whose notion of 'quiet politics', that reflects the "more-than-implicit" encounters that take place across difference, offers some openings. By quiet politics, Askins refers to "an unassuming praxis of engaging with others, in which new social relations are built in/through everyday places, relationally connected across a range of geographies" (2014, p.354). Such a quiet politics involves an emotional and embodied form of relating that is at once gentle ("gentle hands on shoulders, smiles, laughter, tears and frustrations") and quietly transformative through disrupting binaries (caring/cared, guest/host) whilst giving space for agency, political will and motivation. As I have suggested in Chapter 1, the latter are often written out of the politics of encounter that tends to assume relations are already co-opted into wider mechanisms of power, hence limiting our ability to account for the negotiating and reworking of relations (see next section). Finally, Askins (2014) relates her sense of quiet politics in a feminist praxis of an "emotional citizenry" that might be part of "wider transformative change" (ibid).

Another way into developing a politics of encounter is through attention to William Connolly's (2002) *Neuropolitics*, in particular his work on 'micropolitics'. The political theorist Connolly, who is committed to a multidimensional pluralism, understands life to be saturated with an excess of energies, affects and material forces (Connolly 1999). Indeed, Connolly argues that "[t]he material forces of life always exceed any 'social organisation of human and things' (Connolly 1995, p.33). What Connolly's (2002) neuropolitics brings to work on encounter, is the vocabulary of "'layers', 'folding', 'viscera'" (Finlayson 2010, p.7) that adds texture to the multiple

dimensions of encounter. In her research into diversity training workshops, Helen Wilson (2013a, p.79 – 80) has made links between Connolly's neuropolitics and techniques of encounters. In attending to micropolitics – "the relational techniques of the self"– Connolly's (2002) work particularly helps account for how we might live in and through encounters, and cultivate affective modes of belonging differently with others.

Before developing my argument further, however, I must introduce a final body of literature which theorises shifts in the governance of difference. In doing so, I tie together the contextual overview presented in the first part of thesis, in particular recent policies and practice around strategies to cultivate encounters (both those outlined in community cohesion contexts, and other strategies of renewing relationships across difference).

2.3 Governing through difference

Before I explore recent studies of governing difference (in relation to debates on encounters), first a few words on 'governance' and 'governmentality'. Governance, in its simplest form, is the "process of social and economic coordination, management and 'steering'" (Painter 2009, no pn.). Rhodes (1997, cited in Painter 2009) argues that governance exceeds the formal institutions of the government and includes non-state actors and the blurring of the "boundaries between public, private and voluntary sectors" (p.53). Whereas 'government' refers to "coordination through hierarchy", governance is all about the coordination through the interactions between different partners (NGOs, campaigning organisation, think tanks, voluntary sector, faith groups and other community groups etc.). Some of these partners are closely aligned with government schemes, others loosely related (and sometimes opposed to) government priorities.

Within Human Geography, over the past two decades much of the critical analysis of governance has taken influence from the French philosopher Michel Foucault – particularly the 1978 and 1979 lectures (Foucault 2007 [2004] and 2008 [2004]) – to understand the practices of the governing of populations of "the self by the self"; known as 'governmentality' (Elden 2009). For Nikolas Rose (1999), the "ethico-politics" of governmentality concerns the "self-techniques necessary for responsible self-government and the relations between one's obligation to oneself and one's obligations to others" (p.188). William Walters (2012) gives a brief history of the

conditions in which Foucault's governmentality came about, and also resulted in much popularity. Part of the appeal of governmentality, Walter writes, is down to the:

> "fact that the idea of governmentality was put forward by Foucault, and extended by subsequent researchers during a period of great change and instability in political, social and economic life… [including]… a profound questioning of and set of revisions to the framework of the welfare state within which domestic politics was conducted; various reconfigurations in the landscape of economic and cultural life associated with the words 'neoliberalism' and 'globalization'; the birth of new scales and spaces of politics associated with feminisms, environmentalisms, activisms, fundamentalisms, and citizenships of many shapes and colours; and much else besides". (Walters 2012, p.1)

Among the wide range of social, cultural and political concerns that governmentality studies have attempted to address, how difference and diversity are governed is one particular strand which is relevant for this thesis. Recent work that derives from a Foucauldian analysis of governmentality includes Wendy Brown's (2006) study of how 'tolerance discourses' in the US pervade non-state actors and institutions and produces particular kinds of subject, marking in advance certain minority groups who are "ineligible for tolerance" (p.7). Tolerance is "exemplary of Foucault's account of governmentality", as she puts it, since it is specifically not enshrined in law, and takes place in a variety of diffuse and informal practices (p.4). The fact that tolerance is "voluntary" renders the power relations produced invisible. Other examples in the UK context include Anne-Marie Fortier's (2010) research into the governance of difference in UK contemporary community cohesion polices, as well as Sara Ahmed's study of UK multicultural discourses of love (Ahmed 2008) as I shall now go into.

2.3.1 Proximity by design

Of particular interest for my research, is an article by Anne-Marie Fortier (2010) on the governance of difference in UK contemporary community cohesion polices. Fortier examines UK government policies between 2001 and 2009 and highlights how the community cohesion agenda governs the behaviours of citizens through encouraging certain 'meaningful' forms of interaction that will have a positive influence on

cohesion. Through a Foucauldian analysis, she traces the "mechanisms of subjectivation" that not only cultivates "responsible, discerning, rational, autonomous subjects who bear full responsibility of their lives" (Fortier 2010, p.19), but also draws in those "whose conduct arises from and responds to fears, anxieties and insecurities" (p.21). The latter gets at what Fortier terms 'governing through affect': which is the managing of the population through cultivating particular feelings towards cohesion. In short, Fortier argues that the premise behind such strategies is that conducts and feelings change when interactions change, hence the focus on instilling particular sorts of interactions.

Fortier's critique sketches out how particular narratives of governance take shape. In particular, Fortier (2010) highlights how particular narratives of citizenship are privileged over others; in particular the citizen who has a high capacity to mix well and demonstrate their "connectedness" is favoured. Here, particularly 'bridging' capital is favoured that connects individuals across communities, as opposed to 'bonding' capital that connects people within defined (particularly ethnic) groups (cf. Putnam 2007). 'Bonding' within is undesired, she argues, because "differences within become invisible, and thus unmanageable" (p.26). The privileging of "fun, cool and easy" (p.27) forms of mixing then shapes funding priorities, suggestions of 'good practice', as well as prioritising the partners the government seeks to work with.

Fortier's critique of the cultivation of 'positive' influences on cohesion is that certain forms of mixing pacify others forms. The design of 'meaningful interaction' writes out any form of antagonist politics, or what Chantel Mouffe (2005) terms 'adversarial politics'. Fortier (2010) notes that "some forms of cohesive communities are given more value than others; where some are encouraged, sustained, achieved, while others are discouraged, dismantled or excised" (p.27). She concludes by suggesting that "fun, cool, easy and meaningful interactions" (p.27) censure what Cvetkovich has described as "alternative forms of public discourse that combine anger, sadness, apathy, ambivalence and confusion" (2007, p.464, cited in Fortier 2010). Although my own ethnographic focus on Near Neighbours' projects focuses less on how policy ideals might be reflected in the practice of Near Neighbours – and more on the strategies of how practitioners seek to bring people together – Fortier's (2010) analysis nevertheless remains very important in the wider context of neoliberal governance of mixing.

2.3.2 Multicultural love

Similar critiques have been made by Sara Ahmed (2004) in *Cultural Politics of Emotion* (see pages 104 – 143). Like Fortier, Ahmed (2004) critiques a 'multiculturalism' that accepts certain differences (especially the value of openness) whilst rejecting differences that threaten liberalism[4]. Ahmed positions her critique in relation to policy discourse (government white papers, quotes from politicians) to show how "acting in the name of love can work to enforce a particular ideal onto others by requiring that they live up to an idea to enter the community" (p.139). To quote her at some length:

> "Others must agree to value difference: difference is now what we would have in common. In other words, difference becomes an elevated or sublimated form of likeness: you must like us – and be like us – by valuing or even loving differences (though clearly this is only about the differences that can be taken on and in by the nation, those that will not breach the ideal image of the nation)" (p.138)

By 'others' she refers specifically to those labelled "intolerant racists" and "migrant or asylum seekers"; those who must prove their ability to value difference. Unfortunately however, Ahmed does not offer any detail of which differences can be "taken on and in" contrary to those that "will not breach the ideal image".

Ahmed (2004) also shares Amin's (2012) critique of the "humanist fantasy" that a world of love will transform society. She repeats (and critiques) the mantra "*if only we got close we could be as one*", akin to Amin's (2012) claim that social theory (as well as policy) has invested too much promise in the inter-personal tie to respond to social conflict. To be sure, Ahmed (2004) recognises that it is not that love isn't important (she states she is not "against love"), rather "*how* one loves matters; it has effects on the texture of everyday life and on the intimate 'withness' of social relations" (p.140, emphasis mine).

Ahmed (2004) and Fortier's (2010) critiques of contemporary forms of governing shed light into the normalised codes of conduct that are implicit in practices and policies. In this sense, their critiques are hugely important in foregrounding questions of power, authority, and ideology. However, such critiques *can* leave us

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[4] Although the policies she's referring to are often framed more by the language of 'community cohesion' and 'integration' than 'multiculturalism', she uses the term 'multiculturalism' to describe a particular British relation to otherness in society.

wondering what the alternative forms of interaction might look like. By suggesting that bridging (for Fortier) and loving and valuing difference (for Ahmed) are co-opted by techniques of governance *and tying these complex acts too closely to a coherent governing intention,* we have less room for the messy and contradictory politics of encounter that do not always fold so neatly into such modes of governance.

Interestingly, both Ahmed and Fortier devote just a few lines to any alternative ideas of how we might live together. As explored above, for Fortier (2010) an alternative politics is found in Mouffe's antagonist politics that contains "anger, sadness, apathy, ambivalence and confusion" (see Cvetkovich 2007, p.464, cited in Fortier, 2010, p.27). Similarly, Ahmed (2004) shares a concern for the principle of disagreement and draws on Jodi Dean who argues for a "reflective solidarity as that openness to difference which lets our disagreements provide the basis for connection" (Dean 1996: 17, cited in Ahmed, 2004, p.141). How these alternative approaches to engagement might be built in, or re-shape existing norms of governance, will be brought into my analysis of how practitioners design, and facilitate, spaces of encounter in the meeting of strangers in multicultural regions of West Yorkshire. One way into complicating narratives of governing, is to think through the contested politics of encounter, as I shall go onto explore.

2.3.3 Complicating narratives of governing through politics of encounter

While being careful not to reduce the complexity of Fortier's arguments (and to some extent Amin 2012 and Ahmed 2004) to a simplistic critique of Foucauldian-inspired perspectives, I want to suggest scholars make more room within this literature for the affective potential of encounter to shape actions, alter behaviours, habits and practices, or the contingency and complexity of relationships prior to encounters. Similar critiques have been levelled at governance studies of the pre-emptive measures to manage Muslim communities through the Prevent agenda, with O'Toole et al. (2016) arguing that in practice Prevent has been "less complete, and more contested, than many studies have allowed" (p.165). Governmentality-inspired critiques that focus too exclusively on the discursive formations of policy through written documentation (for example), obscure the "transformative agency" of practice, which as McKee (2009) argues, has resulted in a pessimism of how to respond creatively to such accounts (see also Cooper 1994; Philo, 2012).

To be sure, Fortier herself recognises that her critics warn "against attributing to governmentality a coherence that it lacks" (2010, p.19), whilst also recognising that the success of governing regimes cannot always be assumed. This point is returned to in a later article by Fortier (2016) in a special series of Citizenship Studies on 'affective citizenship' where she calls for "much needed research that recognises how *all* actors who are various affected by a state policy… variously experience, interpret, enact and feel those policies" (p.1042, emphasis original). She goes as far to suggest, drawing on the work of de Wilde and Duyvendak (2016), that "policy practitioners" are "more 'fully human' than they are often made out to be when they are conceived as 'agents of the state'" (p.1042). By attending to the practices of encounter, then, I want to augment Fortier's (2010) 'proximity by design', and welcome her call for further research into *how* policy practitioners experience designing and implementing projects of encounter. In doing so, I seek to complicate recent accounts of governance (de Wilde and Duyvendak 2016; Vrasti and Dayal 2016) through attention to the multiple dimensions and potentialities of encounter; both the limitations and possibilities of alternative geographies of coexistence.

In order to make this step however, I argue for a different relation to the empirical material. This next section develops one way into this task. To do this, I draw on the work of Gibson-Graham (2008) who offer another way of thinking about academic practice. They argue:

> "[a]t present we are trained to be discerning, detached and critical so that we can penetrate the veil of common understanding and expose the root causes and bottom lines that govern the phenomenal world. This academic stance means that most theorizing is tinged with scepticism and negativity, not a particularly nurturing environment for hopeful, inchoate experiments" (2008, p.618)

Writing in the context of investigating creative economies, Gibson-Graham (2008) argue that conventional "discerning, detached and critical" academic practice is likely to dismiss experiments in promoting new economies as "capitalism in another guise or as *always already coopted*; they are often judged as inadequate before they are explored in all their complexity and incoherence" (p.618, emphasis mine). Their term 'always already coopted' is worth unpacking. Co-option assumes that a practice has lost its ability to shape an outcome that is different to the expected (coherent) agenda. Gibson-

Graham (2008) also argue that the very dismissal of an "always already coopted" project reinforces the very mechanism in which certain practices are perceived as dominant. Instead, they argue for a "different orientation to theory" (p.618) that enables openings; "a space of freedom and possibility" (p.619). Drawing on principles of 'weak theory' from Sedgwick (2003), Gibson-Graham (2008) propose we start on the premise that we do not know whether systems will fail or are "destined to reinforce dominance" (p.619). Instead, they suggest we ought to read for "difference not dominance" as well as how processes coexist simultaneously (p.623). One example they offer is relevant to the topic at hand. In a fairly contested example (as seen in recent debates in UK welfare politics, see Featherstone et al. 2012), Gibson-Graham show that it is possible to condone the retreatment of the state from welfare provision *at the same time as* "explore the social economy that has become visible in the wake of that departure, including the full range of social enterprises and perhaps even socially responsible corporations" (p.628). In other words, not writing these enterprises off simply because they stem from state welfare restructuring. A similar argument is made by Cloke et al. (2017) who argue that reading food banks as simply "embodiments of the neoliberal shadow state" can "obscure some of the more progressive possibilities arising in and through spaces of food banking and wider welfare and care" (p.704). Or, to rephrase Thrift (1997), not everything can be forced into set categories of either resistance or submission.

So, incorporating ideas from rethinking academic practice and affirmative critique with Gibson-Graham, the following openings can be brought to work by Fortier (2010), Ahmed (2004) and Amin (2012). Firstly, we need to attend to other constituents who shape overlapping notions of the "human need to connect with others" that Fortier identifies in policy documents (Fortier 2010, p.22), as we look for "difference not dominance" (Gibson-Graham 2008, p.623) as competing accounts might coexist across actors.

Secondly, there are times when we need to refrain from coding particular actions as apparently un/desirable (i.e. in a weak theory vein). What would it mean, for example, to hold back deciding that policy dictates that "[i]t is good to have fun, cool, easy and meaningful interactions, it is bad to tackle racism" (Fortier 2010, p.27)? Fortier is of course deliberately codifying the outcome of particular forms of governing through proximity in simplistic terms to expose particular sentiments. Yet, as we will see in the research, the aims of tackling racism are *not always* easily written out in the practice of strategies that are shaped by the policies of meaningful interaction. Indeed,

the DCLG documents that Fortier uses to justify her critique borrow from a range of 'partners', some of whom directly adopt anti-racist principles in their community organising. Rather, we need an account of the shifting rationalities (and hence power relations) that are negotiated and mediated through the conflictual interests that arise in the uneasy alliances of state policy, civil society organisations and individual capacities for integrating interpreted policies.

Thirdly – and in relation to Amin's (2012) dismissal of projects of (human) encounter – we might hold back framing multicultural projects as "likely to flounder" since people *might* nevertheless be "persuaded by a politics of care for the stranger" (p.33). Pushing Amin's (2012) argument (perhaps a bit audaciously), if we assume that the various Near Neighbours projects are "already always coopted" (Gibson-Graham 2008, p.618) and destined to reinforce cultural difference, then we miss out on the struggle for agency, commitment and will, as well as the 'quiet politics' that undercut dichotomies of oppression/resistance (Askins 2014).

Of course it is important to recognise the differences in approach between critical governance studies (Fortier 2010; Ahmed 2008) and the task this thesis addresses (understanding how 'encounters' are thought through and practiced in the context of diverse community engagement). However, this thesis attempts to address the limitations of the former (i.e. critical governance studies) through offering insights from empirical ethnographic accounts of how encounters are worked through by those organising diverse communities in the activities of Near Neighbours in West Yorkshire. To do so requires a different relation to governance which I approach taking inspiration from the work of Gibson-Graham (2008). I argue this is a more affirmative sort of approach, yet remaining critical (i.e. critique as affirmative, rather than critique as scepticism). Such approach to engaging with the range of different motivations for being involved, experiences of participation, and variety outcomes in projects of encounter, I argue, then helps reconsider the relationship between community practices and governance. In laying out a "different orientation to theory" (Gibson-Graham 2008, p.618) that enables "a space of freedom and possibility" (p.619), we can begin to imagine how research might be undertaken in this context. The next chapter will engage further with how Gibson-Graham's (2008) approach that encourages "working with people who are already making new worlds" might inform methodologies of research, particularly co-production approaches to knowledge and to reworking concepts of governance as the inherent 'negotiation' between different partners. Gibson-Graham (2008) argue for the need to:

"…mobilize the resources to support the co-creation of knowledge, create the networks necessary to spread these knowledges, work with activists and academics of the future, and foster an environment where new facts can survive" (p.629).

Gibson-Graham's (2008) call to work with activists and others "making new worlds" then leads to a final consideration on the task of complicating accounts of governance. This is to revisit how participatory geographies – that explicitly takes a different approach to the question of governance – offer insights into understanding the *negotiations* implicit in the interactions between different partners. While I have given attention above to critical Foucauldian accounts of governance (i.e. Fortier 2010; Ahmed 2008), it is also worth mentioning work by Mike Kesby who – in a very different way – engages with concepts of 'governance'. Kesby's (2007) perspective on governance comes from a different strand of Human Geography – participatory geographies – however his arguments are particularly useful for Chapter 7, where I explore how practitioners are working with researchers to explore questions of spaces of encounter. Rather than examine how ideals of mixing circulate in policy and practice, Kesby (2007) argues that any form of engagement with these issues (especially in contexts of participation) will invariably involve forms of power. Yet rather than writing engagement because participatory research is a form of power, he joins other participatory geographers in arguing that participation "*can* effect empowerment and catalyse radical transformation" (Kesby et al. 2007, p.23). They write:

"The unavoidable paradox is that the governance of participatory spaces can enable the emergence of associational modes of interaction" (Kesby *et al* 2007, p.23).

Hence, the final way I shall bring another perspective to the existing literature on critical governance is by showing how concepts of governance become reworked, as practitioners (and in this case, with researchers) "practice more inclusive forms of governance" (Blackstock *et al* 2015, p.254).

To summarise this section, in order to complicate narratives of governance, I adopt a different form of engagement than recent Foucauldian critiques of governance, through the inspiration of Gibson-Graham (2008). In doing so, space is opened up to

explore the affective potential of encounter to shape actions, alter behaviours, habits and practices, and the contingency and complexity of relationships prior to encounters. By looking for "difference not dominance" (p.623) whilst resisting the idea that governmental supported practices are "already always coopted" (618), a different approach can be fostered to examine the possibilities of alternative ways of governing (and subverting particular norms of governance). Finally, as Chapter 7 will particularly develop, insights from other fields of Human Geography can help shed light into how governance might be reworked to promote more inclusive forms of being together and encouraging interaction in diversity.

2.4 Near Neighbours in West Yorkshire

So far I have outlined existing work within the geography of encounter literature as well how developing particular themes of encounter can respond to critical governance studies; specifically in developing an alternative mode of engagement to the practices of encounter within particular organised programmes of encounter. To begin to understand how this task might take form, an introduction is needed on the case study in which these debates will be brought to light. The first part introduces Near Neighbours, while the second part explores the social geography of West Yorkshire.

2.4.1 Near Neighbours

Near Neighbours was launched in June 2011 by the Church Urban Fund and the Archbishop's Council with funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government. The aim of Near Neighbours is to "bring people together in diverse communities, helping them to build relationships and collaborate to improve the local community they live in" (Near Neighbours 2014a). Initially targeted at neighbourhoods in Birmingham, Bradford, Leicester and East London, Near Neighbours received funding of £5 million; roughly £3 million towards the development of various inter-faith bodies, with £2 million given to the Near Neighbours Fund with small grants of £250 to £5000 available to fund local community-based initiatives through a simple application process (DeHanas et al. 2013). Near Neighbours received renewed funding of £3 million from DCLG in February 2014, as well as £210,000 in January 2017 (DCLG 2014; 2017). Near Neighbours grants that fund, or part-fund, the projects in this research, have three aims. These include firstly creating 'first encounters' between people of ethnic or

religious difference, secondly sustaining 'everyday encounters' through encouraging regular convivial living (eating together, participating in religious festivals, encouraging children to play together, for example), and thirdly, to create 'civic engagement' to transform local communities (Near Neighbours 2014a).

To place Near Neighbours into some context, an understanding is needed of the dynamics between government and different faith groups. Near Neighbours was launched under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government in May 2010, at the height of David Cameron's Big Society that sought to place greater emphasis on third sector organisations taking on the role of welfare provision for the state. While rhetoric of Cameron's Big Society was relatively short lived, it received much criticism (Wills 2012; Norman 2010) for 'sugar-coating' the Coalition government's prolific austerity programme, that involved millions of council cuts, significantly affecting provision for communities, the slashing of welfare benefits, disability allowance, and legal aid, as well as the closure of council-run libraries. As hinted at before, one of the reasons why Near Neighbours merits attention is that, in an era of excessive government cuts, the fact that there is still funding and investment in this particular sort of cross-community partnerships[5], highlights a key site of government interest, and hence, worth investigating. Indeed, Near Neighbours has been hailed as the "Coalition's flagship integration programme" (O'Toole et al. 2016 p.171).

Near Neighbours also marked a shift in the government's engagement with faith communities. The New Labour government in the UK (1997 – 2010) saw the first era of sustained engagement with non-Christian faith groups, despite Alastair Campbell's famous quip that the Labour party didn't "do God" (DeHanas et al. 2013). Under New Labour, in 2007 new infrastructure for multi-faith dialogue and action was set up, including funding for regional multi-faith bodies called the Regional Faiths Forums, recognising the potential of faith groups in terms of resources, social capital and voluntary capacity (see DCLG 2008; Dinham 2012). However, after the Coalition government came into power in 2010, a different approach to faith engagement was taken. The Regional Faiths Forums around the country were no longer funded, and a shift from a "multi-faith paradigm to a Christian heritage" was observed (DeHanas et al. 2013). As such, Near Neighbours "reflects significant changes of political direction in relation to faiths since [the Coalition government came to power]" (Dinham 2012,

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[5] Albeit small (£250 - £5000) and for some, "unsustainable" (personal conversation)

p.584). This is seen in the sole funding for government invested inter-faith work through not only a Christian group, but through *the* established Church (Church of England) which is "potentially oppressive to other faith traditions" (Dinham 2012, p.586). Not only are Near Neighbours' projects funded through the Church Urban Fund (a body of the Church of England), but a vicar in the local parish has to 'sign off' and approve the project before the application is submitted to Near Neighbours office in London. Despite the Church of England acting as a "policy gateway" (Dinham 2012, p.585), existing research shows in the first year of Near Neighbours funding, 39% of participants were Muslim (the largest proportion of any faith group, with Christian participation at 36%). More widely, there has been a mixed reaction to the Church of England's governance through the parish system not only among other faith leaders, but also within the clergy of the Church of England (Thomas 2014; DeHanas et al. 2013). Chapter 4 will pick up on the contradictory positions regarding the Church of England's governance of Near Neighbour projects. These various perspectives all shape the conditions for the spaces in which encounters (as we shall see in Chapters 4 – 7) are designed, practiced and shape participation in the activities of Near Neighbours.

The second structural consideration in the positioning of Near Neighbours, is in regard to the policies of Prevent. As previously mentioned, Prevent received very mixed reception among policy makers and community organisers. By 2011, the UK government revised its Prevent strategy to decouple the funding for Prevent initiatives from community cohesion policies (Heath-Kelly 2013). Near Neighbours was launched the same year (2011) and under this new framework for community engagement Near Neighbours was dissociated from Prevent. The extent to which this decoupling of security from community funding can be seen, however, varies considerably in the implementation of Near Neighbours across the different regions. In Leicester, for example, the organisation that 'hosts' the Near Neighbours – St. Philips Centre – has been described as having a "close relationship" between "tackling extremism" (Prevent) and cohesion, compared with Bradford and Tower Hamlets, East London who have worked on the assumption that Near Neighbours is distinct from Prevent (O'Toole et al. 2016, p.171).

Reflections from fieldwork also highlight the different perspectives around the extent to which Near Neighbours is Prevent: one inter-faith advisory termed Near Neighbours as "a good Prevent initiative", much to the frustration of others involved who were adamant that the projects were "distinctly *not* Prevent" (personal communication). In a review of Near Neighbours, Therese O'Toole (2013) recounted

the words of one Muslim who commented that "Near Neighbours might "achieve the results that the Prevent agenda wanted to achieve", while others "point out that Near Neighbours' emphasis on funding interfaith activities is a necessary corrective to the mono-faith, Muslim-focused basis of Prevent funding"" (O'Toole, 2013). The uneasy place of Prevent among community practitioners and policy makers suggests that in practice the implementation of such policies is more fractured than the coherence policy documents suggest (Newman 2012, p.100 - 101) and "the ways in which multiple, sometimes antagonistic, [state] projects are articulated into apparently coherent projects – projects in which, however, paradox and instability are all too evident" (p.105). Some of the complexities about the implementation of encounters, I suggest, speaks back to the governance literature that tends to overplay the coherence of governmentality.

In summary, there are three issues that characterise Near Neighbours as a contemporary example of engaging in community across difference. Firstly, as explained in Section 2.1.3, Near Neighbours exemplifies how recent iterations of the 'contact hypothesis' (see Hewstone 2015) are worked into contemporary community cohesion strategies. In particular Near Neighbours illustrates the shift from dialogue (and face to face) to different faith groups working side by side and "doing social action together". Secondly, Near Neighbours comes at a time when the settlement of state/public relations has shifted, as the state retreats (in terms of resources, funding and capacity) and works through empowering others in community (via faith and community practitioners). Yet while on the one hand the state devolves responsibility for the roles that in previous decades were tied up with the state's welfare provision, on the other hand the state seeks to govern more intentionally through the interactions of subjects (whether individuals, communities, faith groups etc.) This third point is seen in the relationship between the Prevent agenda and Near Neighbours. Although post-2011 revisions in policy have seen Prevent become more disassociated from community engagement, Near Neighbours still sits on the border of the Prevent/post-Prevent vision for integration in the UK.

2.4.2 West Yorkshire

Having outlined some of the features of Near Neighbours Programme nationally, I now turn to contextualising Near Neighbours in one region. As already mentioned in 2011, Near Neighbours began its first phase with a regional coordinator in the four

regions of Birmingham, Bradford (including Oldham and Burley), Leicester and East London. Existing research has highlighted how the scope and ethos of each region differs, to a large degree down to the activities of the coordinator (Fisher and Range 2015). By February 2014, at the start of my research, Near Neighbours had expanded to 7 further regions, including Dewsbury, Leeds, Bury, Prestwich, Luton, Nottingham and the Black Country. From June 2014, the Bradford region would expand to include Dewsbury and North Leeds, which included the arrival of a new coordinator (who I will introduce and discuss further in Chapter 3).

The multicultural cities and towns of West Yorkshire are fragile places in the debates around integration and community cohesion. It is believed the original Near Neighbours northern locations of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham were selected because of their association with the summer riots of 2001, as well as places that continue to be in the policy spotlight as 'segregated towns' (personal communication). Other voices within Near Neighbours point to a "complex formulae between deprivation, ethnicity, and faith presence" that marks the towns of Bradford, Oldham and Burnley (and later North Leeds and Dewsbury) as one of the highest indices of poverty and (ethnic) segregation (personal communication, Near Neighbours staff). Although North Leeds has a higher socio-economic index than parts of the south of Leeds (Beeston and Holbeck, for example), the willingness of the Jewish community to be involved in neighbourhood projects (who were not part of Near Neighbours in 2011 – 2014) influenced the decision to be included in the new areas since 2014. Boundary maps of Bradford, Dewsbury and Leeds can be found in Appendix 1.

The character of Bradford and Dewsbury share many resonances. Although Bradford is larger and a city, with a population of 522,452 (Dewsbury, a minster town, with a population of 62,945)[6], both were once thriving mill towns in the foothills of the Pennines, in the Calder valley producing heavy wool peaking in the mid-19th century. Around this time, the mills in Dewsbury and Bradford attracted labour from Ireland, and then Italy, and in the post-war period migrants from Central and Eastern Europe. In the 1950s, with colonial trade links still ripe after the decolonisation and partition of India, the British government encouraged the migration of cheap labour from the Mirpur district of newly formed Pakistan. From the mid-1960s, however, the mills closed due to international competition and the shift from manufacturing textile to importing wool from abroad. Bradford and Dewsbury underwent huge decline, rising unemployment, facing governmental neglect, discrimination, forcing working class

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[6] According to the 2011 census.

white and Asian men into the local service economy: shops, restaurants, take-away stalls and taxi firms. Swanton's (2007) description of Keighley (a town eight miles north of Bradford), appropriately captures the scene of parts of Bradford's[7] post-industrial landscape:

> "[A place that] continues to be dominated by the ghosts of the textile industries that are etched into urban fabric through the grandiose architecture of tired civic buildings, imposing mills in varying states of dereliction, back-to-back terraces, but also through the churches, cultural centres and mosques that are testimony to the mundane, everyday cosmopolitanism of the place" (Swanton 2007, p.5)

The effect of the government cuts forced Bradford Council to make £72 million cuts between 2010 and 2012, affecting public services and the voluntary sector (Telegraph and Argus 2012). More widely, the cuts were said to affect Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities disproportionately, as well as women and young people (Blume 2010). Additionally, the benefits cap further affected low-income Asian families (who on average had larger families), while the bedroom tax affected low-income white families (Dickens 2013). In 2013, Bradford experienced confrontation between the English Defence League (EDL) and counter-protests and today unfortunately remains often cited as containing 'monoethnic' pockets and home to individuals who have travelled to Syria to join Islamic State (Halliday et al. 2015). Others, however, are more hopeful and point towards the bourgeoning arts and literature scenes, with the Bradford Literature Festival growing in popularity every year (personal communication). Not to mention being home to some of the country's finest curry houses!

Ten miles east of Bradford lies the city of Leeds which, unlike the industrial towns of Bradford and Dewsbury, is more ethnically diverse and characteristic of what Vertovec (2007) terms 'super-diversity'. The migratory history of Leeds dates earlier (Jewish migration in the early 19th century, for example), as well as a more varied patterns of migration more recently (including larger African and Afro-Caribbean communities). Leeds, like Bradford and Dewsbury, also contains pockets of the most deprived wards in the country, with reports that 150,000 of Leeds' 751,500 residents live in the most 10% deprived wards in the country (DCLG 2011). While community

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[7] Also, to some extent Dewsbury that lies 10 miles southeast of Bradford

activists tend to describe Leeds as less vulnerable to depictions of segregation than Dewsbury and Bradford, Leeds was also caught up in the media and policy limelight in the weeks after the July 7th 2005 bombings in London. On the 13th July, residents of Beeston – a suburb of Leeds – woke up to find media sources from as far as Japan and North America on their doorstep with the news that Beeston was the home to three of the four perpetrators of the London bombings (Ward 2005). Furthermore, one of the bombers' mothers who had been actively involved in local community organising, was subsequently shunned, scarring local neighbourhood relations (personal communication). Yet, due to improved community relations in Beeston since 2005, the tensions that were feared in 2015 during the 10 year commemoration were averted.

West Yorkshire also receives a high percentage of the overall arrival of asylum seekers in the UK, placing the wider region (Yorkshire and Humber) as 3rd of the 11 regions that receive asylum seekers every year (Yorkshire Migration 2014). Subsequently, many of the Near Neighbours' projects in West Yorkshire often involve refugees and asylum seekers. While most are run by their statutory or charitable support organisations, a number of projects are actively facilitated by those who have directly experienced seeking asylum or living life in the UK as a refugee (personal communication).

I will offer further detail of the specific character of the places in the research as and when they appear in the findings.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has firstly outlined the context in which encounters have been sought as a response to the problems of social division and the failure of former multicultural policies. Within this context, encounters have become the focus of empirical attention within geography and social sciences in investigating how encounters are designed to enact transformations across a range of sites and spaces. As well as specific studies of encounters in a UK policy context, more broadly, 'encounter' has emerged within academic writing as a promise for a cosmopolitan ethic of kindness (Thrift 2005), as well as sites to cultivate capacities, habits and practices for intercultural engagement (Wise and Velayutham 2014). This chapter also addressed various critical accounts of encounters, whether Valentine's (2008) reminder that not all encounters necessary translate into respect for difference, or Amin's (2012) move away from encounters, as part of a shift towards the more-than-human.

The second body of work crucial to this thesis is critical governance studies as it relates to the governing of difference. Through unpacking critiques made by Fortier (2010) and Ahmed (2008), I showed that dominant narratives of belonging are exposed as well as the potential limits of reading too closely a Foucauldian account in the lens of power/resistance. In doing so I have suggested that turning to the everyday practices (including the strategies of bringing people together) and attending to the different encounters experience within such programmes might help us nuance critical governance accounts of living with difference.

Finally, I introduced the origins of the Near Neighbours Programme, how it is situated within wider political concerns, and how it aims to tackle issues of isolation, segregation and divisions within different communities. Giving detail into the context is crucial since I will be drawing upon Near Neighbours funded projects to understand more about the forms of encounter that take place and how practitioners go about utilising encounters for transformation. Firstly, however, it is important to learn how encounters with difference can be approached methodologically.

Chapter 3 – Methodological approaches to researching encounters

This chapter outlines the methodological approach to the research including the various methods deployed to capture the "multiple, intersecting and complex social relations" (McCall 2005, p.1772-3) that encounters produce in community engagement projects. These include an in-depth qualitative ethnography encompassing participant observation, semi-structured interviews, as well as participatory filming methods in a co-production project that I undertook in the last phase of the research. This chapter is organised as follows. Firstly, I begin with epistemological and ontological understandings of encounter and how these prioritise certain methods. By outlining the epistemological and ontological approaches of existing work around urban encounter and social transformation, I highlight three overlapping research methodological approaches to encounters; (auto)ethnographies (e.g. Swanton 2010; Wilson 2013a), oral histories (Valentine and Sadgrove 2014) and participatory methods (Askins and Pain 2011). In the second part of the chapter, I explore the specific methods that I utilised as I work chronologically through the research process and design (in four phases), as well as approaches in analysing the research through writing up 'vignettes' to interrogating the various layers to specific encounters. Throughout the four phases of research, I touch upon questions of positionality, reflexivity, and the methodological limitations affecting the research process.

3.1 Researching encounters

As Chapter 2 explores, geographical studies on encounter cut across different sub-disciplines within geography, each with their own ontological understandings of encounter. In urban studies, for example, Watson (2006) argues against accounts of urban life that are hitherto "rarely grounded in complex and textured understandings of the people and places concerned" (p.3). Instead, through detailed ethnographies, Watson interrogates "in a fine-grained way how difference is negotiated and lived, when and how differences are lived agonistically, and how power is exercised" (p.3). More recently, however, there has been a more popular uptake of "sustained participant observation" (Neal et al. 2015, p.466) that details more grounded accounts of everyday multiculture and the dynamics of social relations (Laurier and Philo 2006; Rogaly and Qureshi 2013; Jones et al. 2015). For Jones et al. (2015), ethnographic

fieldwork in a café researching encounters enabled "embedded engagement with the café's publics, practices, uses, atmospheres and rhythms" (p.649). Urban accounts of difference and encounter, then, prioritise sustained participant observation and detailed ethnographies as methods to capture the complex and textured dimensions of urban life.

Secondly, in more recent writing on encounter within geography there tends to be a methodological divide depending on the ontological positioning of encounter. Recent writing on affect including Wilson (2013; 2016), Swanton (2010) and Saldanha (2006) draw on ethnographic methods in order to capture what race *does* in encounters and interaction. In this body of writing, 'encounter' derives from the poststructuralist writing of Deleuze, Spinoza, and more recently Massumi (2002), Ahmed (2004), Anderson (2014). For Anderson (2014) – drawing on Deleuze – in encounters "life is opened up to what is not yet determined or is to be determined" (p.82). Attention to the world "is not an object of recognition but of fundamental *encounter*" (Deleuze 1994, p.176, cited in Swanton 2007, p.26). These ontological positions posit encounter as an openness to change that is sensed, felt, embodied. This is to reposition an ontology of encounter as the very stuff of grasping and sensing life, in a 'more than representational' vein (Anderson and Harrison 2008). Methodological approaches that flow from this ontological position then seek to investigate social and cultural life less as it is interpreted and constructed, but rather how difference functions – i.e. "what does race do?" as Swanton (2007, p.28)[8] asks. Such a question has implications for both more-than-representational approaches to questions of encounter as well as participatory geographical approaches that work through concepts of 'contact zone', (albeit differently) as unpacked in more detail below.

To take one example, Swanton's (2010) study of the materialisation of race in a northern England mill town involves a method that includes 'purposeful drift'; a method "inspired by the possibilities of psychogeography for registering and experiencing the affective life of multiculture" (Swanton 2010, p.2337)[9]. Encounter, for Swanton, is the messy, everyday, lived reality of urban life that is best made sense of by "foregrounding multiculture from below" (Swanton 2007, p.19). Swanton then describes using "narrative fragments" from his fieldwork to "reconstruct encounters" in order to perform the "lived, affective, and embodied dimensions of multiculture"

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[8] Swanton (2007) argues that asking 'what race does' enables him to "come to terms with the momentum of raced difference on the ground" (p.28)

[9] 'Purposeful drifts' Swanton later explains are "embodied practices for registering and experiencing the impact of an environment on human emotions" (2007, p.80).

(ibid). These are "'fictional' reconstructions of empirical material" (p.2338), prompting alternative ways of engaging with race and multiculture. For Helen Wilson (2013), who also focuses on the affective dimensions of the way difference is encountered, workshop diaries enabled thick descriptions of the emotional and guttural experiences of encountering difference. These examples of urban ethnography point towards how research practices might "register neglected intensities of everyday knowing (the habitual, the affective, the tacit, etc.)" (Swanton 2007, p.78). While acknowledging the difficulty of researching the unconscious and nonconscious (Noble 2015b), these methodical explorations seek to capture the emotional, guttural and other visceral registers activated in encountering difference.

This body of work, however, has been criticised by Valentine and Sadgrove (2012; 2014). As previously explained, Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) are critical of the "fragmentary observations" (p.2050) of public encounters (cf. Wilson 2013a and Swanton 2010) that, they argue, make temporal assumptions about the significance of fleeting and momentary encounters. As well as a theoretical critique on the loss of the subject in the encounter (see Chapter 2), Valentine and Sadgrove's (2014) critique shapes their methodological approach. By arguing that affect-inspired research on encounter is merely 'fragmentary', they interpret Wilson's auto-ethnography of bus travel, for example, as mere observational research, failing to grasp the way in which both Swanton and Wilson's method does take account of an assemblage of conversations, images, discourses, and go-along interview material. Valentine and Sadgrove's (2014) solution, then, is to engage in "indepth examination of individuals' personal histories" (p.1981) through indepth interviews and oral histories. This is a point that Andersson et al. (2011) have also made in arguing for the use of semi-structured interviews as a method of capturing people's experiences of encountering difference (Andersson et al. 2011). As I shall discuss further in Chapter 4, Valentine and Sadgrove's (2014) examination of personal histories, while useful to engage participants' own understanding of their encounters, does not always account for the affective, embodied and non-discursive encounters with difference.

In recent years, researchers have begun experimenting with participatory research to understand the taking place of encounters in the context of interethnic relations. This move has arisen from a critique that much of the cosmopolitan literature is devoid of engagement "with the people whose lives are being discussed" (Askins and Pain 2011, p.818). This is exemplified by Askins and Pain (2011) who call for the deployment of "contact zones as *method* as well as theory" (p.804, emphasis original).

Drawing on feminist and participatory epistemological perspectives, Askins and Pain (2011) argue that the study of contact zones and interethnic encounters share a resonance with participatory methods within geography (Kindon et al. 2007), since participatory research methods can facilitate the learning of the messy and multiple relations that are made and unmade in and through encounters. For Neal et al. (2015) research practices into multiculture in parks in diverse communities in Britain "create 'contact zones' between groups of 'very differently positioned' participants and researchers" (p.463). In this vein, Torre et al. (2008) for example understand contact zones as an opportunity to create "a politically and intellectually charged space where very differently positioned youth and adults are able to experience and analyse power inequities together" (p.24). In doing so, however, a critical reflexivity is required to ensure 'participation' does not become a tool to normalise and silence the often uneven power relations that still exist, further entrenching these inequalities of power, privilege and voice (Cooke and Kothari 2001).

Although the different interlinking approaches outlined above can rarely be separated out – given the interwoven nature of emotions and affect – at times, the tensions between different approaches are made light of in academic discussion around methodological approaches to understanding encounter. These tensions appear, for example, in the significance of the subject, both in terms of how we conceptualise the 'subject' as well as how we involve others in the process of researching encounters. The theoretical differences around the subject are exemplified in the debates between Valentine and Sadgrove (2012; 2014) and Wilson (2011) and Swanton (2010). The work of the latter consciously seeks to decentre the subject, in attempt to reconsider the affective, material, and atmospheric dimensions of encounter. In contrast, for Valentine and Sadgrove (2014), the subject sits at the heart of their enquiry into how prejudice takes form and how "personal pasts and the collective histories" (p.1981) affects decisions about how we relate to others, etc.

Turning to the research in this project, my methodological approach draws from the learning across the different approaches to understanding the dynamics of encounter. A significant method I utilise is participant observation for its usefulness in studying how encounters are designed and staged, how encounters take place, and how encounters intersect with wider narratives. This is evident in the use of participant observation and ethnography to understand how encounters are both experienced by different people, as well as how they are worked upon (i.e. organised, facilitated and anticipated). However, since questions of affect were so apparent in the scoping

research phased (outlined below), I draw inspiration from recent affect-inspired accounts, taking into consideration the importance of the visceral dimensions of encounter. Yet, contrary to Swanton (2010) and Amin (2012) whose work on more-than-human encounters – I argue – tends to lose sight of the subject, I seek to foreground the agencies that nevertheless do work in relation to the more-than-human dimensions of encounter. This is particularly so, as my primary aim is to understand how practitioners think through, design, plan and work through encounters in their practice. As I shall argue throughout this thesis, the agency of practitioners and how they work with the affective dimensions of encounters should not be lost within these debates. Rather, I seek to make space for the affective, embodied and material within ethnographic fieldwork *as well as* more conventional methods of structured interviews and go-along interviews[10]. Finally, drawing upon participatory approaches to exploring encounter offers me a set of tools to negotiate the intimacy of researching encounters, recognising the depth of my own research and the co-dependency on participants in telling their stories of encounters. In the final part of this thesis (Chapter 7 and 8), I discuss how participatory research might develop ethical sensibilities for both researchers and their participants to better attend to the encounters that are an invariable part of the coming together in participatory research.

