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UCL Migration Research Unit
UCL Department of Geography
University College London
26 Bedford Way
London WC1H 0AP

www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/mru

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No 'Place' For Home:

Stories of Discomfort and Depoliticisation in the Privatisation of Dispersal Accommodation in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Lorna Kate Gledhill

UCL
Migration Research Unit

No ‘Place’ For Home:

Stories of Discomfort and Depoliticisation in the Privatisation of Dispersal Accommodation in Yorkshire and Humberside

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Lorna Kate Gledhill
September 2013

Supervisor: Dr. JoAnn McGregor

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I can only hope that this project articulates a small moment of solidarity with those whose precarious everyday lives are ever-more shifted and shaped by the whims of myopic politicians.

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List of Acronyms

COMPASS: Commercial and Operational Managers Procuring Asylum Support Services

G4S: Group 4 Securicor

LA: Local Authority

NASS: National Asylum Support Service

RAASS: Refugee and Asylum Advocacy and Support Sector

UKBA: United Kingdom Border Agency

Where Are We Now? January 2014

From strongly worded criticisms in the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into Asylum to recent revelations of G4S' main contractor in the region not paying Council Tax on any of their properties in Leeds, the management of housing provision for asylum seekers in Yorkshire and Humberside has been under intense governmental scrutiny over the last six months.

Many of the concerns articulated by my research participants seem to have recently materialised into fact. We have rapidly seen service provision severely damaged by a desire for profit, with pastoral care frequently pushed aside and housing standards plummeting. The COMPASS contract's neoliberal mantra of speed and cost-efficiency is starting to bear rotten fruits.

But perhaps this disease has taken root deeper than we first thought. We now find ourselves in a social, cultural and legislative environment which in which hostility towards migrants is accepted as a 'common-sense.' If the Immigration Bill comes into law in April this year, we will find ourselves in a situation where every individual in the UK may be forced to divulge their immigration status in order to access a plethora of public and private services, including the NHS, bank accounts, legal support and private rented housing. Many professionals working in these sectors will also find themselves expected to act as an outsourced border force for the government. This is a *privatisation* of immigration control, both in the sense that it is reconfigured as an operation kept at arm's length from the state, and in that the border is reconstructed in domestic, or private, settings away from traditional sites of immigration control.

Many critics often state that a restriction on the rights of asylum seekers and refugees is always a pilot for a more generalised movement towards regressive national policies. We've seen the very same neoliberal governmentality that was used to rationalise the privatisation of housing and support for asylum seekers being used to rationalise a wide-reaching reform our public services in the name of immigration control.

It's time to be more vigilant. We must start to learn from our mistakes, or we will all be faced with the rotten fruits of a neoliberal governmentality where our rights are increasingly disposable, delimited and degraded.

30.1.2014

Say this city has ten million souls,
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes:
Yet there's no place for us, my dear, yet there's no place
for us.

"Refugee Blues", W.H. Auden
(1939)

Introduction

Summer 2012: COMPASS

In July 2009, the Commercial and Operational Managers Procuring Asylum Support Services (COMPASS) contracts for "initial and dispersed accommodation and associated services for asylum applicants; and transport for asylum applicants" (Home Office & UKBA 2012) were put out for tender. The previous system (TARGET contracts) where individual Local Authorities (LA) in dispersal areas were contracted to organise housing and the provision of support, was redesigned and the UK was separated in six, trans-regional "super-contracts" (Burgess 2010: 123). By March 2012, the six contracts were awarded to three multi-national security companies: G4S, Serco and Clearel Ltd.

Summer 2013: Yorkshire and Humberside

Sat in the lounge of a young refugee mother as she fed her one year old son, I looked around at the sparsely decorated room. You could not see out of the bay windows that looked out onto the street. Her whole life was still in boxes; precarious towers of nappies, brightly coloured toys, bedding, and papers prevented the warm July sun from reaching my seat on the other side of the room. She had lived in six different COMPASS properties in the last six months: "It has made it so so difficult to make me settle – you know – and I've still got that fear that every accommodation that I'm

going to be provided with might be really nasty and disgusting, and you know, horrible."[1]

The COMPASS 'event' in Yorkshire and Humberside

Between these two events, the COMPASS contracts had been fully initiated; the transition period had passed, Council Asylum Teams had been dissembled and all asylum seekers had been accommodated by the new suppliers. According to the UKBA, this UK-wide transition of 19,000 recipients of housing support to the new contracts resulted in the physical move of just over 2,300 (12%) applicants (UKBA 2013).

Whilst ideological critiques of privatisation typified early responses to the contracts, wider concerns surrounding the operational capacities and practices of the new service provision have gained momentum over the last 12 months. The contracts are now forming part of the UKBA's investigation into asylum support, whilst concerns around the provision of housing and support within COMPASS has featured in all but one of the oral transcripts for the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into Asylum.[2] Equally, a number of charities and individuals have submitted specific evidence to the government focusing on the problems with the contracts (JRF 2013; Grayson 2013; Krause *et al.* 2013). The majority of scrutiny has fallen on G4S, the contract holder for the North East and Yorkshire and Humber, and the Midlands and East of England.

Arguably the privatisation of NASS housing[3] and support has brought a number of critical perspectives into focus. It is important to state that the involvement of private companies within the "asylum market"[4] is not new. However, their involvement has

1 Interview I, 17/07/2013.

2 Transcripts of oral evidence are available at www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs -commitee/inquiries/parliament-2010/asylum/

3 In 2006, NASS was dissolved and its functions incorporated within the general workings of the UKBA. However, the term "NASS housing" has proved to be a sticky label, and is frequently used by service providers and users to refer to all housing provided for those on Section 4 or Section 95 support. Like Hynes (2009), I will use this common terminology in my own research.

4 Term coined by Stephen Small, G4S contract manager, at a meeting in South Yorkshire with asylum-rights activists and campaigners at the beginning of the contract transition process.

previously been concentrated within the arenas of detention and deportation, rather than 'support' and 'humanitarian' sectors such as housing. Thus, with the introduction of these new contracts, narratives of privatisation, protection, and the 'placement' of asylum seekers within the UK begin to collide.

Through a series of conversational interviews with campaigners, advocates, sector workers and asylum seekers themselves in Yorkshire and Humberside, this research project aims to investigate the way in which these individuals *make sense* of the recent changes to NASS housing.

Setting the Scene

Yorkshire and Humberside has a long standing history of providing sanctuary for asylum seekers and refugees and has been a region with high levels of dispersal since the introduction of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. However, under the terms of COMPASS, the region has been merged with the North East, another region with high dispersal figures. The latest government figures (Q2 2013) reveal that Yorkshire and Humberside and the North East combined currently house more than 4,000 recipients of Section 95 support; over a fifth of all dispersal housing.[5] Rotherham (388), Stockton-On-Tees (490) and Middlesbrough (702) house the largest proportion of those on S95 in the region (See Appendix VII, fig. 2 & fig. 3).

Due to its history, the region has a large refugee and asylum advocacy and support sector (RAASS), providing front-line support services alongside more radical campaigning and activism work. As my research is focusing on how the changes to the provision of housing and support has affected both asylum seekers themselves and the RAASS, the presence of a strong network of charities and NGOs in the region is crucial.

This research project focuses on the provision and privatisation of housing for asylum seekers because it provides us with an interest nexus where concerns around the demographics of a nation, immigration, right to welfare and ideas of liberal hospitality

[5] Data on the geographical distribution of S4 applicants is not available.

collide. The “residentialist bias” (Papastergiadis 2010) of Western European states and the reification of owner occupation (Sivandanan 2013) can be seen to formulate a certain logic of ‘home’, by which the nation-state is only seen to be the rightful home to its resident nationals. Essentially, a focus on housing allows us to pay attention to the kind of geographical, political and social space asylum seekers and their advocates are afforded in the UK.

A focus on housing also allows for an approach that is sensitive to the everyday reproduction of certain diagrams of power and control in seemingly mundane settings. Taking inspiration from Vicky Squire's (2011) “analytics of irregularity”, this research aims to listen to the “everyday activities, performances and practices which recreate the marginality of asylum seekers” (Darling 2011b: 269). Discomfort and depoliticisation does not have to be exceptional; it can be fundamentally domestic.

Whilst there is nothing new about discomforts in the asylum process, the privatisation of housing and support under COMPASS introduced new actors and new concepts; humanitarian housing was now to be managed according to a different logic. If “accommodation becomes a key space through which a relation to the border is lived for asylum seekers” (Darling 2011b: 263), what happens if the provision of accommodation becomes subject to a market logic of efficiency, speed and ease of circulation? What happens to the 'place' of the asylum seeker in the UK if their very location in the country is subjected to the conditions of the market? Looking at how privatisation and neoliberalism takes place (Springer 2010) in the COMPASS event, the narrative approach of this study aims to look at the “in place” (Wiles *et al.* 2005: 98) experiences of those engaged with and experiencing contract change.

Through looking at “how they understand and attach meaning to situated experience, and produce the places in which their experiences occur” (ibid), we can begin to investigate the effects of shifting diagrams of governmental power on the actions and desires of asylum seekers and RAASS in the region (Gill 2009b: 187). Working to contribute to the debate concerning the 'place' of asylum seekers in Britain (Hubbard 2005: 4), this piece of research aims to flesh out existing theoretical narratives of domopolitics (Darling 2011b; Walters 2004) and the neoliberalisation of governmental

power (Springer 2010) in the situated experience of privatised NASS housing.

No choice of place to stay;
Belongings remain packed, ready for the next move.
Anytime, anywhere, anyhow as the locker man dictates.
Fear, sleepless nights, confusion, depression and stress,
Characterise all the veterans in the struggle.

'The Brown Envelope', performed by WAST (Women Asylum Seekers' Together) in Leeds, 21st July 2013.

Literature Review

This thesis will first outline the theoretical framework that has informed the development of the project. Tracing the development of the dispersal policy in the late 1990s, I contextualise the "institutionalised exclusion" (Carter & El Hassan 2003, in Hynes 2009: 101) of the asylum seeker from an increasingly nationalised welfare state, and consider the dissemination of border-zones (Squire 2011) into sites of social welfare. This legislative background informs the figuration of the asylum-seeker as administrative burden and national threat through the everyday governmentalities of domopolitics (Darling 2011b; Walters 2004). Next, I will consider the psycho-social effects (Gill 2009b) of these governmentalities through the distribution-logic of dispersal, and the marginalisation of the asylum-seeker's *presence* within the *domos-as-state* and the *domos-as-home* (Squire & Darling 2013). Finally, I will contextualise these critical trajectories within a wide-reaching theoretical discussion of neoliberalism, neoliberal governmentalities and the 'efficient' state (Ferguson & Gupta 2002; Springer 2010).

1: Welfare Restrictionism

Many scholars have recorded the influential changes to UK immigration policy that foreshadowed the introduction of dispersal in 1999 (Dwyer 2005; O'Mahony & Sweeney 2010; Phillips 2006: 542; Rahilly 1998; Zetter & Pearl 1999). The 1985

Housing Act excluded asylum seekers from LA homelessness support, whilst the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act and subsequent 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act removed asylum seekers from mainstream welfare support (Dwyer 2005; O'Mahony & Sweeney 2010: 303; Rahilly 1998: 244; Zetter and Pearl 2010: 680). The 1999 Act established the National Asylum Support System (NASS); a centralised body responsible for allocating both section 95 and section 4 support for asylum seekers. This “institutionalised exclusion” (Carter & El Hassan 2003, in Hynes 2009: 101) of the asylum-seeking individual from a nation's welfare-state can be understood in terms of both a 'nationalisation' of welfare and the transition from the border-as-site to the border-as-zone (Squire 2011).

1.1: 'Nationalisation' in the Welfare State

Through the allocation of welfare, the state is able to classify and categorise legitimate and illegitimate recipients of support; the 'deserving' and the 'underserving' poor (Sales 2002). However, when faced with the impossible numbers game of migration statistics, governments are left to manage the quotidian sites of belonging and citizenship (Squire 2011: 3). Increasingly, the organisation of welfare support for migrants in the UK is becoming a governmental technique to manage migration flows into the country. Whether that be the so called 'residency test' for European migrants before they are accepted on social housing registers, or the reduction of migrants' rights to free healthcare on the NHS, access to welfare is becoming a question of the 'deserving' national and the 'underserving' migrant.[6]

Changes to welfare provision created the legislative category of 'asylum-seeker', both 'fracturing' the refugee label (Zetter 2007, in Hynes 2009: 101; Tyler 2006: 189) and facilitating the marginalisation of the asylum seeker from state-support that was increasingly becoming exclusive to 'nationals'. In this respect, the state's distribution of welfare can be understood as an “organic boundary mechanism” (Laegaard 2007: 51). When the borders of the welfare state and the psycho-geographic boundaries of the nation-state are pushed into alignment, the asylum seeking individual can only be

[6] Edit 2014: The introduction of the new Immigration Bill 2013 crystallises this theoretical approach to the nationalisation and neoliberalisation of the Welfare State. See new Prologue for further information.

constructed as an unwelcome guest and a financial, social and national burden (Gibson 2003; Hubbard 2005; Rahilly 1998).

It is also important to briefly outline the contributory turn in recent political conceptualisations of welfare provision (Dwyer 2005). Ending the “culture of something for nothing” has become the catchphrase of the current Coalition government (Hennessy 2013). This principle of entitlement-through-contribution underwrites the exclusionary principles of a ‘national’ Welfare state in which the new migrant, by nature, cannot have contributed prior to arrival. When “welfare is not a right, but a finite resource which one must prove entitlement” (Bloch & Schuster 2005: 509), we encounter a “new racism” (Gibson 2003: 367) based on the positioning of the asylum-seeker as a foreign parasite. Through casting the asylum seeker as ‘unwelcome guest’, the nation-state can re-assert (imagined) borders; it claims to protect the *welfare of the state.*

1.2: Restructuring Welfare / Redistributing the Burdensome

With the establishment of dispersal the ideological became geographical; the ‘burdensome’ asylum seeking population needed to be 'fairly' distributed across the UK. This rationalised the provision of NASS housing for asylum seekers on a no-choice basis, often in hard-to-let areas with high levels of deprivation (Hunt 2005: 109-110; Hynes 2009: 100; Pearl & Zetter 2002: 238). Arguably, these changes to the welfare system and access to housing worked not only “to remove asylum seekers from the responsibility of the public sector” (Pearl & Zetter 2002: 230), but also to delegitimise the rights-based claims of asylum seekers to sufficient welfare support. In the words of Patricia Hynes (2009), “access to services such as housing has been restructured several times, with each restructuring resulting in a decline of entitlements and further exclusion of asylum seekers” (2009: 101).

2: Constructing Citizens and the Nation: the Governmentality of Welfare

The discursive and legislative experience of social welfare can be conceptualised in terms of 'soft' control in a more ‘mundane’ settings (Squire 2011; Vaughan-Williams 2010; Sirriyeh 2010). The border can no longer just be 'located' at the geographical

peripheries of the nation-state nor in its grammatical stasis as a noun; its classificatory mechanisms and conditioning principles are active practices, permeating all levels of social life. This is not to say that asylum seekers are not subjugated to "forceful, blunt forms of power", but that they are also experiencing "subtler governmental techniques" (Gill 2009b: 186). Triggering "multi-level networks" (Dwyer 2005: 627) of bordering practices and border experiences, some argue that there are "new configurations of power, new conceptions of territory and control." (Walters 2004: 253). The management of welfare as a bordering practice is, arguably, an act of governmentality.

