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Residential mobility, work and belonging in low-income communities

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Abstract

This research aims to understand how people respond to post-industrial change in places that are represented through a range of official measures and narratives as 'declining'. Against a backdrop of pervasive policy assumptions about why people move from, or remain in, 'declining' places, this research explores in-depth the range of responses that people make to changing labour market contexts. It particularly seeks to understand why people remain in weaker labour market areas rather than moving to places that may offer greater employment opportunities.
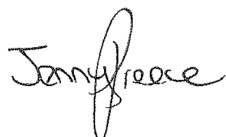
The case study approach focused on two areas in England: Nearthorpe, Sheffield, and Eastland, Grimsby. Stakeholders were interviewed to understand the area context and official narratives of place. The main data is drawn from in-depth interviews with 18 households, comprising 25 individuals, who were interviewed twice during the research. Thematic and biographical interviewing and analysis was used.

The research found that experiences of working in low-paid and insecure work reduced the impetus to residential mobility for many participants. Most people adjusted to labour market changes not through mobility but by remaining in-situ and drawing on place-based support. The extent to which networks of support were utilised to find work, provide childcare, and support those experiencing ill-health strongly suggests that immobility performed an important function.

Mobility decisions did not draw on a simple cost-benefit calculation of the relative economic benefits. Participants foregrounded emotional connections to people and places, embedded experiences of work and places that guided responses to opportunities in the present, and revealed multiple motivations for (im)mobility within households. This research has demonstrated the importance of understanding how people relate to the places in which they live and the active processes of distinction that are used in order to construct a place in which they can belong and adjust in-situ to a changing labour market backdrop.

Candidate's statement

The work set out in this thesis is authored by the candidate and has been undertaken in accordance with the procedures set out by Sheffield Hallam University. Where material has been drawn from other published work this is clearly indicated by references within the text. Any errors or omissions remain the candidate's own.

Jenny Preece

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Finally I must thank my partner for his support over the last few years. Moving to Sheffield and enduring a long commute back to London enabled me to pursue this opportunity, and was the start of us building a life here. Now we have a small person to wrangle in and amongst everything else, but the PhD was the start of it all!

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The overarching aim of this research is to understand how people respond to post-industrial change in places that are represented through a range of official measures and narratives as 'declining'. It seeks to add to the literature by undertaking in-depth research to explore "why people do not move, especially when relocating may provide them with new opportunities" (Coulter and van Ham, 2013:1053). The origins of the research lie in pervasive policy assumptions about why people move from, or remain in, particular places, against a backdrop of shifting labour and housing market trends. It therefore aims to understand through empirical investigation why people may remain in weaker labour market areas rather than moving to places that may offer greater employment opportunities. A set of focused research questions – outlined later in this chapter – were designed to elucidate the relationship between people, place, mobility, and work.

The research uses a case study approach, focusing on the neighbourhoods of Nearthorpe (Sheffield) and Eastland (Grimsby). Both places have experienced the decline of key industries and the loss of many thousands of jobs, and there is an implicit assumption in popular narratives that they are undesirable places to live; understanding how current residents relate to these places forms a core part of this thesis. A qualitative approach to data collection was used, comprising semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders such as local authority employees and estate agents, whilst the main fieldwork was carried out through in-depth, repeated household interviews. The main findings are drawn from these 34 interviews with 18 households (comprising 25 individuals). The second interview with each household took a biographical focus, drawing out how people related to the places in which they had lived across their lives, how they represented their experiences of mobility and their responses to labour market changes. The aim was to be able to adequately represent the interplay of the many factors involved in decisions to remain in, or leave, places. By using this biographical frame of reference and key concepts such as the habitus (Bourdieu, 1990), which emphasises the historically situated nature of behaviour, the research also sought to understand the role of enduring influences on behaviour and perceptions.

Fundamentally, the research presented here suggests that the role of work and labour-market factors in residential mobility are differentiated by class, and people orientated towards employment in the low-pay economy are less likely to be residentially mobile in relation to work. This does not mean that they are not responding to changes in the labour markets in which they are situated, but rather that they are adapting in-situ by drawing on place-based support as they move in and out of formal employment and engage in other activities to manage complex circumstances. The extent to which local, place-based networks were utilised to find work, provide childcare, and provide support for those experiencing ill-health strongly suggests that immobility performed an important function. However, people's relation to place was not just pragmatic but also emotional; there was a level of comfort in living in a place that was knowable and in which one could belong. Taken together, these place-specific elements reduced the impetus towards residential mobility for many people.