3.2 Research phases

To document the research process itself, the rest of the chapter is organised into the four phases I identified throughout the full period of research. Under each phase, I identify the methods I adopted, the epistemological concerns that each raises, as well as discuss positionality and reflexivity in the research process. The four phases I identify are the following:

1) Empirical scoping study (February 2014 – March 2014)

2) Shadowing Near Neighbours (September 2014 – December 2014)

3) Active participation through volunteering (January 2015 – July 2015)

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[10] In the next section I shall say more about how interviews – despite being accused of being linguistically-dependent – can also be a site in which the pre- and non-cognitive aspects of experience can be explored.

4) Co-participative research project (April 2015 – July 2015)

3.2.1 Empirical scoping study (February 2014 – March 2014)

This section introduces the initial phase of 'scoping' the research site, outlining the reasons for why Near Neighbours in West Yorkshire was chosen, as well as how learning from the empirical scoping study impacted my research questions, empirical site, and approach to the research.

Prior to the research in West Yorkshire, I already had some knowledge and awareness of faith-based community engagement through previous work as a Reconciliation Intern at the Reconciliation Ministry Team at Coventry Cathedral. This is worth exploring for it gives detail into my positionality in approaching the research. My internship involved developing the educational capacity of the Reconciliation Ministry Team through assistant support work to the Canon for Reconciliation. This involved coordinating meetings between different partners (universities, civil society organisations, council members, and occasionally members of other faith groups in the city). For a time I was the Cathedral representative of the city's Inter-faith Forum, and in my year in Coventry I gained some experience of coordinating community development with those from different institutional, cultural and religious backgrounds. However, as I began working on my PhD research, I was inevitably approaching the question of cross-cultural community engagement with a different set of institutional affiliations (as a PhD student, in a prestigious university), and a different set of ideas that often complimented, but also diverged from, practitioners' commitments and interests. Back in February 2014, although I knew that I wanted to examine faith-based cross-community engagement, I did not at this time have a clear empirical focus. I had touched based with a number of organisations, exploring the possibility of PhD research, but no firm commitments. Since two organisations were already based in the city of Bradford, less than ten miles from where close family friends of mine lived (and where I would eventually live for a year) I took a preliminary research trip, or what Arksey and O'Malley (2005) term an 'empirical scoping study', to find out more.

The trip was not only invaluably useful for determining the sorts of projects that organisations are engaging with, it was very memorable to me. The towns of Bradford and Dewsbury were towns I had experienced several years earlier during a

visit to a former roommate's family whom I met during my first year of university. Mike and I soon became close friends and since Dewsbury was much closer to Durham than Southampton (where my family live), I had soon become adopted like a son, and from 2008 would gradually become more familiar with the post-mill towns of West Yorkshire (Bradford, Dewsbury, Batley, Wakefield, all part of the 'Yorkshire Conurbation'). By 2014, my trips to Dewsbury became more frequent since Mike's father, John, had been diagnosed with Dementia and I had become increasingly fond of Pat and John, and it was becoming clear, important to stick around since I seemed to be a calming influence on John, who often had unsettled periods as a bi-polar sufferer. So, until February 2014, I had only visited Bradford during visits by Pat, John and Mike, who generously and proudly took me around. On these visits, I also recalled the stories of my grandparents, who were all born and grew up in parts of South and West Yorkshire. With these stories lurking in my subconscious, our visits to the West Yorkshire landscape were infused with a post-industrial melancholia (for example at the ruins of what were once magnificent stone mills) and a tangible (and even nostalgic) sense that the area had changed. Retrospectively, I also had a fairly minimal understanding of the diverse communities of the former mill towns.

My own journey to come to know these towns and cities of West Yorkshire is important to declare and acknowledge, since personal perceptions are always carried into research engagement (England 1994), and the questions I bring to the exploration, are shaped invariably by these experiences. My visit to Bradford in February 2014 involved a visit to a church-based practitioner who I knew from a previous inter-faith project as well as the coordinator of Near Neighbours (who at the time was the coordinator for projects in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley) as well as an ethnic minority community centre, and a mosque. The scale and reach of Near Neighbours was more elaborate than I had anticipated and since Near Neighbours part funded two of the other organisations that I had visited, it made sense to focus my attention on Near Neighbours and begin the 'snowballing' process (Valentine 2005) through the coordinator. Near Neighbours, it appeared, was a contemporary site in which the presence of the state is both felt and enacted (Painter 2006) when it comes to managing differences and the staging of encounters to remedy the ills of separate communities, apparently living in parallel lives (Near Neighbours 2014a; Cantle 2005). Yet, I also felt during the scoping interviews that the projects that were funded had a sense of independence and grounded practice that would complicate any neat accounts of governing through difference (cf. Fortier 2010). One of the most vivid feelings I had

upon reflecting over the initial phase of research was that the neat accounts of governing assumed a particular subject who would act in a particular way, prompting particular outcomes. Therefore, in terms of *content* (a site bridging national, regional and local scales and the relationality of governing through difference throughout these scales) and in terms of research *access* (the regional coordinator as a gatekeeper to various projects), Near Neighbours seemed a very suitable focus.

Secondly, around this time in parallel I had been reading geographical literature on urban transformation (including multiculturalism, conviviality and living with difference). One of the key concepts that bridged across this work was 'encounter'. What I took away from the empirical scoping study was not only that the term 'encounter' had been used in the official website of Near Neighbours[11], but ideas of encounter were spoken about when I interviewed the then coordinator of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham. However, right at the beginning of the research – even as early as the scoping exercise – it was clear that Near Neighbours were investing in, and utilising ideas around, interaction and encounter, and hence another reason why the work of Near Neighbours was chosen – to illustrate contemporary manifestations of the encounter in community engagement projects.

Near Neighbours, at the time of beginning research, had four major regions (East London, Birmingham, Leicester and the northern M62 corridor towns of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham). So why choose West Yorkshire? Not only was West Yorkshire a place that I had a curiosity about and a personal connection to, it was also a place that featured in policy review, media narratives, and the site of contested academic study (cf. Cantle 2001; Phillips 2006). As explored in the previous chapter, the northern disturbances in 2001 among other events placed Bradford, Oldham and Burnley as 'troubled' towns, with a growing problem of lack of cohesion and segregated communities living parallel lives. There is, of course, a risk that choosing a site that is already in the spotlight for negative reasons, in fact reinforces the idea that these towns are just that: 'problem' towns, in need of research. Over-researching neighbourhoods already in the media spotlight can result in 'research fatigue', where research becomes tiresome and weary, reproducing a truth about the 'need' for research in these areas (personal communication). In phase 4, I return to the question of 'research fatigue' in discussion with the current West Yorkshire coordinator. However, since I am examining strategies of encounter and the attempts to govern through

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[11] "To create first *encounters* that develop new relationships between people of faith and ethnic communities… These encounters can be key moments of transformation in a neighbourhood." (Near Neighbours 2014a, emphasis mine).

interactional policies, the fact that these three towns are *still* the site of policy intervention some 13 years later, I feel deserves attention. After considerable conversations with the coordinator, it was apparent that it was not so much a question of *whether* to research, but *what sort of* research would be appropriate given the context of Bradford, and to some extent Dewsbury and Leeds. We concluded that careful ethnographic study, with the permission of those leading and participating in the projects was necessary. The participatory research project in phase 4 also was justified on the grounds of needing more research that worked *with* people involved in community engagement, rather than research done *to* or *about* vulnerable communities (see Kindon et al. 2007).

The empirical scoping study that I undertook also involved a trip to a national Near Neighbours conference in Birmingham that I was invited to attend by the then Northern England Near Neighbours coordinator. Not only was the content of the conference useful in getting at the questions of how Near Neighbours imagines, designs and cultivates a particular ethos of engagement, the conference also enabled me to meet individuals involved in Near Neighbours. At the end of this period, I had refined my empirical focus to the way in which practitioners think through, design, practice and attempt to harness encounters to bring about transformation in diverse community engagement.

3.2.2 Shadowing those involved with Near Neighbours (September 2014 – December 2014)

During the summer of 2014, Near Neighbours launched its second phase of funding, with a renewed grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Having received widespread recognition of the successes of the first phase (from 2011 to 2014), DCLG committed to fund a further three years, expanding to a further 9 regions applicable for funding (DCLG 2014). Subsequently two coordinators were required for the new regions created for the Northern England region. The existing coordinator (mentioned above) was reassigned to the North West (which included the existing areas of Oldham and Burnley, as well as the new areas of Bury and Prestwich). Meanwhile a new appointment was made in West Yorkshire to cover Bradford, and two new areas: Dewsbury and North Leeds. Wahida Shaffi, a freelance journalist and community organiser in Bradford, was appointed.

In August 2014, I got in touch with Wahida to discuss the possibility of carrying out research with some of Near Neighbours projects in the West Yorkshire region and

on the 2nd September 2014 we met for the first time. I arrived at the community centre that 'hosts' Near Neighbours office in eager expectation, and with a good dose of nerves. As I lingered around reception half over hearing a conversation going on ahead of me in the corridor, it soon became clear Wahida was mid-flow in conversation, passionately engaging in conversation before our appointment to meet. I grew to like Wahida immediately and remembered her from a brief encounter a few years back at a church conference in which she was invited to speak. As we sat down in the café lounge of the community centre, sipping coffee and making introductions, we established where we knew each other from. Although she didn't remember me in the audience of 100 or so for her talk, finding commonalities and shared commitments in our initial meeting helped build the rapport that is so crucial early on. During the first meeting, Wahida pointed me towards some of the Near Neighbours funded projects in the area (as well as following up by openly e-mailing projects to ask whether they could invite me to participate). Mid-way through this first meeting, a woman passing by the community centre spotted Wahida, who in turn then beckoned her over. The woman in her 70s who originated from Pakistan, spoke to Wahida (whose family also originated from Pakistan) in Urdu. Wahida immediately explained to me that Mrs S is planning to set up a project to combat loneliness through music in a multicultural housing association in Bradford. So from day one, I had insight into the busyness of community organising that doesn't wait for gaps in one's schedule.

A huge amount of what was possible in the research is down to Wahida and this appreciation only grew throughout the coming months. Within three weeks of our first meeting, I had already attended three meetings with practitioners who had either secured, (or were in the process of securing) funding by Near Neighbours to carry out projects in their local community, bringing people together. On the 10th September, I attended a Near Neighbours launch for one of the new areas (Bury and Prestwich). While the area was not one of the areas I had designated for the research, the conference gave me more time with Wahida and some of her colleagues in Near Neighbours. I nervously sat at a table with a badge on that represented me as a PhD student. Sitting among politicians, civil servants, faith leaders, it was a chance to network, make connections and develop links. Reflecting back, I didn't really know the language, and dressed hideously smart out of ignorance of the appropriate way to dress/speak/act. Appendix 2a documents some of these early meetings, some of which involved me turning up to the projects alone, others involved shadowing Wahida as she met with various community leaders, and potential applicants who

were looking to apply for funding from Near Neighbours. The meetings I attended with Wahida were particularly insightful as our time spent together enabled me to really grasp the intricate thinking that went into developing approaches to engaging across difference, and how ideas about 'encounter' are shaped (I discuss the method of 'shadowing' further below).

Working out which projects across Leeds, Bradford and Dewsbury would become the focus of the research took longer than anticipated. I was keen to cover the three towns/cities listed above since it would give a range of different projects including a "super diverse" (Vertovec 2007) city (Leeds) and regions that experienced what practitioners I spoke to described as "bi-cultural segregation" (Bradford and Dewsbury). At the time of beginning research in September 2014, there were a possible 25 – 30 projects that were either active or in the process of obtaining funding. Hence, I needed to decide how I might narrow down to select a handful that would appropriately inform the research. I initially asked Wahida whether I could be put in touch with projects that focused on craft, art and other creative process of bringing together. As the first months unfolded, it became clear that my selection criteria would be less organised by a key theme (such as craft) and simply which projects I felt able to participate in and who welcomed me to be present. Of course, there are limitations of choosing projects based on ease of access – or even acceptability – yet, trust and rapport were crucial in the sort of research I was hoping to engage with. Since I was looking to participate in some depth (given the intimacy required to fully grasp the various dimensions of encounters), it became increasingly important to follow the lead of the projects that I was able to attend with the acceptance of those involved.

During the first month, for example, I met with a woman who was organising community through providing, fixing, and riding bicycles on the back of *The Tour* in Yorkshire (a cycle competition which is part of the Tour de France). Although we met initially for a coffee to chat about her project, I was unable to attend the first session and subsequently we lost contact. In a similar example, I had hoped to participate in a fusion-music project in Bradford with a classical musician interested in engaging in fusion music between primarily Pakistani worship music, and Greek classical music. Although meeting the project leader in a Pakistani café on the edge of Bradford helped me understanding more about the challenges and difficulties of bringing people together, it later transpired that I was unable to attend most of the sessions of the project as they became rehearsals for the various musicians for their final performance.

The first few months were overwhelming to say the least. Appendix 2a shows the frequency of meetings and range of different individuals who humbly gave me their time. Reflecting back, I perhaps said 'yes' on a few too many occasions in order to expose myself to as much as possible. I feared saying no, since saying no might be turning down the very meeting that would open up the doors to a project that I would be able to participate in, contribute to (i.e. through volunteering), and to research ideas about encounters in the context of cross-cultural community organising. My strategy was to keep all doors open, which of course did result it stops and starts and sometimes disappointments (as illustrated above with the potential music fusion project) but also important connections that would lead to future participation. Through this process of trial and error, I eventually established 6 projects that I participated in – to varying degrees – from planning, through to the projects' taking place, and its afterlife (see Appendix 2b). Three of these (Roots to Leeds, Catalyst, Toast Love Coffee) became the empirical focus of Chapters 4 – 7, with learning from the other projects deeply informing the write up. My use of methods during these initial few months included semi-structured interviews and go-along interviews.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews and go-along interviews

For individual meetings with the project coordinators, I opted to use semi-structured interviews to understand how practitioners made sense of their experiences and their strategies to bring people together (Andersson et al. 2011). Semi-structured interviews enable quick insights into the possible connections and networks that the earlier stages of research require. Where interviews were appropriate and possible to conduct, I sought consent and permission to record the interviews on my phone. In most cases written consent was given, in other cases where it was difficult to obtain written consent verbal consent to interview was acquired (see Appendix 3 for consent forms for interviews). It was found that interviews provided a safe space for participants to dwell and reflect on their experiences, aided by gentle questioning and empathetic responses. In some cases, practitioners commented on how the experience of being interviewed had been beneficial to them, to "stop and think" and reflect on their practice. Interviews are also an interactional method of knowledge co-production, as emotions, bodily gestures, verbal responses and assembled atmospheres are all generated between participants and researchers (Bondi 2005).

Depending on the practitioner I spoke to, and the context of their work, some interviews took more the form of what Kusenbach (2003) terms 'go along interviews'.

Sometimes in the busy lives of practitioners who didn't have the luxury of time to sit down for an hour to discuss their work, I was invited to 'come and see'. Here, practitioners were very happy to meet me, and answer any questions I had. However, the nature of conversing whilst active community organising (whether painting a sculpture ready for an art exhibition the following weekend, as in one case, or talking whilst sharing a lift from one project to another) set up a more informal space, where seeking consent (as well as capturing what was said) became more challenging. However, rather than seeing this as a limitation, I take inspiration from Kusenbach who suggests 'go along interviews' are in fact more desirable for many research projects. Kusenbach (2003) remarks that traditional sit-down interviews can generate "static encounters" which act to "separate informants from their routine experiences and practices" (p.462). Instead, by attending to practitioners in the context of the projects they are involved in (whilst painting, making food, weaving fabric), knowledge is generated through cognitive processes as they are in relation to other registers of experience, as sights, smells, feelings and other intuitive processes interact to generate "thought-imbued feelings" (Connolly 2008, p.55).

Additionally, the relationship between interviews as a method and the ability to access the non-cognitive, requires further deliberation. While interviews are more closely associated with linguistic-based articulations of experience, more recently geographers writing on affect have reclaimed speech, commentary, and interviews, as beneficial in exploring the co-constitutive relation between voice, body and the environment (Burrell 2016; Bissell 2015). In concerns around the tyranny of 'representation' in geography (Thrift 2000b), the interview has been regarded as incapable of capturing the habits of everyday practice, since respondents are rendered "impotent 'carriers' of practices" (Reckwitz 2002, p.250, cited in Hitchings 2002, p.65)[12]. Yet, as Bissell (2015) reconceptualises, rather than speech *representing* a set of static temporal moments, speech "enacts its own performative powers" (p.148). In a similar way, in my research interviews that enabled participants to share the memories of past encounters often enacted particular emotions, as recollection of past events "no longer represents our past to us, it acts it" (Connolly 2002, p.28). Conversation can, as Sharp argues, expose us to the "very forces, the affects, and images moving us" (Sharp 2011, p.52)[13]. In another example, Hitchings (2002) shows how in interviews about everyday practices of elderly people keeping warm in the winter, there was ample evidence of

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[12] Notable exceptions include Brickell (2013)
[13] In full, Sharp argues "[a]lthough the tongue escapes our conscious control, it has the potential to reveal those affects and forces that contour our imaginations" (Sharp 2011, p. 44).

"reflexive awareness of how their routines worked" (p.64). Adams (2006) too remains more optimistic over the possibility of participants to attune to, and disclose, why particular practices are embodied.

Burrell (2016) reminds us that researchers themselves are subject to the same critiques as their participants, as she highlights the "obvious impossibility of academics, as humans, ever forming research insights which are not themselves subject based" (p.1605). Instead, she puts forward an argument to recover the

> "moral weight of narratives and storytelling, for the empathy and understanding they can promote on a human level. Working in places which may be experiencing particular challenges it seems especially important for people to speak for themselves and not to let the subjective appraisal of the academic researcher shape the entire discussion" (p.1605)

Similar sentiments, I feel, can be applied for the studying of the projects in West Yorkshire that are "experiencing particular challenges" (ibid). This works out both conceptually (since interviews *can* enable the exploration of the affective dimensions of experiences) and ethically (prioritising participants' voice, where historically participants have been ignored or silenced). In summary, throughout the research, interviews helped me understand the various dimensions of encounter, including the affective and material dimensions (Bissell 2015; Burrell 2016).

Methods: Participant observation through 'shadowing'

Phase 2, Shadowing Near Neighbours, also relied on in-depth participant observation. While participant observation as a method will be explored in more depth in the next section (Phase 3), it is important to note that 'shadowing' – a term I borrow from Dobson (2009) – involved a specific type of participant observation. Dobson (2009) describes 'shadowing' as periods of "prolonged interaction with key actors in their organisations… sensitizing [one] to informants' experiences, 'realities' and social worlds" (p.189 - 190). In my case, as I began to get to know Wahida, she invited me to accompany her on some of the visits she was making to community organisations across Bradford, Leeds, and Dewsbury. These trips not only allowed me an opportunity to witness how community organising takes place in practice, and the work that goes into sustaining and maintaining organising across difference, they also were beneficial to Wahida. For Wahida, going to these meetings together provided

company on commutes, sharing the experiences of meeting new people and allowing space to reflect on the various meetings we had attended. On the times when we would share lifts, although Wahida also drove, I often willingly volunteered freeing Wahida up to make phone calls, send emails, and other activities necessary to her role as coordinator.

Not only had Wahida and I found a working relationship that was mutually beneficial, I was beginning to feel more confident in my own role within my engagement with Near Neighbours. Turning up to projects and other community events with Wahida made meeting new faces much easier, since she was able to endorse my position as a researcher who had her permission. It soon became clear that the very ethos of Near Neighbours – partnerships across difference – meant that I felt respected for being a different constituent *alongside* Near Neighbours' staff, and the various partners (including the supporting inter-faith organisations, as well as local leaders on the ground). In a way, I had permission to be a partner, with an independence to report, scrutinize, unpack and explore the project as someone's opinion who was welcomed.

A similar relationship between researcher and research*ed* organisation can be seen in the case of Jane Wills' (2012) research into political community organising in London with the organisation London Citizens. Wills (2012) speaks of an engagement with the organisation (London Citizens) as allowing a "deep insight into the operations and implications of the organisation" (p.120) without "abandoning [her] role in the university". She writes further, "belonging to the alliance has allowed me to fuse the academic with the political" (p.120). Such an ethos of engagement shares resonances with Gibson-Graham (2008) who offer an epistemology of "working with people who are already making new worlds" that enables university-based scholars to

"…mobilize the resources to support the co-creation of knowledge, create the networks necessary to spread these knowledges, work with activists and academics of the future, and foster an environment where new facts can survive" (p.629).

I take inspiration from Wills and Gibson-Graham in my approach to the Near Neighbours. Firstly, negotiating a healthy dynamic with Wahida was crucial in establishing a productive (yet independent) relationship with Near Neighbours. In the first few months (September – December), as I shadowed Near Neighbours through

attending planning meetings, brainstorming ideas for new projects, and various related-conferences, Wahida and I reflected on the importance of independent critical thought. Wahida was especially keen to understand how I saw Near Neighbours given my skillset, and sought opportunity for critical reflection, drawing on my insights. She acknowledged that her role and mine were necessarily different, recognising that I had the advantage of time, reflection and 'critical distance', and the ability to record, capture and document the development of projects that she simply did not have time to do. Yet at the same time I would never know as deeply as she would the experiences, needs and aspirations of those she knew from her background in community development in Bradford.

I offered to Wahida the idea of a "critical friend" to Near Neighbours – a term borrowed from Blackstock et al. (2015) – to reflect an ethos of engagement that was neither naively co-opted into the terms of Near Neighbours, nor a normative critical baseline approach, where my theorising was "tinged with scepticism and negativity" (Gibson-Graham 2008, p.618). The 'friend' in me affirmed the innovation and creativity of projects, took an interest and curiosity in the stories, experiences, even hoped for meaningful engagement and transformation between different individuals and groups in the communities I spent time with. The 'critic' in me asked questions, kept the insights I have observed in conversation with different academic and policy perspectives, attended to my own feelings and intuitions from past experiences. More widely, this is the recognition that we cannot so easily – or even at all – bracket out our own political aspirations, normative codes, and moral obligations. Rather, they have to be negotiated. The best we can hope for is to acknowledge these dispositions and work with them in conversation with others who are active participants of the co-production process.

Of course, this is not to say we always got the relationship 'right'. During my first 'shadowing' visits in attending a Near Neighbours conference to launch the new funding areas (Dewsbury and Leeds), I offered to help. Before I knew it I was in charge of the registration desk, complete with a name badge that read my name with the logo 'Near Neighbours'. Afterwards, we both reflected on whether this was misleading to those who attended, and both concluded that my affiliation should be to 'Durham University' since to hide my affiliation might compromise my role as a researcher, even though I would be still working *alongside* the coordinator. I will return to this question of the negotiation of interests and commitments in section 4 since the co-production project involved a more intimate and intense negotiation. In the 'shadowing' stage, I

was more overtly a researcher finding out the "operations and implications of the organisation" (Wills 2012, p.120), from a more distanced approach.

3.2.3 Active participation in TLC (January 2015 – July 2015)

Methods: Participant observation through volunteering

The third phase of the research began roughly around January 2015, beginning with the volunteering at Toast Love Coffee. As previously introduced, Toast Love Coffee (TLC) is a pop-up café that works with, and supports, the refugee and asylum seeker community in Harehills, Leeds. Among the volunteer team were a range of different individuals: some seeking asylum, some members of a synagogue, others friends of Anna (co-Director), some who had simply turned up and wanted to be more involved. Initially I was invited by Wahida to visit TLC, where I met Anna. After interviewing Anna in November 2014, knowing it would be beneficial to the research Anna invited me to volunteer in the New Year. It was important to negotiate the terms of my participation which meant making aware to those who I spent time around that I was participating not only to support the café (as I would have done had I not have been a PhD student) but also as a way to find out *how* the café functions, how it brings people together, and how difference is performed, enacted and reshaped in the encounters in running a café.

The tasks of my role as a volunteer were no different to the other volunteers, except I would be undertaking the activity as an ethnographer, paying attention to the richness of life, the dynamics between people, objects and environment. Participant observation in this fashion is to deliberately immerse oneself into the everyday "rhythms and routines" (Cook 2005, p.167). As Gill and Worley (2013) note, this type of ethnography helps develop a "rich and detailed understanding of the complexities and messiness within 'everyday' spaces, resulting in research findings" (p.21). As previous explored, participant observation is a frequently used method in the social study of interactions and encounters between different groups (Rogaly and Qureshi 2013; Neal et al. 2015). Watson (2006) notes the need for "complex and textured understandings of the people and places concerned" including "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973) of the unfolding events of the café. This was not without difficulty, however. Since the tasks of the café (washing up, serving coffee and toast, cleaning the surfaces, making sure people were welcomed and occasionally striking up conversation with anyone on their own) demanded a lot of concentration, it wasn't possible to take notes during tasks. I

gradually learnt the knack of writing 'cue' words on my phone (i.e. 'door', 'coffee spillage', 'chat about birds', 'sofa encounter') so that in my recollection of events – often spoken into my phone audio recorder – I would be able to capture the range of sensory, affective and atmospheric experiences through detailed notetaking (Wilson 2013). I negotiated continuously with Anna on the levels of consent from participants, with the agreement that verbal consent from respondents who appear in the stories or vignettes (as they would later be written up) would be sufficient. In the cases of those whom expressed a desire to be named (such as Anna and Anita), their names were not anonymised. This was an intentional and political decision since they wished to be acknowledged and since their stories and experiences are also shared on social media in order to promote the café to a wider public.[14]

Occasionally, more intentional and participatory moments sprung up. For example, in conversations with practitioners around community organising that often happened in the café, I would ask whether it would be possible to take notes, or even record samples of conversation, as it would help the research. This more intentional stance prompted a more careful ethical and consensual contact, with more explanation on the aims of the research as well as signed consent, depending on the unique circumstance.

The second volunteering capacity I participated in during the research was as a participant on the Leeds Catalyst Programme; a Near Neighbours funded youth programme aimed at 15 – 30 year olds engaged in faith-based community activism living in Leeds. Since I was aged between 15 – 30 at the time, and living in Leeds, I was invited to participate. Catalyst is a Near Neighbours initiative, funded by, but also resourced through, the regional Near Neighbours coordinator. For the Leeds group this was Wahida and she offered the opportunity for me to participate with the understanding it would enable me an in-depth and intimate insight into the facilitating of learning about community engagement and encounter, as well as contribute something back, which I willingly was looking for opportunities to do. As with TLC, joining the Catalyst residential for the research required negotiating the terms in which I participated. Wahida and I collectively agreed I would participate as a young person, completing the same programme as the other 15 young people, but with the added task of "capturing the learning experience" both for the research and for the benefit of Near Neighbours. Subsequently I produced a reflection booklet with the input of a few members of Catalyst (see Appendix 5) as well as made various recommendations to

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[14] Http://toastlovecoffee.wordpress.com

staff within Near Neighbours. While this was potentially a lot to take on board in a 10 month period of research, it became part of my ethical commitment to ensuring the research directly impacted the critical reflection and learning to enabling future change within the organisation of Near Neighbours[15].

3.2.4 Co-production research project (April 2015 – July 2015)

The final phase of the research involved a coproduction project, that while bigger than the PhD, my involvement in the project informed the analysis of the PhD considerably. It is no coincidence that the coproduction project took place during the last phase (April – July 2015) since it takes considerable time and energy to establish the trust required for such a project. The project came about through an invitation by Wahida to join an N8 Partnership[16] workshop on a new initiative titled 'Realising the potential of coproduction' that took place in December 2014. The N8 Partnership were inviting applications from partnerships between academic researchers and 'non-academic partners' (third sector, public sector, private sector) to investigate how 'co-production research' might be undertaken. The invitations were for Experimental Pilot Projects to explore specific areas of coproduction research. From this workshop, Wahida and I decided we were in a strong position to apply for a grant, both enabling Wahida and I to further consolidate our emerging partnership (and more importantly, enable the time and financial support necessary to further engage in particular communities) as well as contribute to the N8 Partnership's investigation, potentially impacting the future and direction of university research.

By January we had successfully received funding for a co-participatory project to investigate the role of intermediaries (Wahida and I in different ways reflecting on our positions within the research) in three participatory film projects that would engage three Near Neighbours' funded projects, two of which I had (or would have) already spent considerable time participating in. The two specific to the PhD research were Toast Love Coffee and the Catalyst Leadership Programme (the two outlined and introduced above) and one of these useful for the empirical analysis (in Chapter 7). The aim of the project was to explore how people are creating safe spaces to engage in meaningful and difficult conversations about difference, through participating together

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[15] For this role, I also received some financial assistance by Near Neighbours.
[16] The N8 Research Partnership is a collaboration of the eight most research intensive Universities in the North of England: Durham, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and York. See http://www.n8research.org.uk.

in producing three short films. The topic of 'safe spaces for difficult conversations' emerged from interviews carried out with practitioners during Phase 1 (September – December 2014) and during discussions with practitioners in designing the research proposal. The project would enable participation in the process of film making as well as produce three accessible films that would help the three projects promote their work on social media. Not only would the films create opportunities for participants to engage (and in some cases further stimulate the very relationships that sustained the projects), the filming was also incredibly useful as a method to explore the intricate ways difference was negotiated and lived with (see Chapter 7). The films were 'participatory' in that they were shaped by the decisions of those involved, directed by Wahida and cut professionally by a local film producer based in Bradford. The project culminated in a film launch titled *Faces, Spaces, Places: Leeds Community Film Launch* which was run by some of the people involved in the research and included a facilitated discussion with questions that enabled the audience (a mix of participants, family members, friends, others involved in community organising) to further engage with the issues of the film.

There are numerous benefits for using participatory filming to enable understanding of the taking place of encounter. Filming acts as a form of visual note-taking, registering not only the environment and wider context, but also the gestures and other bodily interactions of participants (Pink 2007). While the filming itself enables an insight into the habits of social interaction (Dant 2004), it was in fact discovered that the process of filming (rather than the product of the film itself) was more useful for the PhD than anticipated. In the end, the way I ended up drawing on the participatory film process for the PhD research was different than anticipated: the process of filming helped me think through the negotiations over how to document one of the participants' neighbourhood (see Chapter 7). What the participants got out of the research, however, is still important to stress since the project had multiple aims. I also must recognise that although the project engaged participants from the design of the research proposal, and the carrying out of fieldwork, the final analysis and write-up was my own. The report itself was co-written by myself and Wahida, with some (although limited) input from the participants of the projects themselves (see Campbell and Vanderhoven 2016). One of the participants (Adam) also co-presented the findings of the research with me at an academic conference in Newcastle[17] to honour the commitment to co-produce not only the design and research process, but also reflection

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[17] Titled 'Race, religion and migration: spaces, practices, representations' (13 – 16th January 2016)

on the findings in a co-produced fashion; hence honouring the time and commitment that Adam had put into the project.

Methods: Participatory Filming (Co-production research project)

So what is participatory research and how can it enable research into encounters across difference in the context of community engagement? 'Co-production' builds on an emerging (although still marginal) area of research called participatory action research (Kindon et al. 2007). For the N8 Partnership, coproduction "assumes mutual respect, no hierarchy of knowledge forms, fluid and permeable disciplinary and professional boundaries, and a normative concern with action, not simply a focus on systematic analysis" (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016 p.12). In particular, this type of research prioritises the *working together* of practitioners and researchers to produce knowledge through action, seeing participants as "producers of knowledge in research processes" (Askins and Pain 2011, p.806). There has been substantial critique of the use of the term 'participatory', which has often been used to gloss over the inherent power relations and inequalities (Kesby 2007, Cooke and Kothari 2001). Therefore, engaging in this type of research requires constant critical reflection, especially in a context that is often 'over-researched' and susceptible to 'research fatigue' (conversations with Wahida).

As introduced in section 3.1, one of the central aims of this thesis is to further develop Askins and Pain's (2011) case that participatory approaches have much to offer the study of intercultural encounters. Indeed, they argue "participatory action research approaches inherently place researchers within contact zones and that more theoretical attention to these will help in the development of richer, more nuanced and ethical approaches to research, policy, and practice" (p.807). Another reason why 'participatory' methods serve the capturing of the dynamics of encounter, is that interactions through stuff (e.g. the interactions necessary for participatory filming) "demand communications, and enable conversations across and between the research participants, and researchers and participants"(Askins and Pain 2011, p.813). A similar phenomenon was experienced in the process of filming. There was a noticeable difference between the *accounts* of encounters by participants and the *practices* of encounter generated through the participatory filming project. Chapter 7 details some of the events that took place during the filming, including the unexpected moments that would reveal tacit knowledges about the difficulty of staging encounters, as well as learning that arises from challenging encounters. Here, I refer specifically to an incident that took place during filming outside a mosque in Leeds. The decision to stop

filming due to complex intersecting power dynamics (sensitivities around gender, race, and the presence of a camera given the over-exposure of mosques to the right-wing media) resulted in an in-the-moment reflection on identity, difference, and tolerance that would probably never have happened otherwise. Yet these conflictual moments also led one participant to seek to build bridges with the committee at the mosque, suggesting practical steps were taken to repair relationships. In conceptualising contact zones as theory and *method*, then, through participating together on a film project, I seek to show how participating together on creating a film enables learning about the dynamics of encounters, including the opportunities (and threats) from encounter. In the actions and reflections generated through the filming process, we sought to develop a way to work through "difference, power, and privilege" (Askins and Pain 2011, p.806), key issues that participatory methods foregrounds (Kindon *et al* 2007).

In summary, the participatory film project which I undertook was bigger than the PhD research itself. While the three film projects were valued by the three groups (TLC, Catalyst, and another Near Neighbours funded project not explicitly in the research) for learning, experience, skills-development and publicity, being active in the Catalyst film project provided invaluable learning about the dynamics of encounters. Following Askins and Pain (2011) I seek to further conceptualise contact zones as theory and *method*, making the case for how participation can result in more conceptually nuanced and simultaneously more ethical approaches, giving participants the space to develop their own thinking around the politics of encounter.

3.3 Drawing together the methodology

This chapter has explored the challenges of designing a methodology to research how practitioners cultivate spaces for encounter. I identified three overlapping approaches to researching encounters in the context of cross-cultural projects that each tend to emphasise particular ontological and epistemological understandings of encounter as well as prioritise different methods to capture how encounters are organised. The method of ethnography is most apparent within recent urban accounts of encounter for its versatility to the complexity and unpredictability of encounters as they take place. The research in this thesis, hence, draws primarily from the methods of participant observation, ethnography and semi-structured interviews in detailing the way in which practitioners design and implement spaces for encounter. Yet, as I have shown, there is much value to draw from both affect-inspired writing and participatory

approaches to engaging practitioners in collaborative research around safe spaces for encounter. Both recent affect theory inspired approaches and participatory action research approaches help capture – albeit differently – the ontological nature of encounter as it is sensed, felt and embodied. Here, the very ontology of encounter shapes both the attunement to encounters within the research and (as we shall see below) the approach to analysing and writing up the research. Insights from participatory methodologies also shape my approach to carrying out the research; including the use of democratic forms of research design as well as the possibilities that participatory film enable. This will be addressed particularly in the last empirical chapter (Chapter 7) in exploring the co-designing of spaces in which researchers and practitioners can better collaborate on the very issues that those involved in cross-cultural community engagement work through. Yet, it is also important to recognise that the differences in methodological approaches to researching encounters do invariably bring their own tensions. As I would go on to find, this is particularly so when holding the need to explore the non-representational aspects of encounters (its felt, pre-cognitive and non-verbal affects) with the ethical imperative to ensure those shaping relations in community are empowered to participate in exploring how emotions and affect shape the way in which encounters are cultivated to organise community relations.

Having now drawn together some of the different approaches to researching encounters, the final aspect of the research process is my approach to writing up the research material. As mentioned before, fieldnotes were written up to capture the full range of sensory, affective and atmospheric experiences (Wilson 2013). With the more participatory aspects of the research (Phase 4), there was a greater involvement of co-analysing the material *with* participants. Indeed, fieldwork diaries that I kept were shared with participants of the co-production research, particularly Wahida who was involved in the co-writing of the report for this part of the research.

Much of the rewriting of ethnographic fieldnotes took the form of vignettes that are "brief descriptions written to capture the essence of an event" (Crouch and Pearce 2012, p.126, see also Rogaly and Qureshi 2013). Furthermore, vignettes help us grasp "social practices *in the making*" (Latham 2003, p.2005, emphasis original). In my analysis of my ethnographic material, vignettes were used to interrogate the various layers of meaning that opened up in each encounter. Since the encounter is always folding and opening, writing *about* encounter is itself an encounter or sorts, ushering new knowledges into being, making links between expressed ideas, conversations

about the findings, and the theoretical connections that are established in academic writing up of fieldnotes (see Swanton 2007).

With this in mind, I turn to exploring the conditions for encounters through examining how Near Neighbours begins its intervention into community engagement in West Yorkshire.

Chapter 4 – Planning for encounter: creating the conditions for togetherness

"Wahida introduces me verbally to a dozen or so projects, sending me introductory e-mails from her iPhone as we meet. Wahida doesn't waste time. She simultaneously speaks, smiles, and works her fingers forwarding me links to online articles about successful projects, and the occasional introductory email that would later prove really useful to me. There's a café that encourages informal interaction[18], a film maker asking the question 'what is cohesion?', a litter picking project, an art project focused on bee keeping, an inter-faith bread baking initiative, a textile project, a local neighbourhood gardening project, one that involves Islamic geometry and stain glass windows in churches. Wahida recalls images of an Islamic scholar talking to a pagan – an image that sticks in her mind and makes her smile as she evokes it. Mid-way through a woman appears and approaches the café style seating in the foyer where we're sat. Wahida excuses herself momentarily, jumping up and beckoning the older woman dressed in a traditional Pakistani silk Shalwar Kameez to come and join. She affectionately sits beside her and works through an application form, explaining in Urdu which parts to develop. The woman is applying for a project for Near Neighbours funding to combat loneliness through music in a multicultural housing association in Bradford where she is a resident. The woman Wahida speaks with would later tell me that "little knowledge is dangerous" and then by coming together, "knowledge, skills and smiles" would combat loneliness"

(Fieldwork diary, 2nd September 2014)

A snapshot into the world of inter-cultural community organising. A moment that made an impression on me, not only as a 'first encounter' of sorts for me as an eager postgraduate researcher beginning PhD research in September 2014 into the community organising of state-funded inter-cultural community projects, but a moment that I look back on as capturing something of the energy, strategy and creativity that goes into organising activities that bring people together. This opening empirical chapter will work through the various aspects of planning evidenced in the

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[18] The café is called Toast Love Coffee (the focus of chapter 6)

opening vignette: the role of the coordinator, the importance of enabling participation in the planning of projects, networking, how coming together to tackle common problems such as loneliness can, as a by-product, facilitate the togetherness of different groups. What draws these different aspects together, however, is the theme of 'creating the conditions for encounter' that are implicit in the first stages of planning projects of encounter.

More specifically, this chapter asks how do practitioners create the conditions for encounter, given the unpredictable and unguaranteed nature of encounter (as shown saw in Chapter 2). The unguaranteed nature of encounter has been identified and brought to our attention in recent geographical work on encounter (Valentine 2008; Matejskova and Leitner 2011). How practitioners bring people together *given* the unguaranteed nature of encounter in fostering respect and understanding, however, has been given less attention in recent scholarly work. I begin by reviewing recent work that does however seek to explicitly engage with "purposeful organised activities" to encourage encounter (Mayblin et al. 2015a; Askins 2015; Askins and Pain 2011). The analysis of my research speaks to, and develops, this literature on organised encounters by highlighting the various strategies, tactics and intuitions that practitioners work with to encourage interaction. This is done specifically through a) narrative-telling and connecting themes of encounter to context-specific ethical narratives of participation (including faith narratives of 'responsible encounter') b) awareness sessions that enable people to creatively think about the different resources in their community and how they might bring people together c) through specific planning and implementation workshops that enable people to bring their ideas into practice, working though the challenges of the unguaranteed nature of encounter. The insights come specifically from the first phase of the research (see Chapter 3) that involved shadowing the local coordinator in setting up Near Neighbours projects. At this point in time, Near Neighbours had been active in Bradford for three years (2011 – 2014) and the newly appointed local coordinator, Wahida Shaffi, had begun working in June 2014. Hence, the resources to support the argument come from existing Near Neighbours reports and analysis from the first three years, as well as primary research from interviews, ethnographic notes, and other informal conversations with Wahida and those who were beginning to set up projects in their local community from 2014 onwards.

After reviewing the existing literature (which sets out the problem of the unguaranteed nature of encounter), I offer a brief context to the spatial geography of

the work of Near Neighbours. While offering a further overview of the context of Near Neighbours in West Yorkshire (complementing Chapter 3), this section also highlights some of the spatial conditions (financial resource availability, social capital and local community capacity) required for projects of encounter. The rest of the chapter is organised into three sections. The first part explores how narrative telling is one strategy to encourage an ethos of participation. In order to stimulate faith groups to participate, particular 'cross-over narratives' are developed that enable participants to share common commitments to their local area in their differences. The second part explores Near Neighbours awareness sessions. These are put on to encourage people to come together who otherwise wouldn't meet in order to plan potential projects. Near Neighbours awareness sessions are themselves a site of encounter and become to potential applicants the means to work through the design and shape of future projects that seek to encourage interaction across difference. The chapter argues that Near Neighbours local coordinators play a crucial role in the facilitation and governance of bringing people together to plan and implement projects that seek to improve their community. Finally, the chapter draws out how practitioners plan together to mitigate the unguaranteed nature of encounter through offering incentives to participate and strengthening the existing spaces where young people (in this case) already meet and mix. Lastly, I argue that encounters by nature of being unpredictable (prompting new relations) can only ever be shaped or nurtured and never guaranteed.

4.1 Encounter without guarantees

As I have shown in reviewing recent policy around community cohesion and integration, contact theory attributed to the work of Gordon Allport (1954) remains at the heart of attempts to bring communities together. Recent writing on the encounter within geography, however, has disputed the assumption that contact with difference necessarily results in respect for difference (Valentine 2008; Matejskova and Leitner 2011). One way in which the causality between contact and behaviour is disrupted is in the unpredictability of encounter (Carter 2013). As Ahmed (2000) notes, an encounter is "premised on the absence of a knowledge that would allow one to control the encounter, or to predict its outcome" (p.8). The 'absence of knowledge' that is required for any given encounter to prompt something new, then, throws up a problem for practitioners whose work is around fostering encounters. Whilst there are particular outcomes that may be desired (understanding, trust, respect, tolerance, for example),

these outcomes can never be forced, for to do so would compromise the ungrounded nature of encounter. Furthermore, recent research has highlighted the often unintended outcomes of encounter, including the hardening of prejudices (Leitner 2012) as well as the vulnerability of 'minority' groups in the pressures to conform/integrate with 'majority' people (Valentine 2014).

The predicament of the encounter has led some to abandon the idea of encounter as a strategy to produce more harmonious relations between strangers in the city (Amin 2012) since focusing on encounters has led to an "overly humanist framing of contemporary social ties" (p.12). This has in part inspired an emerging body of work that reconceptualises the encounter in a post-humanist vein (Swanton 2010; Darling and Wilson 2016). Yet, for others, the unguaranteed nature of encounter has prompted investigations into the way practitioners design spaces for encounter, taking account of the difficulty in setting fixed outcomes of encounter. In the study of an inter-faith cricket initiative by Mayblin et al (2015a), the creation of space for exploring differences, shared interests, as well as banal sociality enabled encounters to be facilitated across difference. They highlight the importance of understanding a non-spatially and non-temporally bounded 'contact zone', recognising moments of encounter outside of the engineered contact between young people. The presence of a professional facilitator trained in conflict resolution and mediation also enabled people to get to know one another in a safe and supportive environment.