2.1: Domopolitics and Welfare

Governmentality has been used as a useful critical framework for analysing the conditionality and conditioning effects of welfare distribution in the asylum process (Darling 2011b; 2013; Dwyer 2005; Walters 2004). More specifically, both Walters (2004) and Darling (2011b; 2013) have focused on the concept of domopolitics, a mode of governmentality concerned with governing the state-as-home and the 'domestication' of the foreign. Walters (2004) argues that the welfare state's inherent desire to identify, locate and produce certain types of citizen makes it a domopolitical project. Domopolitics works to maintain the illusion of a static national space or territory (Squire 2011: 12) by drawing together an "array of techniques of security designed to 'secure' and regulate the place of the 'homely' nation within a world of global flows" (Darling 2011b: 264). Fundamentally concerned with "fixing locations, imposing mobility and defining distributions" (Darling 2013: 6) in a world where this is becoming increasingly difficult, domopolitics aims to reconfigure state power in the "alignment of security, territory and nationhood in governance" (Darling 2009b: 264).

In governing the state as home, domopolitics purports the idea that there is some natural connection between birthplace and 'home'; the link between national and nation is assumed to be universal and inescapable (Walters 2004). Thus, the 'homeliness' of the nation relies on the coherence of the national family and the management of the 'unhomely' migrant. This is, quite literally, "social security." (Walters 2004) in which there is a clear confluence of the "logic of identification and

[the] logic of spatial containment." (Darling 2013: 7).

In terms of the domopolitics of dispersal housing, Darling argues that NASS created a "mode of circulation which is both highly disciplined and pervasively disciplining" (2011b: 268). The controls articulated through housing provision over the asylum seekers' *space* in the nation (no-choice allocation of housing), *length of stay* in the nation (integrated with asylum claim), and *conduct* within the nation (accommodation provision is heavily conditional), work to both contain and condition the asylum-seeking individual within the 'homely' nation. If they misbehave – refuse to accept dispersal accommodation, do not co-operate with immigration officials, or fail to report regularly – their 'right' to be accommodated in the nation-state is withdrawn (Perry 2005: 23). Echoed in Hubbard's (2005) discussion of the proposed introduction of asylum hostels, the space afforded to asylum seekers in the UK is forever constrained by a figuration of the hosting nation-state as someone else's home.

Thus, the provision of accommodation for asylum seekers in the UK can be conceptualised as another governmental technique that aims to identify the asylum seeker as a 'suspect body' that needs to be heavily regulated (Dwyer 2005; Gill 2009d; Sivanandan 2013; Walters 2004). If the nation is governed as home, it is consequently understood as "our place, where we belong naturally, and where, by definition, others do not" (Walters 2004: 241). Therefore, when migration is considered as something out of our control, what is at threat is not just the space of the *domos*, but the domestic; our way-of-life is conceptualised as under threat (Papastergiadis 2010: 352).

3: Dispersal: Unwelcome Visitors and the Inhospitable Host

Arguably, an attention to the house as not just a place where the asylum seeker is 'fixed', but a place where mobility, rights and access are regulated and managed (Gill 2009b; 2009d), is an important caveat to recent understandings of the internalisation, proliferation and normalisation of border zones in a multiplicity of mundane spaces. A "positioning of asylum seekers as forever at the border" (Darling 2011b: 264) in the

domopolitics of asylum accommodation is not to say that they are always at a site that demands either inclusion or exclusion, but to say that they are forever in the process of negotiating their presence in a seemingly unwelcome space.

3.1: Mobility and Governance

For some scholars, governmentality in the asylum process is concerned with a management or circulation of unease (Gill 2009c; Rygiel 2012: 219). Caught between a discourse of support and surveillance (Lewis *et al.* 2008: 33), dispersal accommodation's reflection of liberal toleration rather than hospitable housing identifies it as a site of discipline, marginality and discomfort (Darling 2011b: 266). These "emergent entanglements of governance" (Darling 2011b: 267) are not concerned with pure securitisation nor discipline - subjectification or objectification – but highlight complex diagrams of mobility and control. In attempts to "define the boundaries between […] those who are at home and those who are not" (Sirriyeh 2010: 214), there is a restructuring of asylum seekers' lived experiences of migration (Gill 2009d).

Gill (2009; 2009b) argues that mobility and controls over mobility are used in a number of disciplinary ways in the dispersal process (2009b: 187). This sentiment is echoed in a number of critiques of dispersal in general, where it is theorised as displacement from social networks (Bloch & Schuster 2005: 493), affective bonds (O'Mahony & Sweeney 2010: 297), and a technology of deterrence (Lewis *et al.* 2008; Hynes 2009; Phillips 2006). For Darling (2011b) and Rygiel (2012), these affective discomforts in the asylum process also work to rationalise the delimitation of rights from the asylum seeker and the refugee. Their "ontological homelessness" (O'Mahony & Sweeney 2010: 285) in the national home is a performative construction; the liminal status of the unwelcome guest both produces and justifies further discomforts. Rather than solely acting as an initiation procedure (Conlon & Gill 2013: 242), the discomforts in asylum accommodation reiterate an unwillingness to give geographical, ideological nor political space to the asylum seeking individual.

In light of this, a number of scholars have discussed the relationship between

discourses of hospitality and asylum (Darling 2009; 2011a; Gibson 2003; Squire & Darling 2013). Arguably, a reification of owner-occupation in Western democracies has perpetuated the idea that 'settlement' can be conceptualised in terms of a fixed house (Papastergiadis 2010: 344). This forms a "residentialist bias" in which the migrant is always cast in a negative light and as a threat to the supposedly bound, static nation-state (*ibid*: 352). Thus, the liminality of housing provision for asylum seekers can be conceptualised in terms of a discourse of visitation (Gibson 2003: 369) and the temporality of hosting (Squire & Darling 2013: 64). Forever shadowed by the fear that the host may not be able to continue hosting, discourses of hospitality are marked by a pervasive power imbalance between the grateful visitor and the sacrificing host (Darling 2011a: 412). This provides a rationalisation of the "moral panic"[7] (Robinson 2010) surrounding the *gifting* of social housing from a 'national' welfare state to 'dependent' migrants. A discourse of 'reasonable' hospitality, like 'reasonable' humanitarianism, can be co-opted (Every 2008) in order to rationalise the very lack of hospitable spaces within the asylum process. Sitting "on a precarious and sensitive political axis" (O'Mahony & Sweeney 2010: 296), social housing for asylum seekers becomes a place where ideas of homeland, belonging and *presence* are negotiated.

3.2: Refiguring a Politics of *Presence*

Before considering the ways in which these governmental controls can be reconfigured by the 'subjects' of control, it is important to briefly contextualise the incongruous idea of the "asylum tenant". The rights of asylum seekers as tenants in social housing were dissolved by the introduction of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act; in being removed from mainstream benefits systems, a corollary removal of general 'citizens' rights followed. This can be seen explicitly in the 'Mutual Agreement' document that supplants the place of a general tenancy agreement in NASS housing scenarios. The document states that "no tenancy or lease or any proprietary rights or interest is created by this agreement. Any Service User staying is at the will and discretion of G4S" (Mutual Agreement, 2013, Appendix II). The mutuality of this agreement is that power is ceded to the housing managers and

7 For examples of the media's 'moral' panic surrounding housing for asylum seekers, see the following selection of articles Hastings *et al* (2010); Dorrian (2009); Hall (2010)

housing providers over the asylum seeking individual. There can be no such thing as the asylum seeking tenant; they are merely guests in a space hosted by a private company. Arguably, then, this abjectification (Tyler 2013) of the asylum seeking resident functions through a process of 'disappearance' in which the asylum seeking individual is afforded no active legal presence in the NASS property.

What becomes a useful vocabulary for understanding the legislative and political positioning of asylum seekers in relation to the provision of dispersal housing is the relationship between concepts of abject spaces (Isin & Rygiel 2007), the process of abjectification (Tyler 2013) and the idea of a rightful presence (Darling 2013: 7; Squire & Darling 2013). The abject space, where the individual is neither a subject of discipline nor an object of elimination, is a space where the individual has no *presence.* This is not because they don't exist, but because "their existence is rendered invisible and inaudible" (Isin & Rygiel 2007, in Darling 2013: 7). The asylum seeker is at once hypervisible (Tyler 2006) as burden and threat and invisible as human agent; only figured in terms of the circulated discourse of stereotypes, the asylum-seeker is but a folk devil (Lynn & Lea 2003, in Hubbard 2005; Robinson 2010). Faced with a "legal and social desert at the very borders of visibility" (Tyler 2006: 187), an analytics of rightful presence aspires for justice, not inclusion, in the face of the 'crisis' mentality surrounding asylum (Squire & Darling 2013: 72). A consideration of 'rightful presence' demands both a critical analytics of the limitations of institutionalised rights-based discourses, and a redrawing of new spatial and discursive narratives of *being* in the nation-state (Darling 2011a; Gibson 2003; Squire & Darling 2013: 72). This is also echoed in Gill's (2009d) articulation of acts of 'co-presence' where asylum seekers and local communities work together to disrupt stereotypes; they are able to write their own *presence* through a sense of lived relationality. Being a "rightful claimant to support is something qualitatively very different than being a recipient that simply receives a gift from a person" (Korf 2007 in Darling 2011a). It becomes a question of refiguring a politics of *presence* in the face of geographic and social marginalisation.

3.3: Refiguring a Politics of *Mobility*

In a system of multiple displacements (Gill *et al.* 2011), the well-meaning calls of researchers and the third sector for 'safe', 'secure' and 'stable' housing provision (JRF 2013) flattens fixity into safety, and mobility into insecurity, running to the same binary logic in which liberal governmentality associates mobility with freedom and fixity with incarceration (Bigo 2011). It is at this juncture that the acts of citizenship literature can provide a re-routing of entrenched conceptualisations of mobility.

In these dispersed governmentalities, mobility and stillness can also be used by migrants as a means of survival and a resource of connectivity (Rygiel 2012b: 820) as well as providing tools for acts of resistance (Gill 2009b: n.p). The reclaiming of moments of stillness and mobility as moments of interruption (Conlon & Gill 2013: 245) in order to reconstitute a politics of becoming (Darling 2013) allows for "creative breaks in the given social and political order" (Isin & Nielsen 2008, in Rygiel 2012b: 813). Taking into account Papastergiadis' (2010) recasting of mobility in light of "complex theory" in which mobility is creative rather than solely destructive, we are able to understand mobility outside of both linear and binary concepts (2010: 355). Although we must not fetishise these 'moments' and 'events', they allow us to grasp "different concepts that can track the process by which levers slip into nodes and bases become networks" (*ibid*: 347); how migrants can command their own mobility and stillness (Gill 2009d) and draw their own diagrams of becoming.

4: Restructuring the State through Privatisation: A Neoliberal Governmentality?

Dispersal policy grew out of the adhoc emergency measures taken by some LAs in London and the South East in the late 1990s. Due to the increasing concentration of asylum claimants in the capital, certain LAs had begun to house new claimants in areas outside of their own wards, often in areas with lower priced housing stock (Hynes 2009: 101). A "fear of overwhelming numbers" (Bloch & Schuster 2005: 503) manifested itself as a social and financial emergency. Arguably, the restructuring of NASS support in 2012 was also foreshadowed by a similar social and geographic figuration of emergency in the guise of the financial crisis and austerity. Cast in the

shadow of budget cuts and increasing poverty, the outsourcing of housing and support for asylum seekers from the public sector is not only rationalised through nationalism, but through neoliberalism.

4.1: Neoliberalism and Asylum

The fairer, faster, firmer logic of New Labour's restructuring of the asylum process has been described both in terms of modernisation (Walters 2004: 238) and in terms of “speed” (Darling 2009b: 266). Even in the National Audit Office's own analysis of NASS support in 2005, efficiency was cited as a key rationale for the eventual diagram of service provision introduced in 1999 and the restructuring of the system in the late 2000s (NAO 2005: 7). Designed with administrative and financial 'efficiency' in mind, the ideological formation of the dispersal system can be easily figured in terms of a specific “joined up network of governance” (Dwyer 2005: 627) designed around neoliberalism.

4.2: (Neo)liberal Governmentality

The combination of protecting the state-as-home (domopolitics) and running the state like a business has combined to produce a strange mode of governance. For Bigo (2011) and Conlon & Gill (2013), this intersect potentially highlights a paradox of liberal governmentality. Whilst liberal governmentality is reliant on the management of mobility in order to ensure the efficient freedom of some at the costs of the control of others (Bigo 2011: 31), the liberal *government* demands a system without overarching state intervention (Conlon & Gill 2013: 241). This concern with how to produce a society that can “at once be governed and be a partner in its own governing” (Conlon & Gill 2013: 242) can be further understood through the prism of *neoliberal* governmentality.

Coined by Ferguson & Gupta in 2002, neoliberal governmentality is described as a particular modality of governance that functions through distance (2002: 989). Transferring risk onto the ‘enterprise’ of the individual and devolving responsibility for discipline onto the ‘free’ subject, neoliberal governmentality can be conceptualised in terms of the reworking of scales of responsibility and the reification of market logic

and the enterprise model (*ibid*: 989). Alongside this circulation of market logic, Springer (2010) also identifies neoliberal governmentality as the "transformative practices through which the capitalist expansion became tied to a legitimising neoliberal discourse of progress and development." (2010: 1033). Therefore, the market logic of neoliberalism (Springer 2010) demands a rescaling of responsibility that keeps the state at a distance.

4.3: Neoliberalism and the Age of Consensus

The legitimisation of market logic within neoliberal governmentalities is evident in the recent restructuring of asylum accommodation. If the asylum-seeking population is forever figured as a financial and social liability (Dwyer 2005: 624; Hubbard 2005: 11; Malloch & Stanley 2005: 55), it is arguable that the outsourcing of their 'management' is the next logical step in the trajectory of neoliberal governmentality; the restructuring of public areas for private profit is understood as 'economic common sense' (Hall *et al*. 2013: 18) in the context of austerity. Following on from the removal of asylum seekers from the "responsibility of the public sector" (Dwyer 2005: 623; Pearl & Zetter 2002: 230), outsourcing the administration of housing and support for asylum seekers to the private sector can allow the state to fore-go certain responsibilities and duties towards the asylum-seeking population.

Thus, in neoliberal governmentality's attempt to order the conduct of conduct (Springer 2010) according to market logic, the increase in privatisation can be accompanied by a decrease in political debate. This is arguably the age of consensus politics (Darling 2013; Grayson 2013b; Hall *et al.* 2013; Papastergiadis 2010) in which the mantra of 'there is no alternative' has taken hold; we have focused on operationalization rather than justification (Bloch & Schuster 2005: 491; Gill 2009b: 187). In the same way that the crisis politics of financial collapse has provided an alibi for the restructuring of the state and society along market lines (Hall *et al.* 2013: 10), the asylum-invasion crisis (Tyler 2013) has provided an unlimited justification for the destruction of an active political space in which a rights-based discussion of asylum seekers' access to housing to take place. We're faced with such a semantically satiated debate that we struggle to think, let alone act, beyond the pre-

set parameters of 'legitimate' beliefs:

> "Neoliberal ideas seem to have sedimented into the Western imaginary and become embedded in popular 'common sense.' They set the parameters – provide the 'taken-for-granteds' – of public discussion, media debate and popular calculation" (Hall *et al.* 2013: 17).