The research presented in this thesis seeks to make a contribution to knowledge around a number of key areas. It makes an empirical contribution by explicitly examining the role of work-related factors in residential mobility, beginning to fill a gap at the intersection of two sub-disciplines. This research takes an integrated approach, working across housing studies and labour market research. It emphasises the importance of drawing across these disciplines to provide a more nuanced account of behaviour and people's responses to post-industrial change, underpinned by sociological theory.

Because of the qualitative nature of the research, this study has been able to make a contribution to knowledge in exploring *why* work was not an important part of mobility decisions for many people in Nearthorpe and Eastland, something that labour market research has been less able to explore because of the nature of the data that these studies are based on (Champion, 1999, Champion and Coombes, 2007, McCormick, 1997, Turok, 1999). In doing so, it has drawn a fuller picture of experiences of immobility, considering the range of ways in which people respond to labour market changes. This has particularly highlighted how many people are adapting in-situ rather than through the rootless mobility conceptualised by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002).

A further contribution to knowledge is made by combining biographical interviews with a household approach to exploring residential mobility and labour market change. This has added to the small number of studies that have used either household approaches (Winstanley *et al*, 2002) or biographical interviews (Bertaux-Wiame, 1981) when exploring residential mobility. Whilst one study has utilised both (Clark, 2009), the research presented here extends this to the English housing context and widens the scope to include a range of housing tenures.

A final contribution to knowledge is made in seeking to advance understandings of belonging in low-income communities. It therefore responds to calls by Paton (2013) for further research to begin to fill the gaps in understanding contemporary working-class attachment to place, and by Cole (2013) for more attention on the historical formation and development of neighbourhood attachment in working-class communities.

1.2 Research questions

The case study areas of Nearthorpe and Eastland have been subject to problematising policy narratives around worklessness and immobility. As Mah (2009:289) asked in her exploration of former industrial areas, when places are seen through official measures as 'declining' and offering few opportunities, why would people want to live there? The research questions provide a framework around which to present a more nuanced understanding of both mobility and fixity, exploring how people relate to the places in which they have lived across their lives.

The key research questions are:

1. In what ways do experiences and perceptions of labour markets influence households' residential mobility behaviour and intentions?
2. How might changes in the nature of work have shaped the relationship between people and place?
3. What factors do people draw on to explain residential mobility and immobility?
4. How can biographical approaches add to our understanding of residential mobility and immobility across people's lives?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Chapter Two discusses the origins of the research, which lies in labour market and housing market trends and the policy narratives that have sought to frame understandings of worklessness, place and residential mobility.

The next chapters explore how these areas are addressed by the academic research literature. Chapter Three focuses on key themes from housing studies, while Chapter Four introduces research from studies of labour markets. Arising from this review of relevant literature, it is argued that there are gaps in knowledge, which the research presented here begins to address. One gap exists at the intersection of these two sub-disciplines, with potential for original research to investigate the relative salience of work in residential mobility using a method that can provide an understanding of *why* work may play a different role in the mobility of different types of households. There is also potential to utilise a household and biographical approach in the English housing context. Finally, there is potential to add to the literature on mobility and place by using theories of belonging (May, 2011, Savage *et al*, 2005) to understand working-class belonging in low-income communities.

Chapter Five puts forward an analytical framework through which the research findings could be scrutinised. This draws primarily on the broad concepts of individualisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), habitual explanations for behaviour (Bourdieu, 1990), and place-related notions of belonging (May, 2011, Savage *et al*, 2005).

Chapter Six outlines the methodological approach to conducting the empirical research. This includes consideration of the ontological and epistomological foundations of biographical research, describes the approach to case study selection and the conduct of fieldwork, highlights some of the limitations of the research, and provides a discussion of key ethical considerations.

Chapter Seven sets Nearthorpe and Eastland in the context of their broader urban locales using a mix of administrative data and stakeholder interviews.

Chapter Eight reports key findings from participants in the case study areas. It outlines the many factors that households draw on to explain their residential

(im)mobility, linking back to the themes highlighted in the academic literature. This chapter argues that residential mobility is more complex than broad models can capture; household decisions are often multi-layered, diverse, and contested, drawing on a range of emotional and experiential factors that have been less well represented in the existing literature.

Chapter Nine explores how participants' experiences and perceptions of changing labour markets relates to their (im)mobility. Beginning with a discussion of participants' experiences of work, this chapter argues that these experiences – particularly of low-paid and insecure work – guide perceptions of labour markets. In turn, this drives the many different responses that people demonstrate to changing employment contexts. While work-related residential mobility was relatively uncommon (except for those working in more professional occupations), immobility was far from a non-response to labour market change, and participants utilised a variety of strategies to adjust in-situ.