Askins and Pain (2011) further highlight the importance of participation in sustaining the possibility of encounter. In their research into a participatory art project in the North East of England involving young people resident and recently arrived (refugees and asylum seekers) from different backgrounds, allowing a "disorderly, messy, noisy, mobile" hands-on approach worked to create a "participatory space" (p.811). When these conditions were undermined and the "process offered little involvement or activity" (for example an artist who edits all the photography, with the young people merely watching) there was a noticeable drop of attendance (p.812). Indeed, they argue "without 'stuff' to mobilise around, fragile, emergent relationships appeared to slip; old habits and relations reemerged" (p.815). These are some of the key factors that are identified as shaping the conditions for encounter. In a similar way, Helen Wilson's (2013b) study of a diversity training workshop, revealed the contingency of factors including "the placing of objects, the temperament of the facilitators [and] the emotive nature of work" (p.76) which all condition the possibility of encounter, as well as the multiple interactions that took place within the workshop.

It is important to recognise, however, that there is "no formula" for engineering engagement, as Amin (2002) argues. He suggests that "any intervention needs to work through, and is only meaningful in, a situated social dynamic" (p.969). Therefore, this chapter turns to the specific 'situated social dynamic' of the contexts in which Near Neighbours engages in community engagement. In doing so, this chapter contributes to emerging work within geography on the "practices and conditions that engender and foster positive intercultural social relations" (Askins 2015, p.471). With this in mind, I now draw out three key ways in which the conditions for encounters were shaped, as illustrated through Near Neighbours engagement in diverse communities. Firstly, however, a bit more context is needed into how Near Neighbours begins its intervention into community.

4.2 Designing a strategy of engagement

4.2.1 Rationale for Near Neighbours

In order to explore the conditions that shape how encounters take place, we need to explore the rationale of Near Neighbours and where Near Neighbours prioritises its funding. As situated in Chapter 2, Near Neighbours closely embodies recent government strategies to create more cohesive communities with the underlying theory of the contact hypothesis (DCLG 2008; DCLG 2012). In 2014, the Near Neighbours' website offered the following rationale for its purpose:

> "Some neighbourhoods in England have a number of different faith and ethnic communities living close to each other, these communities often rarely interact with one another and instead live parallel but separate lives.
>
> Such separation can lead to misunderstanding and a lack of trust or respect for each other, which is not healthy for a local community." (Near Neighbours 2014a)

These descriptions are particularly revealing of the way in which Near Neighbours re-articulates the specific language of government policy responses to the 'northern riots' in 2001. The language of 'community cohesion' – with 'parallel lives', 'separation', 'misunderstanding' – can be traced back to the Cantle Report (Cantle 2001) and

subsequent policy documents (DCLG 2008; DCLG 2012; Casey 2016). As the Near Neighbours' rationale shows, the lack of interaction between different faith and ethnic communities is the primary 'problem' Near Neighbours attempts to tackle in its approach to community engagement. The original three funding regions of the Near Neighbours in the north (Oldham, Burnley and Bradford) in 2011 to 2014 also maps neatly onto the three locations that experienced ethnic disturbances in the summer of 2001, further reinforcing the idea that the Near Neighbours was set up as a direct response to the ongoing need for community cohesion, after events in 2001.

4.2.2 Geographical regions enabled to participate

With this rationale in mind, certain regions of the country were selected that were identified as areas of high ethnic diversity and low interaction. According to the staff at Near Neighbours, the regions eligible for funding are identified by a "complex formulae between ethnic diversity, levels of separation, and deprivation" (fieldnotes from Near Neighbours launch in Prestwich, 10th September 2014). More specifically, in West Yorkshire, Leeds and Dewsbury were included alongside the existing areas of eligibility for funding (Bradford and Keighley). Dewsbury's inclusion seemed to resonate among practitioners who were invited along to a Near Neighbours awareness sessions (which were advertised to target existing community practitioners as well as potential applicants through faith groups and other existing third-sector organisations). Dewsbury shares a similar ethnic diversity to Bradford, as well as containing some of the most deprived wards in the country, hence Dewsbury was regarded as a place 'in need' of further community engagement projects. During a Near Neighbours launch in West Yorkshire, however, a number of comments in the question and answer session surfaced some of the confusion around why parts of inner-city Leeds in the south (including Beeston and Holbeck) were not included, despite having much higher rates of deprivation/ethnicity. The response from Near Neighbours staff present at the launch was unanimously that upon consulting different communities after the first phase (2011 – 2014), those involved in community organising from Jewish perspectives felt that they were unable to get involved with Near Neighbours since they were not included in the eligible regions. The concerns of those involved in community engagement in the south of Leeds, however, were taken on board as a result of these conversations. The local coordinator, for example, was able to engage members of a Synagogue within the eligible area of the North, with a

group based in Beeston as a way to connect up the North and South of Leeds, since local practitioners raised the importance of working across the city.

In summary, the analysis of the social geography of conflict within ethnically diverse and deprived regions, as well as the potential social capital availability, shapes specifically where funding is available and hence the conditions for the emergence of projects.

4.2.3 Contested Parish geographies

As well as contestation over the boundary of eligibility for funding, those engaging with Near Neighbours were also ambivalent about the local governance of the funding administration within these regions. Within each region eligible for funding, a series of Church of England parishes are identified along with the information of the appropriate parish priest to contact for support with the application. The parish priest subsequently 'signs off' a project before the application would be sent off to the Near Neighbours office in London for a decision on funding. Figure 1 below gives an example of the eligibility maps that are available on the Near Neighbours website (see also Appendix 1).
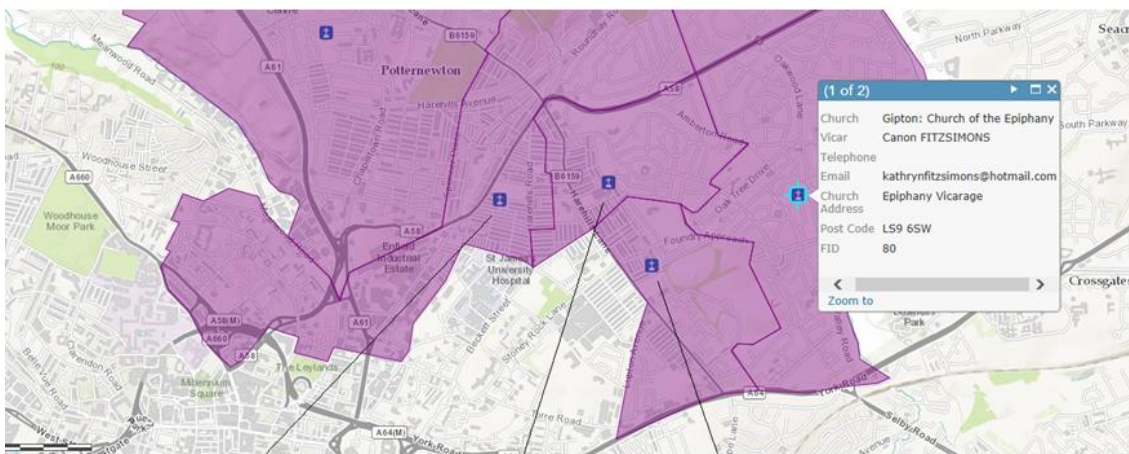
Figure 1: Example of eligibility maps and parish priest contact details

To understand why parishes were identified as reference points for potential applicants, we need to go back to the wider discussion on faith-engagement in the contemporary political climate as we explored in Chapter 2. As we established, Near Neighbours stems from a partnership between the Church Urban Fund (CUF) and the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) under the

Conservative/Lib Dem Coalition government that came to power in 2010, marking a different trend of inter-faith engagement than in the previous New Labour government. There are a number of different justifications given for *reinvesting* in the Church of England's parish structure to engage with faith communities. From those within Near Neighbours (particularly those working from a Church of England perspective), the parish geography of the country is favoured for the following reasons.

Firstly, it was mentioned that the parish geography of England "connects up 11500 parishes" that each have a parish priest who is essentially empowered to be responsible for the well-being of his or her parishioners. At several Near Neighbours launches I attended in the North, Paul Hackwood (Executive Chair of CUF) compellingly described that the Church of England "does territory", justifying the use of the parish geography to serve Near Neighbours. Secondly, this move towards empowering the Church of England to be more present in matters of civil and public life is part of a wider trend within the Church of England of 'Presence and Engagement'. Presence and Engagement is a programme by the Church of England to equip churches to remain "present in multi religious areas and engaging positively with communities of other faiths" (Lambeth Palace 2003). Thirdly, there has been considerable support for the Church of England's governance in administering support for Near Neighbours community projects from other faith groups. DeHanas et al. (2013) highlight how some Muslim proponents of Near Neighbours understand the programme to support the development of minority faith groups, describing the parish system as a "wonderful infrastructure" that could be used "as a kind of grounds to get others involved" (p.13).

Yet there was considerable critique about the use of the parish system to administer the funding for intercultural community projects. For many, the reassertion of the Church of England's parish governance was part of a wider trend towards a Church of England-centric inter-faith agenda, rather than the former New Labour model of inter-faith representation through civil council meetings (that took place in the Regional Faiths Forum). For Robert (a faith practitioner from a non-denominational church background) the Church of England's privileged inter-faith role was part of a wider political programme to shift power to more Conservative Party supporting faith institutions. Criticisms also came from other faith perspectives, such as Adbul-Rehman Malik, a London-based Muslim public intellectual, who DeHanas et al. (2013) describe as questioning:

"Do you think Muslims know which parish they're part of?" he asked, incredulously, "To me, it's undemocratic."" (DeHanas et al 2013, p.12)

It could be argued that the insistence of a counter-signature by a Church of England parish priest – whether an opportunistic move by Church Urban Fund to keep 'present' or a requirement to satisfy DCLG – reinforces the very problem of difference that Near Neighbours sets out to remedy (as outlined in 4.2.1). Privileging the Church of England in this way not only reinforces the unequal power relations of access to funding, opportunities and entitlement to be engage in communities, but also sends a message of unease towards trusting other non-Church of England (let alone non-Christian faith) groups. The research also found that on a number of occasions the parish priests were not officially approached or asked to sign off funding applications. In some parishes, parish priests were either uninterested in getting involved or did not see it as their role to sign off applications. In other cases, where projects were not directly involving the church (for example a Muslim-Jewish partnership project) parish priests were not approached. Bypassing the signature of the parish priest could be seen as one way of subverting the hierarchy of governance of Near Neighbours, for a more relational and participatory approach to engaging with different groups. The research recommends that the role of the parish priest to officially sign of projects is reviewed for the wider politics of governance that such a practice entails.

This first section has explored how Near Neighbours organises its resources, as well as where specifically Near Neighbours funds. So far, a number of factors that shape *the conditions for encounters and influence who is enabled to participate* have been identified. Firstly, the specific regions identified are already shaped by a particular geographical way of seeing areas that are 'in need' of more interaction, and hence restoring trust, understanding and respect. Additionally, these maps are created with some sense of the capacity available, as well as encouraging particular groups to participate. This is evident in the case of North Leeds that prioritises faith capacity over deprivation, sometimes at the confusion (and frustration) of others involved in community building in the south of the city. Secondly, within the eligible areas, the person who is responsible for signing off projects (i.e. the parish priest) also shapes who is likely to get involved as well as privileging one particular denomination (Church of England), within one particular faith group (Christianity). As the research has shown, this privileging of the Church of England – whilst justified on a principle of inclusive civic engagement – does actively put off certain practitioners who feel

colluded in unequal power relations, or in some cases, governmental agendas of "managing minority communities" (Robert, a faith practitioner from a non-Church of England background). Yet the research shows that often these requirements are subverted in order to increase the participation of other groups, recognising that not only are some parish priests uninterested or unqualified for signing off and checking Near Neighbours projects, but that the very structure of signing off projects through the priest is an unjustified privilege of the Church of England.

These examples highlight some of the negotiations of how these structures (developed by Near Neighbours) govern recruitment of participants and the implementation of projects. It also highlights the agency of those involved in positions of power/responsibility that are able to subvert the rules for the sake of inclusion. These examples also help us develop a more nuanced understanding of the governance of such spaces. I have shown how both the policy design and the practice of the local coordinator are co-constituents in the *governance* of inter-cultural community projects. While the areas are selected (and hence governed) based upon a specific reading of the causes of segregation and ethnic conflict, the role of the coordinator has an influence in the application of particular policy ideals in response to the energies and needs of the community. As well as the politics of *who* is approached (within faith partners), *how* faith is articulated matters, as the next section explores.

4.3 Embedding narratives of encounter in faith traditions

Faith is undoubtedly at the heart of Near Neighbours' approach to community engagement. So far, I have shown some of the ways in which the Near Neighbours' approach depends on the resource capacity of particular faith groups. This next section explores how faith narratives help create the conditions for engagement.

4.3.1 Embedding concepts of encounter

Having outlined a context in which funding priorities shape the sorts of projects that are possible in the first place, the next section explores how narratives are used as a strategy to encourage participation. One way in which Near Neighbours enables encounters between people from different backgrounds is by embedding the concept of encounter into different faith narratives. This was evident at a launch event for the second phase of Near Neighbours in February 28th 2014 in which the Archbishop of

Canterbury, Justin Welby, articulated the importance of the contact hypothesis (as featured in recent government policy on community cohesion) through the parable of the Good Samaritan:

> "[Jesus] told us to love our neighbour; one of his great parables that many people know is the story of the Good Samaritan, which is of the conflict of cultures and of history being overcome by the personal contact and working together. And when we meet each other, we deal with fear – we may not agree, but we deal with fear."
>
> (Justin Welby, in DCLG 2014)

The tenant 'Love your neighbour' (which is found in the biblical story of the Good Samaritan) is offered as an example of "the conflict of culture and history being overcome by personal contact and working together". The term "conflict of culture and history" – although implicit – in the context of the conference about Near Neighbours, refers to contemporary cultural difference in multicultural Britain. The imperative to encounter – to make personal contact and work with others who may be different – is rooted in the words of Jesus and the account of the bible, according to Welby.

At another Near Neighbours launch, a similar comment is made illustrating how the concept of encounter becomes engrained in faith discourse. A church leader who was invited to give a keynote speech suggested "neighbour isn't a suggestion; it's a duty". This was said again in reference to the principle of 'Love your neighbour'. By reinforcing the *duty* of neighbourliness and encounter, I argue the encounter is responsibilised. By responsibilising the encounter (i.e. giving moral weight and importance to the act of 'encounter'), advocates of Near Neighbours are encouraging those who come from a faith perspective to get involved, since the practice of encounter is deeply rooted in their faith.

The concept of 'neighbour' however goes further than responsibilising encounter within specific faith traditions. It also becomes a form of 'cross-over narrative' across different faith and non-faith perspectives (Cloke and Beaumont 2013). This was most evident at the Near Neighbours launch in Dewsbury. Representatives of the three Abrahamic faiths (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) spoke at the launch, all tasked by Wahida (the West Yorkshire coordinator) to speak to the theme of 'Love your neighbour', a common ethical principle found across the three faiths. For

example, Nuzhat Ali – a Bradford Faith Advisor – reminded the audience that in Islam, humankind is created to know each other:

> "O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another" (Hadith, 49, 13)

Ali suggested that we are created differently – different nations and tribes – in order to know one and truly understand one another. She added that one of the Hadiths' commands that anyone who believes in God will show no harm to one's neighbour and entertain guests generously. Although the principle of 'love your neighbour' is expressed in different ways, the general principle is capacious enough to resonate across different traditions and hence an important strategy to enable different faith groups to participate together, yet respecting religious particularities.

Embedding 'secular' concepts of encounter (whether contact or neighbourliness) into faith narratives then not only instructs and encourages those from particular faiths to participate along religious/ethical grounds, it also becomes a 'cross-over narrative' to foster engagement across religious difference as well[19]. Put differently, cross-over narratives involve putting "aside possible moral or ideological differences in order to engage in common or political praxis" (Williams 2015, p.192). Cloke and Beaumont (2013) argue that 'cross-over narratives' help post-secular partnerships to "converge around particular ethical precepts and practical needs" (p.27). Thus, one way in which encounters are enabled by Near Neighbours is to embed and make attractive the idea of encounter into particular faith traditions that simultaneously resonate across different perspectives. This is one way in which faith groups are seen as "repositories of cultural, moral and social resources" (Bretherton 2010, p.34) that on one hand have the potential to be connecting agents (ancient traditions of loving people who are different) and on the other encourage principles of connection across difference.

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[19] It's not my intention here to explore the secular/theological roots of the concept of 'encounter'. However following Cloke and Beaumont, a concept like 'encounter' that emerges in a policy context are then "reconnected" to religious roots as part of a "postsecular process in which crossover narratives are able to form the basis of new alliances across the religious/secular divide" (Cloke and Beaumont 2013 p.37).

4.3.2 Common causes across difference

Faith narratives that allude to ethical precepts for participation also appear in a publication produced by staff within Near Neighbours to encourage different faith groups to come together. Like the practitioners in the launch mentioned above, the publication *Faiths Working Together Toolkit* (Near Neighbours 2014b) also suggests faith groups should converge around the religious principle of 'love your neighbour' (also known as the 'Golden Rule') to encourage working together and building friendships:

> "Social action in local communities is often a common means by which this Golden Rule ["treating others in a way you would like to be treated"] can play out and thus makes a good starting point by which people can be brought together" (Near Neighbours 2014b).

Near Neighbours' *Faiths Working Together Toolkit* also recommends that sharing a common cause or interest can then create a stable relational engagement moving "beyond surface level interaction" (p.3) to honesty about differences. The publication suggests that participants do not need to "sacrifice deeply-held convictions" but rather should hold these with "humility and a recognition that not everyone will share your views" (p.4). To unpack more specifically how engagement is envisioned by Near Neighbours in how differences/similarities [play out], the document is worth quoting in some depth:

> "It is common in projects for people to disagree on some issues, occasionally profoundly. You can still work together, finding ways to do that which leave room for respectful disagreement. […] In engaging with others of different faiths it is also important to be aware painful histories exist between communities as well as challenging interactions globally in the present day can sometimes lie close to the surface. Part of listening and hearing well is to be able to hear this – and respond if you feel it appropriate. However, it is important to recognise that in cooperative social action projects the main focus is the shared commitment to your area and one another, and that dialogue in this context cannot hope to resolve all the issues of history." (Near Neighbours 2014b)

The above is significant for three obvious reasons. Firstly, the vision outlined accepts that differences will exist, sometimes profoundly. Yet differences are not a prerequisite

for engagement, as the first sentence alludes to. Secondly, the quote illustrates a wider trend away from dialogue as the solution to the problem of difference. Earlier models of interfaith engagement prioritised 'dialogue' rather than social action as the basis of finding a common approach to public life (Weller 2004). One practitioner in the research – a former Near Neighbours regional coordinator – suggested that a liberal middle-class preoccupation with inter-faith meant that engagement tended to be among the well-educated and theologically-trained. More recent inter-faith engagement places greater emphasis on 'doing' and working together despite linguistic or theological differences (Dialogue Society 2013; DCLG 2009). There are resonances here with Cloke and Beaumont's (2013) concept of "cross-over narratives" that describes a strategy that faith-based organisations use to enable (religious) participation in so-called secular tasks. According to Andrew Williams, "cross-over narratives" involve putting "aside possible moral or ideological differences in order to engage in common or political praxis" (Williams 2015, p.192). Indeed, Near Neighbours' approaches aptly reflects the development of "connecting for the common good" over conversion or arguing the merits of a particular faith. Thirdly, the attachment that does the work on connecting communities is the attachment to the local. "Your area" is used emotively to encourage participants that their connection to others should centre around the neighbourhood. Indeed, the publication begins its justification for the local by suggesting "the one thing you already have in common is your neighbourhood" (Near Neighbours 2014b, p.2).

I will now unpack this third point on the importance of the local as a site of connection and the importance of local causes that enable people to get behind common issues together, as I turn specifically to how Near Neighbours encourages and enables interaction. If the eventual goal is to see neighbours engaging together on local projects, how practitioners within Near Neighbours (policy advisors, directors, faith leaders and regional coordinators) encourage the setting up of projects requires significant exploration.

4.4 Coordinating action and enabling participation

4.4.1. Local coordinators

Each of the funded regions outlined above in Section 4.2 has what is termed a 'local coordinator'. A local Near Neighbours coordinator is responsible for overseeing the activities of the 'small grants programme', which is the funding of £250 – £5000 available as "seed funding for local groups and organisations who are working to bring together neighbours, to develop relationships across diverse faiths and ethnicities in order to improve their neighbourhood" (Near Neighbours 2017a). Local coordinators support and help potential applicants apply for funding, as well as process the application form (reviewing and making recommendations, before sending it to the central office in London for a final decision). The role of the coordinator has been noted elsewhere as crucial to the delivery of Near Neighbours Programme. In a recent report about Near Neighbours by Coventry University's Centre for Social Relations (Fisher and Range 2016), on the role of the coordinator they argue:

> "Much of the Programme's distinctiveness lies in the role of the local coordinator who is usually someone with an extensive knowledge of and network in the local area, provided with a flexible remit to create change and connect with people using the tools and profile of Near Neighbours" (Fisher and Range 2016, p.12).

The report goes on to argue that the 'relational' approach of Near Neighbours is due to the "coordinators being embedded in local communities" and that the coordinators have a significant role in attracting those who have little experience applying for funding, and hence move "beyond the usual suspects [of inter-faith work]" (ibid, p.16). Others have pointed out that Near Neighbours' reliance on the role of the coordinators can create a dependency that is unsustainable, as too often relationship building and community transformation relies on the coordinators' capacity, rather than the ability of local groups to bring about change on their own terms (Ray, interview). It is noted, for example, that due to particularly enthusiastic and engaging coordinators, certain Near Neighbours regions benefit more than others. During my time shadowing the staff of Near Neighbours in West Yorkshire, it was found that the local coordinator was crucial to the initiation and setting up of projects across Bradford, Dewsbury and Leeds and hence much of her work features in the following two sections. Before introducing

these ('Near Neighbours awareness sessions' and 'independent project planning sessions'), firstly let me further introduce Wahida Shaffi, the local coordinator.

As detailed more thoroughly in Chapter 3, I first met Wahida at the Near Neighbours Bradford-based office after an invitation to meet her following an e-mail request from me. She warmly invited me to meet her, explaining some of the projects that were being planned (and that she was facilitating) as well as those that were off the ground. An enthusiastic woman in her late 30s, passionate about her own community, Wahida was born and raised in Bradford. A second-generation British Pakistani whose parents moved to Bradford to work in the textile trade in 1950s-60s, Wahida graduated with a MA in Peace Studies from Bradford University and has spent the best part of 20 years as a scholar practitioner, working in community development, as a free-lance journalist and more recently publishing a book about the lives of Muslim women in the UK called *Our Stories; Our Lives* (Shaffi 2009). In June 2014 she took up a post as the local coordinator of the West Yorkshire Near Neighbours, facilitating the setting up of projects in Dewsbury, Bradford and Leeds.

From our initial meeting, I got an immediate sense of the scope of her work, as illustrated in my fieldnotes from the 2nd September 2014 in the opening epigraph. In this meeting, Wahida introduced me to a number of projects that were in various stages of operation as well as invited me to shadow some of the work of coordinating and overseeing the local projects funded by Near Neighbours. I left feeling very hopeful and privileged to have an insight into the range of innovative projects that were out there. Already my perceptions of Bradford as documented in policy, academic research and media coverage as a city of segregation were beginning to shift. Research itself is an encounter and Allport's (1954) principles of shifting prejudices in face to face encounters were certainly experienced by me that Tuesday morning in an office of a buzzing community centre on the outskirts of Bradford.

A few weeks later I would meet Wahida again, this time on the move as she invited me to journey with her to meet potential small grants funding applicants in Leeds at what she would go on to term 'Near Neighbours awareness sessions'. I'll come back to these shortly, but on this journey Wahida explained to me the different types of applications that she receives. There are those who sign up because they have seen the advert and the opportunity to create something new, starting with the Near Neighbours criteria. And there are those who work to fit an existing project they are seeking funding for into the criteria. Near Neighbours criteria can be found in Appendix 4 (see Near Neighbours 2017b). The first thing to take away from shadowing

the community organising of Near Neighbours, then, is that while Near Neighbours does *enable some* encounters, Near Neighbours also *shapes existing* relations. In this sense, Near Neighbours intervenes by enabling new projects as well as shaping existing projects into more relational, multi-partnership based projects.

The importance of 'new' projects was also identified in interviews with Near Neighbours staff in the London offices. Two of the ten priorities found in the Near Neighbour criteria (see Appendix 4) include funding 'new' projects: (1) "organisations which have not been given Near Neighbours funding before" and (2) "new and innovative projects with a high local impact at the neighbourhood level". Jenny, a Near Neighbours employee responsible for approving applications for funding, reported that "the only way of allowing the really interesting projects is funding *new* ideas and projects. Yet, you never really know what happens, it's… it's risky, really. And sometimes the risk is we get it wrong". Another staff member mentioned the importance of reaching "beyond the usual suspects" who usually get involved in inter-faith work as being a way of "planting seeds". Planting seeds helpfully captures the idea of intervention without full knowledge of where (and when) the seeds may fall and the flowers may bloom. Thus, one of the ways in which Near Neighbours creates the conditions for enabling change given the unguaranteed nature of encounter, is by funding new projects despite the risk of doing so. The strategy is likened to that of the uncertainty of planting seeds, not knowing (or being able to control) the outcome of the decisions made to fund particular projects. One of the concerns about relying on the possibility of encounters to prompt new relations across difference is that often people who are "already young and cosmopolitan" are only ever reached (Amin 2012, p.31; Amin 2013). Yet the research shows practitioners within Near Neighbours are aware of the importance of including those who are unlikely to participate, in order to reach 'beyond the usual suspects'.

Having now set the scene of some of the activities of the local coordinator and their approach to enabling/shaping the sort of desired encounters that will improve local communities by bringing people together, the next section explores more specifically the practices of two particular activities.

4.4.2 Preparing for projects of encounter

The "flexible remit" of the Near Neighbours local coordinator "to create change and connect" (Fisher and Range 2016, p.12), means it is difficult to categorise the activities

of connecting up individuals to prompt inter-cultural projects. In reality, "no two days are the same" (as Wahida often remarks) and tasks are fluid, and people and their projects are complex and interconnected. However, for the sake of the argument, the rest of this chapter explores two specific activities: that of 'Near Neighbours awareness sessions' and that of 'Independent planning sessions'.

Near Neighbours awareness sessions are designed to bring together people who have shared interests and objectives but who would otherwise not necessarily meet. These are often 'engineered' by the coordinator and brought about by their extensive networked knowledge of local communities. Those invited to attend are either existing contacts that coordinators have from previous engagement, or 'snowballed' through asking trusted individuals or approaching community organisations to send someone on their behalf.

Independent planning sessions, on the other hand, take place once communities have decided to come together to work on a local project independently from the coordinator. Sometimes these were prior to a funding bid, in other cases once funding had been granted. In some instances the coordinator offered to run a facilitation session at an independent planning session, but often outside of the remit of her Near Neighbours' role and on a voluntary basis. Knowing that the best insights into how Near Neighbours enables people to come together would be at these meetings, Wahida willingly invited me to attend some of these meetings.

The following example is used to illustrate a **Near Neighbours awareness session** that took place in a community centre in the Dewsbury eligible area (see Appendix 1).

To set the scene, consider the following from the fieldnotes:

> "In the upstairs room of a community centre in a multicultural West Yorkshire town, six community leaders meet. Some of whom meet for the first time. Its mid-day and the nursery downstairs can be heard as the parents come to take their children home, as can the busy A-road connecting the commuter towns of Leeds to Huddersfield. Spread evenly around a conference-style circle of tables, a mixed group of people from different ethnic and faith backgrounds meet. They bring with them a diversity of experiences organising community, from

the youth worker in his 40s from the community centre that engages with largely Muslim young people [Sami], to the church gardener in her 70s [Tracy], and a local vicar [Helen]. I've joined with Wahida [Near Neighbours coordinator] who I've been shadowing as part of my research into how Near Neighbours enables communities to bridge across difference. The meeting lasts an hour before further conversations splinter into three pairs, as further ideas are thrashed out and potential ideas run by [Figure 2 illustrates the splinter conversations]."

Figure 2: Splinter conversations in a Near Neighbours awareness session (From left to right: Sami, Helen, Tracy, Wahida, Khaled and Dan)

'Near Neighbours awareness session' was a term used by Wahida to describe a meeting that enables potential applicants to learn about how Near Neighbours can provide an opportunity to bring people together in local neighbourhoods. Those present at this particular meeting were invited by Wahida because they were known to be already involved in some sort of community engagement, whether through links within Near Neighbours (knowledge of some of the church-based practitioners) or from previous work experiences (knowledge of the community centre that engages Muslim youth).

Wahida describes these meetings as "where [potential applicants] can thrash out ideas and come up with a project". She later further elaborates and argues that "sometimes people's paths don't cross" and that these meetings create the space for people to plan together a project from scratch. Indeed, one of the criteria for a Near Neighbours project is that it involves "more than one faith group and/or ethnicity […] involved in planning and implementing the proposal" (see Appendix 4).

The meeting begins with introductions which spill into motivations for why people are here, hinting at what their passions and interests might be. In doing so, the ground is set for the sharing of passions which helps establish the common causes among diverse practitioners (as outlined in section 4.3.2). With Wahida noticing his rugby shirt, Sami (a trained fitness instructor and community officer) shared what it means to be a rugby fan who happens to be Asian: "a lot of people don't put being Asian and playing rugby together, but there is a few of us". Helen, a vicar from a local parish church, then introduces herself and some of the projects she's already been involved in, including a video project about belonging to Dewsbury and a collaborative art project involving Islamic geometric shapes and church stain glass windows. She is followed by Dan who shares his involvement in an informal conversation café for asylum seekers looking to improve their English. Two more join a short while later (the church gardener in her early 70s, and a Muslim community worker in his 20s), with each time Wahida facilitating a brief introduction to ensure all the others are aware of all those present and their different skills and experiences. The informal conversations at the beginning offer a chance for first encounters, as participants negotiate the informal boundaries of meeting. For example:

As [Sam] asks "whereabouts is that?" clarifying the location of a particular [school?], [Sami] responds: "it's actually right near where I live"

"Oh" jumps Helen "what number do you live at" and then thinks and explains "oh sorry, sometimes the filter goes and I say the first thing that comes into my head", touching Sami and learning forward in laughter. He jokes along and says "it's a'right. I live at 92"

This particular extract highlights some of the moments in which local connections are established through humour and laughter, as well as the perceived boundaries which are challenged ("whereabouts is that") and blurred ("it's a'right"). After the introductions, conversations flow freely around the causes that people are passionate about. Sami pulls out a notepad with a list of ideas he'd written down in preparation. The 'Dads and Lads' activity that aims to bring young men and their boys together sparks a curiosity by Helen. She says young men in this area that experience high teenage pregnancy are often neglected. A short while later another issue gets banded around: Saturday school as parents often struggle to support children with homework.

Until now Wahida has remained quiet, listening to the ideas circulating, giving plenty of time for ideas to come from those in the room. However, she gently intervenes, prompting a little more clarification on "what a potential Near Neighbours funded project could look like". She stresses that the importance of tackling issues together across ethnic and religious difference is a key criterion for funding. She emphasises 'new' projects that aim to do something different, engaging in a new and creative way, whilst simultaneously avoiding 'duplication'[20]. Her 'light-touch' (Wise 2009) intervention then sets off a new discussion which seems to land on the idea of taking users of this community centre (largely Muslim young people) to visit a local church. At this Wahida again intervenes, but gently and with respect: "really, the projects must be reciprocated". Another suggestion of a visit is given, with Wahida encouraging dialogue: "why?" she asks Helen, as she pushes her to explore what that might do for people involved.

These insights show how the relational ethos of Near Neighbours is worked into the subtle guidance that facilitates group discussion around common causes and shared objectives that a project might be built around. A short while later, another idea surfaces. This time Tracy, the gardener, suggests that the others could get on board with the church's garden clear up and restoration of the grave stones. Others begin offering examples of other garden projects they've come across, including an insect hotel and even a bee hive. Wahida follows attentively with gentle nods and hums of recognition. She then adds, "it's about not just seeing communities use the space, but transforming the *way* communities are *using* the space". Shifting the emphasis onto the *way* in which space is used, rather than including other groups into one's existing space, then, is another way of enabling the sort of relational engagement Near Neighbours seeks to enhance. By transforming *how* groups are using the space, a third space is created that is co-produced together by different groups in a more reciprocated manner. Similar sentiments were heard at a local Near Neighbours launch in which Paul Hackwood, Executive Chair of Church Urban Fund (who directs Near Neighbours) argues that Near Neighbours is "not one community doing something for another community" but rather projects that are relational with a "cross-ethnicity focus"[21].

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[20] A term often heard in community engagement that refers to two activities that take place simultaneously and as a consequence could be effectively linked up, pooling together resources and expertise.

[21] Ironically, it could be argued that the Near Neighbours is itself a 'community' of sorts "doing something for another community". Intervention from the Near Neighbours was not always so

The examples of the refining of ideas through facilitated discussion highlights the input that goes into designing and planning spaces of encounter. Therefore, in exploring *how* practitioners bring people together, considerable attention needs to be given to the ethos of such initiatives as well as how these approaches are embedded in the practice of planning projects. Both Wahida and the former Near Neighbours local coordinator in the north spoke of how these awareness sessions are also spaces of encounter in themselves. Even before the projects begin, the planning meetings afford moments of learning, exchange, dialogue and interconnection. Wahida for example has been able to put the woman from the housing association (mentioned above in section 4.4.1) in touch with a music student who was able to help her find a sound system for her project. She described it as an "encounter even before a project". For Carlo, the previous northern Near Neighbours local coordinator, the very act of meeting to plan a project is a cultural and educational encounter:

> "It may be that you meet somebody to do a Near Neighbours project and the first…. opportunity is that you can learn from another person of a different culture. So, that's actually an education in itself, you know. Just by, something very simple. […] [A potential applicant] may even perhaps develop skills in community management and finance, that may spur them on to actually see how they can get trained in a particular field, all of this simply from having a new experience"
>
> (Interview with Carlo, February 2014)

Even before a project is fully fleshed out, detailed, accepted for funding, the opportunity to come together and plan a potential project affords moments of learning.

In this section, I have offered one example of a Near Neighbours awareness session which aimed to bring practitioners together who were perceived as sharing common work practices and who might benefit from organising their work in partnership with other applicants. The example also highlights the role of the coordinator in guiding ideas towards a more relational way of engaging collectively in intercultural projects. As it became clear, not everybody was necessarily on board with the ethos of Near Neighbours and the coordinator spent considerable time shaping, guiding, and prompting different ways to think about the sorts of projects that could

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welcome. One practitioner responded to the initiative with saying "what does the government know about meaningful interaction"

be thought up; through finding common passions and interests as well as reflecting on how space might be used collectively, rather than one group inviting another to participate. The next section explores one example of an Independent planning session that shows typically the next steps after thrashing out general ideas with the support of the local coordinator.

Independent planning sessions

The example used to highlight how independent planning sessions enabled projects to form is taken from the third of three planning meetings for a project based in Leeds that sought to bring together young people from Jewish and Muslim backgrounds, through a partnership of Jewish, Muslim and Christian practitioners. Prior to establishing a working group to take forward a proposal for funding, members of the group were part of an earlier Near Neighbours awareness session. The meeting took place in the conference room of a church-based organisation that develops "community cohesion and social justice" and involved three members of a synagogue in north Leeds (who are involved in youth work), another youth worker from a different synagogue, the youth coordinator of a Muslim-inspired arts centre in the south of Leeds, a member of the church-based organisation and myself (a "PhD student working with Near Neighbours"). The difference between this meeting and a Near Neighbours awareness session is that those around the table are already aware of Near Neighbours and in this instance the coordinator of the arts centre in the south of Leeds has already provisionally filled in a rough draft of the application form.

In an earlier meeting, it was established that young people from Muslim and Jewish backgrounds would interview their grandparents to paint a picture of the history of Leeds as experienced by their grandparents' generation. The project would be called 'Roots to Leeds' to reflect the 'roots' (and 'routes') that different faith groups experienced in coming to Leeds and calling the city their home. The project would involve three stages. After the first stage, which would involve interviews between the young people and their parents, a second stage of interviews would take place where young people from one group would interview someone from the other group, to find commonalities and differences in their respective journeys. The final stage would involve the young people working together to exhibit an exhibition that would showcase photographs of their grandparents, along with a short extract from the

interviews they conducted that gave expression of their grandparents' experiences of living in, or journeying to, Leeds.

In order to illustrate how groups design and plan a strategy to bring about this project, the following extract comes from the discussions within this meeting. The first theme that emerges is the need to *build on previous and existing local inter-faith initiatives*. One of the previous projects that was mentioned was a church-based project that involved an inter-faith sailing trip with young people. It was hoped that the volunteers from this project could help at the exhibition stage of the project. More specifically, the need to "tap into what is already happening" is a theme that surfaces time and time again. As we learn from the meeting, one of the youth clubs already has the "kit, the filming and the music technology". In the discussion on the resources available, the term "networks of trust" is brought up by one of the youth workers, and another mentions in passing that "we don't need to reinvent the wheel" (director of education of the synagogue). Furthermore, there is a recognition that to engage young people in extra activities outside of their existing youth group will be a big ask, as the fieldnotes reflect:

> "One of the youth workers suggests it would be better to engage the kids when they are at the [existing youth club] rather than take a group out to another place, as they're unlikely to come. It's about making the project available to them. There were lots of nods and affirmations. 'Yes, that's a really good idea' offered the arts-based organisation coordinator, who adds "we need to carry out projects where people are at".

A little later the same person adds "I believe you've got to give people little things to do", spurring another to respond "you have to provide a comfort zone first" referring to the expectations of involvement in the project. In these examples we see how practitioners work with their existing knowledge of how to get people on board and involved. The voices around the table in this planning meeting suggest that getting young people on board to events that engage across difference is difficult and hard work and therefore strategies that enabled participation in informal and relaxed means were favoured. Hence, practitioners begin with the need to make activities "available to [the young people]", "where people are at" by giving people "little things to do". These valuable insights open up the discussion on how motivation affects participation in projects. Mayblin et al (2015a) in their research into an inter-faith cricket tournament

argue that "motivation and commitment are also vital components if engineered encounters are to be successful" (Mayblin et al. 2015a, p.5). As Harris and Young (2009) point out, strangers generally need to feel strongly motivated to interact with those perceived as 'different', so some form of intervention may be needed to facilitate engagement (cited in Phillips et al. 2014). Beyond those who are already involved (or the "usual suspects" as mentioned in earlier quotes above), the research supports this literature and argues that getting people along for the first time takes considerable motivation, energy, and careful facilitation.

4.5 Conclusion

In concluding, we return to the problem outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Given the uncertainty (yet potentiality) of encounter, how do practitioners initiate the sorts of projects that might prompt better geographies of care and togetherness? One way is by recognising that although encounters cannot be 'set' (as to set an encounter is to already predetermine its outcome), the grounds upon which encounters that might result in more interconnected communities can be shaped. This chapter has unpacked specific empirical sites in the preparation of projects in which the problem of encounter is tackled (from funding regions, to the governance of recruiting individuals and groups to participate, to the practices of the local coordinator in the implementation of projects). Each of these sites is developed below as it relates to working with, and through, the dynamics of the unguaranteed nature of encounter.

The first stage of intervention in community engagement is in setting out the 'problem' of the lack of interaction. A particular policy analysis of the geography of ethnic dwelling in areas of high diversity and ethnicity shapes the specific strategies to remedy 'segregation' and 'parallel lives'[22]. These include projects that encourage specifically faith groups to participate together, with a priority on 'new' projects that encourage people to interact in 'first encounters'. While there is an emphasis on a relational approach to designing and planning projects to ensure participants own projects across difference from the beginning, the research shows how a particular 'politics of relationality' is contested among different practitioners. There is considerable objection for the privileging of the Church of England in the governance

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[22] However, as geographers have written elsewhere, a different social analysis of the problem that takes into account economic inequality, race discrimination and the context of how certain communities come to exist in apparently separate and parallel communities would prompt different solutions (see Phillips 2006)

of the application for funding, suggesting a limitation on the 'relationality' of the beginnings of projects. Yet, from a Near Neighbours' perspective, relying on the traditional parish structures and utilising the responsibility of the parish priest is a way of governing (and overseeing) the sorts of projects that are applying for funding, hence mitigating the uncertainty in which groups might be funded. In practice, however, the privileging of the parish priest is often bypassed in order to ensure groups participate on more equal terms.

Another way in which the unguaranteed nature of encounter is mitigated is through motivating people to participate in projects through making concepts of encounter attractive and consistent with particular faith narratives. By articulating the principles of encounter in the precepts of religious narratives (such as the Good Samaritan story), the encounter is responsibilised and hence becomes a motivation for faith groups to participate. In doing so, both the particularity of the faith tradition (i.e. in the identification of a moral source for interaction) and the universal demand to work with, encounter, and love others in 'cross-over narratives' can be reconciled. It is hoped that the narrative of encounter, which is shown to be integral to particular faith discourses and practices, then shapes the ground for participation. The faith narrative of encounter then encourages working together locally, participating in a reciprocal manner, on a shared common cause.

The second half of the chapter explored specifically how local coordinators shape the conditions in which projects of encounter emerge. The research finds that the activities of the coordinator play a huge role in prompting the initial coming together of like-minded practitioners, who share in similar community practice (such as youth work, arts facilitators or sport coaches) but who do not necessarily meet in routine patterns of life. Near Neighbours awareness sessions, in which this meeting takes place, also enable the light-touch guiding of the ethos of Near Neighbours by the coordinator, through working with the existing passions of potential local project leaders. It has been established that the best way to get potential applicants on board is by meeting together, where there is opportunity to thrash out ideas, swap perspectives, and engage productively on a project that will benefit groups across difference. Finally, once practitioners have agreed to work together, independent planning sessions become a space to work out how practically projects can be initiated, taking into account the existing resources, spaces of encounter, and capabilities of those involved. In this space, the conditions are created for effective encounter across difference by utilising the existing spaces of contact, meeting young people where they are at, which

both helps increase the incentives needed for new experiences and encounters as well as enables people to participate where they feel confident and able.

While I have used the term 'intervention' and 'engagement' throughout the analysis, arguably these findings also draw out how Near Neighbours *governs* through engagement with communities. Chapters 6 and 7 will particularly focus in on debates about the governance of inter-cultural community projects, but thus far, we can see how different spheres of governance intersect through the examples in this chapter. These include the policy research and design that shape the very regions selected for funding, the role of faith institutions in supporting Near Neighbours engagement (often in contradictory ways) as well as the role of the coordinator who is able to navigate the demands from the policy sphere, with the energies and passions of those working on the ground. In practice, the governance of projects is more fluid than the policy documents suggest (cf. Fortier 2010), given the complexity of encounters within local coordination (whether Near Neighbours launches, awareness sessions or independent planning sessions) and the negotiation of different partners participating in the set-up of projects. These debates will be returned to in Chapters 6 and 7.