Much like Ranciere's police order, where the construction of hierarchy and 'location' masquerades as the natural (Darling 2013: 5), neoliberal governmentality demands a common commitment to the acceptable limits of working with and within the framework of the market.

4.4: Neoliberalisation and the Voluntary Sector

Finally, it is important to briefly outline how neoliberalism and neoliberal governmentality has been conceptualised in terms of the changing relationship between society, state and the third sector. Scholars have repeatedly highlighted concerns over the internalisation of certain aspects of governmental logic within the voluntary sector (Conlon & Gill 2013; Gill 2010; Independence Panel 2013; Judge 2010: 13; Nielson 2009; Noxolo 2009; Zetter and Pearl 2010), but there should be increasing concerns about the neoliberalisation of the voluntary sector. With the consolidation of contract culture and the barren funding landscape, the independence of the third sector can be seen as under threat (Independence Panel 2013).

When the relationship between state and space, system and society, is considered to be in a constant dialectic of production (Ferguson & Gupta 2002: 984), the process of neoliberalisation (Springer 2010: 1029) in its mutated forms demands joined up governance for maximum efficiency. As the asylum seeking individual is moved around an increasingly administrative system, they are moved downwards towards the support of the third sector and sideways away from the state's direct control (Dwyer 2005: 623). This spatial articulation of neoliberalism's effect on service

provision is crucial for understanding the redrawn diagrams of responsibility in the privatisation process: “how asylum seekers are being excluded from Western Nations' sphere of moral responsibility to non-citizens” (Every 2008: 224).

5: Setting the Scene

Through looking at the supposedly “hospitable space” (Gibson 2003: 367) of the home in the supposedly hospitable place of the Western democratic nation, this project aims to contribute to research regarding the discursive and spatial “place” (Hubbard 2005) afforded to asylum seekers in the UK. Triggered by the privatisation of housing provision in 2012, it first aims to look at how neoliberalism “takes place” (Springer 2010: 1031) and restructures space in the COMPASS housing contracts. Secondly, it will consider how asylum seeking individuals and the RAAS sector have positioned and navigated the contracts. Finally, inspired by a relational approach to space that demands an attention to the spatial grammar of becoming and solidarity rather than the fixed nouns of being and belonging, it will look at the ontogenetic processes (Rygiel 2012b: 817) of resistance and solidarity in challenges to housing provision.

Ethics is not simply a matter of following rules and procedures, as is often the focus of research ethics, but should inform all aspects of the discursive interactions between people.

Pittaway *et al.* 2010: 241

'So, you're from the Home Office right?' A Methodology of Ethics

Waiting to talk to a volunteer at a well-established drop-in for individuals seeking asylum in South Yorkshire, a service user engaged me in conversation. He told me that he was a regular attendee of the drop-in and that he knew most of the people involved. About one minute into our conversation, he suddenly asked me: 'you're from the Home Office right?' Surprised by my shocked response, he explained that the week before a woman that was rumoured to have been a Home Office official had been sitting in exactly the same place where I now found myself. This small incident interrupted what I felt was my self-evident role as a researcher-advocate (Silove *et al.* 2002) and raised some important questions regarding the construction of an ethical methodological approach.

The methodology of my research – from the structuring of research practice to the selection of analytical approach – was driven by a politics of ethics. For this reason, this chapter will outline key ethical considerations before describing the eventual trajectory of methodological practice.

1: A Question of Power: The Politics of Ethics in Refugee Research

From questions of co-optation (Darling 2011a; 2013), issues of visibility (Nyers 1999) and emotional sensitivity (Hynes 2009), and the figuration of the 'vulnerable' research subject (Pittaway *et al.* 2010), academics and practitioners within asylum and refugee

studies have problematised traditional research practices. In the main, concerns have revolved around ideas of informed consent (Hugman *et al.* 2010; MacKenzie *et al.* 2007), the reciprocal nature of research outcomes (Pittaway *et al.* 2010) and remapping the researcher-researched power relation (Doná 2007; O'Neill & Harindranath 2006). Fundamentally, a commitment to a methodology of ethics (Doná 2007; Hugman *et al.* 2010; MacKenzie *et al.* 2007; Pittaway *et al.* 2010) is both a political and practical choice; it is a question of power.

Essentially, the main ethical question can be reduced to this: "how do researchers engage with refugees as human subjects?" (Hugman *et al.* 2010: 255). Rather than replicating the subjectifying discursive fix of the 'vulnerable' asylum-seeker without the capacity to give informed consent, how can we attempt to empower through research? How can we ensure that our research practices do not work in similar ways to the classificatory and conditioning logic of everyday governmentalities?

2: Ethically Inflected Methodology

This research project has been heavily influenced by the political framework of reciprocal research (Hugman *et al.* 2010; Pittaway *et al.* 2010). The principle of reciprocity "suggests that the risks and costs associated with participation in research can be offset by the delivery of direct, tangible benefits to those who participate" (Pittaway *et al.* 2010: 234). A commitment to reciprocity demands that we practice what we preach; the very same hegemonic structural powers that are the subject of our academic critique need to be equally challenged in our methodological approach.

Influenced by a Foucauldian understanding of power as a network with multifarious points of (re)application, some have claimed that researchers and participants are "vehicles of power, not its points of application, across complex and dynamic net-likes systems" (Doná 2007: 211). Thus we need to engage with the 'microphysics' (*ibid*) that form a relational understanding of autonomy (MacKenzie *et al.* 2007: 306) in order to respect the *capacity of* and a r*ight to* power and autonomy for all research participants (*ibid*: 310). Secondly, in order to enact reciprocal and relational methods of research, the researcher must be understood as a situated, political and subjective

actor within the research event. The “aerobatics” (Marston *et al.* 2005: 422) of claims to objectivity and impartiality exploit asymmetries of power between the supposed “God’s-eye-view” (*ibid*) of the researcher and the researched object, reducing both a capacity for and right to agency for the research subject. Until we recognise our own political subjectivity as the 'researcher', we cannot begin to address the ethical problematic of power (Ezzy 2002: 34)

However, the alignment of political considerations with practical research methods can be problematic. Some of the reciprocal research designs posited by authors such as Hugman *et al.* (2010) and Pittaway *et al.* (2010) are arguably only possible in large-scale research projects, with extra-time, funding and resources built in to accommodate the activities of reciprocal research. Equally, a commitment to polyvocality (O'Neill & Harindranath 2006: 46) and joint access to research data has knock-on ethical considerations for confidentiality and anonymity. One must be careful to balance the political motivations of the researcher with the practical capacities of one’s research.

Therefore, I can only claim to be incorporating part of the methodologies that so fit my political positioning. Due to the geographically dispersed nature of my research project, alongside a short time in the field, the methodological approach can only really be described as reciprocal research on a small scale. I hope to have incorporated an ethics of reciprocity and co-creation (O'Neill & Harindranath 2006: 49) that has critically informed how I positioned myself as a researcher and how I conducted the day-to-day activities of my research.

3: The ‘Microphysics of Autonomy’ and Small-scale Reciprocal Research: Researching COMPASS in Yorkshire and Humberside

I decided to focus on the RAASS and individuals in the asylum process in Yorkshire and Humberside for the reasons outlined in my introduction: a well-established RAASS in the region, a history of dispersal under previous provision and a large current population of those in NASS housing. Equally, my situated position as an individual who had previously worked with the RAASS in the region gave me a good working knowledge of the regional set-up and initial contacts.

Initially, I worked to 'map' the problem, identifying the key changes to service provision brought about through the initiation of the COMPASS housing and support contracts in March 2012. On the back of this new diagram of power and provision, my aim was to access a variety of individuals who had experienced changes to service provision in different ways – from individuals with experiences of being accommodated in NASS housing (within the last 12 months), to formal employees within the RAASS, and those who position themselves more as active campaigners and activists. This was not to triangulate to a certain 'true' story of NASS housing in Yorkshire and Humberside, but to work towards gathering a number of stories from a variety of angles (Eastmond 2007). The criteria for participation was intentionally broad as to not exclude the voices of willing participants. Aside from the geographical remit, all participants needed to have confident English language skills whilst asylum seeking or refugee participants needed to have had been housed under the COMPASS contracts sometime within the last 12 months.

3.1: Access

The next stage was to contact those in the RAASS in the region. Initial contact was made through an email that introduced the project, provided a formal explanation of what it meant to be involved in the project and a number of different ways to contact the researcher (See Appendix I and II for an example). Throughout the interview process, I was introduced to a number of individuals and organisations that I had not initially contacted, so a second 'wave' of initial contact was made in order to further the remit of my data.

I decided that access to individuals in the asylum process would be garnered through the use of multiple and alternative gatekeepers (Hynes 2009: 103), therefore all these participants were accessed through personal introductions from members of the RAASS. I felt that approaching these individuals in spaces of care and support – such as drop-ins and social events - without prior introduction from an organisation or individual had the potential to unfairly disrupt and disturb the support service in place. Equally, I felt (both emotionally and practically) that I would be fulfilling the narrative of the researcher who 'parachutes' in and takes information regardless of building

any personal relationships of trust and reciprocity (MacKenzie 2007: 306). Whilst one interview with an asylum seeking individual was conducted in the setting of a drop-in, this was only through a personal introduction and with the negotiated consent of the participant.

The final make up of interviews consisted of 4 individuals with recent experience (within the last 12 months) of asylum housing in the region – two housed in South Yorkshire and two in West Yorkshire[8] – and 12 individuals working at various levels within the Refugee and Asylum Advocacy and Support Sector in Yorkshire and Humberside – eight based in West Yorkshire and four in South Yorkshire (See Appendix VI).[9]

When conducting interviews with asylum seekers or refugees, I offered a skill-share in return for the time they gave to be interviewed. In the context of the potential misunderstanding of the power of the researcher to make direct changes to the lives of individuals involved (Pittaway et al. 2010: 231), the skill-sharing model aimed to both horizontalise the asymmetry of power between researcher and the researched as well as demonstrate a small-scale model of reciprocal research design. Returned skills included basic country of origin research to support a fresh claim, as well as supporting an individual in writing a letter of complaint. All participants were asked whether they would like to be sent a copy of the final research report and whether they would be interested in participating in a prospective workshop on the topic in September.

3.2: Negotiated Consent

My methodological design also followed a model of flexible and iterative consent (MacKenzie *et al.* 2007: 306; Pittaway *et al.* 2010) which echoed my commitment to

[8] Participants are only identified by their self-identified role and broad geographical area. This decision was made after multiple conversations with participants who felt they could be identified if specific towns or cities were mentioned.

[9] The precise details of individuals' asylum claims, alongside country of origin information, were irrelevant to the remit of my research and thus I did not ask nor record this information. In the context of increased surveillance and classification of the asylum-seeking body, I felt that omitting this officialdom from my research questions allowed for a less invasive and more equal interview experience.

relational models of power and autonomy. Whilst all participants were asked to sign a written consent form (see Appendix III) that was explained verbally and in print, I purposively designed my consent forms to offer moments of autonomy to the participant. I broke 'consent' down into a number of different statements that could be negotiated separately; questions of audio-recording, confidentiality and voluntary participation could be answered in isolation and not just encompassed under a generalised *signature* of consent. Equally, the form was designed with a small tear-off strip detailing my contact information for all participants, and was offered alongside a verbal reiteration of the participants' right to withdraw from the research at any time. This seemingly small gesture was able to act symbolically as a distribution of power and agency to the research participant; their *right to* and *capacity for* autonomous action was respected. Equally, a number of variables were discussed with each individual participant, from where the interview took place to the practicalities of anonymity and confidentiality. For most members of the RAASS, interviews were conducted on their premises, whilst for those with experiences of asylum accommodation a number of different locations were used, from the office of RAASS charity to the front room of an individual's house. Two interviews (F and M) were group sessions; the decision to have a group interview was, in both occasions, initiated by the participants.

4: Telling Stories / Analysing Narrative

An interview schedule (see Appendix IV) was used as a prompt in interviews with those in the RAAS, whilst interviews with those in the asylum process were more fluid and participant led. Interviews were audio-recorded (with the consent of participants), transcribed and anonymised prior to being subject to narrative analysis (Wiles *et al.* 2005). All data was secured securely on a password protected server as to protect the confidentiality of all research participants.

Interviews were semi-structured and conversational in order to elicit a narrative response; I was interested in stories of asylum accommodation rather than just the statistics. There is an art to everyday narrative as our selves and lives are discursive effects: "the subject is constituted through discourse, and discourse provides the

means of articulation and action" (Foucault 2003, in Fadyl and Nicholls 2013: 25). Moving away from essentialist understandings of oral narrative as a 'window into the soul' (see Linde 1986 for an example), an attention to eliciting stories and narratives from allowed for a greater sensitivity both the performativity of language and the constructedness of the interview text (Fadyl & Nicholls 2013: 26; Wiles *et al.* 2005).

A focus on narrative in research with refugee and asylum seeking individuals has also been discussed as an explicitly political choice. For some, the use of biographical research techniques can work to undermine the linear narratives defined and demanded by UKBA and state-demanded 'documentation' (Plummer 2001). This positioning of the messy, contradictory and situated *human* document against the officialdom of passports, resident papers and visas works to combat the dominant power/knowledge axis of the asylum-*issue* (O'Neill & Harindranath 2006: 42).

Fundamentally, narratives and narrative analysis can help "tell us something about how social actors, from a particular social position and cultural vantage point, make sense of the world" (Eastmond 2007: 250). As this research is fundamentally concerned with how the RAASS and asylum seeking individuals have positioned themselves in relation to, and how they've found themselves positioned by, the introduction of the COMPASS contracts, an attention to narrative allows us to analyse both their modes of representation and reasoning (Wiles *et al.* 2005: 90).

5: Limitations

There are a number of limitations to the sampling strategy used for this research project. Access to those within the asylum process was impossible without the help of participants in the RAASS. It is therefore possible that candidates were selected in order to illustrate the points of view of that specific gatekeeper. Equally, this political model of research design made it difficult to access a large number of participants. Thus, this research project does not claim to be representative; it is a situated account of situated individuals.

The privatisation of asylum provision and securitisation has significant depoliticising effects. It allows for a partial foreclosure of dissent and debate, as asylum becomes an issue of outsourced responsibility, multiple and shifting accountability and procedural practices of 'disciplining, quantification and benchmarking.'

