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Working Papers

No. 2018/8

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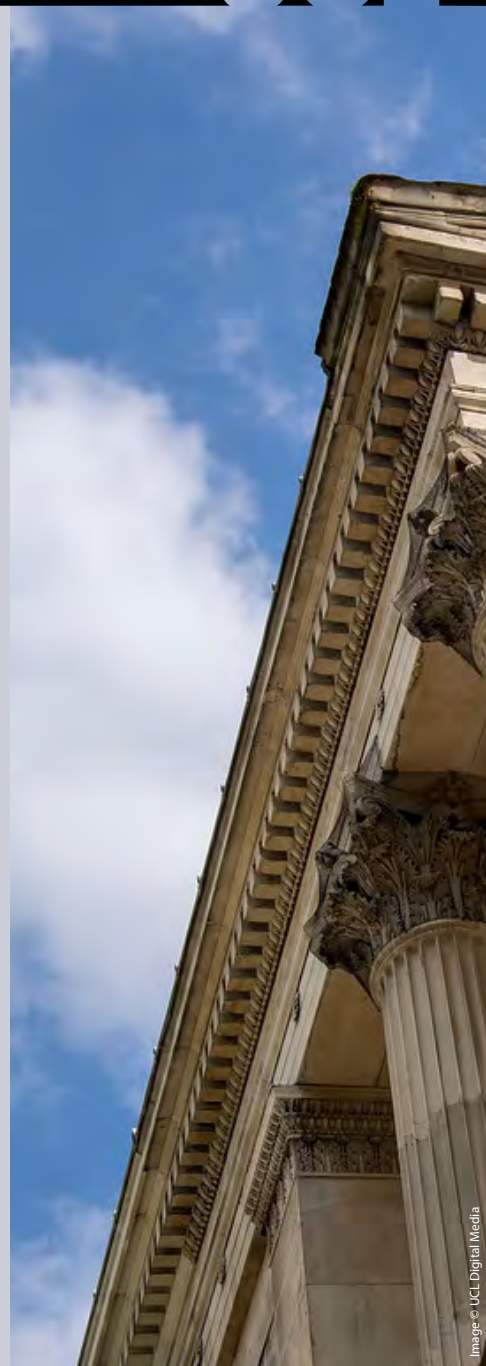

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Third sector organisations and the de-politicisation of asylum governance

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This research dissertation is submitted for the MSc in Global Migration at University College London

2017

Abstract:

De-politicisation has emerged as a defining feature of asylum governance in the UK. Stemming from a neoliberal rationality, de-politicisation has two main features. First, responsibilities are transferred from the state to the non-state sphere. Second, asylum is discursively rendered as a threat to be managed, alternative approaches are closed off and discourse is limited to technocratic issues. This dissertation is an examination of how strategies of de-politicisation have affected third sector organisations (TSOs) on the ground in Bristol. Building on recent trends within migration scholarship, it works with a framework that is informed by anti-essentialist notions of state power and focuses on the actions of a network of non-state actors within a specific locality. The methodology used here involves two research approaches - street-level searches as described by the Below the Radar Reference Group at the Third Sector Research Centre, and semi-structured interviews with third sector workers. This methodology captures both the material and discursive effects of and reactions to de-politicisation, and helps us understand the volitional conduct of TSOs. What will be demonstrated is that practices and discourses within asylum governance are not fixed but are instead constantly being changed and developed as they take shape on the ground. De-politicisation has resulted in a transfer of responsibilities to the third sector, however below the surface of the expanding role of TSOs in asylum services and support there is an on-going formation of counter-hegemonic discourse. Through a coercive engendering of action, TSOs have been motivated to expand their activities, however this does not mean they have been co-opted into hegemonic discourse or manipulated by legal and financial state discipline. Instead, the current alignment of asylum TSOs in Bristol means that a great deal of power lies with actors who are not intrinsically tied to the aims, ideals or interests of the state, and who are able to build counter-hegemonic discourses in opposition to the neoliberal rationality of the state's asylum governance.

Word count: 11899

Contents:

Introduction

In recent years growing numbers of migration scholars have been moved by a realisation that 'locality matters' (Caglar & Glick Schiller 2011: 1). Several trends or tendencies within the scholarship have resulted from this, all of which intersect in that they give 'more attention to the local dimension' (Hinger *et al*. 2016: 441). This dissertation is an attempt to synthesise these tendencies and apply them to the study of a particular phenomenon that has increasingly defined the governance of asylum in the UK: de-politicisation. In his research on asylum governance in the UK, Jonathan Darling has highlighted pervasive practices which 'serve to depoliticise those seeking asylum in the UK' (Darling 2013: 1). Neoliberal at its core and shaped by the demands of austerity, de-politicisation involves the transferral of asylum-related functions from the governmental to the non-governmental sphere. Alongside this, the creation of a discourse in which asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) are framed as a threatening presence to be policed and regulated, restricts the boundaries of political debate as discourse increasingly concerns itself with technocratic issues of "managing" ASRs. Understanding how asylum de-politicisation works is vital for understanding asylum trends across the globe, as it is informed by a hegemonic neoliberal rationality to which many governments have long subscribed. Beyond its prevalence as a mode of asylum governance, it is important also because of its serious impact on the lives of ASRs, which can be seen in the widespread marginalisation of ASRs in society, unable to access state welfare and ostracised from the native population.

The aim of this dissertation is to examine how the dual strands of governmental and discursive de-politicisation are realised at a local level. The case study developed through this research is Bristol, one of the eight members of the Core Cities Group, the reason being that it has a well-established asylum third sector, a large ASR population, and I am personally familiar with it. In carrying out this local examination this dissertation will highlight the 'underestimated relevance of the local context' (Hinger *et al*. 2016: 461) in determining how such practices take shape. In order to do so it will bring together three tendencies within

migration scholarship that together form a coherent framework for a critical examination of the political geography of asylum in the UK. Taking the city of Bristol as a discrete locality in which de-politicisation is grounded, it will foreground third sector organisations (TSOs) as the key actors by which policies and practices are embodied. The third sector is the 'sector of organized human action composed of collective actors beyond the family and distinct from the state and the market' (Viterna *et al.* 2015: 175), and TSOs are intimately bound up in the process of de-politicisation, having the potential to both facilitate and contest it. It will then examine their interactions with de-politicisation within a Gramscian conceptual framework. With its origins in Gramsci's writings on civil society, Gramscianism can help elucidate the actions of TSOs and the motivations behind those actions through well-established concepts. The de-politicisation of asylum is certainly a national phenomenon, even a global one, however the degree to which it is realised in each place is dictated by specifically local configurations of asylum governance. Through the use of this framework this dissertation will demonstrate that TSOs can be coerced into facilitating de-politicisation, however they are also able to contest it.

Beginning with a more detailed review of the tendencies within migration scholarship that have informed the shape and direction of this study, this dissertation will then move on to discuss the literature on neoliberalism and de-politicisation, before finishing the literature review with a consideration of relevant third sector literature and the key Gramscian theories that will be drawn on in later chapters. Chapter 3 will then present the methodology used in this research, which consists of two different data-gathering techniques used in successive phases, and address its merits and limitations. Finally, the empirical findings of the research will be analysed in chapter 4. This chapter will begin with a review of the different forms, missions and social compositions of asylum TSOs in Bristol, highlighting a grass-roots origin and the participation of ASRs as commonalities across the sector (4.1). It will then outline the de-politicising market-oriented transfer of responsibilities which is taking place and how TSOs are increasingly taking on roles of welfare provision (4.2). In contrast to the findings of other studies, what will be demonstrated is that TSOs have

nevertheless maintained a focus on their substantive goals (4.3), a situation in part explained by the relative autonomy and independence of the sector (4.4). TSOs' acceptance of new roles and responsibilities can be understood in part as a response to a coercive engendering of action (4.5), and this chapter will conclude by exploring the ways in which TSOs continue to develop counter-hegemonic challenges to discursive de-politicisation (4.6).

Chapter 1: Turning Local

Within the wide field of migration scholarship it is possible to identify several trends that have developed in recent years following criticisms of methodological nationalism. This chapter will address the issue of methodological nationalism before going on to consider how some researchers have developed new approaches and perspectives that move away from the nation state as the key site of study. Instead, a growing number of studies share an interest in exploring issues of migration at a local level, either by investigating different spaces, examining different actors or developing anti-essentialist notions of state power.

1.1 Moving on from methodological nationalism

Writing in 2010, Gill noted that there has long been a 'strong association between the notion of a refugee and the notion of states' (Gill 2010: 626). The effect of this association has been a tendency within much work around migration, refugees and asylum to focus on the nation state as a 'key site of study, analysis and critique' (Darling 2016a: 485). Beginning in the 1970s (Martins 1974), some researchers began to vocally question the 'consistency, coherence and authority' (Darling 2016b: 178) that migration research had typically assumed of nation states, as well as the pervasive methodological approach which focussed almost exclusive on national models (Schmidtke 2014: 79). Hermino Martins first critically described this as 'methodological nationalism' in 1974 (Martins 1974), a term later elaborated by Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick-Schiller to refer to an intellectual orientation which ties itself to a

framework established by policymakers and 'confines discussions of social processes within national boundaries' (Caglar & Glick Schiller 2011: 9). Spurred on by the developing criticism of methodological nationalism many studies have sought to go beyond analysis at the national level (Emilsson 2015: 1). The traditional focus *on* nation states has been supplemented with a concern for exploring *within* nation states (Darling 2016a: 485), and furthermore with a growing interest in addressing questions long left to political theorists about what a state actually is.