The strategies that practitioners deploy to make the most of the potentiality of encounter are of course specific to the aims and objectives of Near Neighbours. That said, a number of points can be taken away. Firstly, there is the importance of the personal and the potential realised in meeting face to face. Despite calls to move beyond the inter-personal encounter (Amin 2012), Near Neighbours deliberately places emphasis on the role of the coordinator who mediates between different levels; policy on one hand, and ordinary people (via their youth leaders, faith leaders etc.) on the other. The power of the inter-personal is also demonstrated both in the independent planning session and Near Neighbours awareness session, as the opportunity to meet enables ideas to be thrashed out and projects to form. Secondly, we can take away the importance of *shaping existing relations*. While Near Neighbours aims to generate *new* projects, most of these are dependent on existing capacity, (somewhat) established networks of trust as well as meeting people "where people are at". Building upon existing relations and networks is also deployed as a way of mitigating the unguaranteed nature of encounter through offering incentives to participate and strengthening the existing spaces where people already meet. Preparing individuals for meeting people from different backgrounds, however, takes considerable time and effort. This will be the focus of the next chapter that explores how Near Neighbours

equips and prepares (particularly young) people, in developing capacities to act together in difference.

Chapter 5 – Equipping young people for encounter: shaping capacities to act

[Sunday, 7am] "A group of sleepy young people are beginning to gather outside the city's town hall, awaiting a minibus trip to a residential leadership programme in an old priory on the Yorkshire coast. It's bitterly cold for March and shivering inside over-stretched hoodies seems to be the thing that's common among us. Conversations are sedated, with one or two making the effort to generate chat. The combination of the early morning start, the anticipation of the week ahead, and the group of strangers keeps most slightly nervous".

(Epigraph 1)

[Sunday, 9pm] "A silence hangs heavy over the group, as we sit in a circle of chairs in the lounge. We're in the middle of an evening activity of 'sharing an object which means something to us'. Four members of the group have already shared their objects – a book, a prayer mat, a diary, a photograph – each item attached to personal memories, whether of significant times in life, of a best friend, of lost family members, or someone close. After each person offers their object, explaining its significance and placing it on the table that acts as a focal point for our attention, we wait in silence until someone else feels ready to share. The silences in between are profound and highlight the subtle shuffles of arms and feet and sometimes sounds of sobs. One's heightened pulse, someone's sniffles, the heavy breathing that comes with crying. One or two were triggered by the last offering: a photograph of a deceased parent. It's hard to imagine we're the same group who gathered waiting for the minibus this morning".

(Epigraph 2)

[Monday, 9pm] "It takes a while for our eyes to adjust to the dim faint light. The moonlight catches occasionally on the ocean, broken by the passing cloud. All but two of the young people participate on this night walk, as we fumble along a well-trodden, but challenging, cliff path. The more confident and responsible (including the youth leader and the police officer) assume the role

of protector, offering a foothold on a steep step up here, and a hand to step down there. There's a definite sense of trust and cooperation as the light occasionally disguises exactly who needs a hand up. The darkness seems to be an equaliser and as Sarah comments later "Faith didn't need to be… involved, or… matter, yes, it didn't seem to matter".

<div align="right">(Epigraph 3)</div>

[Wednesday, 3pm] "There's a definite sense of the residential coming to a close. A final reflection session reminds us how much has happened in the past four days. The comments reveal that everyone has taken something away, although differing among each participant. The intensity of the sharing seems to ebb and flow, peaking somewhere in the middle of the forty minutes of the session. One young Muslim movingly shared the following: "spending time with you all has meant a lot… hanging out with a Shia would mean I'd get a lot of flak from my community, but I don't really give a hoot". For another, it was the "understanding better where people were coming from" that left an impression (Christian, female).

<div align="right">(Epigraph 4)</div>

Four snapshots that capture the fostering of trust and cooperation during a four-day residential among young people from different faith and ethnic backgrounds. Four windows into just a few of the multiple and fragmentary encounters that took place over the week. Of course, a snapshot always leaves something out of view: the messy, non-linear process of trust-building and the moments where trust becomes fragile, or where the illusion of commonness fails, as we learn to respect the difference of experience. Yet overriding the residential (in which I also participated) was a sense of coming together, the becoming of *our* group. My own experience – and the snapshots in the opening epigraphs – seem to beg the question:

- How does a group of diverse young people who began on Sunday morning as strangers, leave on Wednesday afternoon committed to work together in future inter-cultural community projects?

They begin with a few things in common: age and habitation. They all know something about what it means to be 16 – 26 growing up in a 'super-diverse' city (Vertovec 2007),

yet there are as many "geographical imaginaries" of what it means to live in Leeds as there are young people. All have some willingness to be here, since they all chose to turn up for the minibus on Sunday morning, but all for different reasons. One runs a fitness class for elderly people in his community, another helps out at a youth club, and another has turned up because her friend from her Arabic class – who happens to be of a different ethnic background – invited her. One is a police officer with his younger trainee officer, another has a slot on a local Asian radio channel, another is about to go to university. Some have had experience crossing cultural backgrounds, and for others it's an everyday reality. Others have never met individuals from other backgrounds, other than the occasional chance encounters at bus stops or in the supermarket queue.

I will come back to the specifics of these snapshots shortly, but this is the general context for the discussion in this chapter. So far I've shown how practitioners and policy makers shape the conditions which might enable inter-cultural projects to come about (Chapter 4). Getting people to the point where they are willing, confident and able to participate in project creation, however, takes considerable time and energy. Alongside the Near Neighbours awareness sessions that aim to both enable new ideas to be born as well as shape the sorts of existing community projects that might better bridge different ethic and faith groups, the Near Neighbours has a second main programme: a young person's leadership programme. The programme is called the Catalyst Leadership Programme. Catalyst aims to "equip young people aged 16 – 26 to be leaders for change, developing local social action and transforming their communities" (Near Neighbours 2017c). The three aspects of capacity building are "leadership, social action and social interaction", and hence ideas of 'encounter' are core to the training and outcome of Catalyst.

The link between the small grants programme (as seen in Chapter 4) and Catalyst is that Catalyst focuses on training and equipping potential leaders whom it is hoped will go on to engage in cross-cultural community development, such as the projects that Near Neighbours funds in its small grants programme. If the organising of Near Neighbours (in vision, funding, and its work by the local coordinators) is about shaping the conditions for encounters, Catalyst is all about shaping the *capacities to act* in potential future encounters (Wise 2016; Noble 2013b). While the opportunities for encounter that featured in the previous chapter depend upon already partially established individuals (youth workers, faith leaders, community officers) in relatively brief meetings (1-2 hours), the spaces for encounter during Catalyst are much more sustained and take place over the course of four days.

The empirical material in this chapter (brought into being through ethnographic insights from participating in a four-day Catalyst training programme) offers rich insights into how practitioners shape, cultivate and equip people to utilise the possibility of encounter. The residential in which the training took place became both a site of multiple encounters as well as *learning about encounter*, through "haptic, experimental and participatory" exercises (Lambert 2011, p.27). Practitioners include the Catalyst coordinator (who was also the Near Neighbours' coordinator), as well as four trainers who each delivered a day of training. As the last chapter demonstrated, encounters are valued as the very process of learning and hence much of the training around how to develop communities and encouraging meaningful encounter took place *in and through* encounters.

By exploring how Catalyst creates space to equip and develop young people's capacities to act in projects, this chapter contributes to recent work within the geographies of encounter literature that has turned its attention towards 'sustained encounters'. With the shifting of focus from fleeting everyday encounters – that it has been argued do not always afford learning about difference (Amin 2002; Matejskova and Leitner 2011) – towards more sustained encounter (Wilson 2016) this literature has begun interrogating a whole series of programmes and interventions that seek to "cultivate new knowledge practices" (Wilson, 2013, p.74). Within these, there is an emerging set of investigations into how diversity workshops alter habits of thinking through revisiting memory (Wilson 2013), how art and materiality facilitate learning about others from different backgrounds (Askins and Pain 2011), as well as how particular spaces influence pedagogy (Cook and Hemming 2011; Lambert 2011; Mayblin et al 2015b). Specifically, however, this chapter seeks to interrogate the relationship between intervention and unpredictability, critically responding to Darling and Wilson's (2016) claim that planned encounters write out "risk, surprise and unknowability". Material from this chapter suggests that intervening to set up spaces for encounter is more nuanced than Wilson's (2016) account. Instead, intervention is the art of the negotiation between desirable encounters and unplanned encounters.

In order to show how encounters are sustained throughout Catalyst, I begin with a consideration of how the space of the residential (and the spaces co-created) enabled learning. Following this, the chapter then interrogates moments of planned encounter where the coordinator and trainers set up workshops around exploring young people's leadership skills as well as conflict resolution/engagement abilities.

The chapter then examines moments of unplanned encounter in the informal conversations, exchanges, and impromptu activities in the evenings. The final section examines how the activities and experiences on the Catalyst residential are then harnessed to impact future relationship building and community development. Ultimately, this chapter highlights the ability for practitioners to design in surprise and unknowability into the preparation and sustaining of encounters. Firstly, I shall outline existing research to help situate learning about encounter, through exploring concepts of pedagogy, habit and spaces for encounter.

5.1 Pedagogy and encounter

One insightful way to work through how Catalyst aims to "equip young people aged 16 – 26 to be leaders for change, developing local social action and transforming their communities" is to think about its pedagogy. 'Equipping' and 'training' are very much in the lexicon of pedagogy, if we take pedagogy to be the praxis of learning. Within geographical writing on the organised frameworks that enable encounters, 'pedagogy' is rarely mentioned despite its closeness to the concept of 'encounter'. This is especially important given that positive encounters with difference are increasingly recognised as an affective learning tool in the context of inter-cultural education (Woolf Institute 2015). As I shall show, there is a double-binding relationship between encounter and pedagogy. On the one hand, encounters have a particular pedagogical value to them. It is in and through encounters that learning takes place, sometimes through emersion, sometimes through shock, through surprise etc. On the other hand, developing pedagogy around encountering difference can enhance one's capacity to act within an encounter. Both aspects – learning through pedagogy and pedagogically enhancing the possibility of encounter – can be found in different moments throughout Catalyst, as I shall refer back to in each specific section/moment.

There are, however, a few useful ways into debates around pedagogy and encounter. The first is recent social theorisations of 'habit' (Dewsbury and Bissell 2015; Noble 2013b; Marshall, et al., forthcoming; Pedwell, 2016), which seek to situate the habitual transformation of bodies, ideas and objects through complex 'mind-body-environmental assemblages' (Bennett et al. 2013, cited in Pedwell, 2016). Dewey's work is particularly important to draw upon – and has inspired recent social theory on habit (e.g. Marshall, et al. forthcoming; Pedwell, 2016) – since pedagogy is at the heart of his pragmatism. Dewey theorised habits as practices that are acquired through social

behaviours and interactions (Dewey 1922). Dewey believed that society could be transformed through the cultivation of democratic 'habits' of citizenship through experience and education (Marshall, et al., forthcoming). Drawing on Dewey, Marshall et al. (forthcoming) argue that "it is through engagement and participation… that new kinds of citizens – with skills, habits and dispositions towards democracy – can be fostered" (n.p.). In recent years, such practices have become part of government agencies, think tanks, NGOs, and educational institutions to cultivate new practices of citizenship (Staeheli et al. 2016).

There has been substantial work on habit in discussions on capacities for living together, including Noble's (2013a) writing on the pedagogical process of habituating civic virtues that result in what he terms "'cosmopolitan' behaviours" (p.162). For Sandercock (2006), "participation and negotiation in the interests of peaceful co-existence requires something like daily habits of quite banal intercultural interaction in order to establish a basis for dialogue" (42). In non-representational geographies, Dewsbury and Bissell (2015) have set out an introduction to a special issue in *Cultural Geographies* in which they make a concrete link between habit and encounter:

> "Habit provides precisely the suture through which we can consider how singular situated encounters draw something from the history of previous encounters and tend towards future encounters." (Dewsbury and Bissell 2015, p.23)

Their work has been taken up by Helen Wilson, who suggests that the accumulation of encounters over time can result in "tipping points or breakdowns" (Wilson 2016; Dewsbury and Bissell 2015, p.23) in which habits are deconstructed, or decomposed (Raynor 2016). Habit has also been linked to the process of prejudice – and unlearning prejudice – (MacMullan 2009) and in the context of a leadership training programme, it could be argued intervention can "loosen the sedimentation" of undesired habits (Sullivan 2001). Hence, habits are one framework in understanding how intervention might shape and cultivate behaviours through encounters. Despite outlining general contours (Wilson 2016; Dewsbury and Bissell 2015), less of this work, however, has considered how encounters might be facilitated and worked upon to prompt new habits of civic engagement.

Another way to think about pedagogy and encounter is to consider the recently burgeoning work on spaces of encounter. Understanding space as socially constituted

and produced in and through interactions, we can shift our attention to how group dynamics can affect learning and experimentation. Recent work within geography has begun examining how space can influence pedagogy (Cook and Hemming 2011), as well as how such practices "can alter sensibilities *beyond* such spaces to affect behaviour in the longer term" (Wilson 2013, p.73). Mayblin et al. (2015b) push further these theorisations of space by exploring specifically how "the characteristics of particular types of space and micro-spatial dynamics might be mobilised to artificially engineer encounters across difference" (p.68); an area they argue has been relatively neglected. Finally, for Mayblin et al. (2015a) and Askins and Pain (2011), the concept of 'contact zone' is deployed not to study "everyday spaces of encounter" (as often documented in studies of encounter) but to study explicitly how engineering contact takes place, affords 'meaningful' interactions and so on. 'Contact zone' also has a spatial dimension: "It is a 'zone' rather than a space of encounter" argue Mayblin et al (2015b), who suggest "contact must occur on multiple occasions, in multiple sites, and with a variety of intensities in order to become 'meaningful'" (p.4)

With these existing theorisations of how the working on habit and production of spaces (of contact zones) can influence pedagogy, and in turn the behaviours and practices of those engaging in diverse contexts, I will now outline a brief context of Catalyst before exploring how the coordinator and trainers in the Catalyst residential shape, cultivate and equip people to utilise the possibility of encounter.

5.2 Context of Catalyst

The Catalyst Leadership Programme (Catalyst hereafter) was established in 2011 with the launch of the Near Neighbours Programme. It was designed for young people aged 16 – 26, targeting especially those from different faith backgrounds. Although prior experience in community engagement was not a requirement for the training, individuals were recruited through youth groups, faith-based organisations and existing community organisations requesting youth leaders and other responsible adults to 'sign post' the initiative to young people who would benefit from leadership training. Between 2011 and 2017, 430 participants have taken part in Catalyst across the country (Near Neighbours 2017c) and a recent report by Coventry University's Centre for Social Relations suggests that 87% of Catalyst graduates felt better equipped to be leaders in their community (Fisher and Range 2015). Catalyst offers specific training around faith, identity and belonging, leadership, conflict and power, and media

communication, with a qualification equivalent to a Level 2 NVQ, awarded on completion of assessment booklets which are handed out to participants to complete after the formal training of each day (see appendix 5)

The examples in this chapter come primarily from Catalyst which took place in Whitby in March 2015. Although there is no set format for a Catalyst programme (with the local coordinators responsible for the delivery of the training), the Leeds Catalyst was held as a residential trip to Sneaton Castle (a priory and 19th century castle on the outskirts of Whitby, used as a conference centre for faith groups). There were 16 young people on the residential who all met the criteria of being a young person who lived in Leeds at the time. As I met these criteria and had been recommended to participate by Wahida (Near Neighbours local coordinator), I took up this opportunity as part of the research, informing and seeking consent from all the participants to use my ethnographic insights as part of the research, respecting participants' anonymity. On the residential there were 6 who identified as Muslim (4 male, 2 female), 8 who identified as Christian (4 male, 4 female) and one as agnostic (male) and one Jewish (female). The costs associated (travel, accommodation and the training) were all included.

As the previous chapter demonstrated, the process of recruitment is a crucial part of the success of Catalyst. Hence, much of the hard graft work of Catalyst begins long before the residential itself. From the day I began shadowing Wahida in September 2014, she had been preparing for the Leeds Catalyst, setting up meetings with different faith groups and community organisations to promote Catalyst and invite groups to encourage their young people to get involved. Once participants enquired, Wahida would offer to meet potential applicants in person which not only allowed Wahida to assess the suitability of the applicant for the programme, it also enabled her to share in detail what the programme is about allowing the applicant to decide whether it was right for them. Meeting face-to-face, Wahida insisted, increased the chances of getting people on board. Once participants had met with Wahida, they were instructed to apply officially filling in an online form that asked for the participants' prior experiences, current involvement in community, and what they hoped to get out of the programme. With this context in mind, I shall now turn to describing and analysing the space(s) of Catalyst.

5.3 Creating spaces of encounter

The first theme to explore in the equipping of young people for leadership is 'space'. For critical geography, 'space' is more than simply the physicality of a given area. As Lambert (2011) writes, drawing on Massey (1999, cited in Lambert 2011), critical geography understands "space as socially constituted, as a product of interrelations and multiple narratives and as a forum for disruption" (Lambert 2011, p.4). Hence, we must understand Catalyst as more than the space of Sneaton Castle (the abbey in which Catalyst took place). The abbey co-constitutes the space, along with the use of the space, the workshop setting, the way participants interact with the space. The abbey itself is co-constituted by the aesthetics, its socio-political history, and the religious connotations of the building that emerge and matter in different intensities and at different times. Furthermore, the facilitator and trainers talk of "creating space" indicating the act of participating in setting the space (whether virtual or physical). The idea of 'creating' suggests a space that wouldn't otherwise exist (Mayblin et al. 2015a).

The different forms of 'creating space' vary across the different projects in my research, from spaces within neighbourhoods (for example transforming a community centre into a café) to creating spaces away from, and outside, the very location in which change is ultimately desired. This is the case for the Catalyst residential that purposefully took individuals away from their usual habits and routines, to create a 'new space' for learning and experimentation. In this sense, Catalyst can be analysed as an 'extra-ordinary space', a space outside of the ordinariness of everyday life. Within the geographies of encounter literature, there is much debate as to the effectiveness of such strategy. For some scholars, intentional and sustained intervention is necessary to work on the habits, capacities and practices of individuals (Noble 2013; Mayblin et al. 2015a; Wise and Velayutham 2014), despite the risks that such spaces become "islands of empowerment" (Kindon et al. 2007). For Mayblin et al. (2015b), intentional sustained intervention can enable learning through creating space to "escape the normative conventions of everyday life" (p.79). Here the relationship between space and habit requires further reflection. If habits are cemented within body-mind-environment assemblages (Bennett et al. 2013), then altering the space in which the habitual process usually takes place – it is hoped – can then interrupt the formulation of existing habits. The new space then becomes a space which can be experimented with, where participants can try out new experiences without feeling afraid of the consequence of their actions (since they are away from home).

Figure 3: The workshop room

For others, however, intervention works best *within* the everyday spaces in which negotiation of difference takes place. For Ash Amin (2002), for example, it is the spaces in which negotiation is compulsory for inclusive pluralistic living, (such as gyms, schools, youth clubs, and religious institutions) that would be more appropriate as sites to work on the habits of living with difference. My guess would be that Amin (2002) would render Catalyst as "too exceptional" and too detached from the everyday sites in which the negotiation of difference routinely takes place. I shall return to how new knowledge practices gained in one space might be transferred back into existing network and routine patterns of living in the last part of this chapter.

There are many dimensions that make Catalyst as an 'extra-ordinary space'. Firstly, the historic setting of a priory enclosed by stone walls created a sense of place. Within the premises, there is a workshop room (see figure 3), a dining room that was often shared with other groups (with a capacity of 200) and accommodation buildings within the priory as well as a more informal lounge where the group gathered in the evening for more informal activities such as the object sharing session (featured below). For sleeping arrangements, the group were put into pairs with others of the same sex, often across faith backgrounds. One participant suggested that "eating, sleeping and living together meant that we got to know each other more intimately than if we had just been at a day event in Leeds". By being together in a shared space, with the shared tasks of "eating, sleeping and living", participants naturally got to

Figure 4: Designing the workshop space

know one another. Hence, the physical placing of people together enables 'intimate' encounters.

Secondly, as well as being situated in a physical space, the *use* of the space played an important role in "creating space". As such a lot of attention was given to the workshop room in which most of the formal training took place (see figure 4). Figure 4 highlights three important aspects of the workshop room. No. 1 shows the Near Neighbours' conference banners which were placed at the front of the room to make explicit the institutional affiliation of the programme, giving a subconscious reminder to participants of the programme they are participating in, as well as for the publicity of the photographs that were taken by the professional photographer (who was one of the young people participating). No. 2 shows the descriptions written by participants in their application form of their previous involvement in community and their motivation for participating in Catalyst, along with a photograph, which participants were asked to share as part of their pre-arrival task. The placing of the biographies of participants helps gives a sense of the collective ownership of the space, as well as aiding discussion about the prior experiences of participants which occasionally surfaced in discussions among participants. No. 3 refers to the activities that each workshop day entailed. For Askins and Pain (2011), the activities deployed in the context of inter-cultural activities can interrupt "usual, dominant social realities" and work to co-constitute social relations (p.814). A discussion on how the activities within the workshop used and created space will feature in the next section (Chapter 5.4).

Thirdly, space was 'performed'[23] through the actions and practices of the facilitator, the trainers as well as the participants. Practitioners use the term 'safe space' to refer to the importance of creating (physical or virtual) spaces that give participants the ability to participate confidently and share as much as they are willing, whilst minimising the judgement of others. Yet as The Roestone Collective (2014) argue, safe spaces are always socially produced and negotiated between subjects, bodies, ideas and objects. During Catalyst there were a number of protocols that enabled safe spaces to flourish. The first obvious protocol came before Catalyst began when the coordinator met participants face to face as part of the recruitment process. At this meeting, participants were invited to write anonymously on post-it-notes some of the values they wished Catalyst to observe and protect. These were collated and written

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[23] Performed, in a critical geographical sense, means how something comes into being as it is practiced. 'Performance' reflects the improvised nature of practice, as a performance entails.

up into a 'Participant value statement' which was included in the Catalyst information booklet each participant received upon arrival at the residential (see appendix 5). Some of the values included: respecting oneself and others, mutual cooperation, standing with integrity, taking responsibility, listening to understand, and being dynamic. Allowing the group to actively participate in the creation of values of Catalyst not only ensured everyone had input into the ethos of Catalyst, it also helped create a sense of ownership of a collective 'safe space'.

The performance of the space was also upheld by the trainers who at various points throughout their training alluded to the importance of safe space. One trainer, for example, told the group during the conflict resolution training that "Catalyst is an invited space, but [includes] moments where you create space", referring to the fact that the training began on invited terms (Near Neighbours inviting people to participate, for example, see Cornwell 2002, cited in Kindon et al. 2007). The space, however, would become a 'co-creative' space as participants created space during the training, taking part in the production of knowledges and new experiences. Another trainer used the term "web of connections" to describe the process of Catalyst: "In many ways Catalyst is like a spider's web, creating a web of connections… you are all in the midst of creating webs of connection". These subtle reminders that often involved visual metaphors (e.g. spiders web) helped cement a narrative of 'creative space' in which participants would feel able to contribute to and actively participate in shaping. Hence, we see the importance of space for creating a stimulating learning environment, reinforcing Lambert (2011) and Cook and Hemming's (2011) work on how the design of spaces can influence pedagogy. However, I will show how the learning in this space is translated into other spaces, beyond the safe space of Catalyst.

Having outlined the socially constituted nature of space, along with the multiple practices (safe space protocols) and narratives (i.e. metaphors of belonging) that 'create space', I will now turn to specific spaces of encounter of the residential. These include the formal workshops as well as more informal activities such as sharing food together, sharing an object that is meaningful as well as participating together on a night walk. In doing so, I show how these specific activities enabled particular encounters with difference, sometimes in encountering shared experiences, sometimes in enabling difference to be encountered.

5.4 The workshop

Existing research suggests that in spaces of facilitated interaction, it is important to have contact zones where "the activities and dialogue are focused on bridging across difference" as well as "other levels of contact which move away from explicitly engaging with difference" (Mayblin et al. 2015b, p.5). In a similar way, Catalyst provided both opportunities for informal engagement (over meals, in the evenings) and formal training. Each of the formal training sessions (i.e. faith and identity, conflict resolution, leadership training and using social media) were delivered in a *group context* in which it was hoped that the act of working together, sharing space and participating *together* would prompt new experiences, and in some cases, instill particular habits of civic engagement (see Marshall et al. forthcoming). Thus each trainer deployed techniques that would enable cross-group learning, through participatory exercises, facilitated discussions and purposeful activities that encouraged interaction.

The formal training workshops took place every day after breakfast from 9.00am to 5.00pm, with a lunch break at 1.00pm and afternoon prayer slot at 3.00pm, to include the third prayer of the day for Muslim participants. The main workshop room which each trainer was given to deliver their workshop consisted of a U shape of tables (see figure 3), use of a laptop and projector, a supply of tables dotted around the room which were used for various activities (craft making, writing on poster paper etc.) and flipchart stands and paper, as well as various writing resources including coloured white board markers and coloured card. In the following, I shall unpack specific activities within the formal training that enabled learning about encounter, in and through encounter.

5.4.1 Spectrum exercises

One of the activities that were used by three of the four trainers was 'spectrum exercises'. Spectrum exercises differed in each of the sessions, but overall involved spatially setting up a spectrum between different categories of difference; whether a polar spectrum such as agree/disagree, or a multi-dimensional set up, such as the different responses to conflict: compromise, cooperation, competition, adaption and avoidance. Participants were then given a statement and asked to position themselves accordingly, depending on how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement, or

whether they felt pulled towards one category (such as 'compete', in the case of the different responses to conflict).

In the first workshop on faith and identity, for example, different statements were displayed on the screen that involved different politicians and public commentators on the topic of identity, difference and multiculturalism, as well as the politics associated with different religious perspectives, gender and sexuality issues[24]. Participants were asked to arrange themselves depending on whether they strongly agreed or disagreed with the statement. The following section highlights how this activity made visible particular differences as well as enabling participants to respond to the differences of others in the room. The activity came after the mid-afternoon break and therefore participants had already eased into the activities of the day, including ice-breaker activities and a workshop around belief and identity in Britain. The activity involved the following statements which appeared on the main screen and were read out by the trainer.

> **Statement 1:** "We" is not West. "We" are as much Muslim as Christian or Jew or Hindu. "We" are those who believe in religious tolerance, openness to others, to democracy, liberty and human rights administered by secular courts… This is not a clash between civilisations. It is a clash about civilisations. It is the age-old battle between progress and reaction, between those who embrace and see opportunity in the modern world and those who reject its existence; between optimism and hope on the one hand; and pessimism and fear on the other. This is not a clash between civilisations. It is a clash about civilisations" (Former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair)

> **Statement 2:** "Frankly, we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and much more muscular liberalism" (British Prime Minister, David Cameron[25])

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[24] The second example of spectrum exercises being used involved responding to statements around how participants dealt with conflict (whether they compromised, cooperated, competed, adapted or avoided conflict, in different situations: such as in a dispute with a friend, a family member, witnessing a scene of racial abuse, or an unpleasant comment on social media). The third involved positioning oneself in relation to different leadership personality styles (the listener, the activist, the artists, or the thinker/planner).
[25] At the time of the workshop (March 2015)

Statement 3: "The reality is that the Islamic State is Islamic. *Very* Islamic. Yes, it has attracted psychopaths and adventure seekers, drawn largely from the disaffected populations of the Middle East and Europe. But the religion preached by its most ardent followers derives from coherent and even learned interpretations of Islam" (Journalist for *The Atlantic*, Graeme Wood)

Statement 4: "It is part of our Christian and Anglican discipleship to condemn homophobic prejudice and violence, to defend the human rights and civil liberties of homosexual people and to offer them the same pastoral care and loving service that we owe to all in Christ's name" (Former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams)

The trainer[26] deliberately didn't give the context or the associated name behind each quote, to try and encourage participants to think through the ideas themselves. In his justification for the exercise, the trainer explained that the exercise is a "safe space, allowing you to stand where you feel without judgment, reason or justification, accepting the differences of opinions in the room". After participants had a few minutes to position themselves, the trainer invited participants to share why they had chosen their position. For some, positions were taken up boldly and quickly, with confidence. Others approached the task less confidently, occasionally observing where others were placing themselves, to inform their perspective. To draw out the implicit learning in the activity, the trainer gave participants the opportunity to change their perspective once they'd heard the reasons for why others had chosen to stand where they had. A few people bravely moved positions. For example, after one woman (female, 26) who was standing by the 'Disagree' sign for Cameron's statement (Statement 2) gave her reasons for disliking the term 'muscular liberalism' (critiquing it for being too masculine), another woman (female, 19) moved further towards the Disagree position. Occasionally, someone's reasoning would provoke a person standing closer to the other position, to move further out as they defended their particular view over the counter opinion. After participants had picked their position, reasoned it, and had chance to modify their perspective, the attributed name was announced. In one instance, one slightly vocal participant prematurely attributed one of the quotes to Tony Blair, causing a sudden shift of opinion toward Disagree.

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[26] British Bangladeshi Muslim academic and a founder of a charity that works to reform Muslim thought and practice.

In attending to this activity as a "technique employed to facilitate encounters with difference" (Wilson 2013b, p.73), we can see how the spatial staging of difference enacts new understandings and appreciations of difference. By representing differences spatially, participants are made aware of how they belong to the group differently, and in different circumstances. At times finding themselves standing next to others in agreement and otherwise aware of the physical gap between perspectives, which acted to stand in for the spaces between perspectives. One participant noted how uncomfortable he felt when he suddenly noticed that someone from the same faith background had taken a radically different stance to him.

> "I looked up and noticed [Ben] was stood with much more agreement [over Statement 4]. He's also a Christian and I felt embarrassed that I had taken a really-in-the-middle sort of stance. Shouldn't we be on the same page?"

The visibility of certain positional differences demands explanations and self-critical reflection (Harrison 2000, cited in Wilson 2013b) as participants reflect on why they take the positions they do. In this sense, the exercise entails a particular affective pedagogical quality as the exposure of particular perspectives helps "loosen the sedimentation" of particular habits (Sullivan 2001, p.98) that are not always so apparent in spaces and routines of everyday life. One participant noted how the exercise encouraged "open discussion of topics" that we would have "otherwise avoided with people from different backgrounds" highlighting how the space makes possible the interruption of particular norms and conventions.

The exercise also helped bring to the fore not only the way in which "social space is constantly divided by habits of categorisation" (Wilson 2013b p.77), but also the way in which spatial configurations are dynamics, and shift as they are negotiated. Giving participants time to adjust their positions highlights how identities and positions are often formed in relation to others around us. As such the space produced within the room exceeds the physicality of the room, as the dynamics of how people place themselves produces space and a web of relations itself. These exercises, however, could be critiqued for being too simplistic and in the case of the 'agree/disagree' spectrum, too binary. This was evidenced when comparing the 'agree/disagree' spectrum to the multidimensional spectrum in the other workshop mentioned above (the different responses to conflict, for example) which afforded a little more room for the messy and multiplicity of perspectives, since participants were

able to position themselves within a range of different responses. However what the spectrum exercise does offer, I argue, is both the opportunity to practice the negotiation of positions in relation to the subject formation of others in a safe space, as well as a chance to reveal the layered thinking that constitutes habit (Connolly 2002). If habits are the result of complex interdependencies between body, mind and environment, then the safe spaces in the workshop enable the careful, sensitive revealing of the layers of prejudice, assumption, ethical sensibility, and the judgement of others that all operate when we position ourselves in relation to others.

5.5. Informal facilitation

As well as formal educational spaces of more directed intervention in the 9-5pm workshops, Catalyst provided spaces in which more informal activities offered opportunities for interaction. One such activity was the first evening session on the Sunday night, in which participants were invited to 'share an object that means something to you'. The second opening epigraph at the beginning of this chapter captures a moment within this session and the purpose of this section is to develop how participants were enabled to share at a deep and personal level through this activity, sharing very intimate aspects of their lives relatively early on in the week (the evening of the first day). In particular this section develops firstly how participating together with gentle facilitation and the aid of material objects, gave permission for people to share, and secondly how participating shaped relations in the room, whether enabling connection, solidarity, discomfort, trust or embarrassment.

If the workshop conference room created an atmosphere of work and learning (assembled through the desk layout, the conference booklets, the book stand, trays of pens, spare paper), the lounge which this activity took place in had a cosier feel to

Figure 5: Items that were used in the 'Share an object that means something to you' exercise

it. With limited seating (sofas for 10 people), the entire group gathered after dinner, with people pulling up chairs from their bedrooms, and others sitting on the floor between sofas. The side panel lighting, with thicker warm coloured beige carpets, worked to produce an atmosphere of ease. Conversations were already flowing more causally than before, with a sense of shared activity (we had all completed a day of training together) and leisurely time over dinner that helped us unwind a little. The very location and environment that assembled together that evening worked to "shift the 'emotional tonality' of the space (Conradson 2003, p.1986, cited in Wilson 2013b) in building a sense of comfort and ease.

The group had been encouraged to reconvene after dinner and while it was not 'compulsory' in the same way the workshops required attendance (in order to complete the assessment booklets needed to gain the qualification), many of the participants had been looking forward to the 'sharing object' activity. We had all been told prior to the residential that we would need to bring one object that 'meant something to us' and be prepared to share it with the group and why we had chosen it. I deliberately did not take notes during this session to respect the ethos of the safe space; however participants gave me consent to share their stories anonymously. My fieldnotes written up in the evening after the storytelling session narrates the beginning of this experience:

> "A sudden calm comes over the room. The light mood of laughter and pleasant conversations over dinner gradually ebbs as Wahida gathers us together through introducing how the 'share an object that means something to you' activity will work. In doing so, she sets the tone of the next activity and there's a steady growing sense of the silence of the room. For the activity to work, she adds, we'll wait in silence until some feels ready to be the next person to share their object. We could say as much or as little as we felt comfortable sharing. She asks us to respect and listen carefully to each person who presents"

Once again we see the role of the facilitator, preparing the space for encounter. A 'safe space' is created in which people should be respected, listened to, and where everyone should feel comfortable. The objects shared included a prayer mat, a football, calligraphy from Morocco, prayer books, journals, novels, photographs of loved ones who had passed away (see figure 5). A collective mood of care and respect unfolds as one of the participants begins sharing his object:

"[Khaled] then motioned to share next. He unfolded a prayer mat from underneath his chair, grasping it and switching it between hands, to reveal the different patterns. He spoke as though addressing the mat, perhaps uncomfortable with eye to eye contact. The silence of the room was also incredibly electric. […] The other participants were on one hand absent in sitting very still, making sure not to be distracting attention. And yet on the other hand, their very act of silence was very present, producing a heightened emotional atmosphere. Khaled kept his words to a minimum, but I remember him saying something to words of "a lot of people don't understand why I pray 5 times a day, but it keeps me going, gives me sustenance, and I wouldn't be able to do without it". Ending on this, he placed his prayer mat underneath his chair and nodded to indicate his sharing time was over"

The objects make possible a conversation that otherwise would not be had. The object acts as a talking point, a focus away from the body of the person sharing. It helps direct eye contact towards this external object that is part of one's biography, but also present in the room within sight of everyone. The materiality of the objects in the formation of identity is then further illustrated:

"[Raba] shared with us that her prayer book is precious to her. Holding it and spinning the book across diagonal corners, she told us (laughing a little sheepishly), "I get worried when I don't know where it is! Even though I've memorised half of it, I need it close to me". Immediately I thought it was interesting how the words of the book itself, while memorised, are only part of the value of the book. The book itself is precious, with memories and a sense of identity woven into its presence"

Raba's story, like Khaled, is personal and the act of sharing the intimate details of how one relates to their chosen object helps give an insight into the things that matter, and the experiences and things that make us who we are. Sharing these personal objects, then, helps give insights into the parts of our lives participants choose to share. Next, Sarah shares a photograph of her mother who passed away a year and a half ago:

"[Sarah] grasps a photograph, her hands slightly shaking. She begins telling us of how the photograph is of her mother who we learn passed away a year and a half ago. Mid-way through Sarah spurts into a sob and her shoulders shake in rhythm. She apologies, others nod understandingly. Wahida softly speaks "It's ok, it's ok" giving her permission to carry on. In between sobs, Sarah adds that her mother taught her to be a good person. At this point another woman suddenly uncontrollably gets up in a hurry and leaves the room, evidently upset by Sarah's story. A few moments later Zack, who had originally planned to share another object, decides to share a personal story about losing a mate of his, a 24 year old friend of his, who was killed in a road accident. It seemed as though Sarah's sharing gave him permission to share something close, personal and difficult to share. Like Sarah, Zack begins to sob although runs out embarrassed to share tears in front of the group"

After Sarah's contribution, the atmosphere had intensified further, and it felt as though emotions were circulating, lowing the thresholds of bodily control, as one or two had tears in their eyes. It is an illustration that, as Ahmed (2004) suggests, "emotions do things" (p.26); emotions "align individuals with collectives – or bodily space with social space" (p.26). We see how the emotions expressed by one individual, trigger emotional responses by others, who experience feelings that seemed heightened by the public presence of others, perhaps others relatively unknown. As Kye Askins (2016) illustrates from participatory research with a befriending programme for those seeking asylum and others more settled, it is the "emotional that opens up the potential of/for making connections, and through which nuanced relationships develop, dualisms are destabilised, and meaningful encounters emerge in fragile yet hopeful ways" (Askins 2016, p.515). In a similar way, participants reflect on how emotions enabled connections:

"Sharing our objects on the first night together allowed everyone to be very honest and raw in keeping our emotions open in that room but closed to the outside world" (Female, Muslim)

"The unexpectedly emotionally charged sharing of significant personal items on the first night was, I feel, a really important step in bringing the group together" (Male, Christian)

In the first quote, we also have a sense of the spatial 'island' Catalyst had created, keeping emotions 'open' in the room, but closed to the external outside world. In my ethnographic fieldnotes, I noticed how the dynamics of the group seemed different after the sharing of objects on the first night. Although still relatively unknown to one another, the sharing of personal details and the vulnerability that comes from opening up to others, seemed to enable others to share and find "things in common" (Pickerill 2009, cited in Wilson 2013a).

A further impact of the sharing session included one of Zack's friends who commented how he had never seen Zack cry, despite knowing him from his neighbourhood, being involved in community projects where he grew up and considering him a 'big brother'. This perhaps suggests that the intensity of feelings that are cultivated (and managed) in the space of encounter in the sharing session is more heightened and intense than the participants experience in everyday social settings with their peers. The space for 'exceptional' or heightened emotional responses produces the sense of exceptional space outlined in the beginning of this section. In this space, people can try out new experiences, helping them to explore their feelings, which helps develop relationships, empathy for others, self-understanding and emotional intelligence.

Finally, the example of the sharing an object session is about experiential learning through encounter. Each participant intimately encounters one another's contribution, made possible by the silence and attentiveness of each other's listening. Yet the encounter is only possible by the sharing of material objects and the placing of the object in front of the group. Here, objects became part of the interactions and encounters, as they mitigate against the harsh and exposed intimacies of encounter. Each contribution then connects to a wider landscape of memories, biographical details, stories, hidden features of one's personality as well as the expression of one's feeling. The exercise exploits the very possibility of encounter as a site of haptic learning and experimentation, whilst mitigating the overwhelming nature of encounter through objects, careful facilitation, and the trust and respect from those who participate. Lastly, as the quotes highlight, the exercise whilst apparently spatially and temporally local does in fact resonate beyond the moment, enabling the group to become more cohesive. The example further develops the argument that such a space – whilst apparently 'exceptional' – does work to prompt new ways of thinking and feeling, affecting other spaces within the rest of the residential and beyond.

5.6 Banal Sociality

Catalyst comprises both of the formal facilitation in which facilitators prompt new ways of thinking and learning about diversity and difference (as seen in the workshops and the informal facilitation), as well as the banal spaces that surround the formal activities. Mayblin et al. (2015a), in their study of an inter-faith cricket tournament, describe such moments as "banal sociality" where participants "identified their own natural affinities and found particular shared identity positions which have contributed to destabilising the significance of differences beyond" the formal space of the project (p.9). Moments of banal sociality on the Catalyst residential included the minibus journey, meal times, a trip to Whitby on the first day, night walks, a film night, and an impromptu music concert given by one of the participants. Each moment and space had its own dynamic and it was noted that each occasion was often influenced by the contingency of the previous activity. For example, after the leadership training day when participants arrived at lunch having completed a fun game, the young people were charged and euphoric and hence the conversations over the meal time were much brisker, humorous and at times verging on immature.

The third epigraph captures the mood and atmosphere during the Monday night walk, which will be the focus of this section. What fascinated me about the night walk was the apparent shift in relations as well as the possibilities and challenges of a night walk as a space to build relations between people. By 'shift' I mean how the features of a night walk (the lightening, the cooperation required, the novelty, and the excitement) can influence the different alignment of bodies and the intensities of connection at different times. The night walk on the Monday night took place around 8.30pm after the evening session (7.30 – 8.30pm) that concluded the leadership training. The night walk itself was a result of requests by two participants who knew the area surrounding Whitby and hence the trip was fairly impromptu. All but two participants took part and Wahida remained with the participants who stayed at the abbey. Although Wahida didn't participate on this particular night walk (although she did the night before) she was happy for it to go ahead since it is part of the experience of Catalyst and certainly part of the team-bonding and chance for meaningful encounters between participants. Three taxis – pre-booked by the conference centre – arrived and 15 young people were on their way to the coast. My fieldnotes capture the beginning of the walk:

"Three taxis can be seen disappearing into the evening mist, three pairs of red lights fading out of sight. And here we are. 15 young people, layered up with scarves and walking boats. There's already mixing as Sarah's extra coat has been borrowed, and Zack's spare trainers given to Pete. There's a sense of adventure as Zack – a police officer and youth worker by profession – leads the group towards the beginning of the coastal path. As we leave the drop off point and the yellow lit-road, darkness descends and suddenly listening becomes really important. We hear our way through the path and negotiate our distance between each other accordingly. I sense that pairs are beginning to form, as seems to be the easiest way to walk together along a fairly narrow path. I'm thrown into a conversation which compromised my ethnographic ability to write the story of the overall group. Nevertheless, I chat to the young man beside as our conversation comes and goes, in the space created by the act of walking side by side. We focus on the path, stepping onto rock not mud, a task that requires concentration"

The night walk is impromptu and spontaneous. There's a general sense of willed participation as everyone who's turned up has chosen to. The formal activities of the day are over and the space of the night walk affords more reflective and casual conversations. One participant comments that "this is the real stuff… after hours" referring to the honesty of conversations. I sense that people feel less judged and the pressure to conform to the particular script of the training programme seems to have eased. The fieldnotes above highlight how the practical arrangement of bodies on a night walk shapes the chance for encounter. Walking in pairs seems to happen by chance and although that might place people into more intimate settings, the act of walking beside, staring ahead, focusing on the task of walking in the dark mitigates the intensity of a face-to-face encounter. Space is created in the art of walking side by side.

The chance for conversations along the walk received mixed opinions. For Sarah [Jewish, youth leader] being at peace with nature helped make people relax. She argued it was a "lovely chance to catch up with people… where people were in life… things they did in the community". She also remarked how it was refreshing that "faith didn't need to be… involved, or… matter" as "everyone [could] be who they wanted to be, and their personalities sort of shone through". For Sarah, not having the conversations framed around religious identity (that the more formal spaces set up) was valued and the connection to different aspects of life (university, involvement in

community). For James [Christian, university student], the night walk threw him together with unexpected participants, but not perhaps the conversations he was hoping for:

> "I had so much expectation on the night walk. I was so looking forward to deep and intimate conversations… I think it was because I happen to have conversations with people that I wasn't expecting to" … "I was thinking I'd be talking to [names individuals] on the night-walk, as I get on well with them, but as it happened got talking to [named others]"

James makes sense of his experience, reflecting that "you can't exactly say "thanks for chatting, nice to talk to you" and move on… and it's very… sort of unnatural". However, being "stuck in a way with that person" turned out to be productive. James goes on to say that his conversation with someone unexpected lead him to discover some of the ways in which he shares different perspectives; perhaps even the differences that might explain why they are not naturally easy conversation partners. In their conversation, they established the different realisations that they had had during the leadership training earlier that same day. James discovered he was a 'guardian'[27] whilst his conversation partner disclosed that he was a 'warrior'[28]. James:

> "He's a warrior, he err… loves action and sport and everything, and I love painting and all the things that are more reflective and introverted and we made this joke that "I can teach you to paint, and you can teach me to kick box!"