Swynegdouw 2011, in Darling 2013: 10

CHAPTER ONE

Conceptualising COMPASS: Making Sense of Contract Culture

With the reorganisation of NASS housing provision through the COMPASS contracts, asylum seekers and advocacy groups in Yorkshire and Humberside were faced with an entirely privatised system. This chapter will look at the ways respondents have made sense of COMPASS as an event of privatisation. It will consider how privatisation has 'taken place'; how housing provision has been operationally, geographically and discursively (re)assembled, (re)imagined and (re)interpreted (Springer 2010: 1033) by members of the RAASS and those with experience of being housed under COMPASS. This chapter will introduce the three main understandings of the new service provision articulated in respondents' narratives of contract change: incomprehensibility, anonymity and inhumanity.

1: Incomprehensibility

One of the key features of respondents' understanding of COMPASS was the depiction of the private sector as incomprehensible. Referring to what became known as the transition period (the overlap between the existing TARGET contracts and the new COMPASS contracts) a number of respondents from the RAASS drew direct comparisons between a 'knowable' council service and the unknowability of the new privatised provision. Two very experienced members of the RAASS in both West and South Yorkshire highlighted the detrimental loss of expertise in the dissolution of the council Asylum Teams, the civil servants previously responsible for the administration

of the housing and support contracts.[10] These concerns were often accompanied by a heightened awareness of the asymmetrical distribution of knowledge, power and control in the administration of housing and support. Fundamentally, these narratives of power and knowledge affected the ways in which many respondents positioned themselves in relation to COMPASS.

The monopolisation of information within the managerial layer of the contract was identified as a key issue by a number of respondents[11], with access to information frequently garnered through *adhoc*, informal methods.[12] One respondent articulated his difficulty in accessing certain information about the changes to the contract: "to find out, we have to work pretty hard, and when we do find out the news isn't good. And I guess that was always the fear; that these things would happen behind closed doors."[13] This conceptualisation of the private sector as an inaccessible body that works in 'shadowy' and incomprehensible ways was also posited in comparison to the transparency of the third sector, exemplified by the voluntarily run 'multi-agency meetings' that allow for horizontal information exchange between the RAASS in the region.[14] What can be identified is a certain vertical conceptualisation of power and control within the privatisation of housing and support provision. When "information is trickling very very slowly through,"[15] the hierarchical organisation of bureaucracy positions the contract holders at the top, frontline services at the bottom and individuals in the asylum process being buffered around in between.

A number of respondents identified subcontracting as another demonstration of this asymmetry of power; the introduction of multiple private actors within service provision made the system even less navigable. For one respondent, this manifested itself as confusion: "I got confused a lot because we got a letter saying G4S will be taking over and we got rehoused by Cascade."[16] This inability of knowing who's doing what and where was also cited as problematic for the RAASS:

10 Interview A, 24/06/2013; Interview E, 04/07/2013
11 Interview B, 24/06/2013; Interview C, 24/06/2013
12 Interview B, 24/06/2013; Interview C, 24/06/2013; Interview Miv, 17/07/2013
13 Interview Miv, 17/07/2013
14 Interview A, 24/06/2013; Interview B, 24/06/2013; Interview C, 24/06/2013
15 Interview C, 24/06/2013
16 Interview I, 15/07/2013

> "There's a problem, you call UKBA. Oh you need to call G4S. You call G4S, guess who you need to call: UKBA. So that was the start of the weakening of that kind of accountability we had before […] with the council to some extent."[17]

The blurred lines of responsibility within private provision are once again discursively positioned against the perceived 'accountability' of previous council provision; even the institutionalised acronyms of the UKBA and G4S seem inaccessible in comparison to the 'local' council. Similar to one respondent's use of multiple clauses in her articulation of subcontracted service provision - "it's not the city council and their relationship with G4S, it's ur with the UKBA, it's the housing provider, it's G4S, it's UKBA"[18] - these depictions become verbal imitations of an inaccessible, tortuous cartography of housing provision under the new contracts. According to a project manager in West Yorkshire, "this system of things being subcontracted and subcontracted never works; it never works for the people that are using this so-called service."[19] For those who live and work within its blurred diagrams of responsibility and accountability, subcontracting and outsourcing is about more than an institutional reorganisation of service provision.

2: Anonymity

The unknowability of the newly privatised system was also articulated through mobilising the idea of the 'faceless' private sector. Discussing her experiences as an asylum seeker looking for support under the previous contracts, one respondent explained the differences she found in new service provision:

> "If there's any problems, you know who to complain to, you can just walk into the council and make a complaint. But we don't have that situation with G4S – we don't even know where they're based."[20]

17 Interview L, 24/07/2013
18 Interview Fi, 04/07/2013
19 Interview B, 24/06/2013
20 Interview I, 15/07/2013

Similar to another asylum-seeking individual's experience of not knowing where housing providers and G4S were based,[21] this positioning of the new contract holders as an abstracted body, with unknowable individuals in unknown places, can contribute to the physical and psychological isolation of the asylum seeking individual from avenues of support. What is interesting here is how these individuals conceptualise their *capacity* to engage with the contract holders in spatial terms. Remembering the way she could "just walk into the council", and how she knew where to go - "with the council, if you're in Leeds, Manchester, or Sheffield or London, or wherever there's a council office, [you] go in there and there's somebody to speak to you face to face"[22] - her ability to access support and engage with the process is linked to the *placedness* of council provision.

For one respondent in the RAASS, the increased anonymity and inaccessibility of service provision threatened an outsourcing of the state's responsibility:

> "My main concern is that if the government is handing over responsibility to a private contractor to do something, the government is effectively handing over its moral responsibility, say urm you know how you do it and make whatever money. […] Those private firms aren't interested, primarily at least, interested in urm the care and support side of it, they're more interested in their shareholders."[23]

This redrawing of 'moral responsibility' as something that is mutable within the framework of neoliberal streamlining raises a number of questions in terms of the provision of protection for asylum seekers in the UK. Marked by a distrust of the motivations of the private sector, this story of privatisation sees responsibility become subject to the whim of profit and the desires of shareholders rather than the essentials of international protection.

21 Interview Miii, 17/07/2013
22 Interview I, 15/07/2013
23 Interview Fi, 04/07/2013

3: Inhumanity

For many, the incomprehensibility and anonymity of privatised service provision was articulated in terms of dehumanisation. In the words of one female asylum seeker accommodated in West Yorkshire, the change in the housing set-up had very tangible effects:

> "When I was with Clare House [Initial Accommodation], I had that trust and I had that emotional support. […] I could pop in if I had any problems and I had a support worker who'd come to see me often, all the time call me to find out if I'm ok, or if I'm not ok. And at least that gave me something, this somebody who's trying to understand you and somebody who is trying to support you."[24]

The visibility of support that this individual experienced under the previous council provision was not mirrored in her narratives of current service provision. It was the face-to-face connection between that "somebody" and the individual receiving support that humanised service provision and imbued it with a pastoral, holistic quality.

Respondents varied in their opinions of why a privatised service would be less humane. For some, the market-logic of private companies was considered to be completely incongruous with the idea of humanitarian or social housing.[25] Whilst it was acknowledged that private companies were subcontracted in the previous council-run set-up[26], many felt that the full privatisation of the service signalled dissolution of principles of care and dignity from the provision of housing.[27] For

24 Interview Miii, 17/07/2013
25 Interview C, 24/06/2013; Interview D, 03/07/2013; Interview Miv, 17/07/2013
26 Interview C, 24/06/2013
27 Interview Mi, 17/07/2013; Interview C, 24/06/2013; Interview D, 03/07/2013; Interview Miv, 17/07/2013

others, the key rationale for this decline was the profit motive of private companies.[28]

Speaking explicitly about G4S, one respondent in South Yorkshire explained how the increasing marketization of support services would have inescapable effects on the humanity of service provision:

> "They're a money grabbing, you know, corporate capitalist business, and that's their job. However, if they are your criteria for housing, then you're going to see changes in housing won't you. You'd expect to see quality going down, peoples' rights being diminished, peoples' human rights and liberty and anonymity being compromised, and we've seen all of those things."[29]

For this individual, privatisation is conceptualised as something that forces a reorganisation of priorities. When profit-motive takes centre-stage, aspects of pastoral support – represented by ideas of liberty and human rights – are increasingly side-lined in favour of a more streamlined system. This is the logic of the "asylum market"[30], where the provision and administration of international protection becomes a lucrative business (Burgess 2010: 125). In the words of one volunteer in South Yorkshire, "when money takes over […] you're not thinking primarily about human rights and human beings, you're talking about bottom lines."[31]

Fundamentally, the 'business model' of privatisation was conceptualised as an inflexible, one-size-fits all approach to a more complex provision of welfare. Referencing previous council provision, it was conceived to have "a bit of give in the system"[32] and to have made space for care and wellbeing activities.[33] This need for

28 Interview E, 04/07/2013; Interview C, 24/06/2013; Interview Miv, 17/07/2013; Interview Mi, 17/07/2013; Interview Fi, 04/07/2013.
29 Interview L, 24/07/2013
30 Interview L, 24/07/ 2013
31 Interview Fi, 04/07/2013
32 Interview B, 24/06/2013
33 Interview Fii, 04/07/2013

"a bit of slack"[34] in the provision of "humanitarian housing"[35] is something that the newly privatised system was seen to lack. One respondent felt that the Council's "social welfare housing […] mapped people into key services,"[36] whilst the new streamlined "private contract culture" was typified by "very few obligations placed on connecting people into services."[37] By being connected to a number of institutions, communities and support under the previous contract arrangement with local authorities, asylum seekers were also made more visible as active, human subjects. They were allowed to circulate within a wider network of holistic support, rather than just being an administrative burden to be redistributed. In this sense, the inflexibility and profit-mentality of the "privatised model"[38] works to reaffirm the objectification of the asylum-seeking body as something to be quantified and managed (Swynegdouw 2011, in Darling 2013: 10).

For other respondents, the inhumanity of this new privatised model meant that someone was able to profit from the discomfort of others:

> "There's not much caring – oh what they're after is as much profit as they can. […] I think it's wrong for somebody to benefit from somebody else misery and struggle and pain and heartache. […] Making profit out of somebody's misery, who's also a human being, that's wrong."[39]

The introduction of the profit motive causes an interesting reconceptualisation of the actors and subjects of power and control. Whilst the understanding of the state as an agent of discomfort has appeared in a number of other critical discussions of the UK asylum system, it seems that profit-motive has the capacity to translate these feelings of subjugation into ones of exploitation. The dehumanising experiences of the asylum system are recast in the shadow of marketization; "they put humans' lives

34 Interview Fii, 04/07/2013
35 Interview L, 24/07/2013
36 Interview C, 24/06/2013
37 Interview C, 24/06/2013
38 Interview Miv, 17/07/2013
39 Interview Miii, 17/07/2013

in danger for the love of money."[40]

4: Making Sense of Senselessness

Nevertheless, some understood the incoherence, anonymity and inhumanity of privatised service provision as symptomatic of a system that just doesn't make "sense."[41]

> "So for example, someone's got a relatively simple problem to fix with their house, let's say the washing machine isn't working, whose responsibility is that? Is it my landlord? Is it Live Management? Is it G4S? Is it UKBA? And people were led on a merry dance between those, sometime deliberately – I think to obfuscate and obscure critics – sometimes because I think the system just wasn't working."[42]

The obfuscation of responsibility through the subcontracted service provision is articulated through a narrative of incompetence as well as one of deliberate control. This sequence of interrogative questions without answers articulates a system that isn't "working"; it doesn't make sense. A number of respondents also reflected on the ways in which incoherence manifested itself as incompetence in service provision. Recalling a family who moved into a property without a functioning kitchen, one respondent detailed the subsequent incompetence of 'support' from the housing provider: "a rudimentary kitchen was fitted, and they fitted the worktop over the hob so then she couldn't use her hob." [43] Similar to narratives of individuals being housed miles from supermarkets that accept Azure cards[44] or Post-Offices where they can pick up support tokens[45], these manifestations of incompetence become part of a generalised discourse of discomfort and a lack of respect exacerbated by the irrationalities of a support service run for profit.

40 Interview I, 15/07/2013
41 Interview D, 03/07/2013
42 Interview L, 24/07/2013
43 Interview B, 24/06/2013
44 Interview D, 03/07/2013
45 Interview Mi, 17/07/2013

G4S and the housing providers' spatial distancing from the everyday lived experiences of those in their 'care' – both in terms of a vertical hierarchy of knowledge and the expanding chains of subcontracted companies - complicate the capacity for accountability and oversight within their own mechanisms. Concerned with quantification and efficient distribution, it does not give sufficient space for support; this system "is not functioning"[46] because it neither provides nor protects. This is not just about gaps into provision due to changing policy (Phillips 2006: 551). It is about a restructuring of the physical and political space afforded to the asylum-seeking individual within an increasingly neoliberal approach to care.

CHAPTER TWO

Experiencing COMPASS: (New) Geographies, (New) Geometries

During the transition process between the two contracts, it became clear that G4S were struggling to procure properties in certain parts of the region. Areas in West and South Yorkshire which previously accommodated relatively high numbers of asylum seekers were seeing a decrease in the number of new arrivals in their towns and cities, whilst parts of the North East (Middlesbrough and Stockton-On-Tees) were experiencing a relative increase (see Figure 1). This geographical shift was explained to those working in the sector through an email from the regional UKBA office:

> "You will be aware that UK Border Agency are now providing accommodation to eligible asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers via the new COMPASS contract with G4S. [...] As with all changes, we are experiencing some operational issues, particularly with regard to the availability of accommodation in the south of the region. In order to meet our obligations in accommodating eligible persons we are primarily dispersing people to the north of the region currently and expect this to continue in the short term whilst capacity is built up across the region as a whole."
>
> *(UKBA July 2012)*

46 Interview C, 24/06/2013

In a number of articles in mainstream and local media, it was suggested that the severe budgetary cuts to housing and support in the COMPASS project had meant