As part of a general rejection of methodological nationalism we can identify a tendency to focus attention on researching migration at different scales and in different spaces. This trend reflects and builds on the widespread social-scientific interest in exploring issues of scale and the differentiation between local, regional, national, transnational and global geographic units, which developed in the early 1990's (Brenner 2011: 23). In 2015 Platts-Fowler and Robinson emphasised the importance of recognising that many aspects of migration are 'grounded and embodied in space and place and that despite proceeding under the same general operative processes, can evolve in distinctive ways in different places' (Platts-Fowler & Robinson 2015: 476). Echoes of this argument can be found spanning back over the decade. In this time there has been an emphasis on the 'local aspects of integration and migration' (Emilsson 2015: 1), with studies exploring the heterogeneity of migration policies within nation-states (Hilber & Baraulina 2012). With regards to integration, focus has shifted from national models to understanding whether and how national policies are implemented at the local level (Schmidtke 2014: 1). Cities, reception centres and refugee camps have all surfaced as popular sites of study (Rygiel 2012; Sanyal 2012), both reflecting and fostering an interest in exploring the dynamics of policy implementation in widely different contexts (Darling 2016a: 485). It appears that migration scholarship is increasingly acknowledging that 'it is both conceptually misleading and factually incorrect to speak of a single – national – model responsible for the formation of immigration and integration policies' (Schmidtke 2014: 80).

As migration scholarship has concerned itself with exploring different scales and spaces it has also begun to address more and more the different actors who populate these spaces. This is, again, reflective of a wider shift in the social-sciences occurring in the 1990s, when global governance emerged as a prominent research agenda (Sending & Neumann 2006: 651) following hot on the heels of regime theory and its shake up of the study of international relations. A central element of both of these theoretical developments was a growth in interest in the place and role of non-state actors. Within migration scholarship different nongovernmental groups and actors such as migrant support groups (MacKenzie *et al*. 2012), refugee community organisations (Piacentini 2012) and social movements (Koca 2016) have since been subject to more scholarly attention. An issue of Forced Migration Review published early this year prominently featured several discussions on recognising the role of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) in refugee resettlement (Slaughter 2017), a topic which had 'long been neglected' (Snyder 2011: 565). In the European context, NGOs and volunteer groups active outside traditional state frameworks have been seen to play a key role in alleviating the suffering of migrants and have thus been the focus of a burgeoning area of research (Sotiropoulos & Bourikos 2014; Chtouris & Miller 2017). The empirical findings of research into non-state actors support criticisms of state-centricity and methodological nationalism by highlighting not only their important role in different areas of migration governance but also the dynamic relationships between these actors and the state. Indeed, as new sets of actors gain powers and responsibilities (Gill 2009: 215) migration scholars have been led to critically examine the concepts of state and state power which they employ.

According to Nick Gill 'research into forced migration has not been readily associated with any particular state theory'. Instead the state has often been conceived of as an essential entity, 'standing apart from society and acting upon it from a distance' (Gill 2010: 627), a tendency informed by the intellectual orientations of methodological nationalism. Innovative research in recent years has worked with anti-essentialist concepts of the state, in Gill's (Gill 2010: 639) opinion constituting an 'emerging critical asylum geography'. Chief amongst

these, and of critical importance to this dissertation, are those works which have acknowledged the 'different forms of state power, including governmental power' (Gill 2010: 639). Research in this vein has explored the 'enrolment of discretionary, dispersed, non-state and quasi-state actors into state-orchestrated and state-managed (but not state-executed) practices' (Gill 2009: 218). In the current European context this band of thought finds much traction due to widespread recognition that member states have by and large all made efforts to reduce the direct role of the state in meeting the welfare needs of forced migrants, and that responsibility for such provision has instead been devolved to myriad public, private and voluntary actors who operate at international, regional and local levels (Dwyer 2005: 622). In order to explore how power is exercised through increasingly complex networks of governance some researchers have turned away from essentialist notions of the state which refer only to legal constraints and financial curtailments.

The tendencies outlined above - the exploration of how policies are realised in different spaces, the role of different actors and the dynamics of asylum sector governance - share an interest in locality and the local dimension of large migration-related phenomenon. Some studies have synthesised these tendencies to analyse specific processes, for example Hinger et al have developed a framework for studying the local dimension of asylum housing in German and the process by which it is negotiated. This dissertation will attempt to follow their lead by looking at a specific locality in order to see how the broader dynamics of a particular phenomenon (de-politicisation) are actually constituted, addressing the role of non-state actors (TSOs) and informed by a non-essentialist view of the state and state power (Gramscianism).

Chapter 2: Asylum and the third sector

This chapter will begin by outlining the broader legal-political framework of asylum in the UK, exploring how asylum policies and practices stem from a "neoliberal rationality". In particular it will address how strategies of de-

politisation have transferred asylum-related functions from the governmental to the nongovernmental sphere and created a discourse of asylum as a managerial concern. It will then move on to consider how an awareness of such strategies in the UK and elsewhere have led some third sector scholarship to view the sector as 'co-opted' by the state (McCabe 2010: 7). These views have been criticized as pessimistic for their reductive suggestions that third sector organisations are on a 'uni-directional course towards the state' (Carey 2008: 14), and increasingly researchers are drawing on Gramscian concepts that are relevant to studies of the third sector. The chapter will finish by considering Gramscian concepts of hegemony, counter-hegemony and coercion, and highlight how they support a nuanced framework for analyzing the third sector.

2.1 Governmental and discursive de-politicisation: Neoliberalism and asylum in the UK

Since the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, whose Government was a 'defining, vanguard project' of neoliberalism (Springer 2010: 1028), successive UK Governments have operated according to a neoliberal rationality. "Neoliberalism" can here be understood as an assemblage of 'rationalities, strategies, technologies and techniques' (Springer 2010: 1032) that imbue political, economic and social arrangements with an emphasis on market relations, minimal states and individual responsibility. The crux of neoliberalism can be seen to lie in the 'transfer of the operations of government … to non-state entities' (Ferguson & Gupta 2002: 989), producing, instead of less government, a 'new modality of government' (Darling 2016c: 232) which facilitates 'governance at a distance' (Springer 2010: 1033). One of the key strategies or processes through which this is achieved is de-politicisation. This involves both a governmental mode, in which there is a market-oriented transfer of responsibilities, and a discursive mode, in which this transfer 'becomes common sense' (Darling 2016c: 239) and particular concerns are displaced from political discussions as 'the debate surrounding an issue becomes technocratic, managerial, or disciplined towards a single goal' (Wood & Flinders 2014: 151). In

the context of asylum this means the transfer of welfare and other responsibilities from the state to the third sector, alongside the framing of ASRs as a burden to be managed.

A governmental de-politicisation of asylum is clearly visible throughout the last two decades. New Labour's approach to the third sector was tied in with their wider promotion of a 'Third Way' in public policy planning, which emphasised a reliance on a mix of state and market forces, assessed on the basis of 'what matters is what works' (Jones *et al.* 2015: 2066). The core element of New Labour's approach to the third sector thus revolved around pursuing closer and better managed relations in the form of partnerships, which were to be governed by national and local 'compacts' which outlined guidelines for the relationships between the two parties (Halfpenny & Reid 2002: 521). With the introduction of the National Asylum Support Service in 2000 asylum seekers were dispersed to accommodation around the country and provided with financial support at 70% of income support (Halfpenny & Reid 2002: 522). A mixture of suppliers including private providers, local authorities and TSOs took up contracts for housing provision, and TSOs working with ASRs grew in size and number and increasingly took on roles which involved close collaboration with the state.

The Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government which came to power in 2010 largely continued the previous Government's approach to third sector relations through their vocal promotion of the 'Big Society' policy programme. While it has never been completely clear what the Coalition Government's vision of the Big Society really entailed (Rowson *et al*. 2010: 62), beyond rhetoric of 'turning Government upside down' we can see that the Coalition pursued established policy objectives of devolving powers to the local level, reconfiguring service provision and giving non-state groups a greater role in the delivery of Government policy agendas (McCabe 2010: 4). One substantial policy discontinuity between the two Governments has been rightly highlighted in the huge reduction of Government funding for the third sector that occurred as a result of austerity (McCabe 2010: 6). Following the 2008 Financial Crisis the Coalition Government, in line with many Governments across Europe and the

world, implemented a raft of austerity policies which involved huge spending cuts across Government (Darling 2016a: 487). While the third sector had previously grown thanks in part to contracting and increased Government funding (McCabe 2010: 6), spending cuts caused vast difficulties across the third sector (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2012: 2). However, austerity also fostered further marketization of welfare provision and further withdrawal of state support for ASRs, and so while TSOs had less funding they often had greater responsibilities (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2012). The approaches of both Governments to third sector relations were clearly neoliberal in character, involving a transfer of responsibilities outside of the state sphere and the involvement of TSOs as mechanisms for delivering formerly public services.

Alongside governmental de-politicisation it is also apparent that a discursive de-politicisation has been taking place. Together with nationalistic rhetoric of 'protecting' the sovereign state and 'maintaining' borders, dominant asylum discourse positions ASRs as economically undesirable and a threat to social cohesion (Bakker *et al.* 2016: 118; Lueck *et al.* 2015: 608; Moore 2013: 356). The widespread usage of 'hydraulic metaphors' by Government ministers and in the popular press, which imagine migrants as 'floods' or 'swarms' goes hand in hand with depictions of asylum seekers as 'bogus', 'undeserving' and 'illegitimate' (White 2002: 3). These metaphors and depictions took on particular emphasis in the light of an austerity narrative that as a nation we needed to "tighten belts" and that there was not enough to go around (Perlo 2012). The confluence of these narratives generates 'survivalist emotions', evoking notions of the nation being 'full up, overcrowded' (Anderson 2017: 57). The narration of an 'asylum problem' naturalises the perception of asylum seekers as an unwanted element within (Darling 2013: 81), reinforces imaginings of asylum seekers as 'problematic presences' and fosters a discursive de-politicisation in which their entrance and presence become something to be policed or managed according to 'logics of procedural efficiency and emergency measures' (Darling 2016c: 231). Once the threat of asylum seekers draining the nations scarce resources has been asserted, political alternatives to the Government's approach of deterring their access to these resources become increasingly contentious. As discourse is de-

politicised, the boundaries of debate solidify around questions of 'regulations, risks, quantification and procedure' rather than 'political rights, political alternatives and human lives' (Darling 2013: 82).