The night walk, then, provided a safe space for James and his conversation partner to explore their differences. James encounters the possibility of another way of being: "I can't ever imagine kickboxing. I get freaked out at the idea of that sort of thing…" but imagines a situation where he could collaborate together with someone to try other styles of leadership. When we consider the 'differences' that such initiatives are encouraging people to encounter, we need to have a full range of the different

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[27] 'Guardian' refers to the leadership type the trainer introduced us to, that refers to the leadership style that shows characteristics of affection and sensitive ways of being with others, including being comfortable with touch and talking about feelings.
[28] 'Warrior' refers to the leadership type the trainer introduced us to, that refers to the leadership style that shows ways of leading that are centred around action, with the characteristics of being bold, active, loud and persuasive.

'differences' (personality types, leadership styles as well as ethnicity, race, gender etc.) that are brought into discussion and encounter.

Finally, the night walk was valued because of the opportunities it afforded for cooperating together. We return to Sarah's perspective, as she tells me that the night walk was her favorite night:

> "The night walk was probably my favorite night, because everyone was, well most people were together. You were at peace with nature in a way…. Walking along the beach, and walking up the mountain side. Lovely to see everyone come together and helping each other. And…to have a collective task that you all have to do together" (Sarah)

Having a collective task forced everyone to cooperate and therefore learn to trust one another. Sarah explains that "being scared" spurred people into helping each other.

> "Internally, I was a little bit scared because you were kind of walking over rocks and like trying to climb over wet rocks at one point. But because you were scared… because everyone knew that everyone was scared, people who were more proficient in it were helping… so Zack and Mo and David and people like that were helping people across the rocks and helping people up and I think that brought us all closer together, because again you have someone supporting you… people looking after your safety, was quite heart-warming really, it was very caring…" (Sarah)

It is interesting to note the factors of the night walk that in some way conditioned cooperation: the lack of visibility (as the third epigraph highlighted) that placed people as equals in the task, the ease at which conversations flowed and the space that is created by walking side by side, the collective feeling of being scared and vulnerable prompting relations of care and cooperation. There are also factors that seem to condition discomforts that can, as we saw, sometimes lead to productive moments too: the difficulty of getting out of undesired conversations, the sheer impossibility of leaving the group (once the taxis leave). Overall, the night walk – although on the one hand peripheral to the residential – was an important site which demonstrated the importance of bonding between participants and the banal sociality that prompts encounters with difference. As I shall explore fully in the conclusion, it is the various

components that collectively maximise the opportunity for encounter. The night walk offers moments of encounter that the other sessions might not ordinarily allow, and yet at the same time doesn't allow for the level of facilitation and discipline that the workshop affords.

5.7 Harnessing the potential of encounter

So far I've delved into specific moments (workshop spectrum activities, sharing meaningful objects, night walking) to unpack specifically how spaces were created, and facilitated, to encourage learning through encounter and learning about how to bring people together. As each case demonstrates, no moment is entirely isolated, with people taking away something within each experience. This includes, for example, the way the sharing of objects creates a sense of togetherness and cohesiveness that impacts how people relate later on during the week. Or the example of how conversations emerged on the night walk, inspired by the learning from the day's workshop on leadership. The whole Catalyst experience is of course designed to impact on future relations, to make a difference, to shape capacities to act (Noble 2013a), or to instill particular habits of civic engagement (Marshall et al. forthcoming). In order to highlight how notions of 'making a difference' or 'impact' is worked through by facilitators and trainers on Catalyst, this final section explores the question of *harnessing the potential of encounter*. 'Harnessing' is a word regularly used by Wahida which I think appropriately describes the process of bringing forward learning from the residential to future community development.

So how do the skills, capacities and practices developed in the 'exceptional space' of Catalyst translate back into the everyday spaces, routines, networks of participants in their 'home' communities? In many ways this is the core challenge of Catalyst. If the activities and practices did not develop the capacities of young people, then none of the activities would be worth delivering. After all, the aim of Catalyst is to develop young people into "leaders for change, developing local social action and transforming their communities" (Near Neighbours 2017c). Yet, the transferability of skills and experiences from one space to another is not always guaranteed. As Helen Wilson (2013b) notes in a day-workshop around diversity, the "clever design and atmospherics" to which people attach, will eventually fade "as the demands of everyday life take over" (p.81). For Amin (2012), developing the capacity of connected individuals relies too much on previous paradigms of sociology that prioritises human

interpersonal ties, rather than the wider affective, material, and systematic geographies that render certain subjects strange, over others. Yet, insights from the research suggest that Catalyst *does* have a tangible impact on the potential interactions and capacities of young people to make changes in their community.

The challenge of transferability between Catalyst and the everyday spaces of young people, however, deserves some interrogation. In participatory geographies, Kindon *et al* (2007) caution against assuming that the "skills developed in one domain of association are transformable to another" (p.25). Since "consciousness, agency and behaviour are all socio-spatially relational" (ibid), *new* spaces in which these encounters filter into will also be context specific. To be more than "isolated islands of empowerment", practitioners need to "identify which resources can be successfully redeployed, normalised and distanciated over time-space" (Kindon et al. 2007, p.25).

The coordinator (Wahida) was well aware of the 'exceptional' space that Catalyst generated. I reflected in my fieldnotes at the time that Catalyst seems to be a 'breathing' space for participants; space to experiment, to try out new experiences, to ask questions, to ponder other perspectives. With a fully funded residential trip (meals, accommodation and transport included), Catalyst does enable those from a variety of backgrounds to participate (including those who couldn't afford an opportunity like this if they would have to self-fund it). The sense of exceptionality was evidenced by participants, who expressed comments such as "Isn't it amazing how much we've done?" (in the context of looking back over the accumulated experiences on day 4) and in another moment when two people were talking about an event that took place the previous day, one person remarked "gosh, was that really only yesterday?". These comments highlight the non-linearity of time, as participants not only feel 'somewhere else' but also experience time differently.

So recognising the exceptionality of time, the coordinator spent considerable time during and (particularly the last day), talking about the need to 'harness' the energy and momentum of Catalyst. 'Harnessing', as a strategy, is one of the key mechanisms deployed to ensure that encounters in the residential might affect social relations beyond. My fieldnotes on the last day document an encounter that brings to life the anticipation and promise of the journey from Catalyst into the future.

"I took a walk this morning early before the others got up. It was a glorious and bright morning and I strolled through the grounds consolidating my fieldnotes, with the North Yorkshire moors as a backdrop. The busy streets of Leeds felt a

long way from Whitby. As I returned to the Priory, in the window of the conference room I spotted Wahida preparing for the last day's workshop straightening up the learning material and reordering the chairs from the pizza and film night (yesterday evening's entertainment). We had a bit of a chat about how the week had gone. Wahida, energetic as ever – and more of a morning person than I am! – launched into how important it was to harness these relationships after Catalyst. She said the intensity of the bonds can be lost, as people leave and go back to their lives. I made a connection to 'web of connections', the metaphor that one of the trainers had given us. "Exactly" affirmed Wahida, "it's about nurturing these webs of connection" (Fieldnotes)

The last part of the structured workshops on the fourth day was also planned around the importance of harnessing these connections, as well as enabling others to participate in owning the next steps of the collective journey. On a large piece of flipchart paper Wahida had scribbled the title "What Next?" (see figure 6) and this session was about getting the group to think about the next steps they wished to take. By writing it down, it affectively 'set' the agenda, and people had their phones and

Figure 6: Wahida facilitating a session titled 'What next?'

calendars out, as they made notes of the next steps. These included a 'celebration meal' a few weeks later, a Near Neighbours grants workshop to enable people to learn about the funding criteria and to create room to flesh out ideas for a future cross-cultural community project that would be sent off in a bid for funding. Participants also shared various events that people had in their diaries that they wished to share with the group. This included, for example, a licensing service for one of the participants who would be made a vicar at a new church he had recently joined, as well as an invitation

for people to join a local radio show that one of the participants has a slot on. This session not only worked to concretise some of the off-hand conversations that had been had during the residential (over dinner for example), it also helped give the group a sense of collective journey; in other words the group *would* reconvene and this was the beginning of something new.

There are two important things to take away from the 'What's next' workshop at the end of the Catalyst residential, in returning to critiques of sustained encounter outlined by Amin (2002) and Kindon et al. (2007). Firstly, the fragility of the inter-personal tie, which Amin (2012) warns against over-investing in, is recognised by the fact that a whole session is devoted to ensuring that next steps are established and the group will continue to meet. Secondly, as well as identifying 'resources' to be "redeployed, normalised and distanciated over time" (see Kindon et al. 2007, p.25), I argue that the sense of hope that was generated in one space needs to be built into the next steps. By encouraging participation in celebration events (both the Catalyst celebration event and the licensing service), something of the hope and surprise of getting along with participants from different backgrounds in a relatively short space of time can be rekindled, prompting affective geographies of hopefulness in the future of diverse community engagement.

Finally, as well as concerns around whether the solidarities developed in one space can transfer into other spaces, there is also the criticism that such projects only "tend to attract participants… who already have progressive attitudes towards 'difference'" (Mayblin et al. 2016, p.963). Research into Catalyst both affirms and disputes this claim. On the one hand, the make-up of Catalyst includes those who are already somewhat established as youth workers and volunteers in their community (as well as those who have the potential to become active in their community). There are also examples however of individuals who came along with someone more active in their community who encouraged them to participate. These individuals may not have turned up under their own steam, but once they had arrived benefited from the programme because of the chance to meet others who they may otherwise not have met. However, even if such projects do only attract a particular individual (who is willing to participate, and hence already more open to difference), the importance of harnessing suggests that Catalyst reaches out to those beyond those who have willingly participated. By empowering participants who are already part engaged in community, it is hoped they might impart something of the training and learning from

Catalyst into these spaces, inspiring others who may not ordinarily come to Catalyst with positive messages of working together across differences.

5.8 Conclusion

Let's return with a question I posed at the beginning of this chapter; how does a group of diverse young people who begin on Sunday morning as strangers, leave on Wednesday afternoon committed to work together in future inter-cultural community projects? It is a question that shares resonances with recent writing on the importance of *sustaining* encounter across difference (Askins and Pain 2011; Valentine 2014; Mayblin et al. 2016). In the recent shift towards sustaining encounter – moving away from the fleeting encounters that streets and other public spaces offer (Amin 2002) – Darling and Wilson (2016) make the case for keeping a critical eye on interventions that involve designing and facilitating desirable encounters (p.13). They do so by drawing on Carter's (2013) notion that "any design already holds within it an understanding of what is desired and thus demands that unpredictability be designed out in its very pursuit" (p.13). Thus, the chances for "risk, surprise and unknowability" become questionable. However, what this last chapter testifies to is the ability for practitioners to design in surprise and unknowability into the preparation and sustaining of encounters. I want to show that this is done in three ways.

Firstly, Catalyst encourages diverse forms of interaction, to both keep open the possible forms of connection as well as the different conditions for encounter. This includes moments of formal activity with close facilitation, to encourage both the negotiation of difference and experimentation with difference. Evidenced by the workshop training in which facilitators encouraged participants to interact through the spectrum exercise, for example, careful facilitation can allow people to experience difference differently (compared with the normal conventions of life). In this 'safe space', participants become aware of the differences of opinion, perspective, belief etc. as it becomes visibly staged between two imaginary poles of agree/disagree. I have argued that such exercises are among several that work to expose the layered thinking of how habits are formed, and can be reformed, learnt and practiced in the art of living with difference (Wilson 2014; Connolly 2002).

If the formal exercises condition the possibility of certain encounters, the more informal spaces (such as the night walk or the sharing a significant object) condition a different set of encounters. By allowing a range of different experiences, the different

spaces increase the chance of surprising and unexpected encounters. The sharing an object session was all about creating the conditions for deep sharing that involved emotions, intimacy and required respect from other participants. While the space could be set, and to some degree facilitated, the outcome of which objects are shared, how they are shared, and who is exposed etc. is never guaranteed. The night walk requires even less engineered intervention since although it takes place within the timeframe of the residential, it takes place outside of the formal hours of training and without the oversight of the facilitator. As the walk demonstrates, however, people who participate are not always in control of the situations they find themselves in and hence the encounters they experience.

Secondly, participants are involved in creating the shared space of Catalyst. Hence, rather than practitioners designing the sorts of encounters (and hence designing out risk), participants are *involved in the process* of designing spaces for encounter. This was evidenced in both the creating of the protocols of the safe space of Catalyst, as well as the owning of the outcomes of Catalyst (in setting the next steps, as the space is harnessed for future potential after the residential). By enabling participation in the design for encounter, the power balance shifts towards those who Catalyst is set up to encourage, as participants work together in a collective manner. This was evident in the realisation that 'invited spaces' can become 'co-creative spaces' in which the power inequalities shift as a result of creating space for empowerment whilst receding the control of the initial facilitator.

Thirdly, and critically, it could be argued – following Darling and Wilson (2016) – that the design of Catalyst writes out the risk and surprise in its very recruitment of particular individuals who have some training and experience in engaging across difference. These critical observations are no doubt significant to raise, however it is also important to look at the aim of Catalyst in the first instance. The value of Catalyst lies in its ability to shape the capacity of those who are in some way already involved and yet who are placed in positions of connection to those who might never have had the opportunity to encounter others who are different to them. The individuals who are trained on Catalyst then become intermediaries who reach out and connect both to those who co-lead, facilitate, and connect to others, as well as those who are 'in' their communities. However, to develop this latter point, the next Chapter explores how such individuals bring about change through developing projects back within their communities.

Chapter 6 – Facilitating everyday encounter: encounter as exposure/disclosure

"[Toast Love Coffee is a] pop up community café, creating a space where boundaries between different faith and ethnic communities will disappear over good coffee, good food and good conversations. The café will provide an informal space where social networks will develop, and local knowledge can spread thus empowering the local neighbourhoods"

(Toast Love Coffee proposal)

So far, I have explored how practitioners shape the conditions for encounters and interactions between people from different backgrounds, as exemplified in the work of Near Neighbours (Chapter 4). Within that chapter, I drew my analysis from my observations with the staff of Near Neighbours. I then moved on to explore how education and training can prepare emerging leaders for inter-cultural engagement (Chapter 5). This was explored through the case study of Catalyst, which I participated in for the research. This chapter (6) explores one example of a Near Neighbours funded project to illustrate how practitioners bring people together in the practice of a locally grounded project. Specifically, it explores how a pop-up community café (Toast Love Coffee) works to create spaces for different people to belong, interact, gain experience, build confidence and repair social isolation and loneliness. It is by no means representative of all Near Neighbours funded projects which vary enormously; from arts-based projects (including weaving, craft making and other artistic themed projects), to projects that involve music, to projects that involve participating in an activity (such as litter picking). The project in this chapter however illustrates a number of important aspects of *how* practitioners bring people together through a local project. This chapter contributes to recent research into public spaces – including community centres (Matejskova and Leitner 2011), university campuses (Andersson et al. 2012) as well as cafés (Jones et al. 2015; Warner et al. 2013) – by highlighting how locally situated encounters can both expose difference as well as empower people to live together with differences. Toast Love Coffee is the project that I spent the most time participating in (3 months over the winter – spring of 2015) and hence gained the most insights from.

Toast Love Coffee was launched in January 2014 and every Wednesday morning would become a site of activity, making and sustaining new relationships. Situated in Harehills, a multicultural inner-city neighbourhood in Leeds that has a significant refugee/asylum seeker population, one of the main aims of the café was to provide a space to help support people who have recently arrived in the city as well as improve relationships between those living in and around Harehills; those recently arrival and those 'more settled'[29]. The café itself was initiated by the friendship between two women; Anita who came to Leeds seeking asylum from Greece/Albania in December 2012 and Anna, who moved to Leeds from London in 2003. The empirical material in this chapter traces their story, alongside other key individuals who will be introduced, in order to investigate the sorts of relations that unfolded through participating together in the café.

Up to this point, I have considered the activity of project planning (Chapter 4) as well as a residential workshop (conceptualised as an 'exceptional space', see Chapter 5) as sites in which encounters with difference took place, or were encouraged. This chapter, then, also works to introduce another space – the site of the café – to debates around encounter and coexistence. In recent years, cafés have become increasingly mobilised as an affective space for mixing among diverse populations (Jones et al. 2015; Warner et al. 2013). In attending to the spaces and relations of Toast Love Coffee, I conceptualise Toast Love Coffee as a site of 'micropublics' (Amin 2002). Unlike the Catalyst residential (Chapter 5) that purposefully set up a space *outside* of the usual routines or everyday life in order to prompt new patterns and habits of living with difference, Amin's 'micropublics' are sites in which "prosaic negotiations" are compulsory to everyday convivial living (p.969). These include community centres, colleges, schools, workplaces, sports clubs, and other everyday sites that afford encounters that are more sustained than the fleeting encounters of the street. Arguably, cafés fit into Amin's (2002) definition of 'micropublics' since, as Warner et al (2013) note, cafés blur the distinction between private/public, and hence offer the openness of being public (in attracting 'unlikely suspects') as well as offering moments that are more intimate/closed. Given these fluid public/private and intimate/open spaces that cafés tend to create, this chapter will particularly address how those involved in such a project negotiate their encounters, through attending to moments of 'disclosure/exposure' (explained below).

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[29] I borrow the term 'more settled' from Askins (2016), to "avoid the binary of 'migrant' and 'settled', pointing to relationality… 'more settled' refers to greater stability and security in people's circumstances" (f.n., p.525).

The chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, I shall introduce how I am using the concepts of 'disclosure' and 'exposure' to understand the dynamics between those involved in the café. The chapter then gives a contextual overview of how Toast Love Coffee came about and a brief history of the friendships that underpin some of the relations in the café. Having set the scene, I shall then discuss the spaces the café sets up and the sorts of encounters that are made possible. The second half of this chapter then illustrates moments of disclosure, exposure, over-exposure and non-disclosure through vignettes of life in the café. Firstly, however, a few conceptual notes about the terms 'disclosure' and 'exposure'.

6.1 Disclosure/exposure

In order to make sense of the practices of encounter, I need to introduce two new terms at this point in the argument: 'exposure' and 'disclosure'. Firstly, note the relation between encounter and disclosure/exposure. According to The New Oxford Dictionary of English, to disclose is to "to make (secret or new information) known" and to "allow something to be seen, especially by uncovering it" while exposure is "the state of having no protection from contact with something" (Pearsall 1998, no page). Here we see disclosure as *making* with an emphasis on information/knowledge that is n*ew*, and exposure as the lack of protection from *contact*. Both definitions tie into previous discussions of encounter (as seen in Chapter 2), with an emphasis on encounter as '*making* difference' (Wilson 2016) and 'contact zones' (Askins and Pain 2011; Mayblin et al. 2015a) where differences are relationally constituted. As Pickerill (2009, cited in Wilson 2016) has argued, more accounts are needed of the ways in which commonalities and differences are "*really made*" (p.642, emphasis original). Exposure/disclosure is one way into this.

Secondly, by exploring both the dynamics of disclosure and exposure, I am seeking an alternative vocabulary for thinking about the politics of coexistence (Closs Stephens 2013). While disclosure is more often associated with therapy studies within social psychology (for example 'self-disclosing to a counsellor'), it is useful to borrow and bring to studies on coexistence since disclosure (acts of sharing), non-disclosure (keeping to one self) and exposure (the unwilled nature of encountering difference) are all part of the intricate dynamics of coexistence. For example, scholars writing on the art of living with difference (Sennett 2012; Watson 2006) point to moments when some differences are named, explicated, known, while other differences rendered

unremarkable (Gilroy 2004). Non-disclosure is a key part of negotiating the art of living with difference and in the research it is evidenced in what people choose not to disclose. In some cases, the café becomes desired/liked precisely because people can co-exist with, and despite, their differences. However, for others, the choice of disclosure/non-disclosure is less possible.

6.1.1 Subjectivity/agency within encounters

Disclosure/exposure, as a set of tools to examine the making of encounter, also helps foreground the dynamics of structure/agency that are often sticking points in debates about encounters (See Valentine and Waite 2012; Wilson 2016). Valentine and Sadgrove (2012; 2014) have critiqued recent affective studies of encounter (cf. Swanton 2010; Wilson 2011) suggesting the "fragmentary observations" of public encounters (on the bus, in the street, for example) make temporal assumptions about the significance of fleeting and momentary encounters that orientate bodies and produce affective atmospheres. Such accounts, they argue, "lose sight of the significance of the subject" masking the subjects' reflective judgements made about others, the agency of the subject in making decisions and thus mask how encounters challenge attitudes, behaviours and practices (Valentine and Sadgrove, 2014, p.1981). By turning to disclosure/exposure, then, I seek not only to focus on the role of the subject in cultivating ethical sensibilities in encounters, but to show how subjectivities become struggled for, and yet often lost, in encounters. If disclosure/non-disclosure require a degree of agency (since there is an element of choice involved as when/how/where one discloses), then 'exposure' helps work through moments that tend to be unwilled and where the agency of those experiencing and encountering others is lost. Of course, this is not to say that one cannot choose to 'expose' oneself to new sites, spaces and other beings. Nor, indeed are all moments of disclosure willed acts: for it is possible to disclose. However, by putting exposure and disclosure to work in this context, I seek to show how moments of disclosure and exposure enter into a reciprocal relationship (where one's disclosure is another exposure and so forth) highlighting the co-construction and relationalities of disclosure/nondisclosure/exposure and over-exposure (terms that will be introduced in full as the chapter progresses).

As well as speaking back to recent debates within the geographies of encounter literature, attention to exposure/disclosure also helps counter narratives of governance that are often quick to write out the agency and potential of encounters to prompt

alternative futures. For Amin (2007), too much is often expected from what he calls the 'inter-personal tie'. Amin (2007; 2012) urges scholars to reconsider the wider more-than-human, affective and material forces that affect relations among strangers in the city. To be sure, the more-than-human aspects of encounter have been hitherto overlooked in conventional accounts of encounter. As Chapter 2 unpacks, encounter teem with the more-than-human as the vitality of the material dimensions of encounter come to matter in different ways and for human and other more-than-human actors. However, as I have argued in Chapter 2, such accounts need to be held along accounts of encounter that attend to the ebb and flow of agencies within encounters. Secondly, where encounters (managed through state-funded programmes) are considered they are often shown to be complicit in particular ideals of mixing that produce certain ideals of (affective) citizenship (Fortier 2010; Matejskova and Leitner 2011), hence agency here is restricted and funnelled into a particular set of 'idealised' practices that serve particular political agendas. These debates are, of course, legitimate to show how particular modes of governing work among disparate actors. Yet, without attention to the complexity of practices on the ground, accounts of agency here are potentially stripped of the potential for alternative agencies that might offer different (and not dominant) geographies of coexistence (Gibson-Graham 2008). Although habits of disclosure and events of exposure run along lines of power, privilege, mediated by gender, race, class and educational background, these can never entirely contain the vitalities and energies of relations opened up in encounters (Connolly 2002).

The rest of this chapter flows as follows. First, I build up a picture of the sorts of practices that take place in the café, discussing who turns up, and the interactions that typically take place. Since I am focusing specifically on tracing relationships between 'more settled' residents and those recently arrived, I then turn to specific encounters that highlight moments in which disclosure, non-disclosure, and exposure as well as over-exposures inter-relate and affect the relationships between people, circumstances and social struggles.

6.2 Toast Love Coffee

6.2.1 A brief background

During the time of my fieldwork, Toast Love Coffee popped up in the site of a multi-purpose community centre in a Portakabin leased out by the local primary school in a

quiet residential street one minutes' walk from the bustling high street in Harehills, Leeds. Harehills is located 1.5 miles north east of the city centre of Leeds and has suffered urban decline and high levels of unemployment since the closure of the textile and mining industries in the 1960s, which were replaced with car repair and servicing, as well as storage warehouses. The availability of cheap housing in the 1960s and the demand of jobs encouraged migration from South East Asia (Pakistan and Bangladesh, specifically) as well as the West Indies, the Caribbean, Italy and Ireland. Today, the ward in which Harehills is situated (Gipton and Harehills) is reported to be the most deprived ward in Leeds (Callaghan 2015). According to Callaghan (2015) the ward of Gipton and Harehills has the "highest proportion of people from BME communities (64.2%) and the highest proportion of non-white residents (57.6%)" in Leeds (p.9). Harehills is a key dispersal region for those seeking asylum from war in the Middle East (particularly Iraq and Syria) and East Africa (Eretria and Sudan). Describing the scene for those (whether asylum seekers, refugees or economic migrants) who have moved to Harehills, Callaghan (2015) argues:

> "Harehills has a 'gravitational pull' for migrants, with those who can't or don't wish to live here coming to eat out, socialise, send and receive money, take driving lessons and tests, buy insurance, consult doctors, dentists, and solicitors, tax advisors, have a hairdo or shave, make travel or marriage arrangements, attend religious, educational, and cultural centres, buy food, jewellery, DIY goods, or engage in any of the practices their personal and cultural histories (adapted to their new, local, globally-connected contexts of existence) have disposed them to and for which some group or individual has provided the mean" (p.2).

Since 2002, those seeking asylum in the UK have experienced increased precariousness, due to temporary and regulated accommodation, the denial of the right to work, restrictions on welfare support, as well as increasing demonization in the media (Darling 2010). Harehills could be described by what Callaghan terms "ethnically and culturally superdiverse" (p.2) with the "greatest expanses of densely packed back-to-back and through terraced housing in the city, which grew piecemeal, largely as a result of speculative investment" (Callaghan 2015, p.2).

In the proposal for funding, the Toast Love Coffee team describe Harehills as having a "wonderful vibrancy" but does not have any "social spaces reaching out to

people from all the different communities to come together". Toast Love Coffee co-Director Anna offers further reasons for wanting to locate the café in Harehills. It was the place she was told to avoid when she moved to Leeds for fear of getting "mugged, raped, or even murdered", a stereotype that Anna now rejects (interview with Anna). Harehills was also the home to her grandma who lived just a stone's throw from the location of the café and owned a sweet shop that, incidentally, would later be re-inhabited by an Eritrean asylum seeker who would start volunteering at the café. Anna's grandmother fled from Russia during the First World War as a child and Anna points to the fact that Anita's journey to Leeds as an asylum seeker, is not unlike her great grandmother who fled to Harehills. Anna often talks about "looking into the eyes of [her] grandmother" as she got to know Anita and her precariousness as someone seeking asylum in Harehills (interview with Anna). Her grandmother was also a refugee and, although fled under different circumstances, makes Anna wonder about the difficulties of migration within her own family history. Hence, even before the café opens its door, there are complex lines of connection and disconnection across space and time, folding in solidarity and difference.

6.2.2 Emerging (and unexpected) friendships

The café was initiated by the friendship between Anita and Anna. Since their friendship is crucial to the vision, purpose and function of the café, it is necessary to give a bit of detail into their friendship. This is because the later empirical vignettes that feature Anna and Anita that I will unpack throughout this chapter depend on the contingency of their relationships, and the gradual learning to live with and relate to one another. Proximity to others does not necessarily produce harmonious contact (let alone friendship), as Harris and Valentine (2016) note. Rather it takes what Askins (2015) describes as a "political *will to engagement* that requires commitment" (p.476, emphasis original), further emphasising the role of agency in shaping these encounters.

Anna is in her late thirties, a mother of three, and has been living in Leeds since 2003, after moving from her family home in North London. Anita arrived in the UK in December 2012 with her three year old son, after fleeing a life threatening situation in Greece. She settled in Harehills in a shared accommodation privately owned and leased by the government as temporary accommodation for people seeking asylum. Anita grew up in Albania and moved to Greece where she spent some time working in tourist restaurants, where she developed a passion for cooking. Anna and Anita

initially met at a Christmas party in a hostel for asylum seekers that brought together asylum seekers and "more settled" residents. Here, they bonded over having similar aged children. When Anita is relocated into private accommodation, even though Anna lives in a more affluent part of north Leeds, they both discover they share the same postcode, which prompts Anna to call round to meet Anita (via a contact at the Christmas party). Anita shares her memories of this experience:

> "At first I was scared and I didn't let Anna in to my home. I stood by the door. I thought 'who is this woman? Maybe she's from the authorities or the home office or something'. I was very scared. But she kept coming and bringing food. I couldn't speak any English at all, I was using my hands like this [motions and then laughs]. After the fourth visit, I eventually let her in." (Anita)

Although hesitant at first, the unknown woman who Anita worried was from the authorities becomes a friend to Anita. Over the next 9 months, they regularly meet up and share food together, often cooking in Anna's kitchen. It was here that they dreamt up the idea of running a café where more people would have the opportunity to come to meet like they did:

> Anita: For me, every Tuesday and Wednesday, I feel like I wake up very happy because… whatever going on, when I go inside of the door, so how I say... home sweet home. Last week, when I went inside, I said home sweet home... Because I feel like my home, you know the place where I know I'm going to make the coffee in the morning, I'm going to put the coffee on, and then after I say coffee anyone, and they say yes, and you spend chatting together with people, more people coming and it's just amazing, amazing, you feel like it's not like place I go and do my volunteering job – it's like I go there I feel safe, confident, for what I'm doing…

> Anna: … the idea being that this whole thing that every person is an individual, but when they're treated like they're just part of a system it doesn't bring out the best in them, it doesn't bring out their individuality, they're just an asylum seeker, one of the whatever number they want to pluck out of the sky of numbers, these people

coming and claiming asylum, you know. What we wanted to create in [Toast Love Coffee] was a place where it was a safe place where you can be the best version of yourself, and we want that to shine through and for people to leave, you know, with their head a little bit higher, smiling, just ready to take on the world, or whatever it is. And as the project has developed, I think for me, if you were to say to sum TLC up in one word I'd say 'safe' – or the most important part of what we're doing, and I would say it's this safe space and this idea of welcome.

While their first encounter took place in a different space – a party organised to welcome asylum seekers – it initiated their friendship and the time they would spend together in Anna's kitchen. Bonding over "cooking, crying [and] laughing" became the inspiration to create a space where others can feel "safe, confident" and be "the best version of [themselves]". The time they spent together, including the outings, visits, and the emotional connections developed through crying and laughing in Anna's kitchen, were all part of the accumulation of encounters that consolidated trust and empathy. As Bowlby (2011) argues, the shared experiences of "getting together" become part of the material through which friendships are continued (see also Askins 2015). Furthermore, the café is part of the process of 'co-presence' that sustains their friendships (Bowlby 2011), whilst simultaneously making possible other friendships. With the support of another peace-building organisation in Leeds that Anna had prior commitments to, Anna and Anita launched Toast Love Coffee in January 2014. The next section introduces the café itself and how the dream of a safe space to meet materialises in the construction of the café.

6.2.3 Designing spaces for encounter

As the previous chapter demonstrated, the design of the space for encounter shapes the capacity to act in any given encounter. The design of the café further evidences how spaces can be shaped to encourage particular encounters.

The café itself occupies a room in a multi-purpose community centre (called the Hub) that Anna, Anita and the regular volunteers set up each Wednesday morning. Anna and Anita are typically joined by up to around 4-5 other volunteers, from a pool of 10-12 individuals that include: volunteers at the synagogue located a few miles north of Harehills; volunteers from a local peace-building initiative based in the city centre;

as well as people seeking asylum (including those from Albania, Sudan, Iraq and Syria).

The café is supported by the Real Junk Food Project, a network of cafés and other food outlets that intercepts food that would otherwise go to waste, such as good quality filter coffee, tea, toast, various assortments of fillings, cakes and other unwanted but perfectly edible food, from supermarkets, businesses, or individuals. The food is then served back on a 'pay as you feel' basis which, for those involved in the café, creates a more inclusive concept of 'giving' regardless of how much money one has. There is also a strong emphasis on 'paying as you feel' in other non-monetary ways, including volunteering time, offering skills and experiences, pieces of furniture, or as Anna puts it, "even a 'like' on Facebook". Anna describes the focus around tackling food waste as the "excuse" to bring people together, even if not the overall aim of the café (which the opening epigraph describes). The impact of the focus on food ethics certainly is felt among those who participate and, as one visitor noted, "there is definitely an energy created around food waste" (Fieldnotes, 22nd January 2015).

The Hub is in fact a Portakabin that has a small hall with a reception desk that you pass through before entering the main room (which is usually used as a room for a youth club and other meetings). The Portakabin itself is set back 20 metres from the road, with a green fence surrounding the property. Inside, two youth-group pool tables are covered with fancy table cloths, three large go-pack tables assemble a service counter in a T shape in front of the kitchen, and foldable tables and chairs in bright green and black (the TLC design) which were funded by Near Neighbours are placed to suggest spaces for encounters over drink and food (see figure 7). These tables seat 2 or 3, although a few are often pushed together to seat more. The kitchen is built into the corner, and the smallest wall already contains sofas that enclose a space for group meetings. Up to 10 people can fit on the circle of sofas in this space. Decorations
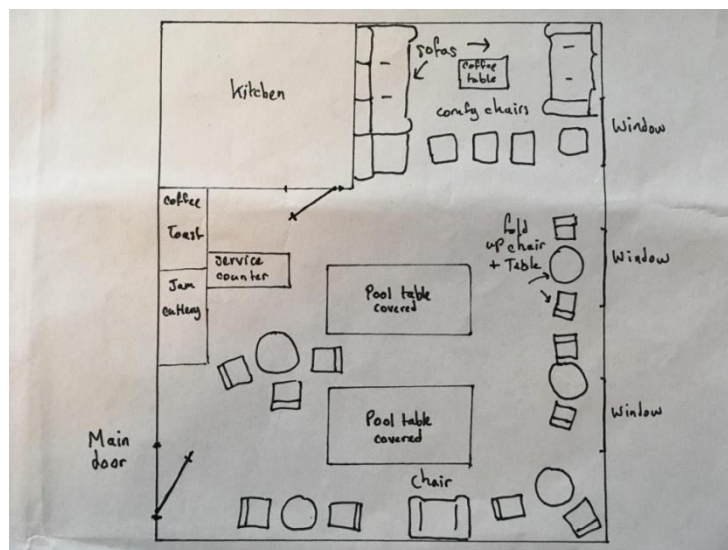

Figure 7: Floor plan of Toast Love Coffee café

are placed around the café to give it a welcoming vibe: TLC signs on heart-shaped

slates, a variety of cakes placed on a three-tiered cake tray, posters of Taylor's Tea and a handmade straw laced heart hung from the wall. The volunteers' name badges are dug out of an old cake tin, produced by one of the regulars, Graham, a white British resident who lives across the road.

Crucially, the implementing of the design of the café *itself* is the encounter, as the opportunities to build, furnish, and make the equipment (such as the badges) often produced meaningful encounters across the team of volunteers and regular visitors. There are countless other examples of activities that constitute the creation of the café – handing out flyers, upcycling furniture, weighing bread and recording the waste food, sharing transport lifts – and that enable relationships to develop. As I shall go on to show, these activities sometimes produced the very safe spaces necessary in order for people to share and disclose aspects of their life with one another, and simultaneously provided distraction from the necessity of having to verbally share. By upcycling a table together, for example, the task itself can take precedence over conversations that might be intimidating. Yet at the same time, the time it takes to build, create, make, hand out flyers in the street and so on, allows time to develop interpersonal skills as people negotiate the boundaries of what they feel acceptable to share and disclose. While the many activities here deserve attention in their own right, they are listed to give an idea of the construction of the café and how they facilitate disclosure/exposure. Section 6.3 begins to explore conceptually the various exposures and disclosures in the café.

There's no typical morning at the café. On quieter days, the volunteers were aware that sometimes the number of volunteers would outweigh the number of visitors. On other days, however, the volunteers were overwhelmed by the sudden swell of visitors, with volunteers who had been in conversation returning to the kitchen to cope with the sudden demand for coffee and toast. There are very diverse reasons for why both visitors and volunteers attend. In the early days, TLC attracted less people from the nearby residential streets and attracted more who had been referred to TLC: whether through existing contact with Anna or one of the other volunteers, from RETAS (a local refugee support centre) or referred by local statutory agencies (including counsellors and medical professionals). Toast Love Coffee often becomes a space where people bring along paperwork relating to welfare support: for example, one day Anna noted that quite a few people had turned up seeking advice around welfare support forms, including someone from Bradford council housing association and someone who needed help with their Disability Allowance claim form.

Here, the space makes possible encounters that enable opportunities for work, legal support, and other services of welfare provision.

Every month or so, the local refugee support centre (RETAS) would visit and bring along between 15 and 20 asylum seekers and refugees, many of whom come from Eritrea, Sudan, Iran, Iraq and Syria, as well as other East African and Middle Eastern countries. Connections between TLC and the local refugee support centre were established through Anita who regularly volunteers at the centre, which is located on the high street, a few minutes' walk from the café. Some of those who turned up from RETAS later became regular volunteers at TLC as it provided opportunities to interact and socialise, as well as practice English and gain work experience, to help improve opportunities for work for when (and if) people's asylum claims had been processed. The café is often visited by those who work in local services including staff at the primary school next door, a local council-employed gardener and from time to time police officers, whether on or off duty. There is also often interaction across the various different groups who attend; for example in the sharing of ideas between those involved in community organising and individuals who are seeking work opportunities. These forms of interaction resemble what Amin (2002) terms 'micropublics'; the prosaic negotiations that are compulsory to everyday routines of life. Having outlined a general overview of the space and use of TLC, we can build a more complex and richer account of how the blurred spaces of public/private and open/intimate prompts both moments of disclosure and exposure. This insight offers one way in to understanding how difference is encountered in the context of a local community project.

6.3 Making sense of the interactions in the café (encounters of exposure and disclosure)

Having introduced the space of the café as well as how people are brought together and enabled to share through the common cause of tackling food waste through a 'pay as you feel' principle, this chapter now turns to understanding how this space is used the interactions that take place. It is important to note that the ethnographic insights offered below come at the very beginning of TLC (January – April 2015) in the first few months of its opening and hence feature more of Anna and Anita and the close team of volunteers than it features all those who come and benefit from the café. Nevertheless, it seeks to show how people came together and the moments in which solidarities were

built, relations developed and new experiences were generated. As introduced in the beginning of this chapter, in order to reveal some of the moments that unfolded, I work through some of the interactions in the café through the concepts of disclosures and exposures.

6.3.1 Sharing experiences in the café (disclosure)

Firstly, many of the interactions in the café were about moments of disclosing, of sharing intimate experiences with others. Specifically, these involved "creating space" to share difficult experiences of being affected by the challenges of seeking asylum, of detention, and the challenges of settling into a new location. This involved both the sharing (disclosing) of those with first-hand experience of seeking asylum, as well as those learning for the first time about these experiences from positions of relative privilege (and hence being exposed to new experiences). Part of the condition for such a space was the creation of 'micropublics' (Amin 2002). These are spaces that mimic the ordinary and everyday patterns of living but 'novel' enough to offer the opportunity for shared being and belonging (in which trust and empathy might be cultivated) that interrupts normative behaviours, patterns of living, structures of prejudice etc. This is illustrated in a vignette offered by Anna who reflects on when Anita shared her experiences of being detained with her son (who was 3 at the time) with a local MP, during one Wednesday morning:

> "Yesterday [a local Labour MP] came and he came because…urm… when we had the crisis with Anita when she was detained, I spoke to him that week and he was incredibly supportive and he was like 'I want to meet Anita', you know, keep me updated, let me know what goes on. And I told him about the café and so I… he was like, oh yeah [book me in] so I booked him in to come yesterday and he came and spent an hour with us and it was no photo-op handshake/give me a vote thing… it was genuinely, he is a good guy. And I'm so grateful he's our MP and erm, he sat down with Anita and [a volunteer] and Anita was able to tell him her story and I just thought… I was really proud that I had created this space where…cos if we had booked in at his surgery for example, a) she's not actually in his constituency… and you know, you get what ten minutes then it's the next person"
>
> <div align="right">(Interview with Anna, November 2014).</div>

Anna then goes on to give a description of their meeting:

> "And she was nervous. So I said at 9 o'clock when we were setting up and said 'Anita I need to tell you, the MP is coming today, I want him to meet you, I want you to tell him, you know' and she was really nervous and that's why [volunteer] sat with her as well. And then I glanced over *and she was giving it…* [emphasis] she was telling how you know 7 police turned up at her door at 4 in the morning, you know she had to strip in front of them, with her son. All the humiliation involved… and he was, you know… there was no [pause] (not retribution that's not the word) …he was always going to listen and be supportive and want to help. It was never a case of you know, she was going to get anything back from him negatively, but she was still nervous and he was able to put a bit of context politically about immigration and stirring it up from UKIP and all of that you know"

<div align="right">(Interview with Anna, November 2014).</div>

Anna talks of 'creating a space' where this sort of encounter/disclosure is possible. She contrasts it to a constituency surgery where "you get… ten minutes then it's the next person". In this sense, the café encounter that has been set up by Anna (through her previous contact with the MP) is different to the formal institutional space of an MP's surgery. Anita is noticeably nervous, as the space set up, even outside of a formal institutional space, is never free from power relations (the fact of his position as an MP and the pressure put on Anita to tell her story). Anna admits that little might come of such a meeting in terms of Anita's status, yet there is also the positive outcome of having someone from an institutional political positon listening and supporting Anita. The MP was also able to provide a bit of context that perhaps would be difficult to do so in other spaces. In another example where Anita shared her story with a "police officer high up in West Yorkshire police", Anna hopes that these personal stories – the face of the other – might change "hearts and minds" and offer a kinder, more humane politics. These examples demonstrate the potential of the encounter to enable difficult stories to be disclosed, which are simultaneously (to others) exposed truths that might change opinions and attitudes.

In this example, Anita is encouraged to share – and to disclose – something about her experiences. Her decision to share is of course mediated by her and Anita's

relationship, and while Anna would never have gone ahead if Anita had been opposed to it, Anita perhaps feels obliged to share. Although as the vignette shows, Anita gets into her story and shares some of the painful memories of her detention. Part of the motivation for Anna to set up these sorts of encounters is the potential that might come from such an encounter. In the words of another volunteer, who agreed with Anna's facilitating of the encounter between Anita and the MP, "having people like [police offices, MPs] exposed to these stories, you just never know… maybe it will change their attitude and inspire further action. God let's hope so…" In this sense, disclosure and exposure enter into a reciprocal relationship. Anita's disclosure is the MP's exposure. Exposure carries with it a potential; the potential to change attitudes and inspire further action.

Disclosing, however, comes at a cost. Anita begins apprehensive and Anna senses it. This is also evident in a second example in which Anita shares her story again, although this time a year later, with an off-duty police officer. A year later as her English speaking ability improves and she grows in self-confidence, Anita is better able to manage these moments of personal disclosure. Nevertheless, after this particular encounter with the MP, she joins the volunteers back behind the counter (where I am) and sighs, expressing how tired she feels sharing her story. While disclosure of painful experiences might lead to others being exposed to such issues (and hence the potential in fostering understanding), disclosure takes its toll and can be extremely exhausting for those who are doing the sharing.