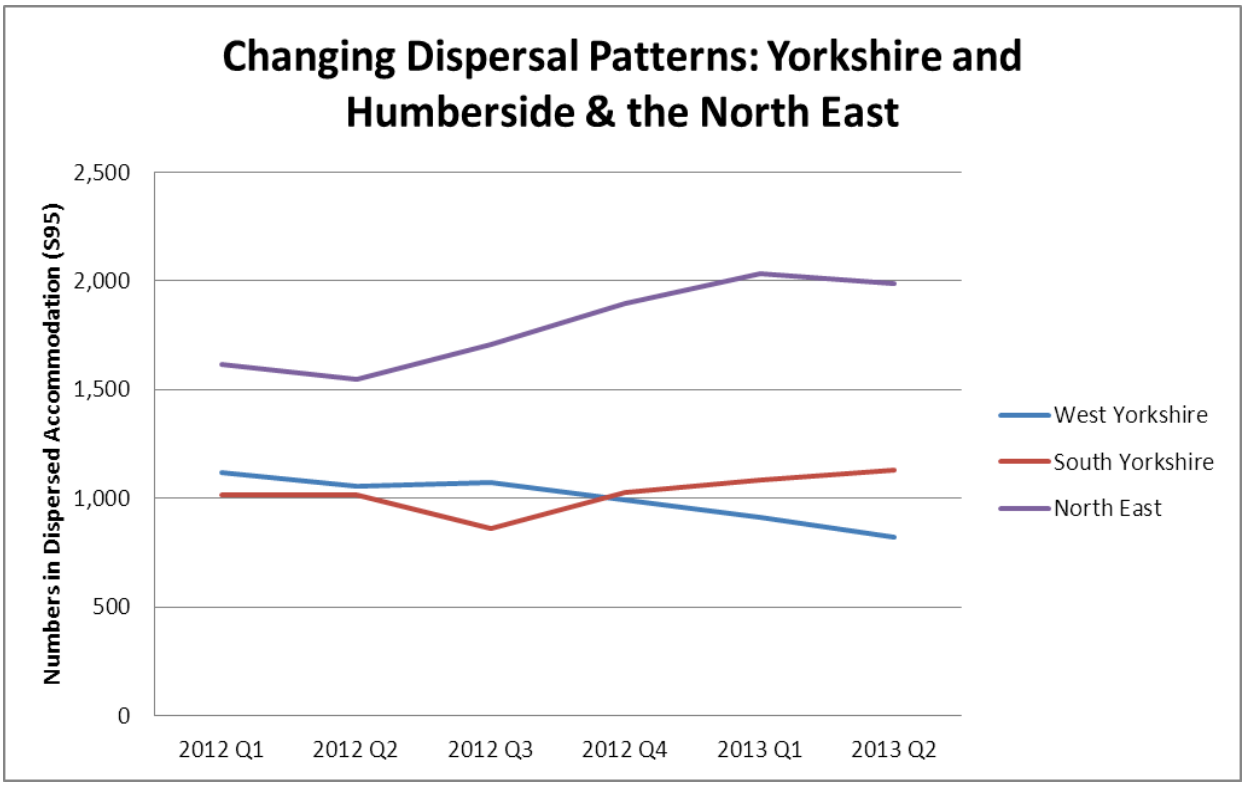

Figure 1: *Source Data*: Home Office (2013), Tables for 'Immigration Statistics, April to June 2013', available at:<www.gov.uk/government/publications/tables-for-immigration-statistics-april-to-june-2013> Accessed [30th August 2013]

that G4S were unable to procure sufficient property because they were not willing, nor able, to offer sufficient payment to housing providers and landlords for the necessary properties.[47] It was rumoured that the original bid from G4S planned to spend between £6-12 per person per night, in comparison to the LA consortium bids of £12-13 per person per night (Lakhani 2012). Similar issues with the procurement of housing in West Yorkshire were raised in early 2013, when the subcontracted housing provider – Cascade Ltd – was suspended from the contracts due to poor quality housing (Grayson 2013b; Rawlinson 2013). All dispersals to West Yorkshire were halted and new arrivals have only just (as of July 2013) started being dispersed to the area.

Whether the changes to dispersal patterns in these early stages of the COMPASS

47 John Grayson (Open Democracy), Emily Twinch (Inside Housing) and Max Salsbary (24-Dash) were the key journalists who published information regarding the COMPASS contracts.

project were driven by profit-motive or incompetence, the impact of the shifting geography of housing provision is evident in both the narratives of asylum-seeking individuals and those working in the RAASS. This chapter will consider how the shifting geographies of the COMPASS contracts have affected the geometries – diagrams of support and the relations of resistance - of asylum support in the region.

1: Lost in the System?

A number of respondents told stories of asylum seekers being redispersed to properties without knowing where they were being moved to.[48] Advocates recalled stories of trying to get in contact with previous clients at their new addresses, only to find that they had been moved to a different property or even a different city.[49] Some were even unaware of their destinations when in transit:

> "And when I was on the way – that's when I realised I'm not even going to [Town A] and I realised we were going to [Town B] and I asked them, hey what's happening where are we going? […] They said, oh no we've got an address for you […], I've not got an address for [Town A]."[50]

The confusion in this messy redispersal, echoed in the cyclical argument over the location of this individuals' new property, works to entrenched the asymmetrical power relation between the individual being housed and the agency organising the housing. It becomes a question of precisely *who* controls mobility and stillness; the "symbolic struggle between state and community, crystallising in specific tactics of spatial and temporal arrangement" (Gill 2009d: n.p.).

1.2: (Dis)Locating Agency

All but one of the respondents with personal experience of being accommodated

48 Interview G, 09/07/2013; Interview K, 24/07/2013; Interview Miii, 17/07/2013
49 Interview Mi, 17/07/2013; Interview G, 09/07/2013
50 Interview Miii, 17/07/2013

under the COMPASS contracts emphasised the speed in which they were expected to sign the 'Mutual Agreement' document.[51]

> "When I moved […] from another house to this new house, this time […] they take some papers, signature, accommodation agreement, then just 5 – 10 minutes […] just say you need to sign this is a house agreement that's all. Here's your room key and even he no go to open and have a look in your room – no – just downstairs, waiting room."[52]

The 'Mutual Agreement'[53] document, the closest the asylum seeking individual comes to a tenancy agreement, becomes just another piece of paper to sign; another document to be handed over to the authorities in order for the individual to be quantified and recorded as 'present.' Fundamentally, being present within the administrative system is more often articulated through narratives of dislocation, disappearance and a *lack* of active presence: "all they say to you is if you move or change your address please notify us. That's what they're bothered about. They don't want to come and see."[54] In the same way that the housing provider does not venture further than the front room, the administrative system is seen as being more concerned with fixing the asylum seeking object in its designated space.

The minimal rights afforded to the asylum seeking individual in the 'Mutual Agreement' are exacerbated by a generalised feeling of disempowerment within the asylum process: "as long as you are an asylum seeker, you are meant to like take whatever thing they give to you, stay wherever place they put you."[55] Whilst this lack of choice is not new in the dispersal process, there were certain aspects of new service provision that were seen to compound the process of marginalisation of the asylum-seeking voice.

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51 Interview H, 09/07/2013; Interview K, 24/07/2013; Interview Miii, 17/07/2013
52 Interview H, 09/07/2013
53 See Appendix VIII for an example copy.
54 Interview I, 15/07/2013
55 Interview I, 15/07/2013

1.3: (Dis)Locating Presence

In the same way in which the bureaucratic fixing of the asylum seeking individual works to minimise their presence to an administrative 'signature', certain narratives of discomfort in housing provision were also understood through the objectification of the asylum seeking individual as 'burden' rather than individual. One respondent stated that her experience of COMPASS housing made her feel more like a “piece of luggage”[56] than a human being; a piece of cargo to be shifted around from place to place. However, even luggage seemed to have more value than the 'asylum-seeker':

> “[W]ith luggage they handle you with care […] because there could be a fragile thing inside your box. […] You're treated like […] a piece of toilet paper when you go to the loo and you clean yourself and just flush it; that's how they treat us.”[57]

Her human cargo isn't as valuable as a possession; instead it is a readily disposable item. The disposability of the asylum-seeker as object is echoed in another asylum-seeking individuals' experience of being re-located under the COMPASS contracts:

> “For me it felt like I was just dumped somewhere and people left. I didn't see them again. I kept calling and calling, they didn't even show at all. […] No, they just dumped us.”[58]

Dumped like rubbish in a new city, the forced movement of re-location becomes another articulation of the dehumanisation of the asylum-seeking individual. The calls for recognition – represented by the consistent phone calls to the housing organisation – are left unanswered; the fact she is present in the house does not afford her any rightful presence.

56 Interview I, 15/07/2013
57 Interview I, 15/07/2013
58 Interview Miii, 17/07/2013

Other narratives of discomfort, such as overcrowding in NASS houses, also contribute to certain metaphorical articulations of the dehumanised asylum-seeker. One respondent spoke of his experiences of living in a 6 bedroom house in which all of the bedrooms were shared.[59] Advocacy workers also voiced their concerns regarding shared bedrooms.[60] For these individuals, the multiple occupancy of rooms was indicative of a dehumanised approach to housing. It was more a case of "shoving them in really"[61] and individuals being "handed around like a sack of potatoes"[62], than a more holistic approach to housing those who are fleeing persecution. Thus for some respondents, the discomforts experienced in COMPASS provision were fundamentally connected to the progressive dehumanisation of the asylum seeking individual: "you're just another number going through the system, rather than someone who needs care and support."[63]

2: Substantiating Presence

The shifting geographies of dispersal under COMPASS not only affected those in housing, but also the capacity of the RAASS to advocate on behalf of an increasingly mobile population. One project worker in West Yorkshire noted that "in the last six months we have had ten people that we know about"[64] whilst one respondent in South Yorkshire highlighted the increasingly difficulties faced by advocacy groups when faced with a forever shifting terrain of housing provision.[65] This inability to 'know about' new arrivals is articulated in the spatial terms of not being able to 'locate' *where* an individual is; something exacerbated by the inconsistency of dispersal patterns under the new contracts.

The idea of having people 'disappear' in the system is not new. However, what is interesting here is the role of the voluntary sector as a force which can help substantiate the presence of the asylum seeking individual. In order to look at this in more detail, it is useful to look at the story of the complaints procedure. Aside from

59 Interview H, 09/07/2013
60 Interview A, 24/06/2013; Interview C, 24/06/2013
61 Interview G, 09/07/2013
62 Interview D, 03/07/2013
63 Interview Fi, 04/07/2013
64 Interview Mi, 17/07/2013
65 Interview E, 04/07/2013

the illegibility of the complaints procedure discussed in the first chapter, the original complaints phone line was an 0845 number, and was expensive to call from a mobile phone.[66] On the whole, individuals were encouraged to direct all complaints to this centralised call-centre, from which G4S would then take the necessary steps to deal with the issue. However, a number of respondents highlighted the practicalities of asylum-seekers engaging in this type of complaints procedure, focusing on the inability for many to afford the call costs.[67] In the words of one asylum-seeking individual, "I have to sacrifice my 4 pounds for a day – maybe I'm not going to eat to buy that credit. […] So for me to top up that phone, I have to sacrifice."[68]

Alongside generalised feelings of disempowerment and fear within the asylum seeking population,[69] this process was seen to further marginalise a number of asylum seekers from personally engaging with the complaints procedure, and forced a greater reliance on the third sector to act as 'representatives' for asylum seeking individuals. Essentially, the capacity to engage in the complaints procedure was contingent on both financial and social capital that some felt asylum seekers may lack.[70] A large number of respondents felt that complaints were only successful when asylum-seekers were 'represented by' or at least supported by a third party, be that the voluntary sector, campaigners, or in some cases, the media.[71] For some, this contact with a third party witness helped substantiate their presence in a subjugating system:

> "I only started getting positive you know outcome when I got in touch with [supporter] who is like a godsend to most of us. […] [They] had to go to that extra length, making sure they give me a proper accommodation that is fit for a human being."[72]

66 It is understood that this system has been revised, and the contact number is now a local number, thus eliminating these extortionate costs. However, the 0845 number did function in the early stages of transition, and thus is still worth discussing.
67 Interview C 24/06/2013; Interview Miii, 17/07/2013
68 Interview Miii, 17/07/2013
69 Interview D, 03/07/2013; Interview I, 17/07/2013
70 Interview Miv, 17/07/2013; Interview K, 24/07/2013
71 Interview A, 24/06/2013; Interview C, 24/06/2013; Interview H, 09/07/2013; Interview I, 15/07/2013
72 Interview I, 09/07/2013

This individual's capacity to access acceptable accommodation is only possible through the intervention of a non-asylum seeking individual; somebody that is not already a 'ghost' in the system.[73]

Yet the adhoc dispersal practices enacted in the initiation of COMPASS saw individuals dispersed to areas without well-established asylum and refugee support networks. Individuals were lost; they are ghosted by the system (Gill 2009b: 187):

> "I had clients who sort of went up there [the North East] who have disappeared […] who'd kind of disappear and you'd talk to them on the phone and they'd be 'there's nothing here' or 'there's no-one here.'[74]

This is more than an inability to locate where an individual client is. In an increasingly subjugating system, the loss of the RAASS as a force of representation allows individuals to slip through the net: "well we lost her – I mean [name] wasn't answering her phone, and then the Social Cohesion Manager left and..."[75] As this South Yorkshire project workers' sentence trails off, she mirrors the gradual dissolution of the asylum-seeking individual from the witnessing eyes of the third sector. The individual's presence in the dialogue of advocacy disappears; they are lost in a new cartography of service provision.

73 Interview Mi, 17/07/2013
74 Interview D, 03/07/2013
75 Interview SG, 04/07/2013

CHAPTER THREE

Challenging COMPASS: Moments of Rightful Presence?

With the past two chapters in mind, it is now important to introduce the ways in which certain points of (dis)location and dehumanisation were challenged by the voluntary sector and by the asylum-seeking individuals themselves. If the “practices of asylum governance serve to depoliticise those seeking asylum in the UK” (Darling 2013: 1), what sorts of moments of interruption (Conlon & Gill 2013: 245) to the increasingly neoliberal modality of asylum governance have been articulated in the context of the COMPASS housing contracts? How have the unstable geographies of dispersal under COMPASS affected both the capacity for and right to 'presence' for asylum seekers and the RAASS in the region?

1: Navigating the System

One of the techniques mobilised by a number of refugee and asylum advocates in their stories of support was the idea of individualising a seemingly anonymous system. Alongside the acts of ‘representation’ in the complaints procedure, a number of campaigners and RAASS workers noted that their advocacy work was most effective when contacting known individuals in G4S or the housing provider.[76] The ‘Social Cohesion Manager’ at G4S was frequently identified as a tangible foot-hold in an otherwise anonymous and unmappable system. In the words of one campaigner in West Yorkshire, “the individual contacts that you can make provide you with some light and some hope as to the possibility on individual cases.”[77]

76 Interview B, 24/06/2013; Interview C, 24/06/2013; Interview E, 04/07/2013; Interview G, 09/07/2013
77 Interview C, 24/06/2013

1.2: Monitoring

For those campaigning against the privatisation of housing and support, monitoring redispersals became a key tactic for challenging the contract.[78] In the context of the asymmetrical power relation between the COMPASS contract holders and the voluntary sector, the act of monitoring and tracing became a way to turn the tables:

> "I guess bringing some accountability into the process. I guess G4S and their subcontractors know they're being watched by us, and that was one of our motivations for our involvement in the campaign."[79]

The process of monitoring not only illuminates an increasingly anonymous service provision, but also establishes the active presence of advocates and campaigning individuals. Creating new networks of organisations and individuals monitoring the contracts – both within Yorkshire and Humberside and also the annexed North East – allows for a horizontal distribution of information away from the asymmetries of power and knowledge symbolised by the COMPASS project. In the words of one campaigner in West Yorkshire, "we tried to link up with other organisations so that we could get information filtered through."[80] Whist information was still considered to be difficult to access, grass-roots networks of monitoring organisations were able to counter-map the institutional diagrams of service provision.