2.2 Subcontractors and handmaidens: Pessimistic views of the third sector

Over the last several decades a number of governments around the globe have engaged in a market-oriented transfer of responsibilities, a trend which has been viewed critically by many researchers. In this view TSOs are 'merely perpetuating the will of the state' (Carey 2008: 11) by carrying out roles and functions that previously had 'unambiguously resided in the state sphere' (Gill 2009: 216). TSOs are conditioned into this position through the use of conditional funding and wider legal and administrative regulations that direct their actions in the interests of the state. In the UK context, research in this vein suggests that the process of contracting and partnership institutes TSOs as a part of the system of governance (Carmel & Harlock 2008: 167). In order to qualify for funding TSOs have to conform to 'systems of regulation, inspection and audit' (Clarke 2004: 36) that shape how they function and what they do. This ties into a wider assertion that for NGOs a dependency on state-aligned donors and the state for funding can effectively make them subcontractors of the state or even para-statal organisational (Kaldor 2003: 21). Furthermore, by providing a 'social safety net' (Kaldor 2003: 16) TSOs are enabling the 'withdrawal of the state' (MacKenzie 2012: 263) and thus acting as an 'important mechanism' (Kaldor 2003: 16) for the implementation of a neoliberal agenda.

One of the most prevalent perspectives of the third sector which takes this view is described by Olaf Corry as the governmental view (Corry 2010: 16). This approach stems from Michel Foucalt's writings on the nature of modern government and his theory of governmentality, a term he used to refer to the 'conduct of conducts', or the practices by which the state governs the conduct of others (MacKinnon 2000: 295). Governmentality then describes the system of 'discourse and techniques or institutions that allow certain practices to flourish and others to appear impossible' (Corry 2010: 16), and a governmental view of

the third sector sees it as part of or even a tool of the dominant order and its discourses and institutions as the means by which a certain kind of governance is achieved (Corry 2010: 16). State power is thus regulatory – it works through institutions and induces individuals to conform to social norms (Carey 2008: 12), and TSOs form part of the apparatus by which governments are able to 'govern at a distance' (Carey 2008: 12) and 'produce the moral regulation of the choices of autonomous individuals' (Gilbert & Powell 2009: 7). The governmental view has been criticized by Raymond Bryant for reflecting too heavily Foucalt's own pessimism (Bryant 2002: 271), and by Corry for being too 'reductionist' in its analysis (Corry 2010: 17), reducing TSOs to merely the 'handmaidens' of governmentality, and the third sector as a whole to little more than a tool for ordering society. In the light of this criticism Gramscian perspectives have been gaining traction within third sector scholarship.

2.3 Hegemony, counter-hegemony and coercion: Gramscian concepts and the third sector

While diverse in their details, these concepts have all developed from the writings of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist theorist and politician. Gramsci is credited with developing a 'culturally and institutionally sensitive interpretation of Marxist theory' (Gale 1998: 270), and his writings on civil society, which he located as a structural third sector between the state and the economic realm (Katz 2006: 334; Viterna *et al.* 2015: 178), have been taken up by later authors. Gramscianism broadened the understanding of how power is exercised by highlighting 'opinion-moulding activity' above and beyond traditional economic and military factors (Sønderriis 2011: 33). Attracting the attention of local governance researchers it was widely taken up as a broad conceptual framework for 'assessing how governance is channelled and delivered through local state institutions' (MacKinnon 2000: 294). While Stuart Hall cautioned that it does not offer a 'general social science which can be applied to the analysis of social phenomena across a wide comparative range of historical societies' (Hall 1986: 5), he nevertheless shared the view that it offers

a theoretical basis from which to analyse the 'dynamics of contemporary political contests' (Hall 1986: 5).

Gramscian concepts offer a useful framework for examining the third sector because it provides both a means of understanding what TSOs are doing, through the theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony, and a means of understanding why TSOs are doing these things, through the concept of coercion. Hegemony, according to Gramsci, is the dominant way of life and thought, diffused through society and informing its norms, values, practices and social relations (Katz 2006: 335). Alongside hegemony there is a simultaneous movement of counter-hegemony (Katz 2006: 336), and while hegemony maintains the position of the ruling class, counter-hegemony promotes a re-arrangement of social forces. Hegemony is thus 'contingent and unstable' (Levy & Egan 2003: 807), and the third sector, according to Gramscian thought, can be seen as a zone of contestation in which social forces vie for dominance (Corry 2010: 17). In this perspective TSO are either utilised by the ruling class to 'form and maintain its hegemony' (Katz 2006: 335), or they act as sites and institutions from which 'an alternative social order can materialise' (Sønderriis 2011: 34). The Gramscian emphasis on the way in which non-state forces and actors in society can be co-opted by the state is similar in its analysis to the governmental view, however it is more nuanced in allowing for the potential for social change to materialise within the third sector. It is important to note that hegemony and counter-hegemony are not a strict dichotomy, and TSOs can be complicated in both promoting and challenging hegemony simultaneously. Nevertheless, as a framework this theory enables us to more fully appreciate what TSOs are actually doing beyond an evaluation of activities and outcomes. Instead, we are able to analyse the third sector as 'the balance of social forces in society' (Corry 2010: 18), and see specific actions as either furthering or countering hegemonic discourses; either reinforcing the existing social order or developing alternatives.

While hegemony and counter-hegemony can help us understand what TSOs are doing, they cannot explain in and of themselves why TSOs are acting in these

ways. Using Gramscian theories of coercion enables us to examine the myriad strategies by which TSOs can be co-opted into hegemonic discourses. Two attributes of the Gramscian notion of coercion are of particular relevance here. First, the understanding that hegemony can form a 'coercive orthodoxy' (Katz 2006: 335), inculcating actors with the desire to act in prescribed ways. In this way coercion offers a framework for exploring how dominant discourses can direct the activities of TSOs as much as disciplinary strategies. Second, the recognition that disciplinary strategies can compel actors to perform certain tasks without resorting to overt legal or administrative manipulation (Carey 2008: 12-14). Here, rather than seeing TSOs which comply with and facilitate neoliberal rationalities as "handmaidens", thinking about the actions of TSOs as responses to coercion encourages us to recognise how consent can stem from actors being 'outflanked rather than brainwashed' (Levy & Egan 2003: 808). In revealing previously hidden pressures which TSOs must constantly negotiate the Gramscian theory of coercion enables us to better understand the 'volitional conduct' (Gill 2009: 219) of actors within the third sector.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Exploring how de-politicisation has been realised at a local level required a combination of different sources and types of data. This data needed to capture both its material effects as responsibilities and funding move around and the work that people do changes, and its discursive effects as the discourse people use is moulded and in turn moulds people's beliefs and perceptions. First, I needed to 'map' asylum third sector activity in Bristol and develop a comprehensive picture of the various organisations, their structures and forms of organisation, the work they did, their stated aims, their funding sources, the people who worked for them, and how they have grown and changed over recent years. Second, I needed to hear the perspectives of those who worked within the sector to understand the dynamics of relationships across the sector and between the governmental and non-governmental sphere, the problems and difficulties TSOs faced, the internal changes within TSOs, how government policies were perceived, the language with which third sector workers described

their work and how they understood their own roles and positions in Bristol. To achieve this, this research used a combination of two separate data collection methods employed in successive phases.

3.1 Phase one: street-level searches

The first phase of research was largely based on work done by the Below the Radar Reference Group at the Third Sector Research Centre in Birmingham. This group was formed in 2009 in response to a growing awareness of the lack of information on 'small, voluntary or below the radar activity' in the Third Sector (McCabe *et al*. 2010: 4). We can get a sense of researchers' interest in such groups from Toepler's statement that 'perhaps one of the few remaining big mysteries in non-profit sector research is the question of what we are missing by excluding those organisations from empirical investigations that are not easily captured in standard data sources' (Toepler 2003: 236). Adopting the term 'Below the Radar' as shorthand for 'small voluntary organisations, community groups and semi-formal and informal activities in the third sector' (Soteri-Proctor 2011: 2) the TSRC began developing a research strategy for this part of the sector. While this research is not solely concerned with "below the radar" TSOs I felt that beginning from their methodology would allow me to develop as comprehensive a picture of third sector activity as possible.

The approach outlined by the TSRC is open and flexible; there is no particular sequence of activities (Soteri-Proctor 2011: 9). Their strategy involves going beyond official records by collating data from local agencies to supplement larger administrative records before conducting 'street-level' mapping in order to find all organisational activity taking place within small local areas. My take on it involved first using Bristol City Council's (BCCs) website to find all the relevant spaces and locations within the area, which included community centres, community noticeboards, job centres, faith-based buildings, health centres, libraries, sports facilities and early learning education providers. These were chosen because of their potential to be integrated into asylum services or support. I then mapped out walking routes around the city which connected

around 150 of these and over the course of 6 days I visiting these points of interest, conducting informal, fact-finding chats and conversations with volunteers, attending events, and often stopping in shops and businesses on the route to talk to local people. These conversations gave me a sense of which TSOs were the biggest and most active, the types of work they were doing, the physical, cultural and political environment in which they were working and the kinds of problems they were facing, all of which informed my later discussions. Due to time constraints I could not visit all, and contacted around 100 community centres by phone instead of in person. Alongside my street-level searches I also conducted some very useful online searches using Facebook and Twitter, two of the most widely used social media platforms, where I used key terms such as 'refugee', 'asylum', 'aid', 'volunteer', 'voluntary', 'community', 'immigrant', 'support', 'Calais' and 'Syria'. These online searches brought up many of the same organisations that I would find during my street-level searches, and my experience here supports the findings of Gaia Marcus and Jimmy Tidey that there is 'a significant amount of overlap between the community assets mapped by … online data-gathering techniques and door-to-door research' (Marcus & Tidey 2015: 1). These searches, both on the street and online, highlighted dozens of active groups, networks and organisations.