As well as one-to-one encounters without those from outside of the café, disclosures also took place within the café community. This next example of disclosure also involves Anita, however this time from a different occasion. The moment is captured in my ethnographic fieldnotes on a day in which Anita shared her story among the volunteers:

> "It's a quiet morning in the café and unlike the busy days, when the flow of activity demands immediate attention away from the team members and onto the tasks of keeping the café running, today the volunteers appear to have more time for deeper and more sustained conversations, as interruptions are far and few between. News of Anita's Home Office refusal letter is weighing on Anita, as well as one or two of her close associates in the café (Anna and Sally[30], for example). An initial round of coffees has been made, the preparatory tasks such

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[30] A pseudonym

as cleaning the floor have been completed and the activities corner for the children has been set up. As the initial wave of activity settles, some of the volunteers and one or two of the regular visitors have settled in the seats in the enclosed area[31]. I am sat with two others at one corner, nearest to the counter, where I have been previously in the kitchen with two other volunteers. Our mundane conversations dissipate, as our attention is taken up by a conversation unfolding to us from the opposite corner. Softly spoken, concerned-sounding voices register concerns and worries imbued with seriousness and meaning. We'd be forgiven if nosiness had been our wrongdoing, as Anita appeared aware, and accepting, of the fact that now six people had become the audience of her story"

(Fieldnotes, February 2015)

Earlier in the morning Anita had mentioned news of her Home Office letter, however, seemed keen not to dwell too much on her current state of affairs, using the café to take her mind off things. Now, however, perhaps it felt a more appropriate time to share more honestly, in the presence of others, some of the experiences she had been through. Anita explained with more solemnity how heart-wrenching it was having to re-tell her story for the fifth time as 'fresh evidence' to the Home Office. Her hands were clasped tight and she seemed on the edge of tears, keeping her head down so as to avoid the vulnerability of direct eye-contact. Those around her on the enclosed sofas were listening and few words were exchanged. Once Anita's flow of words had stemmed easing into a heavy and pressing silence, one by one those around her began sharing words of reflection and comfort. Some responses were hesitant and apologetic in tone. Others were more confident. Sometimes these responses came in the form of encouragement: "I have great admiration for you, Anita" (said Shelia). Other responses were in the form of questions – questions that seemed to open up, rather than close down: "So where are your family now?" For another, it was the 'heartless' system that had been failing Anita and others, as she looked towards the group for mutual affirmation. Brian offers a response in the form of a joke: "Anita, can I adopt you?" Slight laughter ripples, although Anna adds "she's over 18, so we wouldn't even be able to…" bringing the focus back to the issue at hand.

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[31] In this space, two informal comfy chairs with no backrests are placed to complete a circle, with the fixed sofas against three walls of the corner (two corner walls, and the wall of the built in kitchen, see figure 7).

The vignette highlights the dynamics between non-disclosure and disclosure. If the silence earlier in the café helped Anita take her mind of things, the atmosphere that assembles later is more conducive to sharing. Of course, as a participant in the conversation I am also aware that I might be complicit in nosiness (as a volunteer and as a researcher interested in what takes place in the café). These fragile moments of negotiating ethical responses to others always conditions the possibility of disclosure and often take place on uneven grounds. The vignette highlights how intense and fragile encounters can become, as certain moments demand responses (whether in words or actions) and ethical orientations form towards others. This is an example of the 'shocks' that Wilson (2016) notes in encounters of surprise in which borders are "shifted, crossed, made, unmade and undermined" (p.6). In the café as sharing took place, a space assembled that facilitated the sharing of difficult experiences and made possible multiple relations of exposure opened in this encounter. Sometimes, forms of solidarity and understanding were forged. Other times shock, disbelief, confusion, and anger. For example as Anita shares her story in the company of several others, her clasped hands and the avoidance of eye contact suggests the heightened feelings of being exposed. We might also say that those present gathered around Anita are in this moment exposed – although in a very different way – by Anita's vulnerability of sharing (disclosing) and in the process encounter various differences (the differences of privilege, and the opportunity and security that is afforded by stable forms of citizenship). Vulnerability here opens out encounter, drawing in others, promoting responses to what is shared by someone else.

This latter point is made evident by complementing the vignette above with interviews with some of the other volunteers about their experiences of exposure to the lives of those seeking asylum.

> "I've heard a few stories and I've got a bit of perspective on what it's like to be new in this country and you know particularly to find that the authorities are behaving as if they're not best pleased that these people are here. It confounds any stereotypes that I know might exist about asylum seekers" (Interview with Brian, March 2015)

Brian explains that the stories he has heard give him a "bit of perspective" that "confounds… stereotypes". For others the experience of hearing stories affects self-reflection on one's own security and fortune:

"Makes me realise anew how lucky I am"

"I have this passport which gives me security"

This section highlights some of the different ways in which moments of sharing took place, in what I have discussed as 'disclosure'. Disclosure is both enacted (by those setting up encounters, and those who are in the encounters) with the possibility disclosure may transform behaviours and attitudes. Although these two examples have been taken as separate moments, in reality they are contingent on a number of factors: the safe space that is constructed, the dynamics of the café, the trust between volunteers that has been built. In attending to moments of disclosure, we can also see the *affects* that configures the body: in the avoidance of eye-contact and the tightening of muscles, as well as evoking hesitant and sometimes nervous responses as people respond to the demands of hearing the stories of others.

This section also highlights that disclosure/exposure are often in relation. Many instances of disclosure can lead to feeling exposed. As the introduction showed, disclosure is often defined as 'making new information known' and hence encounters of disclosure are openings: creating knowledges in the interactions between subjects. As in the example above disclosure can be productive, both for the one who discloses (whether the act of sharing as a form of therapy and finding support from others) and for the one who gains knowledge in the process (mobilising forms of care, awareness, etc.) However, this can also be the risk of disclosure. Not only can the act of disclosure evoke painful experiences, leaving subjects feeling exposed and vulnerable, there is an uncertainty in how those who have been *disclosed to* might be affected. In any act of sharing there is the uncertainty of how others might respond. Relations of trust that underpin the friendships of Anita and Anna (and the relationships between Anita to others) inform Anita's willingness to share. In order to further develop ideas of encounter and disclosure it is important to explore moments of exposure and what exposure *does* in terms of ruptures and openings.

6.4 Exposure

The scenes above begin with the empirical focus on the acts of disclosure and the affective relations that such encounters enact. For this section, the attention begins with

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the ruptures of exposure that seemingly come from outside, as people find themselves "thrown together" by events that escape their control (Massey 2005), demanding a range of responses. The following example illustrates one moment of exposure that took place in the café, as the community were drawn into a housing crisis of a newly arrived family seeking asylum. The moment began as the volunteers were interrupted by a phone call that sparked a sudden spontaneous visit to a mother who has recently arrived in Leeds. The TLC blog captures this moment, written by one of the volunteers:

"As we were packing up, one of the mums of the birthday girls received a phone call. There was a new single mum in town, from Albania, like her. This new mum, with a two month old baby, and a seven/eight year old boy, had just been housed in a back-to-back in Harehills. The phone call was from the housing officer to say she had very, very little English and could our birthday mum be in touch with her and help her settle in.

"It flicked a switch in all of us. There we were, celebrating, basking in the glory of [the café] and not a stone's throw away was another mum with her kids at an early part of her journey as an asylum seeker in our country. Disorientated, scared, alone.

"We put some food in the car and went off to find them. Having done this a couple of times now, I thought I knew what to expect. But I was not prepared to find the little boy sitting on a chair in the road waiting for us.

"I was not prepared to find a fly infestation in the ground floor room, or the washing machine in the dirty basement. Or the state of the bathroom…"

"The fridge was not in the kitchen, but outside, because the smell was so bad that it was not deemed safe to be used. There was no alternative fridge in the kitchen. On the hottest day of the year so far, with two young children, this woman was expected to create a home in a house without a fridge in the kitchen.

"G4S, and our system for supporting asylum seekers, expected a mum with her baby to live in this – shame on you. Whoever assigned them that house – shame on you. Whoever took them there and gave them the key – shame on you.

"Without a second's thought, we packed the family up into the car and took them to the house shared by the birthday girls and their mums. A couple of other Albanian families were hanging out there too, and they welcomed them with kisses, help with the buggy and bags, and offering of food.

"This family's chances of settling in to Leeds have just been improved ten-fold because of the kindness of these other Albanian single mums/determined women/asylum seekers"

The blog was accompanied by a series of photos taken on a mobile phone that showed the washing machine in the dirty basement, the state of the staircase leading to the basement, and an unflushed and dirty toilet. The experience angered the volunteer who condemns the practice of resettling a family into a house with very poor conditions. So exposure can affect feelings of anger and injustice. The encounter in this case is an encounter with the very structures that render certain lives unliveable. The sight of the material conditions of the house ("fly infestation in the ground floor room") and even the smell of the fridge produced overwhelming feelings of anger. But anger is then mobilised and stirs a sense of collective action, as practical steps were taken "without a second's thought" to offer a welcome that was deemed more just. This encounter might be akin to what (Ahmed 2010) describes as a 'bad encounter'; an encounter of disgust or distaste (particularly as Ahmed draws on Deleuze's example of a bad encounter with something poisonous) that "can also be enabling or creative" (p.201). As Ahmed (2004) writes, "anger against injustice can move subjects into a different relation to the world, including a different relation to the object of one's critique" (Ahmed 2004, p.201). In this instance, exposure to the conditions of suffering enables a form of critique that manifests as anger ("shame on" those who perpetuate and who are complicit in the perceived injustices) and prompts alternative forms of care.

This particular insight helps develop arguments outlined in Chapter 2 that the practices of encounter enables a critique of accounts of governing that do not always get at the messy, complex and contradictory types of mixing. Firstly, one of the

critiques of UK government-funded projects that encourage 'meaningful interaction' is that they encourage certain types of encounters, in particular encounters that pacify political dissent and temper angry, ambivalence and sadness, destroying the ground for renewed and progressive forms of dialogue and action (Fortier 2010). By examining encounters that are exposures, we are able to complicate any neat account of 'co-option'. In this instance, the exposure to the conditions of housing and the forms of solidarity that assembled such exposure made possible, suggest that (state-funded) 'mixing' also contains the very potential to disrupt the pacified 'fun, easy, cool' mixing that UK policy on 'meaningful interaction' allegedly produces (Fortier 2010). The agency (as seen in the response) to the exposure, suggests not all practices at the local are "always already coopted" (Gibson-Graham 2008). "Coopted" assumes that a practice has lost its ability to shape an outcome that is different to the normative political agenda of governance. Of course, it is also important to note that just because the blogger's encounter with the housing conditions lead her to question the norms of housing practices, we can't necessarily assume that encounters with injustice automatically result in responses of indignation (see also Butler 2010, p.2). Such provincial encounters, can, however, contrary to Amin's (2012) pessimism, uncover the wider structural and material forces that govern certain political subjects.

Secondly, the example of being exposed to the structural conditions critiques the notion that encounters are always the tool of the privileged and more settled, either demanding the encounter of the other (underprivileged, newly arrived, potentially "more in need" of encounter) or enabling the 'majority populations' to cope better with diversity (Valentine 2008). Such debates are paralleled in recent critiques that the 'contact hypothesis' (as outlined in Chapter 2) only works for majority groups, easing the prejudices of the majority (Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins 2006). In this perspective, projects that encourage interaction, while working for the privileged, simultaneously disable minority groups leaving them unable to engage in collective action to re-dress the structural inequalities that render them unequal in the first place (Wright & Lubensky 2008; Dixon et al. 2007) and potentially leave others feeling intimidated and put off by these encounters (Valentine 2008). The voices within Toast Love Coffee both support and, I want to argue, contest these claims.

Sometimes, as I have shown, there are moments in the café in which disclosing experiences might lead to feeling over-exposed, intimidated and feeling vulnerable. These include experiences of feeling scared by sharing personal trauma and suffering of detention. In other moments, there are examples of being 'networked in' to a wider

set of relationship and opportunities, including opportunities to gain experience in the café, be signposted to support agencies, and the chance to improve language skills. On this latter point, those who might be considered 'minority' constituents, describe feeling 'at home' and 'safe', gaining in confidence in interacting with others, and sharing their concerns and painful experiences with others (as exemplified in Anna and Anita's conversation in Section 6.2). Here, the café is an example of "thickening the relational web" which "creates more resilience", (as one of the regular visitors involved in community engagement noted) and minimises the vulnerability of those who are rendered precarious by their circumstance. Here, the thickening web or peoples, experiences, perspectives acts to dampen the exposure, as participants who share difficult experiences do so in the 'safe space' of the café.

Insights into Toast Love Coffee also contest the suggestion that the contact hypothesis loses sight of the structural conditions that regulate the inequalities of different groups (Saguy et al. 2009). Some of the encounters in the café exposed volunteers and visitors to the harsh conditions in which some of the asylum seekers who attend the café are forced to live. Seeing first-hand the experiences in which asylum seekers are forced to live, prompts others to rethink their 'perspective' on the UK's dispersal system for asylum seekers and potentially creates the basis for collective solidarity and alternative forms of care (such as sharing of food and hospitality in a place 'fit' for stay). In short, exposures are productive and while risk further vulnerability – or even the normalising of suffering and painful experiences in superficial acts of solidarity – exposures can also lead to greater awareness of structural inequality, prompting learning from those who have more privileged backgrounds to understand better the conditions of those who experience the asylum system.

It is, however, important to recognise the limits of exposure and how individuals manage the risks of over-exposure.

6.5 Over-exposure

Conventional local practices and state-endorsed strategies that embody the 'contact hypothesis' have been critiqued for the way different bodies are expected to encounter, and we could argue, who is expected to be exposed to whom. Ash Amin (2013) argues that a "liberal tyranny" underpins a politics of interpersonal contact, particularly towards immigrants and minorities "who are expected to do the engaging and reconciling, while majorities and the mainstream are treated as the unchanging core

that does not need to shift far in its cultural practices" (p.7). Ethnographic accounts of the café, however, suggests that who contact is for, and who is expected to change, cannot so easily be assumed. There were times, for example, when those considered 'more settled' experienced exposures too, often resulting in over-exposure[32]. The next two examples highlight moments where exposures were over-bearing and resulted in more cautious ways of being with others. This was apparent over lunch one morning when Anna admitted that she felt torn in knowing how far to go to support Anita. In the following discussion, Anna weighs up the balance between making Anita visible for a public petition when she was threatened with deportation, and the need to protect her:

> "We spent long and hard trying to work out whether we should or shouldn't use Anita's name [for the petition]. When you give details like her name, it makes it more personal and will help her cause. In the end we decided not to put down her son's name, but use hers. And then of course, suddenly I realised that if the people who trafficked her find out that I am helping her, me and my family might be the next targets... I keep thinking I'm going to be the next news headline…"

Anna goes on to talk about difficult negotiations with her husband to ensure her personal home is "separate from TLC". She hesitates and then adds, "…but the boundary prevents the magic". These negotiations highlight the relational boundary work that goes into both protecting against threat, and simultaneously, seeking to find spaces for the 'magic' to work. By 'magic' I interpret her to refer to the unexpected outcomes of meeting and living life radically with others and the chance/serendipitous moments that occur. In this sense, exposures make things happen. They make the 'magic'. Yet, sometimes boundaries (that prevent magic) are needed as a protection against 'over-exposure'.

A further moment of where over-exposure is recognised and responded to (and where boundary work can be seen in negotiation) is at a Toast Love Coffee planning committee meeting. At the meeting that involved 8 members (volunteers and directors) meeting to discuss the running of the café, one of the volunteers expressed concern

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[32] Over-exposure is of course an important dimension of the exposure of those less privileged and perhaps we could say the risks of over-exposure of the minority subjects are far more serious since the ability to cope with overexposure is less secure, guaranteed, than those from privileged positions, with higher structural capabilities available to deal with over-exposure.

about "giving too much time". He recalled an experience of being asked for money one morning at the café, which he politely refused but felt uncomfortable doing so. He also expressed he felt the volunteers' duty was not to 'solve' issues, but rather to signpost other services and agencies that are more qualified than TLC members to deal with particular issues at hand, whether housing support, mental health issues, or legal issues associated with claiming asylum. He explicitly mentioned that we need to respect a 'boundary' to ensure the team can deliver to all equally. This is an example of how in public spaces where an ethos of care is encouraged, the demands of others can become overwhelming and often boundaries are put in place to avoid a situation of over-exposure to the demands of 'other others' (Ahmed 2004). These examples highlight how often encounters with difference lead to more cautious and careful management of safe spaces. In this case, difference is contained in order to 'deal' with being over-exposed to difference.

6.6 Non-disclosure

I have already shown moments of disclosure, in the specific example of Anita sharing in one-to-one settings as well as sharing with a wider group of trusted volunteers. Anita has also commented that the café is a place that helps her "take her mind off things". So while moments assemble where sharing takes place, for the most part the explicit details of the cases of asylum seekers, or the day-to-day experiences of the hardship of others, is not always brought into the light. The importance of "non-disclosure" – and indeed the right to non-disclosure – in this instance is crucial for ensuring the space of the café is 'safe' and that individuals have the capacity to disclose at their own choosing. In the interview with Anita and Anna in section 6.2 both Anna and Anita aspire for the café to be a 'safe space', where people can be the 'best version of themselves'. Safe spaces – or perhaps rather 'safer spaces' – however, are always fragile spaces and as such are never free from the risks and demands others often make, however unintentionally.

The final example indicates the importance of non-disclosure for belonging at ease in the café and comes from a more recent interview with Anna (September 2016), in which Anna discloses that she is recently bereaved after the death of her father in February 2016. In her bereavement, Anna finds that certain social situations she does not enjoy anymore:

"I don't know how to present myself... I don't know whether to say 'oh I'm recently bereaved, my Dad died in February', you know... I just don't know. And I don't want the sympathy, but I also don't want people to not know that about me.

"I feel personally very, very vulnerable at the moment, when... in some situations, and I can't second guess it all the time, but [pause…] *I'm okay at TLC* [said softly and resolutely...]"

(Interview with Anna)

Anna goes on to express her discomfort about "talking about trite mundane stuff". She tells me "my Dad died, my *Dad* died" (with added emphasis) and then says:

"…there is something about Toast Love Coffee where, it's known... and of course not everyone knows, but it's known in TLC that I am recently bereaved, as is [Brian], and is [Shelia][33]... and it's kind of just... And maybe it's part of the culture that we've all got stuff we're dealing with... maybe that's the common thread I don't know...

"I feel at home at TLC as much as other people do, and it's not a condescending charitable thing, it really means a lot to all of us that we all have that space to be ourselves....

(Interview with Anna)

Anna then adds "I guess I should have said that 5 minutes ago", as she realises the significance of TLC as a space where she can be herself. For Anna, TLC is a space where there is an awareness of circumstance without the pressure of either needing to publically bereave, or simply talk about "trite mundane stuff". Anna rejects TLC as a "condescending charitable thing" and appeals to the "common thread": that everyone deals with stuff and needs a space to be and belong. In this example, knowledge of the death of Anna's dad is known and yet does not make Anna feel that she necessarily needs to talk about it. She contrasts TLC to other occasions where the unacknowledged news of her Dad means talking about "trite mundane stuff" which she can't stand.

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[33] Pseudonyms

This is one such example of the importance of non-disclosure in being able to 'live with differences'. The café is valued as a space where there is unspoken agreement about the importance of non-disclosure to enable living together with differences. It is hoped, such an ethic of non-disclosure, is "the common thread" that sustains the café as a safe place, where "you can be the best version of yourself" as Anna and Anita imagined the café from the outset. The importance of non-disclosure illustrated here shares resonances with recent debates about conviviality as "living together without the necessity of recognition" (Amin 2012, p.74). Like disclosure, non-disclosure requires the careful negotiation of boundaries of what is legitimate to share and what might be "known" but not necessary brought up. As the example shows, those involved in the café (Anna, Brian, Shelia and Anita among others) value how TLC becomes a convivial space in which people can simply co-exist without the demand of sharing what they are uncomfortable with.

6.7 Conclusions

This chapter has explored a different angle on how practitioners bring people together from different backgrounds. The examples in this chapter highlight how locally situated encounters can both expose difference as well as facilitate the everyday disclosures where people share their lives together. The various practices of encounter explored throughout Toast Love Coffee help us grasp both the "dispositional nature of open-ness to others" as well how "attributes are habituated" (Noble 2009, p.49). One way into this, I have argued, is through the study of moments of exposure/disclosure. Disclosures enable us to examine how fragments of lives are shared with others and the subtle ways in which people negotiate what they disclose. I offered two examples that pertain to the sharing of experiences related to seeking asylum, although there are many other moments of sharing perspectives, life stories, opinions, beliefs, and politics and so on. The two examples of disclosing involved Anita firstly sharing her experiences with a supportive MP, and secondly in the context of a wider group setting that highlighted a moment in which solidarities were developed. Disclosure then is reciprocally (although not necessarily equally) linked to exposure, as one's disclosure becomes another's exposure to particular experiences.

I also highlighted moments of unexpected exposures with the conditions in which asylum seekers are settled. In this example, the café made possible encounters with some of the structural conditions that underpin who is rendered "strange" in the

first place (cf. Amin 2012). I also covered events of over-exposure, which are moments when exposure negatively affects people's sense of safety or wellbeing. Who is able to negotiate the boundary between exposure/over-exposure is of course important to recognise. Not everyone has the same ability to regulate moments of over-exposure. Finally, non-disclosure helped identify moments when the ability (and indeed the right) not to speak gave people the space to breath, and coexist, without the demands of conversation.

The study of disclosures/exposures, then, offers a vocabulary that helps us critique some of the premises of the contact hypothesis, as well as nuance debates around governance by Fortier (2010), as I shall now go on to explore.

Firstly, the examples in this chapter highlight the role of agency in cultivating ethical sensibilities in encounters. Disclosures/exposures are often riddled with moments of agency: the work that is implicit in negotiating speech, performance, rituals, and acts. Equally, disclosures/exposures are shaped and conditioned by the structures of feeling that circulate and events that are experienced as moving bodies, drawing subjects into encounters. While disclosure/exposure does not fit a neat distinction between agency/structure (respectively), disclosures often take the form of agency as subjects navigate how much they are willing to disclose and the way in which they do so. Similarly, when people feel exposed, a loss of agency is experienced that is often inextricably bound up with the 'exposure' of another. When others act on those 'exposures' appropriately, new modes of care and reciprocity can be cultivated. Similarly, in non-disclosure lies a sense of agency: non-disclosure can be the *strategy* to avoid over-exposure and the unpredictability and messiness that too much exposure produces. In making the case for the political will and determination that is evident in the motivations of those at the café, concepts of exposure/disclosure shares resonances with Kye Askin's (2014) 'quiet politics' that I have argued has much more room for agency, will and motivation (see Chapter 2).

Secondly, exposures highlight how encounters can be disruptive. Following Sara Ahmed's (2010) notion of a 'bad encounter', I posit that exposures aren't necessary "blockages" (p.215) for they *can* often result in productive openings. Although it is important to note that exposures do not necessarily produce responses of "open-ness to others" (Noble 2009), as Butler (2010, p.49) has argued, the encounters with the realities of asylum regimes did prompt a politics of response. This example highlighted that some practices are not so easily 'incorporated' into wider regimes of governing difference and projects that are set up to align individuals together in proximity, can

also create encounters with the structural conditions that render particular subjects strange *prior* to encounter (Amin 2012). Yet, contrary to Amin (2012) who has grown wary of the potential of encounter to point to the wider structural conditions, I argue that these encounters *can* bring the vulnerability of others into visceral and embodied forms of recognition. It is of course never guaranteed whether the exposure of one's vulnerability will lead to understanding and empathy by those present. Vulnerabilities can easily be exploited – and often unconsciously – by those in positions of privilege, responsibility and dominance. The findings in this chapter, however, dispute the criticism that the contact hypothesis tends to lose sight of the structural conditions that shape how people interact (cf. Saguy et al. 2009). Coming together in the café did prompt moments of awareness around the structural inequalities that affect people differently, which prompted learning from those with more privileged backgrounds to understand better the conditions of those who experience the asylum system.

Thirdly, exposure/disclosure disrupts the dualistic notion of encounter as privileging 'majority' groups who are expected to remain unchanged in encounters. The café provides moments in which exposures prompted privileged participants into reconsidering their citizenship status as well cultivate a collective sense of solidarity in the face of the treatment of asylum seekers in detention and as they are rehoused in unsuitable housing. The example of arranging for the visit of both an MP, and a senior police officer, to come and listen to Anita's experience of asylum might enable exposure to the realities of asylum, informing and shaping future policy actions. It is an example of working within the system to prompt change. In this example, it is not the minority subject who is expected to change (often the premise of policy deployment of the contact hypothesis), but those in positions of authority and responsibility. Equally, as the encounter becomes unbearable for the one seeking to integrate – the 'stranger' who is expected to change (Amin 2012) – the encounter also forces those from relatively stable, privileged positions, into moments of over-exposure, resulting in negotiating the 'boundary'. The capacity to act in the face of an exposure is shaped by power relations mediated by gender, race, class and educational backgrounds. However, as the examples have shown, in some instances these messy relations are negotiated, enabling participants the agency to prompt alternative forms of care and solidarity. A theme that I weave throughout this thesis is the notion of 'negotiation' that is integral to reforming ideas of governance (Kesby 2007). The examples of negotiating the disclosures and exposures experienced in the café, highlight how

communities attempt to self-govern the action of those involved in the café; a theme that will be taken up more explicitly in the next chapter.

In summary, this chapter further develops the argument that encounters highlight the vitality of life, and the unpredictability of what is exposed, helping us to show how practices are never "always already coopted" but contain the potential to alter the frames of reference, enacting alternative geographies of coexistence.

Chapter 7 – Participating together in research on encounter

So far, I've attended three particular aspects of contemporary community engagement that enables people from different backgrounds to come together. I explored how Near Neighbours designs and implements a strategy to engage existing community practitioners, shaping the conditions for cross-cultural engagement (Chapter 4). I've also explored how Near Neighbours equips young people to harness the opportunities of encounter in a training programme (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 explored one example of how a community project in practice brings people together from different backgrounds and how it works to create spaces for different people to belong, interact and gain experience, build confidence and repair social isolation and loneliness. Each of these three phases was explored through qualitative empirical research, involving initial observations and interviews (Chapter 4), ethnographic accounts of volunteering in the running of a project (Chapter 6) as well as participation in a training programme for young people (Chapter 5). Running throughout these chapters is the theme of 'governance': how those involved in projects cultivate, organise and intervene in social relations to prompt particular encounters. Yet, the findings thus far suggest the governance of projects cannot be easily understood through the framework of policy implementation alone.

To this end, this final empirical chapter expands reflection upon how encounters are governed within projects by exploring how practitioners and researchers collaborate together in understanding how difference and diversity are encountered. In doing so, this chapter adapts a more explicitly participatory methodology than the research in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. This final chapter draws upon the more recent phase of the research – a coproduction research project – that worked to consolidate the emerging relationship between myself, Wahida and some of the young people who were participants in the Catalyst programme (featured in Chapter 5). Inevitably the more participatory methodological approach (in design and practice) resulted in a different understanding of how diversity and difference are encountered in multicultural life in Britain, and hence a worthwhile pursuit for the main aims of this thesis.

The first aim of this chapter, then, is to examine how participation in a project that set out to film one of the participant's neighbourhood generated encounters and subsequently reflection upon how difference and diversity is encountered. The second aim is to offer a different perspective on governance than which has been taken up in previous chapters. Having argued in previous chapters (2 and 6) that recent critical

studies on governance do not account for the messy and contradictory interests and agencies that ebb and flow beneath state agendas for cohesion, I shall further augment my critique by suggesting that participatory research allows us to grasp (albeit partially) the inescapable nature of governance. Here, I draw upon an understanding of the inseparability of governance in participation – as put forward by Mike Kesby (2007). In doing so, I explore how practitioners and researchers might work together – and hence more effectively self-govern projects of encounter – ensuring more inclusive and democratic forms of governance.

The participatory film project was part of a wider N8 Research Partnership initiative titled *Realising the Potential of Co-production*. The project grew out of four months of shadowing Near Neighbours (and participating in various projects) and harnessed the learning from three Near Neighbours projects (Catalyst, Toast Love Coffee and Black Health Initiative, the first two of which feature in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively)[34]. Participatory films were co-created with each project to produce three short participatory films that aimed to capture "how [each project] creates safe space for difficult conversations about difference, diversity and the priorities and interests of [each community]" (Co-production report, 2015).

In the first part, ethnographic fieldnotes from the filming of one project (Catalyst) will illustrate the value of the *process* of filming for tacit and sensory learning about the dynamics of space and encounter in diverse neighbourhoods. The analysis is complemented by a participatory written report, the film clip itself[35] and informal interviews with those involved in the projects. In the second part, this chapter reflects on the challenges of participating together in coproduction research and some of the lessons for future work on understanding the dynamics of diverse community building through participatory research. Although I use the terms 'co-production' and participation interchangeably, I use 'co-production' to describe where knowledge is coproduced participation to allude to participating in the process of research (across the different stages: designing, implementing and disseminating).

First, let's review some of the existing participatory research in understanding community engagement and the fostering of meaningful interactions.

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[34] See Chapter 3 for more information

[35] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqRXg3T5tqo&sns=em

7.1 Participatory research on encounter

This section draws on existing participatory approaches that have been deployed to understand the dynamics of encounters in community and suggests further research is required to understand how participating in practices that generate encounters might a) deepen reflection on encountering difference, and thus b) make more explicit the norms of governance that operate across different partners in the research.

Expanding on Chapter 3, Askins and Pain (2011) have made the most persuasive case to date for how participatory approaches (specifically Participatory Action Research) have "some parallel aspects to, and much to inform, efforts to understand and foster intercultural encounter" (p.806). They offer the notion of "contact zones" (following Pratt, 1992; Fine et al. 2008) to describe the messy space in which participants and researchers encounter one another and how "subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other" (Pratt, 1992, p.7, cited in Askins and Pain, 2011, p.804). They analyse the "contact zones" that emerge in a participatory art project in the North East of England involving young people resident and recently arrived (refugees and asylum seekers) from different backgrounds. These become "politically and intellectually charged [spaces] where very differently positioned youth and adults are able to experience and analyse power inequities, together" (Torre et al., 2008, p.24). Notwithstanding the dangers of uncritically declaring projects 'participatory' and masking power inequalities (see Cooke and Kothari 2001), they suggest contact zones help foreground questions of difference, power and privilege that surface in inter-group relations. They argue contact zones are *method* as well as theory.

Askins and Pain's (2011) writing on contact zones has inspired other research on encounters, including Neal et al.'s (2015) in-depth qualitative research into urban park life which became a form of contact zone for those involved in the research "within which intimate, and often intense, disclosures [were] made" (p.474). They describe how the research process "converged research and social worlds" and was itself "part of a locally embedded – if temporary – convivial process" (p.474). In a similar way, Rogaly (2016) highlights how research methods in a community-based project in Peterborough generated a sense of micro-sociality, by enabling connections and rapport across difference. These observations that participatory research approaches can generate micro-sociality (or create contact zones) in which difference can be encountered (and worked through) certainly encourages a more reflective and participatory methodology (Kindon et al. 2007). But I want to argue that the conceptual

value of participating together is worth foregrounding further. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, knowledge is co-produced through encounters (with ideas, new experiences, others etc.) Actively encountering an idea, an event, or a different experience surpasses reflection of an event, since different sensuous and haptic knowledges are activated in encounters. The material in this chapter shows how the process of researching together enabled both participation in the research as well as intuitive understanding about how space, politics and regimes of racial difference impacts the taking place of encounter.

A second reason to draw upon participatory geographies is to make the concept of governance more nuanced. In order to bring together insights from the process of designing and implementing a project, into dialogue with critical governance studies (Fortier, 2010; Amin, 2012), I draw upon Mike Kesby's (2007) notion of 'governance' in the context of participation. Kesby (2007) helpfully points out that "[g]overnance is a more general feature of participatory approaches - perhaps an essential effect for participation to work at all" (p.2816). Kesby (2007) challenges some of the recent critiques of 'participation' (see Cooke and Kothari, 2001), suggesting that although participation inscribes relations of power, this does not mean we should abandon the idea of participation altogether. He does so by drawing on Allen's (2003) different modalities of power (domination, coercion, authority, manipulation, inducement and seduction) and suggesting that 'negotiation' and 'persuasion' are inevitable features of participation and can be reworked to inspire more democratic and inclusive forms of participation. He writes:

"Empowerment should be reconceptualised as an *effect* of the deployment of various resources. From this perspective, certain arrangements of discourse, technology, and social relations can institute forms of governance that enable people to forge a *common will* and work *with* others via *negotiation* and *persuasion*. Such governance is a power effect, but if there really is no escape from power there can be no way to resist, destabilise, or outmanoeuvre the most pernicious power effects in society *except* via the orchestration of alternative resources and powers" (p.2818)

Kesby's re-conceptualisation of power (and hence governance) helpfully reminds us that the governance of individuals and communities is inescapable in participatory research into community engagement. This chapter moves on from simply critiquing

the governance of projects and highlighting the processes that are inherent in the governance of behaviours, priorities and actions. By the end of the chapter, I will have argued that critiquing the governance of community projects can only ever be effective from *within*, with a full appreciation of the process of negotiating the design and implementation of projects.

7.2 Context of film project

Having established an effective working partnership that was mutually beneficial, Wahida and I decided to apply to the N8 Research Partnership's call for proposals for Experimental Pilot Projects (EPP) which set out to "provide opportunities to learn about the challenges and opportunities associated with doing co-production"[36]. The EPP was part of the N8/ESRC Research Programme titled 'Realising the Potential of Co-production' to explore "how the rigour and quality of research can be maintained alongside achieving practical relevance and supporting change" (see f.n.56). In our application we proposed three short participatory films co-produced by Wahida (Near neighbours coordinator), myself (PhD researcher) and three Near Neighbours funded projects. Each film would be an opportunity for the collaborative process of narrating, filming and editing, with the facilitation of Wahida and an independent professional film producer from Bradford (Jimi).

Each of the three projects were given a simple question: 'how does your project create safe spaces for difficult conversations about difference, diversity and the priorities and interests of the diverse communities of north Leeds'. Project 3 – the focus of the rest of this chapter – featured young people from the Catalyst leadership training (as featured in Chapter 5), including Adam, a 19 year old Imam and student from Leeds, introducing Zoe (24 year old medical student and youth group leader of a Jewish youth group) and Sam (25 year old PhD student from a Christian faith background living in Leeds) to his local neighbourhood, having recently completed a week on the Catalyst Leadership Programme. The film responds to the topic of how Catalyst created safe spaces for learning, as well as how the friendship between Adam, Zoe and Sam affected their sense of engagement with different faiths.

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[36] "The pilots should be experimental and might focus on one aspect of undertaking co-produced research, such as the refinement of (better) research questions, how to build effective partnerships, what makes for a mutually successful placement or new models of commissioning research" (taken from the N8 'Experimental Pilot Projects: Call for Proposals)

One of the most important aspects of the research to draw out here is how the very aims of the research were negotiated between the different partners who expressed an interest in being part of the research. Hence, this shows an insight into the 'governance' of the aims of the project (cf. Kesby, 2007). The term 'safe spaces for difficult conversations' grew out of the conversations with the project leaders. Anna (project leader of Project 2) for example stressed:

"…I want to have those difficult conversations so long as it's in a safe and supportive space. I don't want to have an argument, I don't want to have banter, I don't want to feel terrible at the end of it [S: hmmm] But I think, you know, there's no… there's no benefit to not talking about it. We have to create spaces to talk about difficult things, to encounter each other"

Since Participatory Action Research requires the political and ethical premise of reversing who constructs research questions (Fine et al. 2008), it was important to ensure the language of participants was reflected in the very aims of the research. So, while much of my analysis depends on concepts of 'encounter' and 'interaction', 'safe spaces for difficult conversations' was the preferred language to describe the particular desired 'encounters' the projects were seeking to create. The term 'difficult conversations' then became an overarching concept that translated into different issues for the three film projects. For the third film (Catalyst), difficult conversations included "times of conflict (whether spoken or encountered otherwise) including (but not limited to) identity, culture, faith, religion, youth engagement, misrepresentations, stereotypes and Islamophobia" (Co-production report, 2015).

The third participatory film project – hereafter 'the Project' was titled 'Face, Spaces, Places: Adam, Zoe and Sam's Catalyst Journey' and the filming for the Project took place in June 2015, three months after the initial Catalyst Programme. There were several reasons for focusing on Adam's neighbourhood. Since Adam had expressed a willingness to engage further in his community, it was decided the Project would enable Adam to explore how to engage his community in issues of identity, belonging in the context of Harehills, a multicultural diverse inner city neighbourhood of Leeds. Since Adam also felt strongly that young people are not often heard (or taken seriously) within Islamic communities and more widely in society – with Wahida in

agreement – it was also important to create something that was alternative to the negative media stories about Islam[37].

Filming became both the method to capture existing practices of living with difference (in a film as 'product') and a tool to generate new ideas of exploring how to facilitate encounters across difference (as process). Here, the Project affirmed that the process of participation is both *method* as well as theory (Askins and Pain, 2011), drawing out particularly how new ideas came to the fore through participating in encounter. The Project seeks particularly to understand how diversity is lived through and how encounters might be utilised for reflection and subsequently action[38]. Interviews with Adam, Zoe and Wahida compliment ethnographic fieldnotes from the filming.

Adam[39] was 19 years old at the time of filming and a student at the University of Leeds, studying History and Philosophy. At 16, he became an Imam; someone who has received the authority to administer prayers. Adam is also involved in community radio and public speaking, as well as running a youth group in the mosque. Adam participated in the Catalyst Programme (as featured in Chapter 5) to broaden his network of contacts and develop more effective team working skills.

The filming itself took place one Friday morning, to coincide with Friday prayers at the mosque, since this was a feature Adam explicitly wanted to show in the film. On Fridays Adam stands outside the mosque fundraising with a charity collection bucket; another feature that Adam was keen to include in the film. The overall plot of the film itself was decided by Adam, in conversation with Wahida (with input from Zoe and I), and included his house (the kitchen and his library), the footpath between Toast Love Coffee and his house, the high street, outside the mosque, and inside the prayer space of a separate independent mosque[40]. The commentary that runs alongside the videos was recorded in Adam's living room. Once the filming was complete,

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[37] Only 1 in 20 mainstream news stories about Islam in the UK are positive, according to the Charity MEND (Shaffi, 2015).

[38] Mirroring the cycles of action and reflection that are at the core of PAR approaches to research (Kindon *et al* 2007).

[39] Original name, as requested by Adam

[40] There were two mosques that featured in the film; a large predominantly Pakistani-found (and run) mosque from the Bareilvi (Sufi) tradition with a capacity of 3000, as well as a much smaller independent mosque run by Afghani Muslims in Leeds which primarily serves the shopkeepers below (it is located on a busy high street of an inner-city region of Leeds). The capacity is round 50-70. Adam describes it as a place of refuge and tells me that often Muslims who have felt excluded from the larger mosques come to this space, whether due to racial/ethnic discrimination, or personality conflicts.

Wahida and Jimi shared a rough edit with Adam, Zoe and I so that we could share our input.

Participating together requires some explication about the different motivations for joining in. We made sure our intentions were known and shared among the group. For Wahida, the Project served as an example of "good practice" and would later showcase the film at various inter-faith conferences, including a national Near Neighbours conference. For Adam, the Project helped him document his area, highlighting the spaces which he feels are 'safe and open spaces' for different groups of people in his neighbourhood. Adam is keen to counter negative portrayals of Islam and highlight positive aspects of Islam; including the willingness to accommodate difference, support those who are vulnerable and extend hospitality towards those of other faiths. For me, the Project acted as an insightful piece of research material to help understand how practitioners reflect and make sense of the safe spaces in their community and the encounters in which these safe spaces are worked out. One of the main motivations for engaging in a co-produced piece of research, however, is that there is sufficient crossover in rationale and motivation for participation across researcher/practitioner positions. The research itself was an opportunity – and a "contact zone" - to negotiate these competing, yet intersecting, objectives (Askins and Pain, 2011).

The following section interrogates the process of filming to show that by participating together, encounters were generated (unpredictably and spontaneously) that prompted reflection on how difference is encountered.

7.3 Participating together through film

The following section describes particular scenes within the making of the film to show how participating together generated encounters and subsequently reflection on encounters. The first section sets the scene beginning with filming in the park by Adam's house, as well as in his house. The next section then moves onto the scene outside the mosque.

7.3.1 Setting the scene: choosing a location and focus

It was decided the filming would begin by telling the story of how Adam, Zoe and I met. Subsequently, we began by shooting clips of Zoe and I walking from the site of

Toast Love Coffee (a location that represented an existing place where Zoe, Adam and I had spent time together) towards Adam's house (see figure 8). It was felt that the journey should begin with Zoe and I on our way to meet Adam, since Adam was being introduced. Already in deciding how to frame the beginning of the story, we are making critical decisions about how to tell a narrative about belonging and coexistence. In many ways the beginning of the film captures the existing safe spaces as we leave the café and as the commentary discusses the Catalyst programme, where we all met. It was also important to us that the process of filming began somewhere familiar, to create a sense of continuity (from past relationships) and context (how we knew one another). The audio script that complements the scene of Zoe and I walking comes from an interview that Wahida conducted with Zoe and I separately, asking us our opinions on our friendship with Adam. The commentary begins:

> Sam: We're on our way to meet Adam, who I first met on the Catalyst Leaders Programme. I've only got to know him in the last three to four months, but we've already developed quite a strong friendship

> Zoe: Adam is amazing. He's hilarious actually. He has such a brilliant sense of humour. He's very unique as well, very unique.

Figure 8: Zoe and Sam walking down to Adam's house

Adam's voice comes in to introduce himself as "19 years of age" and "a student of History and Philosophy at the University of Leeds", the film shows the door being opened to Zoe and I waiting on the steps outside his door. Zoe greets Adam's auntie with a hug and the next frame shows Adam, Adam's aunt, Zoe and I in the kitchen making tea

together. There's a shot of Adam jumping playfully next to his aunt, his aunt laughing with gusto and there's gestures towards energetic conversations in Adam's library[41]

The next scene includes two still images of participants on the Catalyst Leadership Training, as Catalyst is discussed, again in relatively positive terms. Catalyst is described as 'stimulating' (Sam), opening 'eyes and experiences', imagining the participants as 'sisters and brothers' (Adam) and discovering oneself to be accepted and loved for being Jewish despite the "wars and things in Israel" (Zoe). There is, however, an honest reflection on the realisation that prejudices towards people of other faiths and perspectives are held:

> "I had certain misconceptions about the theology and the personality of a Christian person and a Jewish person, and even an agnostic person. […] Even though I try to love people, I know in my heart there's a sense of [contempt?] even though you know you need to respect people there's a sense of malice and negative towards the person" (Adam).

So far, the filming has taken place in environments that are familiar to Zoe, Adam and myself (the café and Adam's house) and the discussion is centred about past experiences on Catalyst. It was important to begin filming somewhere that was considered known and 'safe' to allow participants to get to grips with the art of being on camera, being interviewed, and giving input into the spaces and sites they wish to be included in the film. So far the chance for 'encounters' (in the sense of learning/interruption) has been limited, however, starting in a familiar spot eases participants into the process of filming.

7.3.2 Outside the mosque: encountering difference

The film then cuts to a shot of Adam walking with Zoe and I towards the mosque. Adam greets an elderly Muslim man, dressed in a full white garment, who then shakes my hand and Zoe's[42]. In the next shot, Adam holds a charity bucket and appears to be fundraising with two other young men. In the background, men (of different ages) enter the mosque for Friday prayers. There is an evident absence of women (except

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[41] A place chosen by Adam since it represents the place where he bonded particularly with me, as we shared a passion for books and a love of reading.