1.3: Scales of Engagement

However, whilst almost all respondents articulated concerns with the current provision of housing and shared stories of discomfort, their scales of engagement varied hugely. A number of respondents noted the conflicted,[81] fractured,[82] divisive[83]

78 Interview G, 09/07/2013; Interview L, 24/07/2013; Interview Fii, 04/07/2013; Interview E, 04/07/2013
79 Interview L, 24/07/2013
80 Interview Miv, 17/07/2013
81 Interview E, 04/07/2013
82 Interview G, 09/07/2013
83 Interview C, 24/06/2013

and politicised[84] response to the COMPASS contracts from the RAASS. The difficulty of precisely *where* RAASS should be in relation to COMPASS was a recurring problem for some respondents:

> "I suppose the fault line was between those people who believed you could make the contract good, or it was here to stay so you had to do the best, as opposed to those of us who thought you know we have to get rid of the whole contract. […] The fact that you're working alongside G4S actually gives them some kind of cover, some kind of cover of respectability."[85]

For this respondent, increased proximity to and engagement with G4S signalled a loss of independence; working alongside G4S was to be working within a system designed with profit in mind; co-operation is recast as co-optation. This challenge of navigating COMPASS without co-optation was articulated as another narrative of discomfort within the third sector:

> "It think people are really caught up in something deeply political and so for some people that's unbearable, so what you do is your day-to-day work, you work with the individuals, you deal with – attempt to deal with – problems, you engage with G4S."[86]

For this project worker in West Yorkshire, the tactics of individualisation are recast as tactics of survival rather than resistance within the voluntary sector. Faced with an almost inconceivable ideological battle, a focus on the daily struggle of individuals makes the process both manageable and bearable. However, these acts of necessity are also figured as moments of depoliticisation for the voluntary sector:

84 Interview L, 24/07/2013; Interview C, 24/06/2013
85 Interview L, 24/07/2013
86 Interview C, 24/06/2013

> "You know, I think a lot of other organisations feel like they're just fire fighting. They're just dealing with the immediate need, but what we all want to do is give people some independence and let – allow – people to be doing things for themselves and speaking up for themselves and all the rest of it. But you can't do that when you've got a queue of destitute people by your door needing a meal."[87]

When faced with immediate need, the third sector struggles to be *political* in the most general sense. The discomforts of the asylum process, and in this case the organisation of housing and support under the COMPASS contracts, does not afford the space or the time for a politicised approach to service provision. Faced with a forever changing legislative landscape, undulating geographies of dispersal and an increasingly restrictivist approach to migration in general, the potentiality for the voluntary sector to inhabit a *political* space is diminishing.

One interviewee, in response to a question regarding the state of NASS housing in the region, stated that "it's not my job to monitor this."[88] She explicitly separated her role as a support worker from any political positioning:

> "I suppose that's kind of, that's my role. My role is to support people, not to wonder why things are you you know – I'm not a campaigner, I'm just, I'm a service deliverer."[89]

In a similar way in which the immediacy of need overtakes the capacity to inhabit an active political space, this individual sees her role as a service deliver as incompatible with that of a campaigner. The quotidian functions of her job, her engagement with individuals and delivering "support" constitutes her positioning within the RAASS. This need to ensure the everyday deliverance of support for those

87 Interview B, 24/06/2013
88 Interview J, 18/07/2013
89 Interview J, 18/07/2013

caught in an increasingly restrictive and politicised asylum system had a practical impact on the campaigning capacity of one individual in South Yorkshire:

> "They are a giant, and all these little organisations are just these tiny little things. […] Obviously we all want to work for the good of the client, so nobody wants to make things harder for people by kind of stocking up bad blood."[90]

The privatisation process created a second giant in the asylum system: the multi-national security company. In the shadow of the first giant – the state – and the second – the multinational company – the "little organisations" of the third sector can only work at 'ground-level'. This flattening of the third sector was both connected to the practicalities of contract culture (i.e. the increasing number of mergers and consortium bids within the RAASS)[91] as well as the blanket demands of privatisation: "it can only come about if you entirely privatise a whole sector and then ask all the other sectors to engage with that sector."[92]

2: Creating and Challenging Consensus

Some respondents with personal experiences of being housed in NASS accommodation under the COMPASS contracts told stories of relativisation that led to a rationalisation of poor housing provision. Positioned against the very real threat of destitution[93] or in relation to horrific experiences in their country of origin[94], poor housing was rationalised in the terms of "something is better than nothing."[95] This relativisation of discomfort was also echoed in one project worker's concern regarding post-status housing provision:

90 Interview G, 09/07/2013
91 Interview E, 04/07/2013
92 Interview C, 24/06/2013
93 Interview H, 09/07/2013
94 Interview K, 24/07/2013
95 Interview H, 09/07/2013

> "In some ways, and this will be really cynical probably, but urm I think it's probably a good thing not to give people too good accommodation when they're asylum seekers because they're going to be in for a hell of a shock when they become refugees."[96]

In these narratives of relativity, there is concurrent depoliticisation of debate. These work in tandem with the everyday discomforts experienced by asylum seeking individuals under the COMPASS contracts, as well as the marginalisation of political space within in the voluntary sector (Independence Panel 2013; Williams 2013) , in order to create a static consensus on the impossibility of improving housing provision.

Yet, respondents did articulate moments where this consensus was challenged. Recalling experiences of advocating on behalf of asylum-seekers in terms of housing, many respondents described how the use of multiple rights-claims in lobbying for better housing quality or better *control* over housing quality was more effective. This ranged from citing the rights of the child[97], to mobilising narratives of the sick body and medical need[98], as well as general claims to wider human rights and housing rights concerns.[99] When concerns surrounding housing for asylum seekers were perceived as "kind of out of the system in a way"[100], these cross-referenced rights became a strategy to restructure the debate on housing. This method was also mobilised in an asylum seeking individuals' narrative of challenging poor housing provision:

> "And I have had the experience where the environmental health services had to come and inspect where I was and they said it was a category 1 hazard – it's not fit for human to be in sort of accommodation I was given with my son." [101]

96 Interview J, 18/07/2013
97 Interview A, 24/06/2013; Interview C, 24/06/2013, Interview L, 24/07/2013
98 Interview G, 09/07/2013; Interview J, 18/07/2013
99 Interview B, 24/06/2013; Interview G, 09/07/2013
100 Interview B, 24/06/2013
101 Interview I, 15/07/2013

Mobilising both a narrative of children's and general human rights, this individual also enlisted the supporting testimony of the environmental health services to substantiate her claim to decent housing. Linking to the previous discussions of witnessing, testimony and *making present,* this cross-referencing of rights-claims creates a new space for the articulation of asylum-seekers' rights to decent housing. However, it is important to consider the inconsistency of results when using these tactics. According to one project worker in South Yorkshire, "what we've found is a 0% success rate [...], you know if a 9 months pregnant woman with a small child doesn't class as being inappropriate to move that far, then who would qualify?"[102] Echoed in the words of a case-worker in West Yorkshire, "no matter how many complaints they get about G4S or Cascade, it's not going to change the model that they're using."[103] Thus, despite the expanded political space created by cross-referencing rights claims, the 'model' of service provision continues to depoliticise the voluntary sector and deconstruct the agency of asylum seekers in their 'care'.

2.2: Moments of Rightful Presence?

For one asylum seeking woman housed in West Yorkshire, she felt that the consensus mentality surrounding poor housing provision even infiltrated the day-to-day service she experienced under COMPASS:

> "I think that's the kind of mentality they have because many places, like when I was living, they would tell you that oh where you come from you don't have this, you don't have that – they don't know you, so you cannot look at me just because you have that mentality like Africa is poor, this and that."[104]

The stereotype of the 'poor-African' asylum seeker is used to rationalise sub-standard housing provision; the undeserving poor must always be grateful. Unseen as a human, and only seen as an 'asylum-seeker', this individual decided to demand

102 Interview G, 09/07/2013
103 Interview D, 03/07/2013
104 Interview Miii, 17/07/2013

active visibility by refusing to be 'fixed':

> "All that they were after was for you to sign, sign sign. I said what am I signing, and I said really you can't ask me to sign for this house? You want me to sleep in this house? […] I said 'no I am not signing.'"[105]

By refusing to enter into the 'mutual agreement' with G4S, this individual interrupted the asymmetrical power relation between the asylum-seeking visitor and the managerial host. Withholding her name, she withheld her consent to be compartmentalised as another 'poor-African', another burden to bare, another number in the system; she refused to be dehumanised.

This is an act of not just being present, but having presence as an active individual. For another individual with experiences of being housed under COMPASS, the process of resisting the arbitrary, no-choice nature of housing allocation allowed her to *feel* like she had a presence as a human, and not just as an asylum seeker: "That's when I had to feel like a human being as part of a community, to say I actually want to go and see where I want to live."[106] After a thoroughly dehumanising and humiliating experience of living in properties full of "cockroaches, slugs […] rats and stuff"[107] with her 4 month old son, the idea of having no choice over her housing experience was inconceivable. Armed with the ability to choose in a choice-less system, she demanded more than accommodation; she demanded a rightful presence.

Essentially, the capacity to *have presence* is a question of having "something to fight with."[108] Both of the women quoted above stated that for them, one of the most powerful ways to arm yourself in housing battles was to take photographs as

105 Interview Miii, 17/07/2013
106 Interview I, 09/07/2013
107 Interview I, 09/07/2013
108 Interview Mi, 17/07/2013

evidence.[109] In another act of substantiating the subjugated and disbelieved narratives of the asylum-seeking individual, the visual testimony of the photograph fleshes out the skeletal conception of the asylum seeking body; it gives it a substantiated *presence.*

"We all suffer when our access to a secure base for housing and home is rendered precarious."

O'Mahony & Sweeney 2010: 313

Conclusion

What I have attempted to do in this discussion of the privatisation 'event' of COMPASS is reconsider the idea of domopolitics in the light of increasingly neoliberal modes of governmentality, where the figuration of the asylum seekers as financial and administrative burden rationalises the outsourcing of the 'asylum-issue' to non-state actors. In considering how this mutation of governmentality "structures asylum seekers' experiences of migration" (Gill 2009d: n.p.) and the RAASS's experiences of advocacy and support, this project has highlighted the quotidian consolidations, negotiations and navigations of the 'space' for asylum seekers within an increasingly inhospitable nation state.

As such, the prioritisation of functionality and circulation within neoliberal governmentalities has positioned the NASS house as a product of discomfort, but also productive of depoliticisation and dehumanisation. In many ways, the restructuring of housing provision according to neoliberal logic has contributed to the diminishing spaces within the national *domos* in which asylum seekers have a

109 Interview Miii, 17/07/2013; Interview I, 15/07/2013

'rightful' presence. Whilst moments of becoming visible and active in the system triggered moments of interruption, the asylum seeker continues to be discursively and legislatively dislocated from any sites in which a 'place' based claim for support can be articulated.

Fundamentally, if neoliberalism's core proposition is of the free individual engaging with others through market transactions (Hall *et al.* 2013: 14), welfare nationalism, coupled with the residentialist bias in Western European states (Papastergiadis 2010) and the reification of owner-occupation as the ideal state of being (Sivanandan 2013), creates a disempowered asylum tenant that cannot be anything but an object in the market of others.

This is a political challenge for academics, the RAASS and for asylum seekers themselves. When asylum seekers do not have legal rights of residency and no legal rights as tenants, how can we begin to think beyond house as a temporary shelter (Phillips 2006: 547), service provision forever defined by emergency measures, and the experience of NASS housing another moment of discomfort in an increasingly restrictive system? Sustained by the everyday circulations of neoliberal and domopolitical governmentalities, the privatisation of housing for asylum seekers has further constrained our capacity to think *beyond* dispersal and *towards* alternatives.

In the words of Imogen Tyler, "we must repeat political calls for recognition but in ways that reject the constitution or constitutional basis which makes such gestures necessary" (Tyler 2006: 199). The discomforts of *being present* in a subjugating system can be challenged by *having presence* beyond the dehumanising and depoliticising figuration of the asylum-issue. Visibility is a pre-requisite to disrupt existent distributions of power (Darling 2013: 5), but having active, autonomous presence demands agency rather than recognition (Darling 2011a: 408). In this way, "individuals and groups articulate a claim to political subjectivity through assuming the very rights they are seen to lack" (Darling 2013: 11).

This is also serves as a warning. Whilst researching and writing this project, the UK government embarked on a pilot scheme to 'encourage' those who have overstayed

their residency permits to return to their respective countries of origin. From mobile advertising in Brent to stickers on the chairs of the UKBA waiting room in Glasgow, the message was clear: the unwanted visitor had overstayed their welcome; it was time to "go home." The domos is restless.

Rising house prices in London and the South East have clashed with severe cuts to Council budgets and a crippling lack of available social housing units. Councils such as Newham have begun to house homeless families, and those who are set to lose their accommodation through the introduction of the benefit cap, in bed-and-breakfast hostels as far away as Birmingham, Leicester, Southend and Northampton (Gentlemen 2013). As Serco admit that their involvement in the COMPASS contracts was to get involved in the "accommodation business" (Twinch 2013), the neoliberal governmentalities that rationalised dispersal in 1999 and COMPASS in 2012 may now have a different target in their sights. In ten years' time, the privately housed asylum seeker may seem an uncanny presence; the nation is fast becoming inhospitable and unhomely towards its own 'burdensome' nationals.

In order to radically conceptualise housing for asylum seekers outside of the rationalising logics of welfare nationalism and the neoliberalisation of the state, we need to think beyond operationalisation and towards justification. It is not just a case of reconsidering "social welfare entitlements on the basis of need rather than nationality" (Breen 2008: 611), but of a relational sense of social justice.

I will give the last word to one of my research participants who articulated the discomforts and depoliticisations of NASS housing under COMPASS better than I ever could:

> "You ask me how do you make it home […] how can you suit, how can you call it a home? [T]hey just see you and see all the benefit and the money."[110]

110 Interview Miii, 17/07/2013

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Auto-Critique

Whilst the general subject and approach of my final research project was relatively consistent with my proposal, there were a number of diversions from this initial research design. Firstly, my original proposal stated that interviews would only be conducted with those currently housed under Section 95 in Yorkshire and Humberside. However, when experiencing the ethical and practical issues of doing research with asylum seeking communities, I felt that this participant criteria was both difficult to achieve and narrow in scope. Therefore, I decided to widen the remit of my research to include members of the Refugee and Asylum Advocacy and Support Sector in Yorkshire and Humberside, as well as any individual who had experience of being housed under the COMPASS contracts within the last 12 months, regardless of current legal status. Nevertheless, I still had difficulties with accessing the proposed number people within the asylum process for interviews. With more time in the field, I feel that I could have rectified this imbalance between the views of those in the RAASS and those experiencing the process of asylum.

Secondly, the methodological research design in my proposal was heavily influenced by Participatory Action Research, whilst the final project committed to smaller-scale moments of reciprocity in the research process. This change in approach was triggered by early experiences of gathering data in Yorkshire and Humberside, as I realised that the process of contacting participants was taking longer than expected. Equally, with the shift in the demographics of my interviews towards the RAASS, the time and personal-commitment advocated by PAR could not practically fit with the short-time scale of this research project.

Due to these changes, my research questions evolved into more organic concepts

which I aimed to investigate alongside an overarching concern with the 'event' of privatisation in the COMPASS contracts. Equally, the shift in focus away from solely those currently housed under S95 meant that a focus on these individual's sense of home and belonging had to be side-lined in favour of a more theoretically-influenced analysis of governmentality and neoliberalism.