While my online searches encompassed Bristol, conducting street-level searches throughout the whole of Bristol was not a viable option, so a smaller area of the city was chosen. This area was chosen based on demographic information published by Bristol City Council (Bristol City Council 2011) following the 2011 census which suggested that four central wards were most likely to host asylum TSOs. These wards had the highest immigrant population and were the most ethnically diverse, as well as being ranked the highest in terms of indices of multiple deprivation and having the highest population of people receiving means-tested benefits and with low skills for employment. All of which suggests that individuals who would either be involved with or require support from the asylum third sector were more likely to be located within these wards. Furthermore, one of the conclusions drawn by MacKenzie *et al*.'s research into networks of support for new migrant communities was that 'spatiality was key'

(MacKenzie *et al*. 2012: 645); in their case study the town centre provided the urban space for the organisation of the networks, and the area investigated here is mostly made up of four of the central wards of Bristol, although it extends beyond these ward boundaries in some instances.

3.2 Phase two: interviews

The second phase of research involved semi-structured interviews with members of relevant TSOs. Interviews have historically been distrusted by social scientists because they have been understood as a performance on the part of both interviewer and interviewee (Cochrane 2013: 40). Many interviewees were clearly performing a role of representative of their organization, often checking their language or acting awkwardly or hesitantly when they began to express opinions which diverged from the "official line" of the organization, for example when criticizing BCC or other TSOs. One interviewee qualified an answer by saying 'I'm talking as an individual here, not a representative of [their organization]' (interview 1). At the same time, in allowing the interviewer to observe 'expressions, pauses or shifts in attitude' (Cochrane 2013: 44) and offering space for the interviewer to re-word questions and re-direct conversation, interviews offer a means to recognize and negotiate this tension. Semi-structured interviews were chosen over other methods, such as surveys, because in being open to wide-ranging discussion they allow participants more space to express their own thoughts and opinions and to 'introduce their own concerns' (Valentine 1997: 111). Semi-structured interviews are 'dialogue rather than an interrogation', a 'conversation with a purpose' (Valentine 1997: 111). Approaching Bristol's asylum third sector as an outsider I wanted to maximize the opportunities for interviewees to direct me to pertinent events I had not been aware of, issues I had not anticipated, and avenues of thought and discussion which I had not considered. Learning about the Refugee Forum, which had not appeared in my street-level searches, and hearing a third sector worker's criticisms of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme, a conflict I had not expected, are just two examples of how semi-structured interviews were successful in this regard.

I began this phase by selecting a sample group of TSOs to contact, initially aiming to develop a sample which would include the key actors in the field who would be able to 'answer specific question of substantial or theoretical importance to the research' (Johnson & Rowlands 2012: 150) while also being illustrative of the different organisational types and third sector activities that could be seen across the city. However, a significant number of the TSOs I approached were either unable or unwilling to take part, and while several of these could be replaced my sample size of ten TSOs was smaller than I had hoped for. This difficulty in engaging participants was a significant limitation in the effectiveness of this approach and forced me to respond in less than desirable ways. In order to make the interviews more attractive I removed some questions to make them shorter and offered to conduct them over the phone as well as in person. This resulted in a significant uptake. Conducting interviews over the phone meant I was unable to observe interviewees' body language, and the conversation was often more stilted and awkward, interspersed with periods of poor phone signal. Compared to my in-person interviews, conducted in local cafés or interviewees' offices so that interviewees would feel comfortable, phone interviews were more difficult but not problematically so.

Another way I responded to the difficulty in engaging participants was by following up with interview requests that emphasised my status as an 'insider', someone who is 'similar to the participants in many respects' (Dowling 2005: 26). In declining to take part, one third sector worker told me that they received a large number of interview requests from students and that they did not have the time to participate in all of them. The presence of around 50,000 University of Bristol and University of the West of England students in Bristol was not something I had considered. By referencing my own experiences volunteering for an asylum TSO I sought to distance myself from student "outsiders" and develop a positive rapport. While this may have helped in winning participants round, it also may have caused further in problems terms of assumed knowledge and objectivity. On multiple occasions during the interviews I had to ask for further clarity on terms, policies and events that the interviewee had mentioned

in an off-hand manner, obviously expecting me to have been aware of the fine details already. In other instances I was made aware that by emphasising my insider status I had potentially compromised my 'independence from the object of research' (Dowling 2005: 25) in the eyes of interviewee. Just as they assumed I had certain knowledge it also felt at times like they assumed I had a certain opinion, and while the personal characteristics and social position of the interviewer will always inform participants' behaviours I made particular effort to hold back personal opinions and ask non-leading questions. Overall, despite these limitations, the semi-structured interviews were successful in providing me with richly detailed data, often on topics I had not previously considered, that included not just factual information but a sense of interviewees' personal feelings and opinions.

Chapter 4: Analysis

In the following chapter I will analyse the data collected from the street-level searches and interviews. Beginning with a survey of the diverse forms, missions and social compositions of TSOs, I will develop the argument that while responsibilities have certainly been transferred from the state to the third sector, it would be wrong to attribute this to the 'co-option' of TSOs by the state. Bristol's asylum third sector remains largely autonomous and relatively uninhibited by legal and financial state discipline. Instead, TSOs have been coerced into picking up the pieces of welfare provision left behind following the withdrawal of the state through both the formation of a coercive orthodoxy that encourages participation in third sector activities and the compelling effects of harsh asylum measures. Far from merely perpetuating the will of the state, asylum TSOs are actively engaged in a counter-hegemonic contestation of the discursive de-politicisation of asylum.

4.1 Forms, missions and social compositions

The political and cultural environment of Bristol has fostered a large and growing number of active TSOs that work with ASRs, demonstrating Gill's assertion that 'new sets of actors are becoming increasingly empowered and responsibilised' in the asylum sector (Gill 2009: 216). These TSOs are not only numerous but also diverse in their forms of organisation, missions and social compositions. The span of organisational forms runs from horizontal, online-only networks through small volunteer-run charities to branches of international organisations such as the Red Cross. Most of the TSOs identified were organised along the lines of traditional nonprofits or operational charities, however even within this there was variance. Some have more vertical and hierarchical structures, with several levels of governance which may include boards of governors (interview 1; interview 4), while others operate more horizontally. Some employ paid staff and hold permanent premises and office space, while others are fully volunteer run on a part-time basis (interview 3). There is an apparent correlation between the size of an organisation and its degree of bureaucracy and hierarchy - small TSOs may operate with only several part-time staff, meaning that there is little scope for hierarchical structures to take shape, while larger TSOs may require separate branches of management for different activities.

As well as diverse forms of organisation the TSOs were also diverse in their missions. Missions can be understood as the aspirations or aims that underlie an organisation's actions. Mary Kaldor, in outlining four ideal types of civil society actors, suggests some degree of discrete boundaries between different types of missions; for example, the 'emancipation of the poor and excluded' is set apart from the 'protection and promotion of members interests' (Kaldor 2003: 12). What was found in my interviews was that interviewees often felt their organisations had several different missions which they pursued simultaneously. One TSO could aspire to 'support destitute migrants', 'build community bonds' and 'change people's minds' [about ASRs] all at once (interview 2). Furthermore, what was made apparent throughout the interviews was that when TSOs aligned themselves more closely with one particular mission they did that cognisant of the missions of TSOs around them. The different aims and aspirations were seen

to complement each other (interview 2), and interviewees spoke respectfully of organisations which had ostensibly different aims. Many interviewees used similar language in describing their main aim or ethos and also explicitly suggested a synchronicity across the sector. According to one interviewee 'we're all here in the interests of asylum seekers, and that's what we're going to focus on' (interview 6), an avowed unity of purpose that many interviewees were similarly keen to present.

Acknowledging this aspirational harmony leads us on to consider the social composition of TSOs. The local or grassroots origin of many of the key TSOs and the widespread participation of ASRs was recognised to play an important role in shaping the aims and aspirations of TSOs. Eight out of ten TSOs in the interview sample were originally created in Bristol, and while national and international organisations are present and play an important role it is clear that the core of the sector is made up of local TSOs. Management of TSOs was usually the remit of professional voluntary sector workers who had worked in paid or voluntary roles in the sector for a number of years, reflecting a widespread trend within the sector (Randall 2015: 33). In some cases, however, ASRs played key roles in the creation of TSOs and occupied the top management positions. ASRs also make up a significant proportion of the volunteer base of many TSOs in Bristol, including five in the sample. While Lucy Williams is right to note that 'refugees and other migrants are not mere passive recipients of care, but are active in finding help appropriate to their own priorities and objectives' (Williams 2006: 867), in Bristol we can see that ASRs are not just active in finding appropriate help but in creating it. Several interviewees were clear in recognising that their roots in the local area and the participation of ASRs strongly informed their missions and activities. The 'lived experience' of refugee staff had been vital to shaping the 'vision' of one organisation (interview 2). For another, having beneficiaries also volunteer and take part in decision-making processes meant that they could know 'what members really want' (interview 1).