[42] In some Muslim traditions the shaking of a woman's hand is seen as forbidden

Zoe). The mood is friendly and the tone light. Overdubbed is a commentary from Adam (from the interview conducted by Wahida to complement the film). Adam's vision is for us to see the mosque as a place of contact:[43] Adam puts it:

> "The Mosque is a place of contact and communication. It's the people who make the mosque what it is. A mosque would only be a building if it isn't for the people within the mosque. It should be an open place, a place of purity, a place of reflection. A place where the Muslim and non-Muslim can come together and be themselves" (Adam)

Over the words 'purity' is the shot of the handshake between Zoe and the man outside the mosque (figure 9). A frank handshake by someone who Adam had approached moments earlier to ask if he would be present in the film welcoming his non-Muslim friends. He willingly participated. It is important to note that the editing was primarily done by Wahida and Jimi and hence their ability to shape the narrative was considerably greater than Adam, Zoe and I. (I will return to this point in the reflection section).

Figure 9: Man from mosque greeting Zoe and Sam

Paying attention to the subtle negotiations, intimate exchanges and the experiences *in the process of filming*, however, reveals a different set of issues, constraints and also possibilities. My ethnographic fieldnotes illustrate some of the encounters in this next part of the film:

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[43] Indeed Adam took me along to the mosque for prayers on a few occasions. On one occasion, Adam was visibly moved mid-way through the Quranic recital and leans over to me and whispers a quick translation: The hadith read refers to the importance of respecting the People of the Book, suggesting that the believer respects those from other faiths who also call God, God.

"It's taken longer than expected filming at Adam's house and we're hurrying over to the mosque in the car to catch the end of the prayers. The roads outside the mosque are packed as its Friday and there's a hustle of largely men heading over to the mosque to pray. As Jimi is setting up the equipment, Adam is looking apprehensive. He is welcomed by those he knows well, who are fundraising at the gates. Adam introduces Sam and Zoe to a few people, but notices one or two people stood nearer to the mosque looking uncomfortably at him" (Fieldnotes)

By this point Jimi has captured a few shots of Adam introducing Zoe and me to a few people outside the gates of the mosque, but Adam becomes increasingly agitated and he tells the others (Zoe, Wahida, Jimi and I) to wait by the gates as he goes into the mosque to enquire. On his return, he advises the others that they're better off filming at the other mosque (the smaller and quieter mosque that we had planned to visit later on). My fieldnotes continue the story:

"At this point, we decided to break for lunch and we sat on the wall of the nearby supermarket carpark eating sandwiches. Energised by an agitation from the 'incident' outside the mosque, conversations erupt that attempt to make sense of what happened. "I felt uncomfortable" Zoe remarks, having felt perhaps her and Wahida's presence, as women, might have been the barrier to entering the mosque. Replying to Zoe, Jimi [film maker] acknowledges "I felt uncomfortable for you Zoe". Wahida, however, seems adamant that it is very much connected with the lack of communication between the mosque committee and Adam and the politicised nature of the camera in a community that already feels vulnerable, resulting in the mosque's defensiveness. This later opened up more nuanced discussions about the role of the mosque within the community and the role of women in the mosque as well as other places of worship, such as synagogues. Wahida, for example, mentioned that she had been engaged with mosques to make spaces more inclusive for women and young people" (Fieldnotes)

Behind the apparent ease of relations between Adam and his friends outside the mosque (as the film portrays) is a fraught encounter. Adam is nervous and goes to investigate the concern. It is soon apparent that filming is going to be too tricky and

although there's a confusion as to why (and what might be going on), it is clear the camera must go away and it feels 'time to break'. It's an encounter that's loaded with uncertainty, but also an encounter that is apparently understood in different ways. Over sandwiches in the carpark, it is apparent that there were different ways of narrating the same encounter. For Zoe, the uncomfortable encounter is felt as one of exclusion for being a woman. For Wahida, the root of the problem is the camera as into the encounter folds past experiences of film production, faith-based practices and an intimate (intuitive) awareness of the politicisation of Islam. The presence of the camera worked to "reopen the prior histories of encounter that violate and fix others in regimes of difference" (Ahmed, 2000, p.8). Adam comes to a similar realisation when we reflect on the events that day in a follow-up interview. He notes "cameras are seen as a weapon as opposed to a communication tool, to some parts of the community that are very stubborn, very old, and very fragile, in terms of their thinking". Adam argues it "comes across as looking negative" because the "media is quite disliked in our community because of its portrayal, so I did at one point feel as if I would be perceived as a spy, because of the looks of certain people". The encounter puts him in a difficult position, as he feels his actions might place him against those in his community. It is a moment where his beliefs and aspirations for the mosque as a 'place of contact' (as he expressed in his interview earlier on) suddenly become questioned and he finds himself in-between realities and aspirations. As Chapter 6 theorised, this might be an example of an encounter that 'exposes': exposing Adam to the authority of the mosque committee and as the following quote highlights, the encounter may have exposed Adam to another way of thinking:

> "It's interesting how they [committee at the mosque] see me as a person (insider), but when they see a camera or a white man, they respond differently, so I was able to learn new things about certain people that I thought I knew, but in actual reality I didn't know so well…"

Adam goes on to suggest it might be down to "a camera or a white man" and later wonders whether it might be down to "women and non-Muslims [not] being allowed into the mosque".

Participating together in the process of filming creates opportunities as well as challenges. Firstly, the very act of engagement in an urban neighbourhood (in this case filming) disrupts existing social relations. Moving from the "safe space" of the café,

Catalyst and Adam's house, towards a different space that is both new to Zoe and Sam (and Jimi) and yet also a "safe space" for Adam, produces new experiences. The presence of a team (ethnically diverse, of men and women, with a camera) produces a contested encounter between the team and the mosque, complicated by an unawareness of what the team were doing and what the inability to film means for each one. In this encounter, sensory and haptic knowledges are produced that differ quite dramatically to the sorts of learning that might take place away from the neighbourhood (on the Catalyst residential, for example). The impact of the spaces of encounter on the relations between people will be discussed further below.

Secondly, in participating together we discovered the spaces for reflection were not always so easy to predict or manage. In the initial proposal for the Experimental Pilot Project (for the N8 Research Partnership project), we outlined how 'conversation hubs' would be set up to facilitate discussion around the process of coproduction research. These had planned to be held on different days during the research where participants would reflect on their experiences. Instead, as a result of doing the research, we found that these moments of reflection assembled more organically. One example is the conversations that emerged over lunch in the supermarket carpark that became a form of "contact zone" (Askins and Pain, 2011) as everyone responded to the events that had just taken place. Although we had planned to create conversation hubs, in the practice of carrying out the research we found that these couldn't be forced but had to be harnessed in the moments in which reflection and deliberation mattered. As we began talking over lunch, Wahida was then able to gently facilitate, and prompt discussion, and draw out the different experiences. Later in the day, I sought and received permission from Zoe, Adam and Jimi (the film maker) to include the moment of conversation over sandwiches in the write up of the research.

7.3.3 Spaces of encounter: Zoe's reflections

To deepen the reflection around how participation shapes the spaces of encounter, it is worth exploring how Zoe, Adam and I experienced encounters throughout the filming differently. Participants were cognizant of the ways the process of the filming produced new spaces, highlighting what Darling and Wilson (2016) describe as the role encounters have "in *producing* space and subjectivity" (p.11). The encounters that formed in and through Catalyst in one space – a residential trip away from the neighbourhoods in which people came from – then fold into a new space and

temporality. It is the interaction of these emergent encounters with a new context that generates new relations. Zoe illustrates this point of learning succinctly when she argues:

> "I think it's odd when you have a friendship with someone when it's all very at ease, and then to be told you're not allowed to make contact with someone is very frustrating" (Zoe)

Zoe is referring particularly to the incident outside the mosque, as she discusses her friendship in a follow-up interview with me a few weeks after the filming day. When discussing her friendship with Adam during Catalyst and in the spaces of TLC and Adam's home, she describes herself to be "very at ease". Yet in her encounter at the mosque, she is "told [she's] not allowed to make contact" with Adam, which frustrates her. When I asked further she told me that

> "In safe spaces, such as each other's home, or on Catalyst… []… those differences are no longer differences in those situations, cos we're all equal and we're all human, and we can have different backgrounds, or different religions, or different perspectives of life potentially. You're in a safe space where you can chat or laugh, it doesn't matter… you're then equal"

Zoe refers to safe spaces in her reflection on what happened outside the mosque. The more fractious encounter here that weaved together gender, ethnicity, faith and the visibility of media (and various 'misidentifications' that are expressed/implied) prompts Zoe to reflect on other spaces that are considerably safer. Therefore, this insight highlights how the act of participating in a project in one space can affect the productivity of an encounter (whether negatively, in spaces compromising feelings of safety, or positively in prompting honest discussion about the intersectionalities of different identities). This is no doubt one reason why practitioners in this field of work face complex negotiations as to at what *point* they expose people to difference (as we saw in the previous two chapters). Mediation/facilitation requires balancing the need for safe spaces with the need for engaging productively with difference. While the aim of the participatory film was to explore "how projects create safe space for difficult conversations about difference, diversity and the priorities and interests of [each community]", it could be argued that the moment outside the mosque temporarily

compromised the "safe spaces" of the participants who were involved. Yet, the feelings of discomfort – and the reflections that followed – seemed to prompt another way of thinking about how space affects one's relationship to others. Hence, safe spaces sometimes need to be held in tension with new experiences, in order to come to know and appreciate what safe spaces mean.

7.3.4 Transformation through encounter: Adam's reflection

The next section reaffirms arguments made earlier in this thesis (notably Chapter 5 about how encounters can be moments of learning). As well as Zoe re-learning her relationship to Adam in a new space, Adam learns a new perspective that challenges and alters his relationship to the mosque. Adam describes what the process of participating on the Project together did for him:

> "The fact that I was being slowed down in my daily [routine] I had other people with me, people I talked to were reacting differently to the people I was with, as opposed to myself, [which] began to [broaden] my horizons in terms of the cultural problems that I was having in terms of women and non-Muslims being allowed into the mosque, the very same mosque that I visit on a weekly basis" (Adam)

The presence of other people (Zoe and Sam) changes Adam's relationship to the mosque and those he's associated with at the mosque. In an interview with Adam after the filming, Adam reflects on the question 'how did the filming go?' After some consideration, he says the following:

> "Well you see there are two angles I could look at this... firstly it showed me my lack of organisation… as there hadn't been enough communication between myself and the mosque before the project… Even though I did try... maybe I could have tried earlier... but I think it made me sort of realise, that actually is this a mosque that I can feel comfortable in? This is my community. As of the last three weeks I haven't actually been going to that particular mosque to pray, I've been going to other mosques to pray on Friday, because I just felt very uncomfortable walking through those gates because of the way in which they reacted to me"

As the vignette illustrates, it is Adam who ultimately lives with the consequences of these encounters: questioning whether "this is a mosque [Adam] can feel comfortable in" and left to rebuild a relationship with the mosque. The quote above illustrates how this particular encounter with the camera in fact hardened difference (Leitner, 2012) causing strained relations that Adam has to work through. The 'bad encounter' that caused a momentary blockage (Ahmed, 2010), however, eventually results in steps towards repairing relationships with the mosque. Two months after the filming day Adam said:

> "I felt from my experience of working with [Wahida, Zoe and Sam] that I'm too distant from the mosque itself, hence these problems, so I need to start building bridges and so I've been building bridges with a young individual within the mosque committee"

Participation in a project about encounters then invariably results in transformation. This is the 'Action' part of Participatory 'Action' Research (Kindon *et al* 2007). Through participating together on producing a film, a series of encounters are activated in which those who participate in some way change. For Zoe, her relationship with Adam is brought into a new space in which there is a need to encounter and respond to difference. She evaluates the spaces which feel like 'safe spaces', noticing how working together on a project out in the street intensifies differences around race, gender and religion.

Adam's experience of filming at the mosque prompts reflection on his belonging to the mosque and also urges him to repair relationships that were affected negatively by the filming. Adam reflects both on his "lack of organisation" – as it puts it – as well as his general sense of belonging at the mosque. While the Project was in no way set up to doubt Adam's belonging at the mosque, but rather to introduce the different spaces in Adam's community to his two friends from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. An unintended outcome of the filming was Adam's self-reflection on his own experiences at different mosques that emerged from the experimental process of filming. I will return to the unexpected outcomes that result in collaborative projects, in the reflection section at the end.

7.3.5 Transforming researchers' experiences: Sam's reflections

Participating together in a piece of co-produced research also transforms the experience of the researcher, often in quite profound ways. In the same way Zoe and Adam change as a result of the Project, so the act of participating affected my own understanding and practice of research. In particular, I learnt a great deal through being forced to be interviewed as a participant in the film. Wahida carried out the interview and the experience of being interviewed (rather than doing the interviewing) gave me an insight into how it feels to be interviewed. There is often little time to rehearse for an encounter and this was certainly the case during the interviews for the Project. For example, in my fieldnotes I reflected on my alertness to the unpredictability of what is said (by the respondent) in an interview:

> "I had never thought this time last year when I was writing my proposal for the PhD that a year later I would be on camera, being asked the questions by the organisation I got in touch with to visit their projects. Being "forced" to answer questions (rather than ask them) also made me realise how little chance researchers often give participants in revising the answers they give. I felt stripped of my luxury to edit my words in my academic writing as I was "forced" to answer in the moment. Walker (2010) notes how academic writing can be a sort of refuge from engagement, and now I see that"

The experience highlighted how much we improvise in conversation, trying to make sense of the experiences we go through. I took away from that moment the importance of allowing people space to articulate what they mean and not simply take one person's account from their interview at face value. Encounters are inherently unpredictable, even in the most orchestrated of moments, such as articulating one's thoughts in the interview that supplemented the video.

These three reflections highlight some of the different lessons that each one of us (Adam, Zoe and I) took away from the process of filming. In the case of Adam and Zoe's reflection on the events outside the mosque, the same 'event' can be encountered in very different ways, activating very different tensions and responses.

7.4 Reflections on participating together in research

Having now given an account of some of the moments during the filming that generated encounters with difference and prompted reflection on questions of space, politics, race and encounter, this next section explores some of the strengths and weaknesses of participatory geographies as a method to understand how difference is encountered and negotiated. I shall conclude by suggesting participatory geographies have a role both in nuancing understanding about the nature of encounter as well as ensuring more democratic and inclusive forms of governance in projects that often have multiple intersecting rationalities invested in them. The strengths and weaknesses are weaved in each of the four sections below.

7.4.1 Process/product

One of the tensions that surfaced during the filming was the tension between the process of filming and the final product of the film. On the one hand the Project was justified on the usefulness of having a short film that could be used to capture how young people encounter the neighbourhood, which would in turn be used to promote the work of Catalyst, support the young people's future opportunities, and highlight the value of co-production research. On the other hand, the 'process' of the film was rendered more significant. The placing of value on product/process varied across the different partners. While the film was received very well by the Near Neighbours staff in London as evidence of the impact of the Catalyst programme on young people's mobility and engagement, the film as product was received very differently at a panel at the American Association of Geographers on Religion and Diversity. I presented the work of the film by breaking down the narrative of the film, with discussion of what took place 'behind' the camera. Although I tried to foreground the value of participation in prompting encounters (and subsequently ethical responses to these encounters) one of the comments from the room was that the film "didn't work" because it was merely a "publicity stunt" for Near Neighbours. Although I responded to the question in a fairly accepting manner, afterwards when mulling over the comment from the gentleman in the audience I wished I'd responded differently. I did point out that the process was more significant (particularly for myself as a researcher, but also perhaps pedagogically for the young people) than the product, but what I

would have added was that participation is difficult and sometimes there are aspects that are out of your control as a researcher. This is not necessarily a bad thing, either.

It is important to recognise that there are different reasons for engaging in participatory projects around understanding diversity and neighbourhood living, yet this need not stop researchers or practitioners from engaging in such projects. Setting out the reasons for engagement more clearly in the proposal may have helped ease the negotiation between the process/product of the film.

7.4.2 The ambivalence of 'reflection'

There was a general sense that those in academic institutions are able to 'build in' more time for reflection since reflection is valued as part of the 'stuff' of doing academic research. Yet in the community sector in particular, time seems to be increasingly precious in the context of public sector cuts and reduced funding in which people are pushing themselves beyond their means. This lead Wahida to affirm the importance of my role in reflecting that:

> "It is really important to have someone who has the time and ability to reflect and capture the learning experiences from Near Neighbours. I simply do not have the luxury of time to be able to do that sort of documenting" (Wahida)

Thus, the skills of researchers (to reflect, capture and share back) are valued in the process of collaborating together. In this particular project, however, one of the aims was to encourage reflection from participants themselves (whether Adam, Zoe, Wahida) as well as from myself. Given the lack of time (and funding to support initiatives that give time for reflection), one of the lessons we learnt was the importance of reflection being organic and arising from *within* the practice of people working together. After all, this is one of the main aims of Participatory Action Research; to encourage cycles of action-reflection (Kindon et al. 2007). We discussed the ambivalence of reflection in the report as we note there was a "constant tension between the need to reflect on the process of coproduction and the desire not to wear down people by being too persistent on the need to reflect" (Co-production report 2015). This was evident in the film project in which moments of reflection that were genuinely owned by participants emerged *from* engagement, rather than requested in addition to engagement.

7.4.3 Exposures and unexpected moments

One of the shared discoveries that came out of the Project was the value of responding to the encounters that emerged. Just as neighbourhood life is unscripted – in the "throwntogetherness" (Massey 2005) of different relations, experiences, cultural influences – so the process of filming reflected the unpredictable nature of encounter. It is interesting to compare the sort of encounters (and the responses to encounter) in the film project with the learning that took place on the Catalyst programme itself (see Chapter 5). While there were moments of unexpected alliances, discoveries of common experience, as well as the way differences are organised, the 'closed' environment of the residential often created a space for learning *about* (rather learning *from*) difference. In many ways creating a safe and somewhat closed environment is sometimes necessary to learn about issues that are difficult and too exposing (and simply impossible to tackle) in the context of the neighbourhood. Yet, while the Project in this chapter offers only a limited perspective, it does suggest that carefully facilitated projects that involve a shared task (like filming) within the context of everyday life (in this case a multicultural neighbourhood), does provide opportunities to respond to difference in a way that the more closed space of the residential does not.

Such discussion relates significantly to the concept of 'exposure' that featured in the last chapter (Chapter 6). The reflections upon the encounters that took place outside the mosque that were differentially experienced suggest different structural conditions that underpin feelings of security (Islamophobia, authority, the place of young people, unequal gender representation) were exposed. Yet the boundary between exposure/over-exposure – such as in the café – cannot always be navigated easily. How one acts in any encounter lingers into the next moment, the spontaneous conversation that erupts, the struggle for something that resembles empathy with others who experienced (how ever differently) the previous encounter.

7.4.4 Narrating difference

One of the weaknesses of the Project, which was alluded to earlier on, was in the editing of the film script itself. Due to time limitations, most of the editing of the film took place by Wahida and Jimi. There was a sharing back session in which Adam, Zoe and I were given a preview of the film mid-way through editing in order for us to give feedback and suggest improvements. However, as it happens it was not possible to

edit out the commentary that we had given, even though our comments were only of little significance. Yet, the process of sitting down and reflecting on the film part way through, which generated much discussion about the importance of context and negotiation of difference, was worthwhile in itself.

To give an example, one of the last quotes in the film was a comment made by Zoe – "at the end of the day, we're all the same" – that [complemented] a shot of Zoe, Adam and I sitting in the second mosque[44]. Upon hearing her words played back, Zoe winced and reacted "oh, I'm not sure I meant it like that". She felt her comment had been cut out of a wider discussion referring to how certain traits and experiences brought us closer than others. Yet, in the way it was cut and placed with the image, it didn't quite convey the original meaning of the phrase. Thus, the very framing of the sequence of images and voiceover is a form of 'governance' in the sense of affecting a discursive narrative. Narratives have an effect since they normalise particular truths and hide others. With the luxury of hindsight, we would have given more opportunity to ensure that participation took place not only in the choice of location for filming (and the content of the story) but the narrative constructed to tell a story about encountering difference and diversity in multicultural neighbourhoods.

7.5 New modes of governance

The final point above about the inescapable 'politics' associated with framing a narrative links to the very last section of this chapter. I want to layout an argument that participatory geographies have much to contribute to debates on the governance of community projects. While I re-iterate the importance of critical governmental studies that expose dominant narratives of mixing that influences the priorities of contemporary community engagement (Fortier 2010; Amin 2012), engaging with questions of governance from a participatory perspective offers another way of understanding the politics of governance.

The argument begins with imagining the spaces that are produced by researchers and practitioners alike as "contact zones" (Askins and Pain 2011). In the case of the Project, these spaces stretched and emerged at different times (in the supermarket, outside the mosque, in reviewing the edit) and intensities, with fluid temporal and spatial boundaries (Mayblin et al. 2015b). Furthermore, Askins and Pain

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[44] After the experience outside the larger mosque, we eventually filmed a scene inside a smaller mosque which it was possible to access, with a mixed group and using Jimi's camera.

(2011) suggest that contact zones foreground questions of difference, power and privilege. The research shows moments where contact zones helped bring to the fore questions of difference: whether in the response to the ambivalent tension where youth, gendered and racial differences surfaced; or in the awareness of power (the power to represent) or in powerlessness and having to cut the filming short over concern about consent and filming; or in the privilege of who faces antagonism and who does not. I want to argue that the contact zones within the research also exposed how governance affects different spaces of participation.

Yet, in consciously ensuring that the Project is designed and produced collectively, there is the potential to both expose particular norms of governance as well as rework governance. Drawing on Kesby's (2007) reconceptualisation of participation – following Allen's different modalities of power (2003) – we can consider governance as an "effect for participation to work" (p.2816) that encourages both 'negotiation' and 'persuasion' – two of the more constructive modalities of power, as identified by Kesby (2007, see Allen 2003). Thus, careful consideration on how projects can include participants at different moments can prompt alternative modes of self-governance. This includes allowing participants to *negotiate* the focus of projects, which was evidenced in deciding to focus around safe spaces for difficult conversations as well as what features of the neighbourhood would be included in the narrative. As I have also argued, further inclusion in the process of editing (and hence framing the stories/voice/experiences) would have further mitigated any dominant narratives of that the film might suggest, such as narratives of 'happy coexistence' (Wise and Velayutham 2014) that often emerge in response to the difficulty of dealing with difference. Had the film portrayed some of more fractious encounters that took place throughout the film, a different understanding of the negotiation of difference might have been articulated. Yet doing so, however, could compromise the value of the film as product for Near Neighbours as well as (particularly) Adam's portfolio of experience with film making, since exposing some of the moments of tension could exacerbate already difficult relations that Adam is working through with the mosque committee.

In other words, only through encounters can narratives of governance be challenged. Critique of the effects of governance on individuals and communities is best articulated from within these projects. Therefore, encouraging more inclusive forms of participation in which participants are given a say in the shape, design,

rationale or a project can mitigate against projects that are set up to serve one particular policy agenda.

7.6 Conclusion

To conclude, it is worth highlighting the methodological differences between the first three empirical chapters (4 – 6) and Chapter 7. Whereas the first three chapters sought to understand how the activity of Near Neighbours enables people to come together from different backgrounds, the final chapter brings this very question to participants themselves, inviting them to design and then implement a project that deepens both the participation between young people as well as deepen the reflection from *within* on how to create safe spaces for difference. It is for this reason that the participatory film project can be considered under the umbrella term of 'Participatory Action Research' (Kindon et al. 2007), since it attempts to enhance "individual and collective energy, skills and knowledge" (Blackstock et al. 2015, p.254). Such an approaches offers both a more nuanced understanding of how difference manifests and subsequently is respondent too as well as a way of enabling participants to reflect more deeply on the politics of encountering difference in their neighbourhoods.

One of the lessons from participating together in filming was how the very process of filming further highlights the unguaranteed nature of encounter. Although the discussion that preceded the tension over filming Zoe, Adam and I outside the mosque was able to be facilitated (particularly by Wahida, with her experience of community facilitation), the fact that those themes surfaced much later in the interview a few weeks after the day of filming show that those encounters mattered and were remembered. The encounters during the filming make an impression on Zoe's sense of how the spaces of their belonging affect their friendship and prompt Adam to work to improve relations with the mosque. The weight and memories of encounter suggest that further facilitation may have been able to further consolidate the learning that took place during the filming.

This shift in focus from understanding how *existing* projects are bringing people together to how practitioners and researchers might *design and implement a new project* also deepens the argument threading throughout this thesis around 'governance'. The participatory film project helps examine the process of governance (that is the way in which the aims, the process, the narrative and the findings of the project might be negotiated between different actors). Relating this back to the core argument

throughout this thesis, the governance of projects cannot be easily assumed or understood through the framework of policy implementation alone. Participatory approaches offer another perspective into the negotiation of governance that is invariably part of the research encounter (in the same way as it is part of the process of working together on intercultural community projects). I have argued that participation together brings questions of governance to the fore by highlighting the negotiation that is implicit throughout the different stages of the film project (designing, implementing and film editing) as well as how the construction (and editing) of the film produces particular narratives of belonging.

Having argued in previous chapters (2 and 6) that recent critical studies on governance do not account for the messy and contradictory interests and agencies that ebb and flow beneath state agendas for cohesion, I have further augmented my critique by suggesting that participatory research allows a partial grasp of the inescapable nature of governance. Taking on board Kesby's (2009) notion of governance as an "essential effect for participation to work" (p.2816), I have shown how attempts to highlight conflict (and power inequalities) through reflection upon encounter might enable more inclusive and democratic forms of governance. Through taking on board the lessons learnt in participating together, researchers and practitioners might better develop approaches to co-produce knowledge around how encounters are experienced, embodied and shape wider relations in community. By cultivating an ethic of togetherness and a shared commitment to working together across difference, practitioners and researchers alike are able to better understand the dynamics of encounters in community.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

"It's an achingly warm June evening during Ramadan on one of the longest days of the year. Less than 100 yards from a bustling high street, a capacious white marquee has been set up outside a primary school where a Portakabin community building sits [the location of Toast Love Coffee]. The steam from a series of food trays is evaporating into the golden dusk skyline, as a team of volunteers prepare food for the approaching Iftar meal[45]. All manner of folk have arrived. The local youth group, the Toast Love Coffee team, the peace-charity employees, the police officer with an MBE for community service, Jewish neighbours from the other side of the A58, as well as primary school teachers from the nearby school. Local residents from different backgrounds who live either side of the back-to-back houses that face the school have also shown up. The atmosphere is electric and there is a buzz that is unquenchable.

"It's hard to imagine what it felt like 10 months ago, back in September as I set out to do research in West Yorkshire. I never would have imagined the intensity and the range of the friendships that have come about as a result of being in involved in projects (and even designing and participating in one). And it all suddenly hit me in that moment, as I looked out across the chairs and tables that had been set up for speeches that were about to come. I spotted the volunteers from the [Toast Love Coffee] café sat under the marquee, a little further behind were some of the Catalyst alumni. Over the other side was the police officer who started a youth club in Harehills to tackle crime and improve youth engagement in the community. I catch Wahida's eye, as she energetically wanders over to say hello. *This* is it. *This* is what togetherness feels like. Gathered together to celebrate the breaking of the fast of one religious tradition, but in our differences of race, gender, religion, occupation and so on. Perhaps it was my own surprise at seeing people from different projects gathered together, who I'd never consciously placed together. Some unknown to each other, but somehow on board with a sense of togetherness.

Or, perhaps it's the delightfulness that somewhere like Harehills; a place that many of the people (particularly the women) who appear in this thesis wouldn't dream of walking alone late at night. A place that makes the news for

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[45] The meal to break the fast during Ramadan in the Islamic faith.

all the wrong reasons: for stabbings, shootings, grooming, sexual exploitation, rape, crime. So, for a place like Harehills to be teaming with positivity and conviviality, really is something! There's an energy in the space, as laughter seems infectious tonight. There are kids from different backgrounds playing and there's the local youth group who've been tasked with making a video involving filming people at the meal wishing everyone 'Eid Mubarak'[46]. Anna from the café and I were just filmed as we shared words of peace, shalom and salaam. If I was about to kid myself there was some sort of happy coexistence, the speeches reveal ambitions for harmony and peace, but also an eagerness to work together: there's a family whose son was violently beaten up who are urging us that love triumphs over darkness; there's the young youth worker who had to pick up the pieces after the youth club windows were smashed; there's one or two acknowledgments that in a few weeks' time there'll be commemorations for the 10th year since the London bombings on 7th July 2005 that deeply affected communities around parts of north Leeds.

I left that evening feeling truly alive as the affective atmospheres (Anderson 2009; Closs Stephens 2016) moved something inside of me. Personally, it felt like a sort of farewell party, seeing all the different groups and alliances all meet, mingle together, and intersect. It was a vision of togetherness that no doubt will shape the continual analysis of the research [and (I can add) the write up too].

(Fieldnotes, Harehills, June 2015).

It feels right to draw this thesis to a conclusion by quoting a significant passage from my ethnographic fieldwork diary on one of my last visits. Of course, this was a snapshot into a rather exceptional moment. A moment in which a sense of 'togetherness' was tangibly and rather viscerally felt. And not just by me… others commented on the atmosphere, the feeling of community, the unexpected sense of safety in a 'challenging' location. Yet, nevertheless, moments of exceptionality offers something of the aspirations and hopes that people dream in the more mundane and the everyday. The hard work of organising people, nurturing connections, and harnessing encounters doesn't come to nothing. Behind these exceptional moments, such as an Iftar community meal, lies the depth of different relationships, extended periods of building trust, social experimentation of trials and errors, as well as personal

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[46] A blessing for the Islamic festival of Eid.

circumstances that shape people's abilities to come together and share in community across difference. It is in this context that this thesis makes a contribution to the bridging of different communities and academic reflection on how encounters might be sustained across different spaces and into the future.

In this thesis I set out to investigate the way in which those involved in community organising think through, design, practice and attempt to harness 'encounters' to bring about transformation in the context of diverse community engagement. The term 'encounter' became a key focus for the empirical research since both ideas of encounter are foregrounded in Near Neighbours' policy and rhetoric, and are also a recent focus of geographical writing within social, cultural and political geography. Yet, there is a risk the term 'encounter' becomes an "empty referent" without, as Helen Wilson (2016) writes, "attention to how encounters are conceptualised" (p.2). Hence, this thesis pays particular attention to the different uses of the term encounter. In doing so, we are better able to investigate how encounters are fostered and negotiated within community projects *as well as the connections between* practitioner expertise *and* academic analysis of the practices of encounter. This final chapter seeks to draw out the multiple contributions that this thesis makes towards this task. I will do so by drawing together three key contributions to geographical knowledge that were outlined in the introduction (Chapter 1.1), using the research questions (Chapter 1.2) to help organise these ideas. This is followed by offering specific contributions that this thesis makes to the organising of community for practitioners as well as suggesting tentative recommendations for future community engagement projects. Finally, this chapter concludes by outlining three future research projects in order to further consolidate the learning that took place throughout the research.

8.1. Contributions to geographical knowledge

8.1.1 How do practitioners create the conditions for encounters across difference?

I began my analysis by affirming the notion that encounters can never be forced (as to force an encounter is to predetermine its outcome), drawing on the work of Helen Wilson (2016) and different perspectives that affirmed this stance within the research. Practitioners explained that forcing people to participate will never convince them of its worth. Instead, practitioners point towards the need to create spaces for *organic*

interactions, where people feel safe, valued and accepted. From this perspective, the thesis then turned to examine the conditions which shape *how* certain encounters might be cultivated for these organic interactions (however unpredictable).

Chapter 4 provided insights into how Near Neighbours intervenes in communities. This is done firstly by selecting the geographical regions based on an analysis of the socio-economic deprivation (coupled with mixing of different ethnic groups); hence geographically shaping *who* might participate. Of course, in deciding which differences matter – in the case of Near Neighbours, especially ethnic and faith difference – the sorts of expected encounters are somewhat conditioned[47]. Secondly, and built into the selection of regions, is the recognition of the resources and capacities that different (faith) groups can bring to the task of community engagement. Resources here include: a willing pool of volunteers, an ethos of connecting/bridging, as well as narratives that invite participants to engage with difference. The latter point was developed by highlighting how particular narratives of encounter were encouraged, in this case 'faith' narratives. I argued that discourses of (and imperatives to) encounter become embedded in particular narratives of neighbourliness, which worked to 'responsibilise encounter' and empower those who might be committed to a particular faith tradition to understand the participation in social action projects as integral to their particular faith. In other words, the effect of narrating and responsibilising encounter, is to encourage participation by those who adhere to particular ethical and religious precepts, by highlighting how concepts of encounter (such as the 'Golden Rule' common to the Abrahamic faiths, or particular versions of this as articulated in the Hadiths in the Islamic faith) are integral to faith and social action.

There were also examples of the contestations over how conditions are set (in Chapter 4). There was considerable discussion (and disagreement) over the governing of Near Neighbours through the exclusivity of the structure and staff of the Church of England. While there was support for utilising the parish system to ensure all areas within the funding regions were covered (in terms of resource and opportunity), others who were either outside of the Church of England or in disagreement with the exclusivity of such an alliance, felt it privileged the established Church of England. When considering the wider inter-faith politics, Near Neighbours' approach to engagement seeks to re-address insecurities within the Church of England[48]. In

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[47] The key recommendations below suggest better research is needed into how these differences are measured and hence frame the sorts of projects that are chosen for funding.

[48] Such a finding prompts a recommendation about the importance of ecumenical, inter-faith and faith/non-faith partnerships in the planning of community projects (see next section).

practice, however, the Church of England priest who is responsible for signing off an application for funding is often bypassed as responsibility is delegated to community leaders who have more expertise. Thus, this thesis also offers critical reflections for those involved in Near Neighbours projects, based on the perspective of those who have been involved in community organising (addressed further in the Recommendations in Appendix 6).

Another way in which practitioners create the conditions for encounters is to actively create (and shape) the spaces in which encounters might take place. The different spaces of encounter varied quite considerably across the different projects/interventions, as illustrated in the different chapters. In some cases spaces were created *outside* of the routine and existing spaces of everyday encounter (as Chapter 5 illustrated) where *exceptional* spaces were created in order to instil particular (and critical) habits of belonging. Chapters 6 and 7 also involved different spatial configurations. While the café space of Toast Love Coffee (Chapter 6) was more pubic/open (prompting unexpected arrivals from time to time), it nevertheless became a 'safe space' for reflection, for sharing (disclosure) as well as exposure to wider issues and concerns. In relation to spaces of encounter, this thesis has argued that closed or exceptional spaces – although lying outside of Amin's (2002) definition of "micropublics" (spaces within communities where negotiation of difference is crucial to everyday living) – *do* nevertheless have an important role to play in preparing individuals for future encounters. This is because it is within these spaces that attention can be brought to the layers of thinking, habits, assumptions and prejudices (Connolly 2002) which are often below the surface of cognition. Hence, altering space can bring particular habits and prejudices to the surface that might be less visible/accessible in everyday routine spaces of encounter. Chapter 5, for example, highlighted what happens when community practitioners facilitate learning about one's relation to difference (as in the spectrum exercises), prompting awareness of the habits and assumptions that structure how we relate to others. When people then return into the routine places that are more characteristic of 'micropublics' (cf. Amin 2002), it is hoped they bring new knowledges and practices from exceptional spaces to inform their actions in more routine spaces. There is evidence to suggest that participants did continue to interact, develop friendships, and participate together on projects after Catalyst.

There is a second reason why the creation of 'space' deserves particular attention. This is for understanding how the creation of space shapes the *form and*

character of encounters that are anticipated. This was most evident in Chapter 5 that focused on the different ways space was shaped/created; from the protocols of engagement (people contributing to the value statement), to the imagining of space (metaphors of webs of connection), to the aesthetics of space (the workshop room, the lounge, the night walk) to how space is participated in (spectrum exercises in which space literally creates difference, sharing objects, fumbling over rocks together). The *spaces* in which encounters take place shapes the nature, the potential of encounter, the significance and the meaningfulness of encounter. Recent geographical work on encounters has connected theories of contact within social psychology (Hewstone et al. 2015) with 'contact zones' (Askins and Pain 2011; Mayblin et al. 2016). The findings in this research add to this growing study by suggesting that much more can be done to rework, manipulate, affect the *spaces* in which 'face to face' encounters take place than the literature assumes. In making this argument, I suggest contrary to recent attempts to dissociate from a politics of inter-personal ties (Amin 2012), we might rather understand how the shaping space itself affects very different sorts of inter-personal ties.

To illustrate, Chapter 5 offered insights into the different uses of space to prompt particular encounters. Take two very different encounters as seen in the contrasting examples of the facilitated workshop using a) 'spectrum exercises' and b) the 'sharing of an object that means something to you' exercise. The first utilised the space in order to stage a debate between different opinions (along an axis of 'agree and disagree'), where space became the difference of opinion, highlighting how people relate differently to different perspectives. The second involved a less formal space in which the placement of objects in the centre and the stillness and silence of participants' respect, created a safe space to share at a very deep and personal level through the facilitation of the objects. Two very different spatial configurations, facilitated in different ways, prompted different relations to difference. A further example can be seen in Chapter 7 where participants of the same residential (Catalyst) came together in a very different space where the chance for (and temperament of) encounters was considerably altered. In participating in the project, we were able to collectively reflect on different experiences of encounters, conflicts and the spaces of friendship. To quote Zoe, for example, "safe spaces [of the home and the residential] are [spaces where] those differences are no longer differences in those situations because we're all equal and we're all human" (Zoe, interview).

Thus, by attending to the spaces that are designed and created (and then in which people participate), it is possible to see firstly *how* practitioners shape the ground in which people come together in transformative ways. Secondly, it is possible to argue that attention to spaces of encounter helps nuance the critiques of the contact hypothesis that 'face to face' encounters are either depoliticised or ineffective for their 'local' impact (cf. Amin 2012). Instead, by facilitating the creation of space (and negotiating the spaces of encounter), participants in community projects had experiences that stretch beyond the momentary to affect other spaces and future capacities to act.

8.1.2 How do practitioners equip people to engage with encounters?

The second contribution to geographical knowledge on encounters with difference in Human Geography is to understand better the relationship between design and planning for encounter and the unpredictability of encounter. One of the advantages of participating in ethnographic research from the beginning of a particular phase of the Near Neighbours Programme (in the summer of 2014) is the opportunity to engage with practitioners as they set out to initiate projects of encounter. The research, therefore, has provided a unique insight into the forming of relationships, the anticipation of change, the hopes and expectations that come from starting out. Both Chapter 4 and 5 gave insights into the dynamics between designing and intervention, on the one hand, and the unplanned and surprising moments of encounter on the other.

In Chapter 4, there were examples of the factors that shape the outcome of encounters, for example the dependency on the role of the coordinator and the contingency of past relationships (and actively building on past projects, existing partnerships, current capacities). There are also factors that attempt to keep open the possibility of the unexpected: funding new projects that may or may not work out, as well as encouraging groups to participate in the planning for projects, despite not necessarily having previous experience in doing so. The research shows that planning sessions are often the very sites of encounter in which transformation between individuals and groups takes place. The role of the coordinator also attests and critiques the notion that design holds within it predictability (cf. Carter 2013). On the one hand, research has shown that each region of Near Neighbours funding differs

because of the set-up of each Near Neighbours' host organisation, as well as the existing networks of the local coordinator. On the other hand, the coordinators are able to recruit participants beyond the usual structures (funding adverts for example), by reaching into different sites and spaces within community and empowering those who are rooted in different communities. Here the research findings affirm the value of networks – and the importance of social capital – in the bridging of communities, as identified in policy around integration and community cohesion (DCLG 2008).

Building on this, Chapter 5 helped challenge Carter's (2013) notion that "any design already holds within it an understanding of what is desired and thus demands that unpredictability be designed out in its very pursuit" (p.13). The design of the Catalyst residential suggests that space for unplanned encounters can be partially built in, in a number of ways. As Catalyst encourages diverse forms of interaction, the possibility for unplanned and spontaneous relations is widened. This is seen in the variety of uses of space, as well as enabled spontaneous moments to occur (such as a night walk during the residential). Since researching the Catalyst programme, I can further attest to the unplanned nature of the relationship building within the space of Catalyst as I have become one of the trainers that facilitates the first workshop day (in a session titled 'Identity, Belonging and Diversity'). After each of the three sessions I have now delivered, I have reflected on how very different each of the sessions is. This is partly down to the unique dynamics of each group and the endless possibilities of different relations that may occur in and between different participants. The dynamics of the group are constituted by a range of factors, including the previous relationships between participants, the mood of the group, the aesthetics of the room, the ideas that are shared etc. These in turns become factors in the differences that come to light (for example in the spectrum sharing exercise, depending on the different issues that the statements trigger). Thus, even though the spaces that are designed set the limits of encounter, they also condition the space in which new alliances are forged and thus encounters with difference take place.

The findings around the ability to plan in spaces for spontaneity and risk also relate to a recent article by Helen Wilson (2017), published online whilst putting the finishing touches to this thesis. In this article, Wilson (2017) takes forward a number of significant themes around risk, design, and the inherent unpredictability of encounter, in relation to Carter's (2013) argument that "any attempt to design out uncertainty and risk, whether successful or not, is at once a move to eradicate the very possibility of

encounter" (p.612). This article builds upon arguments in earlier work (Wilson 2013b; Wilson 2016) by further detailing Carter's (2013) notion of design/encounter as well as offering concrete examples of how design might write out risk and unpredictability[49]. Wilson (2107) draws out how Carter (2013) differentiates between a) the notion of "encounter" that requires "no such prior ground" and b) "institutionalised meeting places" where "some prior form of common ground has already been established" (Carter 2013, p.115, cited in Wilson 2017, p.613). Based on this, Wilson makes a convincing argument for examining 'contact' rather than 'encounter' when it comes to researching theories of contact (cf. Allport 1954). That said, the findings in my research suggest that although grounds are set (suggesting 'contact' over 'encounter'), grounds are set in such a way that might enable the surprising, the risky, and the "unforeseen"; all qualities of the encounter (p.613).

At the heart of these debates is a tension between safety and risk. Safe spaces on the one hand necessarily write out risk, yet also, as we have seen, making possible the sharing of experiences that might manage the risk that such sharing evokes. This was evident in Chapter 6 in how the openness of the Toast Love Coffee café (and fluidity in boundary making) enabled unexpected and emergent encounters to come into being, yet within the "safe spaces" that both feature in rhetoric and specific practices. Anna in the café acknowledged that "the boundary prevents the magic". Rather than designing out risk (cf. Carter 2013), we can see moments when 'safety' is built in not necessary to prevent risk but to ensure that when things do happen, emotions are shared, connections are made, they are done so in ways that enable people to flourish and not become over-burdened by the intensity of sharing differences. This was seen in both the way the community – particular the volunteer community – helped create a safe space which both allowed people to simply 'be' and get alongside one another, as well as being available to listen to the difficult experiences people may wish to share. Not everyone feels the same sense of inclusion and hospitality, however. It is important not to romanticise such a space, when in reality it stands for different things for different people: for some it is a place of conviviality where they can blend in with others, feel safe, and differences "disappear"; for others, it might be an intense place where identities come to the fore. Thus, geographers need to attend to the different ways 'safe spaces' become constituted and affect different people, differently.

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[49] In the example of staged encounters with issues such as homelessness through guest speakers or encountering poverty in Global South tourist excursions, as well as in her own work into workshops around diversity and inclusion (Wilson 2013b)

8.1.3 How do practitioners negotiate the governance of projects?

The third contribution to geographical knowledge is to bring empirical material on the encounters within projects to critique particular narratives of governance. The practice of bringing people together is inherently an act of governing certain behaviours and actions, and thus this thesis enables a discussion between the geographies of encounter literature and critical governance studies. Throughout this thesis I develop a critique of existing accounts of governing through difference (Fortier 2010; Ahmed 2008) by paying attention to the multiple practices at work, the ebbs and flows of agencies, the contested different narratives about the reason for each project that, and the will and motivation of those who work to shape encounters. While each chapter invariably involves a different aspect of governance, I respond explicitly to questions of governance in Chapter 6 and 7.