Equally, although being heavily embedded in the research field in both political and personal ways can be useful, I also found at points that it threatened to distract me from the design of my research. Whilst I feel that this project was based in sound critical and theoretical frameworks, I also feel that the translation of lived experiences of asylum accommodation into 'academia' was often difficult. Nevertheless, whilst the tensions between a *politics* and a *practice* of research are evident in my project, I feel that they do not derail the value of the research.

Embeddedness in the subject and the region also meant that some of my research participants knew me outside of the research event, and therefore could have demonstrated a response bias. For this reason, whilst this project never laid claims to represent the generalised views of the whole RAASS or the asylum seeking population of Yorkshire and Humberside, I believe that it could have benefited from a larger number of participants (from both sides) and a wider geographical scope. Whilst some attempt was made to contact participants in the North East towards the end of my period of data collection, there was not sufficient time to establish relationships and set up interviews. Views from the North East would have been an interesting addition to discussions of the redistribution of dispersal accommodation under COMPASS.

Appendix

Appendix I: Letter to Refugee and Asylum Support Organisations in Yorkshire and Humberside (sent via email and handed out in person).

RE: Research Project into NASS accommodation in Yorkshire and Humberside

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lorna Gledhill, and I am currently conducting a research project into the provision of NASS accommodation for asylum seekers in the Yorkshire and Humber region. This qualitative project aims to gather two strands of information: (1) the lived experiences of those currently housed in NASS accommodation (or recently been granted status) in the region; (2) and the opinions and insights of asylum and refugee support charities, NGOs, church groups and housing professionals into the current state of housing provision for asylum seekers – both in terms of physical shelter and the emotional support base of 'home'.

I aim to conduct a number of interviews in the Yorkshire and Humberside region throughout June and July this year, hopefully culminating in a final half-day workshop at the end of September to bring together those who have been interviewed and any other interested individuals and organisations to discuss the key themes encountered throughout the interview process, as well as discussing what we can do to make housing provision for asylum seekers better.

Currently, I am attempting to contact asylum and refugee support NGOs, housing professionals, and individual campaigners in order to arrange interviews with those who are interested in participating in this research project. If anyone from your organisation thinks they may be interested in participating in this project and is willing to be interviewed, please do get in touch with me. All interview transcripts and notes will be anonymised, and I am very happy to discuss questions of confidentiality and data protection with anybody who may be interested in participating.

Secondly, I am also in the process of contacting asylum seekers and refugees themselves who have stories of asylum housing and NASS accommodation that they would like to share. **I would very much appreciate if your organisation were willing to pass on my details to any asylum seeker currently housed in NASS accommodation, or who has received refugee status in the last 6 months, who you feel may be interested in participating in the project.** I am happy to talk to or meet with individuals prior to any form of interview in order to explain the project fully. Consent will also be continually negotiated throughout the interview process. All interviewees will be offered reimbursal for their time through a skill-sharing activity – ie, a 30 minute interview would be reimbursed with a 30 minute English lesson, or help with an application. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funds, participants will have to speak 'basic' English. Again, I am willing to discuss different options and scenarios with the individuals concerned. I have also attached a small flyer detailing the research and my contact details, which can be distributed to interested individuals, at the end of this email.

My interest in this topic comes from living in Leeds for 4 years, whilst studying at the University and working with Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network on a project that worked with exiled refugee journalists in the city. I have also actively worked with groups in Sheffield, Kirklees and Leeds in order to campaign for better housing for asylum seekers in the region. Whilst this research project will contribute to my final MSc dissertation (MSc Global Migration at UCL), I am planning to write a report of my findings for all interested parties, so that any information gathered can be fed back into the institutions who need it most.

If you do have any further questions, comments or any general enquiries, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me.

Best wishes, and thank you for your time,

Lorna Gledhill
MSc Global Migration

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, UCL,
PEARSON BUILDING, LONDON, WC1E 6BT
Tel: +44 (0)20 7679 0500 Fax: +44 (0)20 7679 0565
L.Hollyman@ucl.ac.uk
www.geog.ucl.ac.uk

Appendix II: Informational Flyer Provided for Organisations and Asylum Seeking Individuals

Stories of Sanctuary, Security and Home:
A new research project into asylum housing in Yorkshire and Humberside

I am currently researching the provision of housing for asylum seekers in Yorkshire and Humberside, and I am looking to talk to anybody with recent (within the last 6 months) experiences of NASS accommodation.

My research involves interviews with people who have been housed in NASS accommodation, and charities and organisations who support those housed in NASS acommodation.

If you, a friend, or a colleague are interested in learning more about this research project, please contact **Lorna Gledhill** with any questions or queries.

Telephone: [redacted]
or email: [redacted]

Appendix III: Template Consent Form for All Interview Participants

Stories of Sanctuary, Security and Home: experiences of NASS housing in Yorkshire and Humberside

You have been invited to take part in this interview as part of an academic research project into asylum seekers' and refugees' experiences of NASS housing in Yorkshire and Humberside. This project aims to gather the housing experiences of those seeking protection in the region, and to discuss ideas of safety, sanctuary and feelings of 'home' in NASS accommodation.

It is your decision whether or not you want to take part in this interview. Participation is voluntary, and you are able to withdraw from the interview at any time. It is important that you feel comfortable with the interview process and understand what participation in the research project involves.

Please read the following statements and tick the box which is most relevant to how you feel:

[redacted]	Yes	Unsure	No
I understand that this interview will be **audio-recorded** and the transcripts may be used in a piece of academic writing and a research report.			
I understand that no participant will be **named** or **identified** in any publication or discussion of this research.			
I understand that all written copies of this interview will be remain **anonymous, securely stored** and all information regarding the participant will remain **confidential.**			
I understand that my **participation in this project is voluntary**, and I have the **right to stop the interview** at any time, or **decline to be involved in the project**, without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences.			
I understand what the project involves and have had the **opportunity to ask any questions** about the research project.			

If you would like to participate in this interview, please indicate your consent below:

I …….. consent to take part in an interview as part of this research project.

Participant Signature:…… Date:...../...../……..

Interviewer Signature:……

Thank you very much for participating in this research project! I'd like to keep in touch with all participants and keep them informed with the progress of the research. Please let me know if you are happy for me to contact you again about future events regarding this project.

If you have any questions or queries after the interview, please contact.Lorna.

Appendix IV: Interview Schedule for RAAS

Key Worker Interview Schedule

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW STARTS

Explain project: research into the lived experiences of NASS housing in Yorkshire and Humberside, both from the perspective of those in housing and those working to support the individuals that seek protection in the region.

Explain consent form: talk through key aspects of the consent form: audio-recordings, confidentiality, anonymity, data protection, voluntary participation, opportunity at the end of the interview for this to be reviewed and any information, participation etc. withdrawn if necessary.

[Double check concerning audio-recording – if consent given, start recording]

COMPASS and Housing Contracts
[Ask participant to briefly outline their role, and the relationship they have to the provision of housing for asylum seekers in the region]

1: In your role, what sort of contact have you had with the new contracts and housing provision?

2: Current set up – what's changed in the provision of housing for asylum seekers? How do you understand the current system of housing provision?

- *COMPASS*
- *Previous set-up / what was the transition?*
- *How informed do you feel about the contracts? How much do you feel you know about the current provision of housing?*

3: How would you describe the provision of asylum accommodation in Yorkshire and Humberside at the moment?

- *What kind of words come to mind?*
- *Why, could you explain your decisions?*

4: What did you think was going to happen when the TARGET (previous contract) contracts expired and the COMPASS contracts were awarded to a private company?

Do you feel that it happened?

- *Why / Why not?*
- *Why do you think it may have transferred from LAs?*

5: Do you think that the increased role of private contractors in the provision of asylum housing has had any direct effect on the quality/consistency/style of service provision?

Housing Issues and Experiences

1: Any problems with housing provision in the region/your area/your area of work? What kinds of complaints have you come across?

- *Are they any different to complaints prior to the contract change?*
- *Has any group (gender/age/nationality) seen the brunt of the problems?*

2: [If involved in direct advocacy work and have personal experience of supporting an individual in NASS accommodation] how did you deal with these problems/complaints?

- *Has the complaints procedure changed? Could you explain the complaints procedure?*
- *How easy is it to advocate on behalf of asylum seekers in terms of lodging a housing complaint? How well do you feel you understand the complaints process?*
- *Have you had any success in rectifying problems through lodging formal complaints?*
- *Have you seen any creative/non-formal processes of dealing with housing complaints?*
- *[if not in direct advocacy, but work with asylum seekers] Would you know how to lodge a complaint? Have you been made aware of the process?*

2: What are the main successes/positives you have come across in NASS housing over the last year?

- *What has been done well in the new contracts?*
- *Have you had any positive experiences in terms of seeking support from the contractors or general management company?*

3: What should NASS housing provide? What do you think are the most important factors to take into consideration? Do you feel that this is provided in the current housing set up?

- *What constitutes 'decent' housing? What kinds of factors? What's the most important?*
- *Do certain groups need special consideration? If so which groups?*
- *Do you feel that the current contracts provide sufficient support?*

Support Work and New Networks

1: Has the set-up of the new contracts had any direct or indirect effects on the work you do/your organisation does with asylum seekers?

- *How has it affected you in your current role – what has changed in the kind of*

work you do?
- *Have you seen different problems, different complaints, or have things stayed much the same?*
- *How has it affected the people you work with?*
- *Has it affected the way you think about asylum seekers' access to housing?*
- *Have you developed different working relationships with other organisations/groups?*

2: Geographical shifts – With the region we're dealing with extending to the North-East, have you had more contact with this part of England due to the North-East?
- *Has this had any effects on how you provide advocacy and support?*
- *Has this made things harder/easier/more connected?*
- *In terms of mobility and the transition between contracts – did this affect your ability to provide support to some individuals?*

3: How successful has the general sector been at responding to the changing contracts? Do you think that there was much to respond to/change to?
- *If changes were made – what were they and who initiated them? Was extra training covered? Who provided training?*
- *Do you think the sector responded effectively to the changes to the housing contract? What could have been different?*

Geography and Mobility

1: Do you think the movement of individuals across the region – from IA to S95 housing, and then around different houses – has any tangible effects on the wellbeing of asylum seekers themselves?
- *Any health, psychological, social, integration effects?*
- *Child health/schooling etc.*

2: How important do you think housing is to the provision of protection/sanctuary?
- *Are other factors more or less important?*
- *Are there other factors that provide a similar sense of 'safety'?*

3: Do you think asylum seekers have agency/autonomy in terms of housing and home-making?
- *How important do you think this agency/autonomy is for the wellbeing/settlement of the individual?*
- *[If no] why not?*
- *[If no] how could this change?*

[Ask if participant has anything more they want to say, or anything they feel like they haven't been able to say]

[End Recording]

Post-interview consent check. Re-iterate that they can get in touch to withdraw anything from the interview. Give contact details from the bottom of the consent form.

Appendix V: Example Extract of Transcribed Interview (Interview L)

Some names of individuals, specific organisations, housing providers and locations have been omitted as to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the interview participant.

Interviewer: Mmm good and perhaps now in your own words could you just explain to me how you feel the provision of housing has changed through the introduction of the COMPASS contracts. So how it's set up, how it used to be – well – how it used to be set up, how it's set up now, and what that kind of means in your opinion?

Respondent: Mm mm. Well I think you'd expect wouldn't you, well we met Stephen Small from G4S he came to talk to us at the start of the campaign to put us right on some misapprehensions we had about G4S supposedly, it was very interesting ur and we let him talk. And during that speech he made justifying their involvement, he described how G4S were going to operate in the asylum market, his phrase, and another quote from him that their primary concern was to make a return for shareholders. Now, you know, fair play to them. They're a money-grabbing you know corporate capitalist business and that's their job. However, if they are your criteria for housing, then you're going to see changes in housing won't you. You'd expect to see quality going down, peoples' rights being diminished, peoples' human rights and liberty and anonymity being compromised, and we've seen all of those things. So, at the start of the contract G4S and – this is transition I'm talking about – G4S and UKBA were playing a little dance where UKBA had to be seen to be upholding some minimum standards because the contract wasn't finally signed, the transition period hadn't finished, and they were a public body under some criticism themselves. So there was a game going on which just illustrated this lack of accountability. There's a problem, you call UKBA. Oh you need to call G4S. You call G4S guess who you need to call: UKBA. So that was the start of the weakening of that kind of accountability we had before in [city] anyway, with the council to some extent. It wasn't perfect, but we did have that direct line to the people who housed asylum seekers if there was a problem. Things became further complicated when G4S started subcontracting first to [initial HP] and then to a whole number of companies whose names you know and some are still with us, some aren't. So then you had an extra layer of you know a gap between, well, an extra layer of bureaucracy to encounter if you're an asylum tenant. On top of that, there was sub sub sub contracting to private landlords in Barnsley. [x] tells a lot of these stories. So for example, someone's got a relatively simple problem to fix with their house, let's say the washing machine isn't working, whose

responsibility is that? Is it my landlord, is it Live Management, is it G4S, is it UKBA? And people were led on a merry dance between those, sometimes deliberately I think to try and obfuscate and obscure criticism, sometimes because I think the system just wasn't working and I think it's important to say you know even though I have utter contempt for companies like G4S and the subcontractors that do this that carry out these contracts, you know there are human beings you know working for them, there are some good people in there trying to do their best, some people who got transferred from the old council asylum teams for example. Urm and they just found it impossible to cope so I think at one point I think Cascade had one worker for 120 people in W Yorkshire which is just an impossible job to do. Target Housing they had two workers for 150 people. So the job became impossible, and in the desire to maintain that return for the shareholder, although we can discuss how big that was and could be in the future, things became compromised people were people were abused, for example lots of people from [city] were moved up to the North East presumably we were told it was temporary, but they're still there a year later. Urm, in [South Yorkshire town] a woman has her child – she'd be waiting a week for the G4S van to come – she'd had notice saying you'll move within the next week sometime – she's waiting, she's anxious – then G4S turn up – great – and tell her that she can't take all her kids' stuff with them, she can't take her kids toys in the van. So she stood there, she had to decide which of the kid's toys are going to Middlesbrough and Stockton. Kids are crying, she's distressed, she's moving house, she doesn't know, she doesn't want to go there in the first place! All her contacts, her life's back in [South Yorkshire town]. Urm, there's examples like that – you know kids toys being left on the pavement, it sounds like a small thing but that lack of respect for people whoever they are. You know, moving house is a stressful thing for anyone, but if you're seeking asylum then some extra sensitivity's needed, understanding that the people are leaving behind AGAIN everything they know, you might say that people are retraumatised by that experience, so in that context, not having a you know an efficient and effective and a sensitive, caring way of moving people – I mean I don't agree with moving them in the first place but if you are going to move em then do it that way – in the absence of that, a lot of upset and stress has been caused and things that are quite hard to measure you know in the box ticking sense, but you know anybody who's spoken to an asylum seeker who's been through that will feel it. Urm, lots of other examples of a woman who was moved from Bradford to Doncaster, put in an extremely small flat I went to see the flat myself and interviewed her, away from everybody she knew, away from sources of medical support, and legal representatives and obviously her community. Her and her baby in one flat, with one sink one sink about a foot wide to do all your washing in – personally washing, all your crockery and presumably for the baby as well – so utterly not on you know for anybody. So OK, so cost-cutting leads to bad quality, ur privatisation leads to a lack of accountability to get that bad quality sorted out. Over that, and perhaps it's straying a little bit from the question you asked me but I think it's relevant – you know a lot of us didn't think actually and I still believe this, that G4S maybe Serco, but G4S weren't expecting to make money out of the asylum housing contract, it was part of their portfolio. They're a privatising company, wanting to show they can do housing presumably without killing anybody that year, and then possibly going into social housing or whatever. So you know, they're very cagey and you will have seen the parliamentary enquiry where SS won't give any figures as to what they make ur. Serco said they make 21p a night off people, but I suspect that the margins of profit

are pretty low actually. It's part of their attempt to you know and it won't be an easy job for em bless em to try and rehabilitate themselves and put themselves out their again as caring and sharing and competent, that's going to be a long haul for them. And our job is to stop them making the first step on that really.