4.2 Market-oriented transfer of responsibilities

Within this diverse sector it has become increasingly common for TSOs to find themselves fulfilling the roles of statutory services. TSOs undertake a vast array of activities within Bristol's asylum sector. The roles of the various groups, networks and organisations identified during online and street-level searches were analysed according to categories provided by the 2010 National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises (Ipsos MORI 2013: 32). These categorise were sufficient in capturing the full range of activity and no new categories were developed during this research.

Table 1: Roles of TSOs in Bristol

Roles	Percentage of TSOs undertaking roles
Culture & recreation	22%
Employment, education & training	8.6%
Legal assistance & advice services	25%
Community development & mutual aid	19.4%
Capacity building / facilities	13.8%
Advocacy, campaigning, representation, information or research	13.8%
Delivery of public services: Housing, day centre, counselling, health care	33.3%

This method of measuring activities allows for single TSOs to fulfil multiple roles, an important ability considering most TSOs displayed some degree of hybridity, meaning that they did not confine themselves to one task but undertook multiple actions with different aims. For example, one TSO provides housing for asylum seekers while also running a drop-in centre. Another TSO working in housing

runs training programmes for its tenants to help them find work, and furthermore is actively campaigning locally and nationally to get employers to 'change the way they employ' (interview 2). The diversity of activities is closely connected to the size and age of TSOs. Those which now offer several services typically began with just one before 'growing into other areas' (interview 10), and smaller TSOs are far more likely to focus on a single activity due to the structural limitations of staffing and funding.

Overall, TSOs in Bristol have come to play a vital role in providing services and support for ASRs. On one level they can be seen as vital for ASRs themselves, many of whom rely on TSOs in some form or another, and on another level they can be seen as vital for BCC. TSOs have taken on so many roles and responsibilities that their absence would have dire consequences for the city. Two interviewees suggested that BCC was well aware of this fact, and that this lay behind their efforts to maintain some degree of financial support during widespread spending cuts. According to one, BCC had 'ringfenced' some funding because they were aware that 'if they don't support the voluntary sector it will all come to their doorstep' (interview 5). Another interviewee painted this in stark terms when discussing the near closure of a large TSO several years prior, stating that 'if they closed it would be a very big problem for city council because you would have a lot of quite angry young men on the street … if those things weren't provided, I think, I suspect there might be some more issues than there are, people kicking off and getting angry and upset' (interview 3). In their view, BCC relied on TSOs to fulfil vital roles, and the closure of key TSOs was a potentially dangerous threat to community cohesion in the city.

That the third sector is widely considered a crucial pillar of Bristol's asylum sector can be largely attributed to the fact that TSOs are now carrying out many of the functions and providing many of the services that would traditionally be associated with the welfare state. A great deal of the work done by TSOs involves providing services to meet the basic needs of ASRs in Bristol. While no precise figures on the ASR population within Bristol exist, after comparing predicted numbers against the numbers of beneficiaries of all the TSOs it appears likely

that the vast majority make use of services provided by TSOs that could be considered essential, such as housing, healthcare, childcare and financial or material support to purchase food, clothing and hygiene necessities. This is not to say that the state is completely absent from asylum welfare, it still delivers cash benefits to asylum seekers via the post office and ASRs are able to use the NHS and attend school, however interviewees uniformly felt they were doing the bulk of the work. One said to me 'what we're doing, I mean really the government should be doing it. I don't know if they used to and then they stopped, but I think it's sad, shameful, that we have to step in and stop people from starving, get people off the street. This is basic stuff, the most basic' (interview 7). The £36.95 a week that asylum seekers receive from the Government was spoken of scornfully during interviews, refugees were seen to be little better provided for and failed asylum seekers were highlighted as being widely at risk of destitution, and so TSOs are now required to provide the bare essentials of life. In doing so they are taking up 'responsibilities and authorities that once resided unambiguously' in the state sector (Gill 2009: 216).

4.3 Resisting goal displacement

In line with their expanding responsibilities, some TSO are becoming increasingly formalised. This process can be understood as the increasing structuring of work roles, the development of rules and procedures which govern employees activities, and the growth of internal bureaucratic or administrative systems. One interviewee noted that as their organisation had grown they had faced more 'requirements upon us in terms of standards of how we have to do things' (interview 1), and when talking about another organisation said 'they're a much younger organisation, they're able to be looser around boundaries, operate in a way we might have done a few years ago' (interview 1). This chimes with a growing literature on the management of NGOs within which issues of institutionalisation and accountability have been frequently highlighted (Kaldor 2003: 5). Institutionalisation is recognised as a trend within the third sector, particularly as TSOs are brought into partnership with government. While advantages to formalisation are acknowledged, it is often associated with

specific disadvantages or problems, chiefly the danger that institutional goals of organisational survival will take precedence over substantive goals (MacKenzie *et al.* 2012: 641).

This tendency can be observed amongst TSOs in Bristol, albeit to a limited degree. As one interviewee explained, the need to both continue providing services and keep staff in work influenced the behaviour of their management committee, sometimes leading them to pursue 'lucrative funding opportunities' which 'those of us on the ground will look at and say, well we don't want to do that' (interview 1). As the organisation had grown it had become more formalised, with many staff now employed full or part-time. This is a clear example of the imperatives of organisational survival generating behaviours which prioritise sustaining the existence of the organisation. More widely across the sector, requirements from funding sources for data and assessments of the impact of TSOs have shaped behaviours, as recognised by (Harlock 2013: 1). In some cases this has led to TSOs allocating resources to producing the required data, and in others it has led to TSOs altering the nature of the services they provide so that their impact can be better measured (interview 10). Measuring outcomes can be difficult in many areas of work that TSOs in Bristol are engaged in, for example quantifying the positive outcomes of a befriending scheme, and in some cases this led to organisations 'rethinking how we do things so that we can know what the results are' (interview 10).

Acknowledging these changing behaviours, it does not appear that the formalisation of some TSOs has led to "goal displacement". It would be wrong to suggest that behaviours that fail to reflect or meet the organisation's needs 'on the ground' signify that its substantive goals have been obscured. All the interviewees shared a concern for the challenges of sustainability they faced in their own organisation and the sector as a whole; organisational survival was not solely a concern for more formal TSOs. In the context of austerity and major reductions in public spending there is a real risk for many TSOs across the country that they will be unable to survive (Sepulveda *et al.* 2013: 645). Several years prior to this research Refugee Action Bristol, then the largest asylum TSO

in Bristol, was forced to close due to lack of funding, highlighting the precarious position that many of these TSOs occupy. TSOs have accordingly undertaken strategic responses to diversify their funding sources. However, possibly due to the widespread involvement of ASRs, they continue to prove to be in touch with their beneficiaries and responsive to their needs, as highlighted in the continual development of new programmes and services within the larger TSOs. While some of Bristol's TSOs are becoming more formalised they do not appear to have succumbed to the associated dangers, supporting the argument that 'goal displacement is not inevitable' (MacKenzie *et al*. 2012: 636).

4.4 Independence and autonomy

The ability to hold on to substantive goals speaks to the wider state of independence and autonomy in which many TSOs have persisted. Some small TSOs have operated completely under BCCs radar for years, with little or no contact. When asked about their contact with BCC, one interviewee described a lack of interest on both sides in developing a working relationship '[my organisation] is very grassroots. I don't really need them, they don't need me. It is what it is, we're very small and just get on with it.' While some studies have outlined a widespread co-option of TSOs through government contracts (Conlon & Gill 2015: 443) this does not appear to be particularly relevant in Bristol. In some cases this has made up around 30% of third sector income (Halfpenny & Reid 2002: 542), however government contracts are rare here. Only the largest TSOs have contracts with the government and these make up only a fraction of their total income. The marginalisation of the BME third sector and the disproportionate funding cuts it has faced (Tilki *et al.* 2015) appears to have been similarly experienced by the asylum third sector, the vast majority of which operates without any government funding. Furthermore, as noted previously, austerity has led to a dramatic reduction in government funding across the whole third sector, and so Halfpenny & Reid's figure of 30%, produced in 2000, is clearly out-dated (2002: 542). This lack of direct government funding narrows the possibilities for the government to enact legal and financial discipline on TSOs.

Beyond funding, there is an overall lack of interaction between TSOs and national or local government and a readily apparent lack of top-down control. TSOs had often developed with genuine autonomy pursuing their own individual objectives, and interviewees generally perceived BCC to have long been uninterested in the specifics of their work, bar a few individuals. That TSOs continue to operate largely autonomously in pursuing their own objectives is well illustrated by the recent introduction of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme in Bristol. This scheme, first announced by then Prime Minister David Cameron in 2015, involves the resettlement of Syrian refugees from Syria to different parts of the UK. While over 100 Syrians have been resettled in Bristol through the scheme the existing asylum third sector has been largely uninvolved in the process, and several interviewees in fact spoke critically of the scheme as being a 'separate stream' to their own work (interview1; interview 3; interview 4). The fact that the scheme is being delivered outside of the existing asylum third sector suggests that the Government is unable to or uninterested in disciplining asylum TSOs into carrying out its own objectives, and that the relationship between the Government and TSOs is not one in which local or national Government can dictate behaviour.