I began Chapter 2 by offering a context for how community engagement projects are often read within Human Geography. While there is a range of different approaches to studying the policies of interaction and cohesion in multicultural societies, in recent years Foucauldian inspired approaches have become prominent in understanding how particular forms of political governance shape and guide the character of the interactions within domains outside of the state (schools, community projects, faith groups etc.) Contributions such as Fortier (2010) and Ahmed (2008) *do* expose the politics implicit in projects of cohesion and 'multicultural love' (projects that normalise certain 'fun, easy, happy' notions of belonging). However, when it comes to understanding the hopes and aspirations of practitioners engaging in this work, I caution against reading too reductively a Foucauldian account alone of such projects that carries with it an assumption that such projects "always already co-opt" certain notions of 'liberal belonging' (Gibson-Graham 2008). By 'liberal belonging', I mean a form of happy coexistence that celebrates connection and masks the inequalities of power, the disagreements of perspectives and the intractable differences (Ahmed 2008). In doing so, we write off the messiness of interactions and the agency of those intervening and participating in projects, as well as fail to highlight moments where interactions might open up space for disagreement as well as connection. The following examples within the research highlight the nuances of practice in relation to governance.

In Chapter 6, attention was brought to the way the café space enabled encounters that became moments of exposures to the wider structural conditions that underpin who is rendered 'strange' in the first place. This was particular evident in the case of people from the café becoming aware of the inadequate housing conditions in which asylum seekers lived in, as well as being exposed to the precarity of asylum seekers and others in positions of powerlessness. In reaction to the 'bad encounter' of seeing the lack of care and provision for asylum seekers, the community in the café assembled alternative forms of care and hospitality in the face of adversity. I suggested that such actions are examples of Kye Askins' (2014) notion of 'quiet politics', in which the "emotionality" in response "mobilises the quiet politics that bring people together" (p.353). Askin's (2014) 'quiet politics', I argue, helps disrupts accounts of governance that – if pushed too far – can write out the agency, will and motivation of those who are (gently) transforming social relations, in quiet and unassuming ways. These findings also suggests that not all projects based on the premise of the contact hypothesis necessarily lose sight of the structural conditions that regulate power inequalities between people (cf. Saguy et al. 2009).

There were many other examples of the encounters which rather than leading to pacifying 'fun, cool and easy' forms of belonging, exposed difficult and challenging issues. The Catalyst programme (as seen in Chapter 5 and 7) is one such example. At different times throughout the research, Catalyst was sometimes associated with the government's Prevent programme, and on others strongly defended as 'specifically not Prevent[50]' (personal conversations, anonymous). In practice, the Catalyst programme afforded an intimate and honest space (particular in the evening), where critical discussions around Prevent, the issues of 'stop and search' which affect young people from Black Minority Ethnic backgrounds, colonialism, as well as explicitly discussing the inequality of opportunities because of race, were brought into the conversation. Although these topics were facilitated by the coordinator, there was arguably room for disagreement and difference of opinion. While the Catalyst programme can be cast 'a good Prevent initiative' – with state funding and (partial) monitoring – in reality, the content of the programme itself and the critical reflection on the thorny issues of terrorism, colonialism and race inequalities suggested a more nuanced approach. Hence, these examples offer how difficult encounters are to govern. Any investment in

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[50] Prevent is the UK Government's Counter Extremism Programme (outlined in Chapter 2).

encounters in order to instil particular forms of belonging is never guaranteed, as encounters always contain the potential for alternative ways of belonging.

Chapter 7 took a slightly different approach to the question of governance. Drawing on Mike Kesby's (2007) reconceptualising of 'governance' (particularly the notion of 'negotiation') within participation, I examined how one participatory film project enabled participants to become more reflective in their own forms of governance in designing and implementing a project about one of the participant's local neighbourhood. The project was an opportunity to examine the way 'contact zones' that formed in the process of doing research helped foreground questions of power, difference and privilege (Askins and Pain 2011). Building in reflection and enabling *negotiation* of what to include in the filming and how participants would reflect this in the filming, the research highlights what the collective governance of projects might look like. The chapter also highlights the disconnections between the 'process' and 'product'. While the process itself became significant to the participants in terms of learning about how spaces affects the character of encounter (the ease, comfort, and security of being together), the narrative in the final cut (the product) did not necessary reflect the ambiguities and challenges of living together with difference. Further participation in the governance of the overall narrative may well have mitigated this.

Thus, it is possible to glimpse throughout the research the ways in which the projects become governed; whether in the planning (how certain regions are included for funding), in the training of future leaders (in which differences are foregrounded and examined), in the interactions in the café (and who has the ability to regulate the exposure/disclosures of encounter) and finally in enabling participants to share in the designing, the carrying out and the editing of participatory research. The lessons to take away from the research are; firstly that governance takes place through a wide range of different partners (not just the state) and for different reasons (beyond more conventional contact theories); and secondly that ways of governing between participants disrupts the negativity (and pessimism) that accounts of governing tend to get cast as.

8.2 Contributions to practitioner knowledge and practice

This thesis also makes a modest contribution to those working in the field of community engagement; whether those developing policy and strategy regionally, those coordinating Near Neighbours' projects, or those who are community facilitators and trainers on the ground in specific contexts. I bracket, however, the fact that the learning has come from particular projects in specific places (mainly Leeds, as well as insight from Bradford and Dewsbury) and hence these contributions are suggestive and, at the least, only very cautiously applicable. This section outlines three points of learning, before discussing briefly the lessons learnt from the collaborative research project set out in Chapter 7.

Firstly, deepening the reflection on the conditions for encounters (as seen above Section 8.1.1) shows how considerable energy and commitment is required to ensure projects are set up in ways that are mutual, participatory and do not compromise the work of past projects. Where projects were successful, partners from different groups were included *from the very beginning*. Unless people genuinely own the projects and desire to be part of them, the chances of projects materialising and building bridges across different groups will be unlikely. This was seen both in the examples of projects that emerged (as in Chapter 4) and suggested both by the current Near Neighbours coordinator, as well as the previous Near Neighbours coordinator for West Yorkshire.

Secondly, one of the constant challenges for practitioners in this field is to reach those who would not otherwise mix with others from different backgrounds. Although recent studies suggest that there is a disconnect between prejudices that are often held in less public places (such as the home or the pub) and courteous manners expressed in public (Valentine 2014) – with others more dismissive of multicultural projects that only reach those "already young and cosmopolitan" (Amin 2012, p.31) – the research also suggests the following. By empowering those who are rooted in their communities, who are both connected to others (such as those in Catalyst) and those who would never otherwise mix with others, do we have the best chance of getting the "unlikely suspects" (as one practitioner put it) to join in. There were also examples of those who came on board to participate in projects due to the encouragement of others, who would not have done so otherwise: whether the trainee police officer who was invited by the youth worker to join Catalyst, or the local resident who came to be part of Toast Love Coffee café (Chapter 6) who acknowledged that two years ago he would

never had thought he'd have such pleasant conversations with the Asian women who (more recently) have come on board with the project. Hence, such projects – when facilitated appropriately, collectively and sensitively – can make a significant difference to the lives of individuals and the relation in local neighbourhoods. It is these small acts of courage, commitment, and experimentation that sets the grounds for, for example, a community Iftar meal springing up rather organically during Ramadan, as the opening vignette illustrates.

Thirdly, a theme that threads throughout this thesis is the importance of *doing stuff*. When people participate together on something – whether planning a project, an activity to learn about difference, navigating a cliff top on a night walk, or building a table in a newly furbished café – something happens. The very encounter becomes not just one of dialogue, but through orientation to the task at hand, multiple relations are generated: of emotional connection, of stories being triggered by the fabric of a prayer mat, of collective achievement in building a table and making a friend in the process. They are not always positive however, the coming together through task and collective action can also marginalise those who may be less able (on their feet, with their hands, etc.) as well as highlight uncomfortable differences that are felt more viscerally; such as the awareness of the gaps between differences through the spectrum exercises on the Catalyst programme. Such task requires the effective facilitation by someone with appropriate experience who is able to draw out the desired outcomes of collective action, whilst mitigating against any unintended outcomes. The orientation towards task and activity (and the materiality of this) links to work around affect and how encounters are affective experiences (Wilson 2013b; Connolly 2002; Askins and Pain 2011). The next section suggests possible future projects of which the study of the affective relations of encounters is one.

Fourthly, this thesis contributes specifically to those in community practice who may wish to develop partnerships with academic researchers who share a commitment to doing coproduction research. As such, the forth research aim – 'what can be learnt from participating together in projects that enhance belonging in neighbourhoods?' – is now addressed. Chapter 7 offered insights into how all those participating in the research (a PhD student, a scholar practitioner, participants from Catalyst) negotiated the different interests at stake, as explored through detailing the N8 Research Partnership Experimental Pilot Project (EPP). Although the project was limited in time (6 months) and funding (£15000) to really establish a working partnership between

university staff and practitioners, there are a number of contributions this projects makes to future participatory research. It was not only an important (and steep!) learning curve for me as a PhD researcher with an interest and passion for community-based participatory research, the project also contributed an understanding of how collective action became the grounds for reflection around the encounters that are generated in participating in a project. Out of all the research experiences, it was the one that prompted the most surprising and unexpected outcome, as illustrated in the comments by Adam, Zoe and myself. The project explicitly drew out how the process of working together on a shared task (in this case filming a story about Adam's neighbourhood) – but in an unfamiliar environment – prompted learning at a deep, visceral level about how encounters matter and how they affect space, can result in tension and conflict, but can also prompt acts of rebuilding and reconciliation.

Thus, this thesis both contributes to practitioner knowledge and practice through the findings from the ethnographic fieldwork, as well as knowledge co-produced in participating together in a project designed to deepen reflection on how encounters with difference are negotiated in a multicultural neighbourhood. Appendix 6 offers a series of recommendations for those involved in community engagement through the Near Neighbours Programme as well as those working within academia who are seeking to more effectively engage in community-based research.

8.3 Future research

This section explores the potential implications of this thesis for future research around encounter, difference and community engagement. I shall outline three possible projects that include understanding a) the affective practices of encounters b) expanding research into the narratives that are (un)told about how encounters are utilised to bring about change and c) future directions in a geography-inspired co-production research, building upon the co-production research project that featured in Chapter 7.

In outlining future projects, it is also important to note that any of these possible projects could have been the main frame for this thesis. There are a number of different conceptual framings to help understand the main question of this thesis (how practitioners bring people together from different backgrounds in multicultural cities in Britain). Although I have chosen in this thesis to focus on questions of 'encounter' as

experienced/anticipated in planning, learning, in a café project and in a participatory film project, drawing on aspects of anticipation, pedagogy, spaces for encounter, exposures/disclosures, as well as negotiation and governance, there are other ways of approaching the questions in this thesis.

8.3.1 Affective encounters: the difference affect makes

Throughout this thesis, the affective dimension of encounters has been a theme that has been implicit in a number of encounters that I have drawn attention to. For example: the way ideas seemed to circulate within planning meetings, rubbing off one body, picking up momentum, exceeding the sum of those in the room; or the way the emotions evoked during a sharing exercise within a residential leadership programme seemed to "do things" (Ahmed 2004, p.26), opening up the "potential of/for making connections" (Askins 2016, p.515); or the way café atmospheres were assembled that seemed to affect bodily capacities for encounters (Anderson 2009), whether in sharing intimate experiences, or making friends with strangers through common experiences. Studies of encounter and affect are ripe within Human Geography (Swanton 2011; Wilson 2016; Saldanha 2006; Ruez 2016), yet, within studies of community engagement and practice, little has been explicitly written on how practitioners might utilise the encounter through its affective modalities. In other words, how, (knowingly or unknowingly) practitioners work with the affective dimensions of encounter in making possible forms of connection that more conventional forms of engagement (dialogue, for example) might not.

One way into such a project would be to examine how encounters are staged through practices that evoke different registers of experience, drawing on the work on William Connolly (2002; 2005). One example is a project that I came across and was deeply inspired by – and somewhat a little disappointed I wasn't able to include this story in the thesis. The story of a practitioner I'll call Debora, for me, makes the case for how practitioners are well placed to know the (affective) dynamics of encounter. Debora runs an inter-faith weaving project in Bradford that brings together women from different backgrounds through encouraging inter-communal weaving. Weaving as an industrial practice is deeply rooted in the textile industries of West Yorkshire (especially Bradford) and many of the practices in the 1950-60s were adopted from parts of rural Pakistan (Mirpur, for example) where Britain imported not only cheap

labour but also non-Western weaving practices. Hence, weaving runs deep in the history of Bradford as well as inscribed into the hands of its diverse residents. In an interview, Debora describes the moment she rather serendipitously discovers the affective potential of weaving for generating togetherness. She talks about her neighbour who comes over to visit her house one day and finds a loom sitting in her front room. Her neighbour is originally from Pakistan and used to work in the great Manningham Mill (arguably the largest silk mill in the world). He disappears and moments later returns with another neighbour, who although spoke very little English, sits down at the loom and begins to name all the parts of the loom, as it triggers all sorts of memories of former work practices in the mill and his story of migration from Pakistan. Making sense of the event, Debora argues:

> "[This connection] is immediate… … it's a memory thing, and of course weaving [and] anything you do physically, will unearth body memories, so... so it's kind of a way of connecting, which is not dependent on us being able to speak, or... [having] a sort of logic of language, which we might assume..." (Debora, interview)

In this beautifully captivating example, we see awareness of the possibility that weaving contains for unearthing body memories. Debora goes onto run a series of really effective weaving projects in Bradford that encourage women to collectively weave stories about their experiences of faith, wisdom and womanhood. Hence, a further project could examine how encounters are sought in order to 'affect' relations with difference, such as the unlocking of memories, slowing down of time, and the weaving together of different textures, practices, and stories through weaving practices. The value of such a project is crucial since it engages with people without the necessity of verbal language, which is often assumed to be a prerequisite for cohesion in policy discourses (DCLG 2012). This project could examine both the 'difference' affect makes (in terms of making a difference to existing projects of encounter) as well as the way in which affect performs/enacts differences and prompts alternative relationships to difference and diversity.

8.3.2 Contested narratives of coexistence

Another possible project that stems from the analysis of this research is to deepen reflection on the *narratives* of coexistence that are implicit at different times through

this thesis. Indeed, both Chapter 4 and 7 examine aspects of the term 'narrative' as it relates to the strategies of bringing people together. This was seen both in its pre-formed and negotiated sense (as Chapter 4 demonstrated with how faith leaders encourage particular narratives to encourage encounter) and how it is deployed to draw together practices (as the final cut of the film in Chapter 7 evidenced). One approach to further understand the sorts of politics at stake in these projects would be to understand how narratives are constructed (and performed) and how they become contested at different moments. Linking this to the questions of governance that have been foregrounded in this thesis, it is possible to examine how particular narratives of coexistence are governed and how alternative narratives of coexistence might be articulated.

Critical governance studies such as the work of Anne-Marie Fortier (2010) and Sara Ahmed (2008) could then be deconstructed as one narrative that is apparent in state policy documents. By drawing on the self-understandings and motivations of participants within projects, it would be possible to understand how the more dominant narratives of how we ought to belong might be contested by alternative geographies of coexistence. By 'alternative geographies' I mean ways of belonging that differ in mood and temperament to the liberal notions of 'fun, cool and easy' types of belonging that Fortier (2010) argues are apparent in UK policy documents. How might questions of conflict, antagonism, anger, truth, injustice and emotion be brought into such spaces in ways that go beyond a liberal notion of citizenship (cf. Fortier 2010).

In a recent paper in Space and Polity, I have outlined some thoughts towards the conditions in which alternative articulations of narratives of difference become restricted by wider political programmes (Slatcher 2017). Here, I proposed scholars make more explicit "the narratives that assign particular value to the function of encounters in relation to producing new forms of belonging" (p.192). In doing so, I highlighted how attempts to scale up encounters can often result in being reframed into particular dominant narratives of belonging. This was the case of a Near Neighbours funded project that I attended for the PhD research that made it onto the regional BBC News as a 'deradicalisation project', despite being about community engagement. Although the intentions of the facilitators, the motivations of the participants and the content of the activities were more about wider issues in community (such as tackling power inequalities in community development), the media chose to link the workshop (which happened to take place in a mosque) as a de-radicalisation project, in attempts to relate it to a news story that same week in which a

Dewsbury boy had become "Britain's youngest suicide bomber" (in an attack in Iraq). The effect of casting the workshop as a de-radicalisation workshop wrote out other narratives that were being articulated around coexistence and community building.

Yet, there is scope to push these arguments further, by drawing on the research in this thesis. Going back to the problem for practitioners of going beyond the "usual suspects" who will always get involved in community development, alternative narrative telling might be one way of creating more peaceable geographies by going beyond simply who might turn up. The argument would go something as follows. One way in which practitioners seek to harness the localised encounters towards wider transformation, is to tackle the very narratives that result in discrimination and prejudice in the first place. By engaging in alternative narrative telling projects, the wider dominant narratives of segregation, or of lack of cohesion, might be challenged by the disruption of alternative narratives of coexistence. Here, I lean to Amanda Wise's (2016) experience of challenging local media narratives in a Sydney neighbourhood through producing a 'Welcome Shops Open Day' book which highlighted the positive stories of coexistence that involved:

"leveraging everyday practice and encounter, together with localised narratives of accommodation and belonging to 'jump scales' in order to enter a larger, national conversation on coexistence" (Wise 2016, p.37)

There were examples of similar attempts within the research, including participants from the Catalyst programme. Some of whom went on to be the guests on a local radio programme to challenge negative images of diversity in their neighbourhood. Others (Muslim and non-Muslim) participated in the collective writing of a report about the experiences of Muslims (and their neighbours) 10 years on from the 7th July 2005 terrorist attacks in London (Shaffi 2015). The report highlighted both the impact of negative media coverage of Islam on their lives, as well as alternative narratives of Muslim engagement with other groups in society (such as tackling homelessness, the refugee crisis and mental health stigma). The young people argue for the need to harness alternative news outlines and advocate the "need to nurture young people with the skills and confidence to use modern social media tools in countering negative portrayals of Muslims" (Shaffi 2015, p.27).

Thus, a second possible project building on the research within this thesis, would make more explicit firstly how public narratives can often reframe attempts to

build community in different ways (and hence, limit the potential for alternative narratives), and secondly how practitioners work against the grain of dominant narratives, to leverage everyday encounters to shape the very frames of reference when it comes to wider conversations on coexistence (cf. Wise 2016).

8.3.3 Post-Catalyst neighbourhood project

Finally, I want to propose a third area of future research, to take forward learning from the participatory research project detailed in Chapter 7. Although examples of research into community engagement that utilises methods within participatory research are becoming more prominent (Wills 2012; Askins and Pain 2011; Rogaly and Qureshi 2015), this work remains relatively marginal to Human Geography. Chapter 7 highlighted the value in how participating together generated 'contact zones' in which difference, power asymmetries and inequalities were foreground (Askins and Pain 2011) as well as how participating in different spaces generated encounters that were very different from the safe spaces on the Catalyst programme. In particular, the participants experienced moments of intuitive learning in which they sensed very vividly how the wider spatial settings they found themselves in affected their feelings of confidence and safety in their friendships with each other. Hence, further research could expand the small-scale project that was undertaken in Chapter 7, to include different spaces (not just a house, the café and the mosque) to interrogate how groups (who have recently met through bridge building programmes such as Near Neighbours) collectively navigate their neighbourhoods. The value of such a project comes from the opportunities to see research as a shared task in which all participate together in (researchers and academics), consolidate the emerging friendships from the projects, as well as offer opportunities to encounter one another in a different spatial setting, prompting further pedagogical learning about how space affects encounter.

Outlining a specific project is difficult to do, since it would depend upon the work of past projects, the context of the neighbourhood, as well as the existing relationships between practitioners and academics working in this field. That said, if I was in a position to design a project tomorrow to build on the experiences of Chapter 7 (and in collaboration with others), I would suggest something along the following lines:

A group of between 8-10 participants could be recruited, including at least half who come from the same neighbourhood and who have in some way begun to

get to know one another (whether through Catalyst, or another Near Neighbours style project). Participants would then work together to plan a walk around their neighbourhood that involves stopping at particular sites along the way that have been chosen by the resident participants. These sites would be places that mean something to each participant, for example a park, a café, a shop, a place of worship, or a relative's house (etc.). Participants themselves would work together to plan a route that would include stopping at these five or so places. At each location, the resident would share a few words about why they have chosen their selected site as well as inviting others to ask questions. The aim of the project would be to offer participants the experience of encountering one another in the spaces of their everyday routines, yet done so with careful facilitation. Ideally, the project would require facilitation by someone who had experience in community engagement (and/or community research) as well as knowledge about the dynamics of (and the socio/cultural/political histories of) the given area. Practically, the project might take place over one day, with two purposeful sessions built into the programme: one reflection session over lunch time and one towards the end, with a series of questions that could generate discussion as participants walk between their chosen locations.

The rationale for the project would be the evidence (as this thesis testifies) that actively walking through and being immersed in a specific place can both trigger ideas about belonging as well as provide embodied and experiential ways of learning about encounter and difference. The research could contribute to recent coproduced research developments (Darby 2017; Campbell and Vanderhoven 2016), walking methodologies (Bates and Rhys-Taylor 2017; Middleton 2016) and further build upon participatory approaches to researching encounters in the context of community engagement (Wills 2012; Askins and Pain 2011).

8.4 Geographies of hope

In truth, there are a number of projects that could be built upon the findings of this research. As such, this reflects the range and diversity of the projects I was able to visit, participate in, and develop theories of transformation through encounter, based on

ethnographies and participatory geography engagement. Yet, however, the conclusions of this thesis do suggest there has been considerable learning that emerged from the research; both in terms of academic knowledge and community practice for those who were in some way involved in the research.

To summarise, this conclusion chapter draws together the four empirical chapters, making explicit the three specific contributions this thesis makes to geographical knowledge as well as how these inform contributions to practitioner knowledge and practice. This thesis has shown specifically how practitioners create the conditions for encounters across difference in paying attention to the role of local coordinators, the importance of narratives of encounter, and the way spaces are cultivated to encourage different forms of interaction across difference. In doing so, I have engaged both with debates around anticipation and design in the geographies of encounter literature, as well as suggest that exceptional spaces for encounter outside of the everyday routines of multicultural life have a role to play in transforming capacities to act in future encounters. This thesis also makes an intervention into recent critical governance studies by complicating neat accounts of governance that – when pushed too far – I argue, write out the messiness and possibility of everyday encounters in enacting new futures of belonging. In developing these theoretical insights, this thesis ultimately speaks back to the work of community practitioners (and beyond those involved in Near Neighbours) by offering insights into how projects might enable more equal terms of participation, centre around practical social action that afford moments various encounter with difference, as well as how practitioners and researchers might better participate together.

Lastly – and to return to the opening vignette in this conclusion chapter – I believe the practices of "ordinary folk with extraordinary visions" leave us with *hope*. Amidst turbulent times in Britain (including negotiating life after Brexit, how Britain responds to the growing refugee crisis and the high levels of racial inequality in terms of opportunity, education and employment) and the increasing pressures to respond innovatively and creatively to the challenges of living with difference, there is still room for hope. The stories of people coming together in adversity, working through their differences, and giving permission for others to come and participate in new ways of belonging, suggests the story is not over. I left the Iftar meal during Ramadan on that warm June evening in 2015 buzzing with excitement that there are resilient communities of cooperation and inclusion. And beneath the buzz and excitement, there lies a series of sacred practices of commitment, hard work, tears, failures, but

ultimately the will to build new geographies of coexistence. This thesis, I hope, has gone someway to make visible the conditions of possibility for encounter.
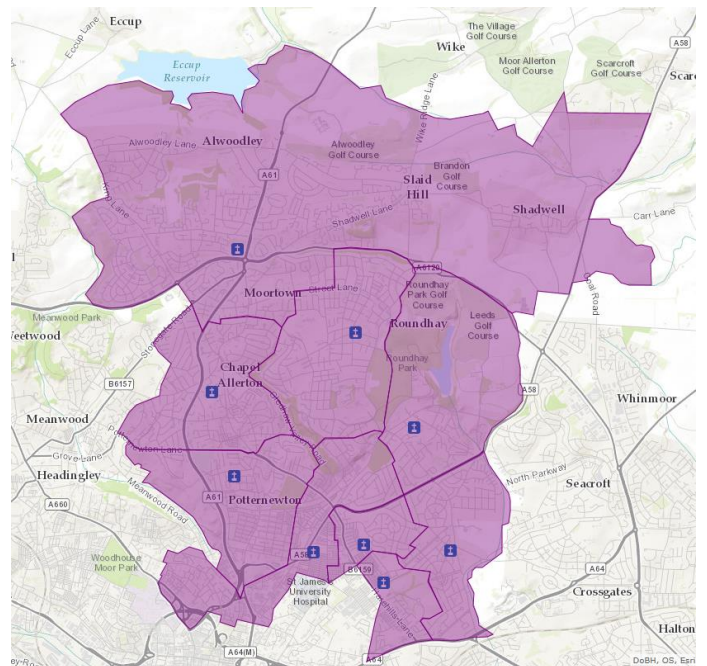
Appendices

Appendix 1: Boundary maps for Near Neighbours grants for Bradford, Dewsbury and North Leeds.
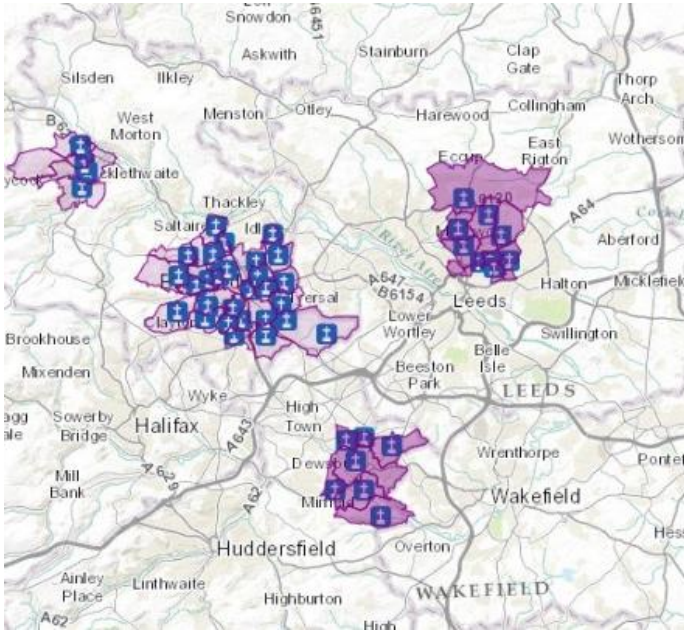
The map to the left shows Keighley (north west, though not part of the research), Bradford (centre), Dewsbury (south) and north Leeds (north east)

The map to the right shows a detailed map of Near Neighbours funding regions for North Leeds

Source: (Near Neighbours 2017)

Appendix 2a: Sample list of research appointments (February 2nd 2014 – November 13th 2014)

Date	Interview/event	Location
February 2 – 4th 2014	Barbara Glasson, Women Weaving Wisdom Carlo Schroeder, former Near Neighbours coordinator BEAT (Bangladeshi Education and Arts, Manningham)	Bradford
February 13th	Near Neighbours Mela	Birmingham
February 20th	Chris Howson (former city priest of Bradford)	Sunderland Chaplaincy
March 11th	Carlo Schroeder	Thornbury Centre, BCDD office
March 12th	St Stephens Church/Woody (a Near Neighbours project)	St Stephens Church, West Bowling
September 2nd	Wahida Shaffi (Near Neighbours coordinator)	Thornbury Centre
September 10th	Prestwich Launch of NN	Prestwich, Longfield Suite
September 18th	Chris Hladowski (potential NN applicant)	Café Regal, Bradford
September 20th	Ibrar and Injit (potential NN applicant)	Attock Park, Bradford
September 22nd	Light Night meeting 1	St Stephens Church, Bradford
September 30th	Launch of Near Neighbours in Dewsbury	Dewsbury Minster
October 15th	Wahida and Mrs Shah	Manningham Housing Association
	Wahida	Conversation in car
	Wahida and Anjum (current NN project leader)	Hamara Centre
	Wahida and Hanif (potential NN applicant)	Hamara Centre
October 16th	Light Night Volunteers	St Stephen's Church

	meeting	
October 25th	Thank U Bradford project, asylum seeker support (existing NN project)	Park Lane Centre
October 27th	Meet Trudy (placement with NN)	College of the Resurrection
October 29th	Visit ToastLoveCoffee	Harehills
October 31st	Light Night	
November 12th	Deputy Left Lieutenant Iqbal (potential applicant)	Thornbury Centre
	Islamophobia conference	Hamara Centre
November 13th	Anna Dyson (Toast Love Coffee)	Taste Café, Roundhay
	Wahida and Trudy	Touchstone Centre

Appendix 2b: List of projects participated in

Light Night

The Light Night was an alternative celebration during Halloween (31st October 2014) that involved a youth empowerment charity based at St Stephen's Church in West Bowling, Bradford, working with community workers associated with the nearby Madrassa. The project involved a celebration of 'light' (including fireworks, face painting and a light display in and around St Stephen's Church) as well as a community litter pick with young people from a variety of schools in the local area.

Toast Love Coffee

Toast Love Coffee is a pop-up café in Harehills (Leeds) that brings different ethnic and faith communities together over sharing "good coffee, good food, and good conversation". The project was set up in January 2014 by Anna and Anita, two mothers who met at a Christmas party to welcome people who were seeking asylum in West Yorkshire. At the time of research, Toast Love Coffee popped up every Wednesday and brought together different people in the community (neighbours, students, refugees, young mums, asylum seekers, and other visitors). Toast Love Coffee is the story of Chapter 6.

Bee Friendly

Bee Friendly is an art-based environmental project that raises awareness about the decline of bees through painting, weaving and other craft practices. It ran between January and March 2015 in Dewsbury and brought together local residents in one session and primary school children in another from Christian and Muslim (and white British and Asian) backgrounds.

Peace Ambassadors

The Peace Ambassadors initiative was advertised to 16 to 25 year olds 'living, working or studying in Leeds' for those 'interested in developing… leadership skills, meeting new people and learning about other cultures'. The initiative was advertised in churches, synagogues, mosques, youth clubs and through existing community organising schemes, and aimed to equip young people with confidence, leadership and skills to 'build bridges across community'.

Roots to Leeds

Roots to Leeds is a cross-cultural project that brought together young people from Muslim and Jewish backgrounds (from South and North Leeds) through exploring the history of the young people's family migration to Leeds. The project involve getting young people to interview their grandparents and then interviewing one another from the other youth group to learn about the personal histories of their families arriving in Leeds. The planning sessions for Roots to Leeds feature in Chapter 4.

Catalyst

The Catalyst Leadership Programme was established in 2011 with the launch of the Near Neighbours Programme. Catalyst aims to "equip young people aged 16 – 26 to be leaders for change, developing local social action and transforming their communities" (Near Neighbours 2017c). The Leeds Catalyst residential took place over 4 days in March 2015 and is the story of Chapter 5 as well as inspiring the project in Chapter 7.

Appendix 3: Sample ethics and consent form

Research on 'Encountering difference in faith-based projects in West Yorkshire' Information sheet

This research project is conducted by Sam Slatcher, who is a PhD researcher at the Geography Department, Durham University. The aim of the research is to explore how people encounter difference in Near Neighbours-funded projects across northern England (Bradford, Leeds and Dewsbury). In particular, the research explores the potential of creative arts to bring people together to open up new ways of thinking about faith and living in diverse communities. Sam is interested in how the nature of the sites and the activities in the projects creates the conditions for meaningful encounters.

The aim of these interviews is to understand the reasons for people's involvement in Near Neighbours-funded projects, and their experiences of encountering and working with people from other cultures and faiths. Secondly, the interview explores the extent to which faith is an important factor in people's engagement in the activities that take place.
Interviews will last between 45 minutes and 1 hour

☐ Interviews will be recorded to assist note-taking and used solely for the purpose of writing up into interview scripts.

☐ The content of the interview will be treated confidentially and used anonymously. The interviews will be typed up and all identifiable detailed removed. The recording will be destroyed and an anonymous version of the interview will be stored securely on a password protected computer.

☐ Participants will be asked to sign a consent form, giving permission for the interview to be recorded and used to inform my research and any subsequent publications.

☐ Participants have the right to withdraw at any time, during or after the interview.

If you have any concerns, comments or enquiries, please contact me directly on s.p.slatcher@durham.ac.uk

Consent form

This form is to ensure you have been given appropriate information about this project. Please see the information sheet above for details.

By signing this form, you are giving permission you know what the project is about and that you are happy to take part.

I know what the project is about	YES/NO
I know I don't have to answer all the questions I'm asked	YES/NO
I agree to the interview being recorded	YES/NO
I agree to an anonymous record of my interview to be kept secure for future reference	YES / NO
I am happy to take part in this project	YES / NO

Signed _____

Name _____

Date _____

Appendix 4: Near Neighbours criteria

Source: Near Neighbours 2017b, p.3 – 4.

CRITERIA

Below is an exact list of our grants criteria. A project should:

- **Bring together peoples of two or more different faiths and/or ethnicities**, to build friendships and develop relationships of trust.
- **Work locally**. We want to see people who are living very locally (i.e. in the same street, estate or neighbourhood) come together.
- **Work sustainably**. We want to see long term and natural relationships grow, that will last beyond the period of funding.
- **Work to improve the community**. We want to see people working to make their communities a better place to live.
- **Involve diverse people in planning and implementation**. People from more than one faith group and/or ethnicity are involved in planning and implementing the proposal.

In addition, a grant must be for:

- **New or developed work**. We won't support repeat or ongoing activities.
- **Specific activities.** Funding is given for a specific project or activity.
- **Immediate activities.** Grants should be claimed within three months, projects should last no longer than six months and finish before the end of March 2018.
- **Grassroots organisations:** We particularly seek to fund emerging local groups as well as charities, religious organisations and other not-for-profit organisations whose focus is on local work. We will look especially favourably on small organisations with a low annual turnover.

We welcome applications from faith groups, places of worship, partnerships of different faith groups, and informal local groups comprising people of different faith groups. We also encourage applications from secular organisations that are working with faith communities.

Funding cannot be granted to individuals but may be given to small groups without a constitution or bank account where there is a reputable local community or faith organisation willing to act as the accountable body for the funds.

We will consider applications from Community Interest Companies and other social enterprises if their membership is from the neighbourhood they are seeking funding for, and if the activity they seek to deliver has a planning/running involvement from local people of more than one faith and ethnicity.

PRIORITIES

In addition to our criteria, we also assess applications by a number of priorities. Applications showing the following qualities will be prioritised for funding:

- Where the purpose is first and foremost to bring neighbours of different faiths and ethnicities together to build trusting relationships through an activity or project.
- Projects that work with vulnerable women, asylum seekers and refugees, and recent migrants.
- New and innovative projects with a high local impact at the neighbourhood level.
- Projects that take place in neighbourhoods with deprivation or disadvantage.
- Proposals from minority faith communities.
- Proposals from small faith or community organisations or groups.
- Where a project shows sustainability; with relationships, sustainable change and/or further work together likely to continue naturally beyond the period of funding.
- It is clear what difference the activity will make to the local community.
- Proposals that are run by volunteers or have a strong volunteer base.
- Organisations which have not been given Near Neighbours funding before.
- Projects that source goods and services from businesses in the local community or use ethically-sourced goods and services, such as Fairtrade refreshments.
- It shows value for money.

Appendix 5: 4 page sample (out of 20) of the Catalyst Reflection Book (written by Sam Slatcher [unpublished]).

Catalyst Leaders Programme
Whitby, 1st—4th March 2015

Photo taken by Paresh Solanki

Stories from the Leeds Catalyst Leaders Programme

Catalyst Leaders Programme: Introduction

What is Catalyst?

Catalyst is a dynamic and interactive programme to make real the potential of individuals so they can change their communities for the better. The Catalyst programme consists of a 4 day residential, a series of local development sessions as well as an online social media presence to provide participants with an opportunity to stay in touch.

Who is Catalyst for?

Catalyst is for individuals who ascribe to a faith or belief, who are between 18-30 years of age who want to make a difference in their own Communities, meet new people and acquire new skills and knowledge. We have focused on this age group because our work over the years has shown that the need for programmes like this have emerged from that age range more than any other.

Is the programme accredited?

The Catalyst programme is a level 2 qualification accredited by Leicester College. This is as a result of previous work completed by colleagues at St Philip's Centre in Leicester. We have worked with them to ensure that we have a strong exploratory and interactive programme that helps us to flexibly incorporate the requirements of an accredited programme too.

What practical and theoretical areas will the programme cover?

We believe that participant contributions and perspectives are vital. As such there will be plenty of opportunity to contribute towards discussions around the topics of identity, faith, belonging, unpack concepts of "power" and "leadership" and acquire some practical conflict resolution and media and communication skills from expert scholar practitioners. The aim is that the knowledge and skills acquired during the residential will be used by participants in their local contexts.

2

Catalyst Values

We believe that it is important to have a set of core values that guide the work that we do. The following list of values were chosen by the participants of Leeds Catalyst.

Respect Oneself and Others

It is important that people feel they can be themselves. Each of us come with a unique set of skills, characteristics and ways of working. If we respect ourselves and our needs it is easier to respect other people's needs. Respect is shown in different ways and can be given or received.

Mutual Cooperation for maximum impact

We all have different strengths and when these are combined it is easier to achieve a greater impact collectively through working together.

Standing with Integrity

It is important that we do what we have said we will do. This helps forge trust and respect. Standing with integrity is also courageous and helps to build strong convictions. If you stand with integrity with the small things it is easier to stand with conviction with the bigger things.

Take Responsibility

We are responsible for our behaviour, actions and decisions and we need to be mindful of how they may impact other people.

Listening to Understand

Trying to be mindful of actually hearing what others are saying is important. When you genuinely listen you are able to comprehend the meaning of words spoken by another and in so doing you can go some way in trying to understand a person.

Be Dynamic

Each of us have traits that make us dynamic whether that be energetic, spirited, powerful, passionate or driven. In our own way we make things happen every day. It is important to recognise the dynamism each of us harbours.

3

Catalyst Leeds

Sneaton Castle

Set in the North Yorkshire seaside town of Whitby, Sneaton Castle is situated in beautiful and extensive grounds adjacent to St Hilda's Priory which is the Mother house of the Order of the Holy Paraclete, an Anglican religious community.

15 young people mostly aged 18—25 arrived in the morning of the 1st March 2015 to begin their Catalyst experience...

Expectations

"I had certain misconceptions about the theology and the personality of a Christian and a Jewish person, and even an agnostic person. Even though I try to love people in my heart, there's a sense of hypocrisy that even though you know you need to respect people, you still may feel a sense of malice or negativity towards the person" (Adam)

"When I was on Catalyst I thought there would be mistrust towards me. There have been wars and things like that going on in Israel and I know there's been trouble. I thought that would be some kind of stigma around saying that I was Jewish and I found out that actually there wasn't and that I was accepted and loved for being me, and for being Jewish" (Zoe)

"Meeting with Wahida before applying left me with the impression that the course would, at least, be led by an ethos I could get on board with: one based on inclusion and empathy" (Harvey)

Appendix 6: Recommendations

This thesis makes the following recommendations for a) community practitioners b) those involved explicitly in the community engagement through the Near Neighbours Programme, and c) those who are working within academia who are seeking to more effectively engage in community-based researcher:

Recommendations for community practitioners

- Unless people genuinely own the projects and desire to be part of them, the chances of projects materialising and building bridges across different groups will be unlikely.

- Empowering those who are already rooted in their communities (who live and work within particular communities, as well as who have links to other spheres of influence) maximises the chance of getting those who wouldn't ordinarily participate in projects to encourage interaction across difference.

- Encouraging a range of activities that get people to use different parts of their brain (using cognitive, sensory, haptic registers of engagement) and their body (hands, feet, legs etc.) unearths different ways of relating to others.

- It is crucial that safe spaces are created where people *can* talk about the difficult topics (such as Prevent, Stop and Search). When facilitated effectively and sensitively, it encourages people to think critically about existing laws and legislations, as well as help develop people's capacity to own their own opinions in relate to complex issues of race, politics and governance of society.

- To encourage participatory research when looking to reflect and deepen learning around safe spaces, encounters with difference, and community engagement. When doing so, this thesis recommends building in possibilities of participation as early as possible (see section 8.3.3 which complements this final point).

Recommendations for Near Neighbours

- A clearer indication of how particular areas are selected for funding and whether alternative axes of difference might be considered, such as socio-economic differences or the bridging of different spaces ("bridging working men's clubs with mosques" was given as an example). In doing so, projects

could be set up *on the basis* of the very differences are identified as significant for the cohesion and strength of particular communities[51].

- A review of the administering of Near Neighbours projects: to encourage practitioners to critical reflect on the governance of projects through the Parish system of the Church of England. Instead, enable Church of England parish priests to meet with potential applicants alongside ecumenical partners, other faith leaders and others in the community in similar fields of practice. The regional coordinator (who is appointed by the Church Urban Fund [of the Church of England] but open to those of any faith or none) should have the overall responsibility for signing off a project, rather than the parish priest, since they are better placed to make such a decision. Alongside this, wider ecumenical, inter-faith and faith/non-faith partnerships are encouraged in the planning of community projects.

- From participation and research into the Catalyst programme, this thesis recommends that the value of "exceptional space" and a period of time away from the everyday mundane encounters that make up everyday life (cf. Amin 2002) is important in providing space to see relationships differently, to reflect creatively on the issues of identity, belonging and diversity that affect community development. Residential trips – which are inevitably more costly – provide moments of encounter across a whole range of different activities (eating, night walks and evening discussions) that are considerably important in the developing of friendships among people from different backgrounds.

- Importance of sustainability across Near Neighbours Projects as well as the Catalyst programme through *harnessing* opportunities that came from specific projects. More funding and resources should be targeted at developing those emerging friendships and associations that came from initial participation.

- To keep Near Neighbours independent as possible from any particular governmental rationale (such as *Prevent*) in order for people to develop for themselves a critical sense of what their priorities are in their community in relation to governance.

Recommendations for community-based researchers

- Make sure pre-research scoping exercises are done sufficiently to ensure the feasibility of the research, particular in areas that are prone to "research

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[51] To further elaborate on this point, it might not be faith difference, for example, that are the most conflictual differences in a particular community, but differences of class, race, or work.

fatigue" (a term used by Near Neighbours coordinator to describe places where research has been overdone and to the detriment of positive social change).

- Bring together the key individuals who are responsible for running specific groups (such as project coordinators) as early as possible to ensure the research is genuinely co-designed across all the different partners in the research.

- Be aware of the different ways in which people 'reflect' and remember the implicit academic preference (bias?) for dialogue-based reflection. Be conscious of other forms of knowledge practices (visual, cinematic, performance based knowledges) that participants might have a preference for.

- Building in time for reflection can be time consuming for community practitioners who are often operating under huge pressures (in recent years of austerity and scarce funding opportunities). Based on learning from Chapter 7, this thesis recommends that reflection is built either into existing routines and rhythms of community work or in specific tasks that are beneficial to the development of community practitioners. Taking people outside of these rhythms of work (and without substantial return) can undermine future academic/practitioner partnerships.

- Spend time negotiating the aims, objectives and different interests among the different partners in the research, with the recognition that there will be differences and that differences can be a good thing: as long as they are made explicit and worked through with agreement over how these differences will be managed.

- Being very clear about the expectations (of the aims, the methods, how much time commitment is required as well as the end point of the research), will help manage the over-expectations that young idealistic researchers (like me!) often have!

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