I: Mmm sounds like it! Urm how would you describe the kind of provision of asylum accommodation in Yorkshire and Humberside at the moment, so NASS housing, what's it like?

R: Yeah, it's been a while since I've been round anyone's house I have to say that, so I'm relying on second hand accounts, urm, the impression I get, and you said before and I think it's a good point, you know a lot of asylum seekers will say I'm only an asylum seeker so I can't expect much, so you know I've heard of cases where anybody else they'd kick up a stink. Problems at the moment we've heard about and I should say that complaints to [two local organisations] are probably, they've gone down in the last few months. I think they're a number of reasons for that, I think if you were going to complain, you probably would have done it before, you know, you've already been in your accommodation now for anything up to a year, so you probably would've done that, if you have complained you might have given up because nothings been fixed, and also some of the complaints that are coming through now are the kind of complaints that would take a while to develop. So for example a call came into [one organisation] about a woman who's housed – I won't name where they were from – but with another woman from the same country and presumably the housing providers thought oh they're from the same country, that'll be fine we'll put em together. Of course that may be the last person in the world you'll want to see – that person might be part of that political party that persecuted your family for example, so this woman explained what the problem was to a long time ago to Cascade – to Live Management I think and G4S they weren't having it. So she called back and I think those kind of problems, those that you might call the problems of sharing a house, well you know generally from my experience but for asylum seekers that extra dimension of who are these people. I think those kind of problems take a while to develop, so you know, I think that's some of the reason why some of the complaints I'm hearing about now aren't the ones you think about about cockroaches you know and damp for sure that exists but the kind of problems of living in an environment that is almost bearable but causes you a lot of stress you know. I think some asylum seekers will have given up and just thought we're not going to get anywhere with this, some will have had their problems solved by campaigners, by voluntary groups like [local organisation], charitable groups like [local organisation] have sorted them out, so the overall quality though with a general brush – I was at a meeting in with the police and some housing providers and some campaigners a few weeks ago and the police made a really good point and said why is it that G4S house a disproportionate number of asylum seekers in Rotherham. Rotherham council have recently said this as well, it's a well-known fact, why is it, well anyone who's from South Yorkshire will tell you the cheapest houses for 30 miles in any direction are in Rotherham. And the cheapest ones ain't going to be the best ones are they you know – I can't say what they're like, I can only say that they're in the area of cheapest housing. There's one other called [x], in [city], which is also where a lot of people are, so people are being housed on the basis of cheap housing. I can only surmise what that means for people. **[…]**

Appendix VI: Table of Interview Participants

	Location	Self-Identified Role	Date
Interview A	West Yorkshire	Director of a Refugee and Asylum Support Organisation	24/06/2013
Interview B	West Yorkshire	Project Worker at a Refugee and Asylum Support Organisation	24/06/2013
Interview C	West Yorkshire	Researcher, Campaigner and Volunteer at a frontline service for Refugees and Asylum Seekers	24/06/2013
Interview D	West Yorkshire	Case worker at a Refugee and Asylum Support Organisation	03/07/2013
Interview E	South Yorkshire	Chief Executive of a Refugee and Asylum Support Organisation	04/07/2013
Interview F	South Yorkshire	Fi: Advocacy and support worker in a Refugee and Asylum Support Organisation Fii: Admin worker at a Refugee and Asylum Support Organisation and Individual Campaigner	04/07/2013
Interview G	South Yorkshire	(See Fi)	09/07/2013
Interview H	South Yorkshire	Male individual currently in the asylum process.	09/07/2013
Interview I	West Yorkshire	Female individual with recent experience of the asylum process; recent recipient of refugee status.	15/07/2013
Interview J	West Yorkshire	Project Worker at a Refugee and Asylum Support Organisation	18/07/2013
Interview K	South Yorkshire	Male individual currently in the asylum process.	24/07/2013
Interview L	South Yorkshire	Advocacy and Support Worker in a Refugee and Asylum Support Charity and Individual Campaigner	24/07/2013
Interview M	West Yorkshire	Mi: Volunteer and Project Co-ordinator at a Refugee and Asylum Support Project. Mii: Volunteer and Project Co-ordinator at a Refugee and Asylum Support Project. iii: Female individual currently in the asylum process, and volunteer at Refugee and Asylum Support Project. Miv: Secretary of Asylum and Refugee Support Project and Individual Campaigner.	17/07/2013

Appendix VII: Graphs of Dispersal from Home Office Data

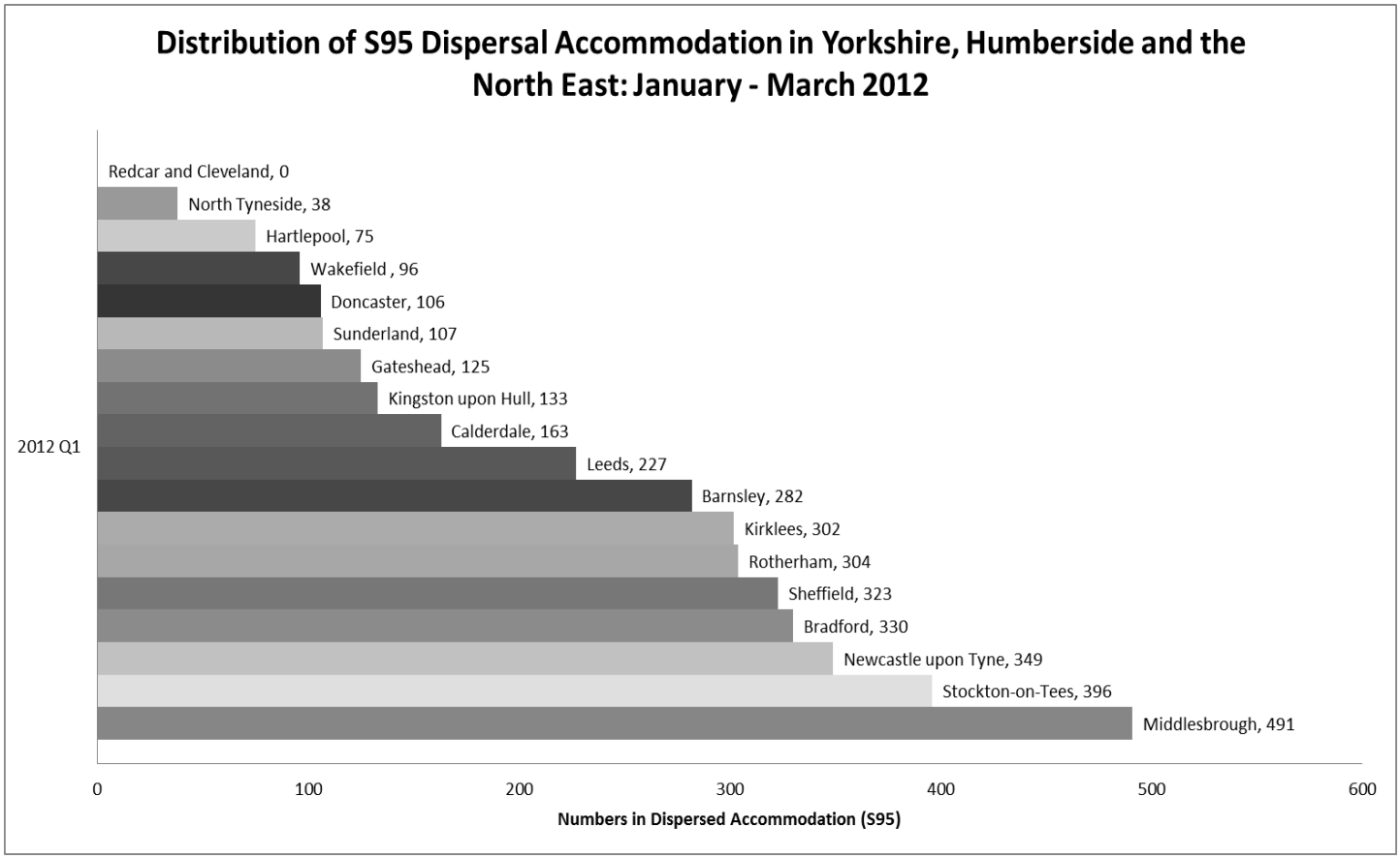

Figure 2: *Source Data*: Home Office (2013), Tables for 'Immigration Statistics, April to June 2013', available at:<www.gov.uk/government/publications/tables-for-immigration-statistics-april-to-june-2013> Accessed [30th August 2013]

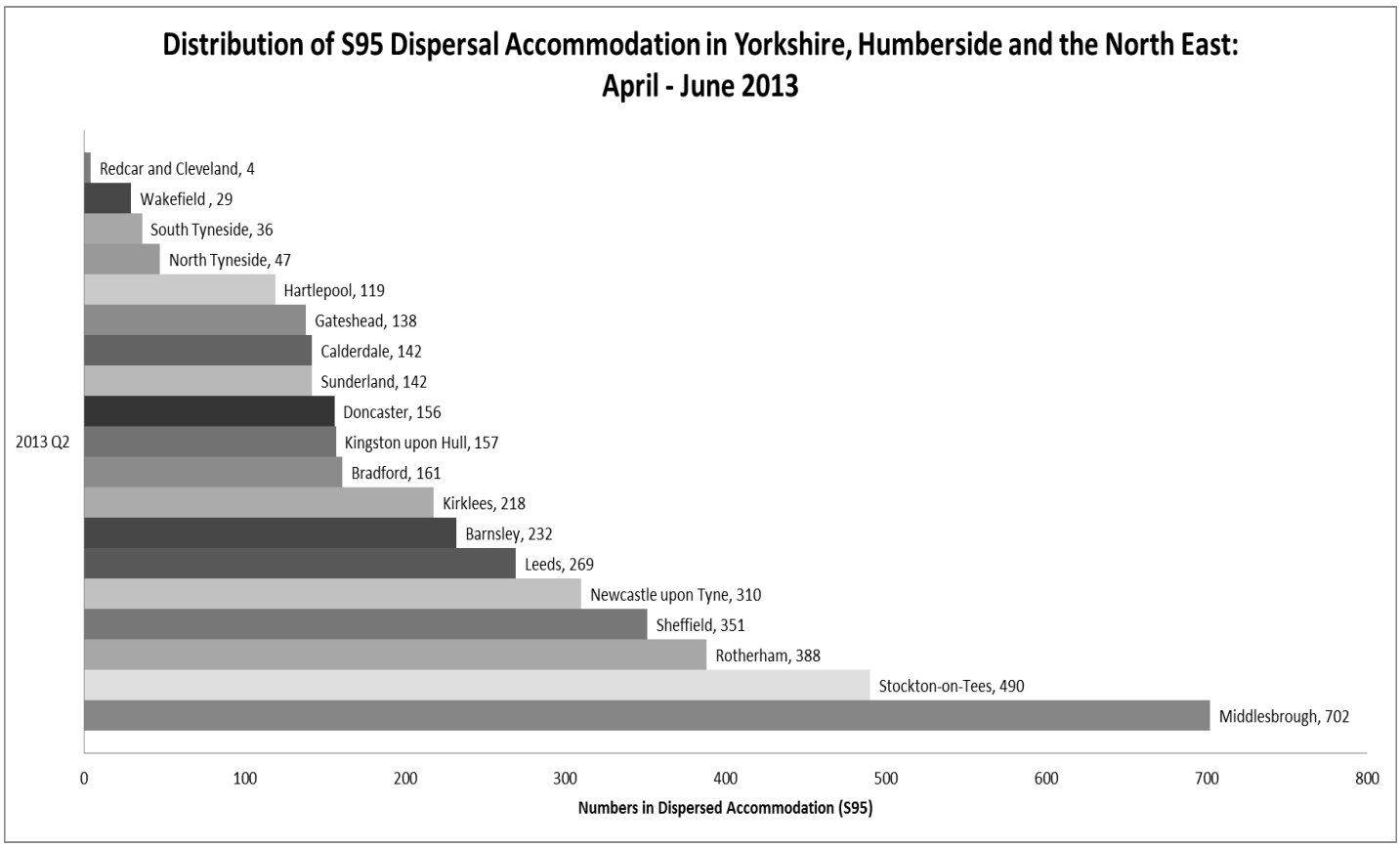

Figure 3: *Source Data*: Home Office (2013), Tables for 'Immigration Statistics, April to June 2013', available at:<www.gov.uk/government/publications/tables-for-immigration-statistics-april-to-june-2013> Accessed [30th August 2013]

Appendix VIII: Example of Mutual Agreement Document

MUTUAL AGREEMENT

AN AGREEMENT MADE THIS [redacted]

[redacted] ("The OCCUPIER")

NASS REFERENCE NUMBER: [redacted]

AND

CASCADE HOMES GROUP LTD **("The ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER")**

Whose main office is at,15 Harehills Road Leeds LS8 5HR.

THIS AGREEMENT IS MADE IN RESPECT OF **THE PLACE OF STAY** at: -

[redacted] **LEEDS,** [redacted]

Please take the time to read this document carefully as it forms a legally binding agreement between you and Cascade Homes Group Ltd on behalf of G4S

If there is anything you do not understand, please ask and we will try to assist.

The management and staff are committed to providing a professional, helpful, friendly and safe environment for the service users. We believe every service user has the right to pursue their life in their place of stay, in as pleasant and trouble free manner as possible. This mutual agreement is about ensuring that our policy is understood, and it is required that all service users must sign it prior to checking in to the place of stay, as a form of acceptance of the agreement.

A) **We agree:**

To make the place of stay available to you, on a temporary basis, at the request and on behalf of the G4S for part or all of the time that your application is being assessed.

That your stay with us will commence on your date of arrival.

To ensure that at the commencement, and throughout the period, of your stay the place of stay is structurally sound, and is reasonably fit for human habitation.

To provide a housekeeping management service to deal with and resolve any issues arising from your stay.

To provide furniture and utensils for use within the place of stay, as detailed on the attached inventory.

To ensure the supply of electricity/gas, water and waste/sewerage disposal to the place of stay.

B) **Nature and limits of the stay**

No tenancy lease or any proprietary right or interest is created by this Agreement. Any service user staying is at the will and discretion of G4S. The Service users unless authorized by the accommodation provider must not allow any other persons, to stay at the place of stay and form part of the household.

Service users will immediately leave/vacate the nominated place of stay or move to another place of stay, at the same or different location at the request of the management swiftly and promptly