The real dynamics of the relationship between BCC and asylum TSOs can be well observed through the ongoing process of BCCs development of a citywide 'City of Sanctuary Strategy'. This is a very recent development, with the first draft of the strategy having been released late in 2016. Many of the core ideas of the strategy, not to mention its title, have clearly developed out of the grassroots 'City of Sanctuary' campaign in Bristol which many third sector workers were involved in around a decade ago (interview 1). Political and personnel changes within BCC have now spurred action on its part, and it began by approaching asylum TSOs via the Refugee Forum to discuss the creation of the strategy. The Refugee Forum, which was founded in 2002, is a multi-agency forum in which TSOs, councillors and representatives of Home Office contractors come together for regular meetings in which they can coordinate action and air disagreements

(interview 6). Now attended by around 25 TSOs the Refugee Forum is one of the main venues for third sector planning and organisation and is managed by several third sector workers. When BCC first reached out to the Forum about the City of Sanctuary Strategy they initially proposed that the strategy could in fact be managed by the Forum, however this idea was rejected. BCC then went on to consult with key TSOs in drafting the strategy following a plan outlined within meetings with the Refugee Forum. The draft document that was then produced now largely consists of issues and recommendations raised by TSOs rather than anything particularly original on the part of BCC, with one interviewer commenting that 'a lot of the strategy is just describing what's already in the city' (interview 8). Looking at the interactions between BCC and asylum TSOs during the process described above there is a clear absence of 'blurred boundaries' between the state and the third sector (Carmel & Harlock 2008: 155) or the use of legal-coercive or financial-manipulative methods. Instead, there is an apparent institutional and operational gap between the two which is only now being broached by efforts to develop a more co-operative relationship.

4.5 Coercive engendering of action

Asylum TSOs in Bristol work independently of local government direction and largely without government funding. This apparent autonomy suggests that in order to understand their volition we may need to consider less blunt forms of coercion that may be at work. In his critique of exteriorisation theory's reliance on legal or financial terms to explain TSOs behaviour, Gill references the Gramscian concept of coercion in which 'states also command powers that are capable of engendering the will to act in accordance with state objectives rather than simply generating the necessity or imperative to do so' (Gill 2009: 219). Following this line of thought, it is possible to identify in Bristol forms of coercion which have compelled TSOs to take on more and more responsibilities. On one level this can be seen in the formation of a 'coercive orthodoxy' (Katz 2006: 335). Through specific framings in public discourse individuals can be 'ideationally conditioned to freely choose to conduct themselves in ways that are nevertheless particular and constrained' (Gill 2009: 200). Government rhetoric

since the beginning of the Big Society policy platform has been particularly consistent in framing participation in the third sector in a positive light, as 'service', 'duty' or 'community work', and seeking to attract and include more citizens within this sphere (McCabe 2010: 2-5). Several interviewees I talked to reflected on the boom in volunteers that occurred over the course of 2014 and 2015, as events of the Syrian civil war and the plight of refugees were relayed to the British public in increasingly graphic images. The language interviewees used to describe this trend, for example saying that 'they wanted to help so they came to us' (interview 4) and 'a lot of people watched the news and then would come and ask us what they could do' (interview 8) suggests that for both them and the volunteers this was a normal and natural action; that there was a clear and obvious pathway from being motivated to act to volunteering in the third sector. This reflects a coercive orthodoxy strategically inculcated by Government policy and rhetoric in which voluntarism and third sector participation has been rendered a conventional channel for positive action and expressions of solidarity.

Another level of coercion can be seen in the pervasive destitution amongst ASRs, which creates a powerfully compelling 'need' for TSOs to act. It is widely accepted that ASRs face incredibly tough living conditions in the UK. High levels of unemployment and low levels of language tuition fosters social exclusion, especially in the context of dispersal policies that house ASRs in socially deprived areas up and down the country (Phillimore & Goodison 2006: 1715). Many live in a state of destitution, and according to one Amnesty International report failed asylum seekers live 'lives on the margins of society, in abject poverty … with health problems and degrees of psychological distress directly related to this painful limbo condition' (Amnesty 2006: 14). A recent study published in the British Medical Journal has argued that some asylum seekers' diets are comparable to pre-welfare state conditions, reflecting their living in a state of absolute poverty (Collins *et al*. 2015: 1). Interviewees confirmed that destitution amongst ASRs is rife in Bristol, and growing; increasing demand for basic services was a problem raised by nearly every interviewee, and many of the services were operating at capacity.

This state of affairs leads us to consider a number of warning statements made during the early days of the Coalition Government. The leading publication for the third sector published an article arguing that the Government's approach amounted to 'volunteer, or else!' (Quainton 2010). In their written evidence to a House of Commons Public Administration Select Committeee the Greater London Volunteering forum raised their concern that 'volunteering in the public service can be about engaging service users in delivering solutions, but should be a choice and not coerced under threat of losing a service altogether which the community decides is crucial and should be statutory' (Greater London Volunteering 2011). Oppenheim et al. presciently warned that austerity meant 'rolling back the state and expecting communities to leap into the driving seat' (Oppenheim *et al*. 2010: 2), and Angus McCabe argued that integral to the Big Society was an understanding that TSOs would have to run services the state felt it could no longer afford to provide (McCabe 2010: 5). These warnings have largely proved true, with third sector workers encountering growing pressures on their services and being compelled to respond. Third sector workers I interviewed were united in arguing that their work was responding to a real and pressing 'need', that what they are doing as a network was vital and they 'have to do it' (interview 7), and that if they stopped their work the results would be catastrophic. This fits in with other appraisals that argue that as migrants' rights and access to public welfare have fallen away there is an increasing onus on TSOs to 'pick up the pieces' (Mayblin 2014: 381). This ties in with a vein of literature which questions whether volunteering is always voluntary and highlights the possibility for governments to 'lean on the compulsion of intrinsically motivated individuals' (Tõnurist & Sulva 2016: 230). In this case, the intrinsic motivation lies in the third sector worker's desire to alleviate the suffering of ASRs, and the withdrawal and restriction of welfare provision that is necessary to sustaining life can be understood in Gramscian terms as 'sublethal modalities of state coercion' (Davies 2012: 2693).

4.6 Counter-hegemonic challenges to de-politicisation

While it is true that TSOs have been coerced into taking on more and more responsibilities for ASRs, it would be a simplification to see this transfer as merely a replacement, or an exchange of like for like. What was made readily apparent through studying TSOs activities and talking to third sector workers was that TSOs have a much more inclusive or holistic understanding of what is 'essential' or 'vital' for ASRs, meaning that they provide more services at a higher standard than the Government or Government contractors may be willing or able to provide. One example of this that was repeatedly flagged during interviews was in housing, where Government contractors such as Clearel were widely criticised for failing to provide an appropriate standard of service. One interviewee spoke disparagingly of the numbers of asylum seekers forced to share a property, as well as the fact that pregnant women or mothers with young children were not provided appropriate space and privacy (interview 3). These properties are by and large outside of Bristol city in rural or suburban areas which causes a number of difficulties for asylum seekers who cannot access services in Bristol. In contrast, third sector housing providers try to source housing in areas where ASRs want to live, have minimum standards for space, cleanliness and safety and seek out landlords who will be receptive to the needs of ASRs. As one interviewee said of Home Office contractors who provide housing, 'they do what we do, but it's not the same, its just not' (interview 2).

Beyond basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter TSOs also provide a wealth of additional services, support and facilities, some of which involve recreational spaces and opportunities for social interaction and leisure activities. TSOs which provide such services consider them to be integral to enabling ASRs to live 'real lives' (interview 2). Several expressed a disbelief that politicians and government officials could think that what the state provided was sufficient, with one commenting 'Do they expect people to sit at home and stare at a wall? Its bizarre' (interview 8). Other services cater for additional needs such as emotional support and advice and advocacy. Discussing the lack of government assistance for asylum seekers currently going through the asylum process one interviewee said 'well on the one hand there's a lot of demands, they have to sign in weekly or monthly or whatever, quite strict rules, and on the other there's no

one actually helping them do it. There's no help at all as far as I'm concerned' (interview 8). In this way too TSOs provision goes well beyond the level of service and support prescribed by the Government. Throughout the interviews there was much talk of ASRs 'needs', which were understood in a much broader and more holistic fashion than merely consisting of the material necessities of life, and TSOs can be seen to be operating according to a different logic of what is 'necessary' than the Government.

Highlighting this contrasting logic makes visible the implicit politics in provision. Social work is 'essentially a politicial activity' (Gilbert & Powell 2009: 4, and the space of the third sector is far from apolitical. By challenging the perceived inadequacies in state provision TSOs are attempting to shape and strengthen the position of ASRs within society. Engaging in what Nik Heyden terms 'the politics of visibility' (Heynen 2010: 1226), TSOs are consciously seeking to counter ASRs reduction in national political discourse to a problem or burden (MacKenzie et al 2012: 639), challenging their current position as "second-class" or "undeserving" and further providing material and social support which can enable ASRs to participate more fully in social life. The notion of 'normality' was frequently referred to in my discussions with third sector workers; they wanted to provide ASRs with the same standard of service and support that 'anyone would normally expect' (interview 1), they hoped that ASRs would be able to feel 'like normal families' (interview 2) and live 'normal lives' (interview 9), and that the wider population of Bristol would see that 'these are normal people just like us' (interview 5). These acts and aspirations constitute the promotion of a discourse in which refugees are not 'a threat, a risk, a victim' but instead legitimate 'agents, actors, and participants' (Nyers 2010: 130) within the community deserving of equal treatment.

TSOs in Bristol are active in framing counter-hegemonic discourses; often acting as institutions in which alternative approaches are 'incubated' (Davies 2007: 784) and discourses are produced which 'try to change the current political and social situation and offer alternatives' (García Agustín 2012: 81). Many TSOs are forthright in their politics and political aspirations, which generally seek to

promote solidarity between local residents and ASRs. One TSO recently launched a 'rethinking refugee campaign', which involves engaging with local businesses, publishing research papers, and hosting events, such as conferences. Their aim is to make local people, businesses and higher education providers more receptive to ASRs and thus facilitate their integration into society. Another TSO is the local branch of the UK-wide City of Sanctuary network, which 'seeks to promote a culture of welcome towards asylum seekers and refugees, based around ideas of responsibility and hospitality' (Darling 2016b: 185). Their work involves building a coalition of businesses, politicians, TSOs, local people and ASRs as part of a 'bottom-up approach to political change' (Squire 2010: 295). Many, if not all of the asylum TSOs in Bristol took part in the Bristol Refugee Festival this year, a new event which grew out of Refugee Week, a nation-wide annual event which is a 'celebration … of refugees and the contribution they make' (interview 6).

In emphasising the contributions of refugees Bristol TSOs are drawing on narratives which directly counter the discursive framing of refugees as a burden. In their efforts to provide services and support that go beyond that of the welfare state they are re-positioning ASRs as deserving members of a community, rather than dependents whose drain on resources must be managed. In supporting failed asylum seekers to remain in the country they are undermining and 'quietly challenging' government policy (Randall 2015: 32). All of this occurs while there is an increasing relocation of responsibilities from the state to the third sector. While strategies of de-politicisation have had successes in the market-oriented transfer of responsibilities, they have not managed to effect the 'closure of alternative imaginaries' (Darling 2016c: 233) or narrow debate on asylum to technocratic or managerial issues. Bristol TSOs have actively aligned themselves with a broader human rights movement and a global movement for the protection of and advocacy for ASRs (García Agustín 2012: 81), developing and promoting a counter-hegemonic discourse that legitimises the social, political and cultural participation of ASRs in society.

Conclusion

Following the lead of Hinger *et al.* (2016) and their effort to pay more attention to the local dimension of asylum, this dissertation sought to analyse the local dimension of asylum de-politicisation. In order to do this it built on recent developments within migration scholarship, developing a framework that was informed by anti-essentialist notions of state power and focussing on the actions of a network of non-state actors within a specific locality. Following this framework a methodology was established that sought to capture both the material and discursive effects of and reactions to de-politicisation.

While the role of TSOs in asylum governance has been criticised by some for facilitating hegemonic asylum discourse, what has been demonstrated here is that below the surface of the expanding role of TSOs in asylum services and support there is an on-going formation of counter-hegemonic discourse. TSOs are taking on greater responsibilities, however this shift does not necessarily result in their original goals being displaced, nor is it necessarily explained by their co-option into hegemonic discourse or their being manipulated by legal and financial state discipline. Instead, a coercive engendering of action is the primary means by which the transfer of responsibilities from the state to the third sector is taking place. Rather than being co-opted, TSOs in Bristol have in some ways been 'outflanked' (Levy & Egan 2003: 808), and, possibly thanks to their roots in the ASR population in Bristol, continue to challenge the discursive de-politicisation of asylum.

'Asylum' is a social construction, created in part by juridical institutions but also by a diverse constellation of social actors (Hinger *et al*. 2016). Despite the clear direction of hegemonic asylum discourse, how ASRs are perceived and treated in society is a matter of countless negotiations occurring at the local level. In this way too the effects and outcomes of de-politicisation are dynamically negotiated within specific configurations of actors and their environment. In the case of Bristol, the current alignment of asylum TSOs means that a great deal of power lies with actors who are not intrinsically tied to the aims, ideals or interests of

the state, and who are able to build counter-hegemonic discourses in opposition to the neoliberal rationality of the state's asylum governance.

Practices and discourses within asylum governance are not fixed but are instead constantly being changed and developed as they take shape on the ground. This dissertation has elaborated a research approach which offers one way of studying this. There are other paths to explore here, and other methods such as participatory observation, or other approaches such as the comparison of multiple case studies, could help develop our understanding of the ways in which de-politicisation can be negotiated. Developing this understanding could help it be translated into action, contributing to conscious and coherent actions that shape asylum in ways which improves the lives of ASRs and benefits the communities they make home.

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Initial proposal

Below the radar responses to the EU migration crisis
Micro-mapping third sector activity in Bristol

Europe is witnessing a crisis of responsibility regarding refugees. The Dublin Regulation has proved largely unsuitable for managing the current crisis, with member states on the Schengen border showing little desire to comply. The widespread implementation of Austerity policies across much of Europe has massively reduced essential welfare services. Many refugees have found themselves caught in a protection gap. Some refugees have been 'warehoused' and suffered human rights abuses, while others have been repelled by Europe's borders and left largely unassisted. In many instances when nation states have failed to provide adequate support for refugees, both within and without Europe's borders, third sector activity has contributed and tried to fill the protection gap. Despite its at times critical role the scale of third sector activity remains largely un-quantified. Academics have increasingly come to recognise the importance of developing a better understanding of organised activity in the third sector which is not captured by the standard sources . Such sources include

the Charity Commission register of recognised charities in England and Wales and the register of Companies Limited by Guarantee in Companies House. Major statistical data sources such as these provide important information but are far from comprehensive. Many groups and organisations exist outside of these registers. Such 'below the radar' groups may be too small to register, may not be able or want to become an official charity, or may only come together temporarily around specific issues rather than be permanent. This dissertation will follow a methodology devised by the Third Sector Research Centre to produce a 'micro-map' of voluntary groups in one location in the UK in order to assess refugee-related third sector groups that have hitherto remained 'below the radar'.

Research questions:

This dissertation will adapt a series of research questions used by TSRC in their micro-mapping pilot study to the context of refugee related BTR groups in Bristol.

1. How are BTR groups structured and how do they operate?

2. What is their role and function?

3. How effective are they?

4. What is the relationship between BTR groups, the formal third sector and local government?

5. Is it possible to more accurately quantify BTR groups and their contribution to civil society?

6. How has austerity affected refugees in Britain?

Methods:

This dissertation will follow the methodology devised by Dr Andri Soteri-Proctor and the Third Sector Research Centre at the University of Birmingham which they have called 'micro-mapping'. This methodology will be applied to Bristol, as having lived there fore several years I am aware of some local groups from which the research can begin and I will be accommodated so I can spend prolonged periods of time carrying out the research. This methodology involves establishing a geographical area within which 'street-level' fieldwork will be carried out. Multiple search tools will be used including solo-walks during which I will look for information on noticeboards, adverts and shop signs and visiting spaces such as community buildings and faith-based buildings. People with knowledge about relevant activities will be identified and interviewed, and using a snowball method will be used to identify other participants. One area of the micro-mapping methodology which will be developed in this dissertation is the use of social media to investigate virtual groups and communities that may only physically coalesce around specific, non-regular activities. For example, the Calais Refugee Solidarity Bristol Facebook group has several thousand members who organise solely online. Identifying these virtual networks will be vital to creating a representative micro-map.

Timetable for research:

April, May	Literature review
May	Identify area to be mapped
June, July	Carry out street-level research
August, September	Analysis and writing
September	Final check and hand in

Rationale:

Building on growing academic discussion of the impact of austerity on refugees in the UK, this dissertation will highlight the role of BTR groups in promoting the rights and safeguarding the welfare of refugees. Furthermore, it will contribute to work done by the TSRC and develop ideas and practices within the micro-mapping methodology.

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Research Diary:

1st February: Began reading working papers from the Below the Radar Reference Group at Birmingham Uni. Interesting methodology for the 'street level'. Following from my other units on E.U refugee law and the idea of a 'crisis of responsibility' have been looking at the third sector and the role it can play in filling a responsibility gap. Have been in contact with people I know in Calais, talking about whether I could map where people are coming from, however it sounds very difficult and also expensive for me. Turning back to the UK, begun to look at research on below the radar migrant support groups. Not much literature here. Settled on Bristol as a case study.

20th February: Submitted first proposal

5th April: Met with supervisor and discussed my proposal. One issue which was raised was that the methodology outlined by the Below the Radar Reference Group at Birmingham Uni is very vague. Thought through how I would actually do it, including deciding on a case study area.

8th May: Oral Presentation. went well, main thing I took away from the feedback was that my approach wasn't analytical enough. I can see that its close to becoming a big survey. Need to find some literature I can connect with this.

21st May: Meeting with supervisor. Talked about how to create an actual research approach. Developed the idea of separate phases, beginning with a larger survey before narrowing it down to fewer TSOs.

June: Settled on de-politicisation as the specific topic for study. Have been reading around interviews in preparation. Trying to read Foucalt, as his idea of governmentality seems very important for studying non-state actors. Quite difficult. Begun to read Gramsci, following a criticism of Foucalt as being too

pessimistic which I agreed with. Started writing up interview questions. Created a generic script to go over with supervisor before I narrow down.

7th – 15th June: worked on literature review. Still unsure of what my focus is, have included a bit of everything.

14th June: Handed in Literature review. Was a rush to finish it, not properly formatted.

14th – 21st June: Have been reading more around Gramsci and Urban regime theory. If de-politicisation is part of hegemonic discourse, then Gramsci and counter-discourse concept is important.

20th June: Handed in Risk Assessment

21st June: Received feedback on literature review. I think I need to narrow down my focus on BTR literature so I have more room for the theoretical stuff.

21st June: Conducted online searches using Facebook and Twitter. Key words: refuge, refugee, asylum, Calais, Syria, immigrant. Come up with a surprising amount of groups. Thinking how I choose which ones to interview.

22nd June: Met supervisor and talked about interview questions. Positive feedback, decided to rearrange order of questions and give more time for discussing issues that I might want to go into detail with.

26th June: Narrowed down a case study area in Bristol using Bristol City Council data.

27th June: Using existing lists of TSOs to supplement my own as developed from online searches.

28th June: Written cover letters. Finding it difficult to justify the research, but maybe being overly critical.

1-7 July: sent out first interview requests. No responses to the first batch. Sent out requests to a wider group of TSOs. No replies in first four days. Written and sent out new requests. Reading on how to code interviews.

11-18th July: Continued reading third sector literature. Decided on a working definition for defining third sector. Began to categorise TSOs activity.

20th – 26th July: Conducted street-level searches around Bristol. Nice to be back. Interesting chats with people and volunteers, confirmed some of my suspicions (BRR is the biggest, there are lots of people volunteering). Also continued to send out interview requests and have had some responses now. Has taken me a lot longer than I anticipated, which was naïve of me.

28th July: First three interviews. Went well, although phone is more difficult and I cant make notes on their body language etc. Learnt about the Refugee Forum, which surprised me. Sounds really important but no information on it anywhere online.

29th July: Two more interviews today. Coding them immediately after as sometimes my notes aren't up to scratch. People can talk very fast.

1st August: Three more interviews. Interesting idea of 'need' and 'have' keeps popping up. Volunteers feel responsible.

3rd August: Last two interviews. Will be leaving Bristol in the next few days. Has taken me a month to get all the interviews which is surprising. Have a much better idea of how to 'win' people over now.

3rd – 10th August: Back in the library. Reading about coercion, and voluntarism, which actually connects back to Big Society. Gramsci again. Written out methodology.

10th-17th August: Completely re-written literature review. Intercut historical context of asylum policy with neoliberalism and de-politicisation.

17th – 20th: Written three chapters – 'who', 'What' and 'why'. Think this is a good way to frame it, who are the TSOs, what are TSOs doing and why are they doing it.

20th- 27th: rewritten chapters around the subheadings. Makes it clearer what my points are.

1st-4th September: Written conclusion.

Interview schedule:
('BRR' is placeholder)

Explain research again
Consent (audio recorder)

Would like to start off by talking about BRR

1. Can you tell me a bit about BRR and what you do here? (Prompt - activities, size, participant demographics, finances, structure, function)
2. What are the main aims or motives? (oth personnel and BRR as whole)
3. BRR was started in …. What was the motive for starting? What was it doing then?

4. Do you think it has changed a lot or not much between when it was started and now? (Prompt - activities, aspirations, size, structure, function)
5. If yes, why?
6. Do you think other orgs in the area have had similar experiences?
7. What do you think are BRRs strengths?
8. Are there any challenges BRR is currently facing?
9. Are there any needs? What for? Is this constant or in response to event/circumstance?

Want to talk about the relationship between BRR and other organisations

1. Does BRR work with other organisations a lot?
2. Could you tell me which ones?
3. Are these relationships long-term, or do they develop around specific events and then fade?
4. (similarly) Are there formal channels of communication, or is it ad-hoc?
5. Do you think they share your aspirations?

As well as BRRs relationship with other orgs, im really interested to know more about your relationship with local government

1. How would you describe BRRs relationship with local government?
2. Do you receive any material support from them? Is it sufficient? Are any conditions placed on this? Do you think these conditions are fair? Are they properly monitored?
3. Is local government supportive of your work?
4. Do you think they share the same aspirations of your organisation?
5. Do you think working with (or not) local gov has been beneficial, and could you give an example of where it has helped? Similarly, has it caused problems in any ways?
6. Would you like to be able to work more closely with local government, or would you prefer to be more independent?

7. Do you think local government has (or exercises) a lot of authority? Do you think they hold a lot of responsibilities?
8. How do you think your colleagues generally view local gov?
9. Do you think this is the case for other asylum VCOs? Is there a general mood or attitude amongst VCOs towards local government?
10. Do you think they are particularly active in this sphere? What do you think their main focus is? Should they should be doing more? Do you think they are effective at what they do?
11. Do you think local government's role has changed over time? Why? (prompt – big society, austerity)

End

Interview transcript extract:

S

So refugee action they were, really, almost the biggest agency within Bristol in the community and voluntary sector working with asylum seekers and refugees. And then we lost funding from the Government. At that stage most of our funding came directly from the government, and probably not enough from supporters, their supporter base. And it meant that we were subjected to quite a few rounds of redundancies and that kind of stuff. So, so, in terms of giving advice – who does it now? Its shifted from refugee action to, um, I would probably say refugee rights. So they have a team, an information and advice team who probably do most of that stuff now that refugee action used to do. and we used to have to do exams at refugee action, it was all very you know regulated, and I don't know that, I don't know how regulated the advice is. I mean, I know refugee rights are brilliant, and I know their volunteers are trained very well, but its less formal I

would think now than it was then. So that's how I started [my org] about 6 ½ years ago now. Looking round at all the other agencies nobody was providing one on one support for people out in the community, it was all about people going to a service to receive help, but the onus was on them getting there. And there was nothing for people who perhaps would find it really difficult to go into a really busy place, or a place where it was predominantly men – if you're a vulnerable woman, or if you're really depressed and actually you needed to meet someone in sort of an anonymous coffee shop rather than a really busy drop in type scenario. So I started b.friend and am still doing it.

N

So, is that still the same sort of work you do? is that still the same idea behind [your org]?

S

Yeah. It's really simple, it's a really simple model of – I train volunteers, mostly in awareness of stuff like who comes to Bristol, why they come here, also listening skills, that kind of thing. And I, through three sessions, basically suss out these volunteers (laughter) and try and work out whether they're suitable or not. And then we have an informal interview and then if they can provide me with two good references then theyre able to be volunteer and they are matched with people who are referred by all the other agencies. So that's kind of how that works, it's a really easy, simple, very quick way to make a difference in someones life, if it goes well and the partnership works. People quite often, they'll do it for 12 months which is kind of the requirement and then after that they might say well actually we still want to carry on meeting together. That's the nicest thing for me, where I see someone go through those 12 months and actually they still want to support that person. And I always say to them just check that person still wants to meet with you, its like you're gonna be some kind of limpet you know (laughter). Yeah, so, iv been really lucky with funding, none of my funding comes from anywhere remotely officially government…

N

Yeah, that was something I wanted to ask you about, I saw on the bridges for communities website that the different sources were individual donors, and then partnerships and grants, whats the sort of distribution in terms of funding?

S

(Pulls face) crikey. Its shifted a bit over the years, um, it used to be that the donations were basically my family (laughter) and now its more individuals rather than just family members who want to see me be able to feed my family. Um, yeah, so, um, I have been really really fortunate with some trust funding, so theres a couple of trusts who I came across through a course that I did, it was an entrepeneurship course that I did in north devon, um, four years ago it was now? And I pitched to like a dragon's den on this course and on the back of that won some funding. Both the trust that hosted that course and also another trust that was there said 'we will give you funding' and they've both agreed to give funding over three years. Both given me £15000 so that's brilliant. [My org] only costs – its really cheap because its just me – just short of £19000 I think it is. I'm part time, 21 hours a week, so in actual fact its not an expensive operation, and I think people like that because they can see that the money they give really does make a difference, it doesn't get absorbed into admin costs or letter stuffing or any of that stuff it really does go towards putting someone together with a refugee or asylum seeker. Its good, it's a quick and easy way to help. And iv done things like run a half marathon, never again (laughter) and we've had fundraising type things... Im trying to think who else has given money, um, iv been so blown away by unexpected people donating money that I didn't even know that they knew about [my org]. iv had a cheque for £1000 through my front door, just random you know?

N

Just general interest from the public?

S

Yeah, which has been amazing, like a big lawyers firm in Bristol just sent me a cheque for £600 that they had had a collection at their Christmas dinner and I

got that in February, and so someone had just heard about [my org] and said lets just give it to them. I didn't know about them, its great.

N

Did you, have you noticed any changes since 2014/2015 things happening in Syria, has that had an impact on public interest and involvement?

S

It certainly had an impact on the amount of people who contacted me offering to volunteer. Over one weekend, when it was all going mad in the press, I had overnight probably ten or twelve together –'I want to be a volunteer how can I help?'. And it was kind of interesting because I found that, um, although people really wanted to help, actually nothing had changed here. The problem was still there (motions with arm indicating somewhere else) and these poor people having to make their way across to Europe, but no one was getting across the channel or at least not many people were getting across the channel and so actually its not been a problem, or an issue rather. Now obviously theres the Syrian resettlement programme, but, um, yeah it felt like it was, it was great people wanted to respond in terms of action, but actually there wasn't much for people to actually do at that point apart from give money or aid – nobody was here at that point. so that was a bit tricky. But I did have lots of people emailing me and some of them became volunteers and that great but others didn't, I think its that sort of thing where you see something and you respond and in that moment you really want to do something but actually you then get on with your own life and there isn't space.

Covering letter:

Hello,

My name is Nick Sharma and I'm a postgraduate student at University College London currently conducting research into Bristol's asylum - related third sector. The main focus of this research is investigating how third sector organisations have proceeded against the background of austerity-driven spending cuts and reforms to public services, voluntary bodies and welfare provision.

As part of my research I will be interviewing members of a number of groups, networks and organisations across the city, and I would like to invite a member of Bristol Hospitality Network to take part in a short informal interview at their convenience. The interview will take around 30 - 45 minutes and some of the topics of discussion include your organisation's activities, organisational aspirations, the connections you may have with other local organisations, and opinions on local government's role in this sector.

Recent publications from researchers at Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Bristol, as well as organisations such as Voscur and the Charity Finance Group, have shown that studying the experiences and perspectives of participants can be of great value for others working within the same field. Following my research I hope to produce a brief report based on the research findings and outcomes that could be of use to organisations in Bristol such as yours. For example, accurate and up-to-date information on how assets are distributed across the city could facilitate collaborative work.

If a member of your team would like to take part or find out more about my research I can be reached at the email address or phone number below and we can arrange to meet locally at a convenient time for you.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Nick