Chapter Ten builds on this, arguing that as the role of work has lessened in importance in many people's lives, the role of places and relationships with people have been strengthened. This chapter considers how people relate to the place in which they live, the different ways in which they generate feelings of belonging, and the importance of networks of friends and family.

Chapter Eleven is the final results chapter, utilising biographical analysis to present the lives of three participants in greater depth. This chapter argues that exploring the whole of someone's life enables the sequencing of events and the enduring impact of experiences to be better understood.

Chapter Twelve discusses the key contributions to knowledge that are made by the research presented in this thesis. As outlined earlier, these include empirical investigation of the role of work in residential mobility utilising a qualitative approach, applying biographical and household research methods to understanding residential mobility in the English housing context, and advancing understandings of working-class belonging in low-income communities. It also offers insights for policy, and suggests future directions for academic research.

2. Market trends and the policy backdrop

2.1 Introduction

This research has its origins in the policy narratives, labour market and housing market trends that form the basis of this chapter. Labour market trends indicate that there has been a negative shift in the security and availability of employment. While writers such as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman (2000) have theorised that individuals have responded through increased flexibility and mobility, the spatial dimension of worklessness suggests that some people remain tied to areas with industrial legacies in spite of profound labour market changes. There is a need to understand the full range of responses to economic change, particularly residential fixity.

Parallel changes in the housing market also impact on mobility by restricting access to certain locations or tenures. Geographical differentiation in housing markets presents a considerable barrier to residential mobility from weaker to stronger employment markets. However, this is precisely the sort of mobility that is expected by certain strands of policy. Worklessness is conceived of as a largely cultural problem, embedded in particular places by an inflexible attitude to seeking employment.

2.2 Labour market trends

This section introduces broad labour market trends and highlights the importance of understanding the spatial component of labour market changes.

Deindustrialisation and geographies of unemployment

The decline of manufacturing industry has been well-documented (Bailey and Turok, 2000, Champion, 1999, Martin and Morrision, 2003, Pollard, 1993, Turok, 1999). In the UK, manufacturing employment as a share of total employment fell from 28% in 1980 to 15% in 2003 (Treganna, 2009). As Table 2.1 shows, this has been a long-running process.

Table 2.1: Changes in employment in Britain by sector, 1951-1991

	Manufacturing		Services	
	Number	%	Number	%
1951-61	+374,000	+5.0	+1,246,000	+9.3
1961-71	-255,000	-3.3	+1,125,000	+7.7
1971-81	-1,929,000	-25.7	+1,457,000	+9.2
1981-91	-1,407,000	-25.2	+1,983,000	+11.5

Source: Turok and Edge (1999:8)

This decline did not occur evenly; urban conurbations, for example, lost manufacturing jobs at twice the rate of towns and rural areas from the 1960s, but service industry expansion was slower in cities than elsewhere (Turok and Edge, 1999:7). Analysing Labour Force Survey data, Sissons (2011) highlighted the on-going nature of this sectoral change, noting that among men the fastest declining occupations were in manufacturing, while the fastest growing were in professional occupations, construction jobs and service roles. Cross-European data points to evidence of the 'hollowing out' of labour markets, creating an hourglass structure in which middle-wage clerical and manufacturing occupations have been eroded, while the highest and lowest paying occupations have expanded (Goos *et al*, 2010).

Decline in manufacturing left a legacy of unemployment, sickness, and economic inactivity; significantly, this has a spatial component. Assessing unemployment using not only the official 'claimant count', but also individuals diverted onto other benefits or off benefits altogether, Beatty *et al* (2012) argued that there is extensive hidden unemployment across England and Wales. Although often in ill-health, these hidden unemployed would be expected to find work in conditions approximating full-employment. As they pointed out, the real world is not divided neatly into those who are 100% fit and able for work and those who cannot do any work at all – there are gradations (Beatty *et al*, 2000:620). Hidden unemployment was disproportionately concentrated in the weakest local economies, older industrial areas where the claimant count was already highest, as shown in Figure 2.1. Its relative absence across much of southern and eastern England (excluding London) primarily reflects the scale of diversion onto incapacity benefits in former industrial areas (Beatty *et al*, 2012:16).

Figure 2.1: Estimated real unemployment, England and Wales, April 2012

% of working age population (16-64)
More than 12.5
10.0 to 12.5
7.5 to 10.0
5.0 to 7.5
Less than 5
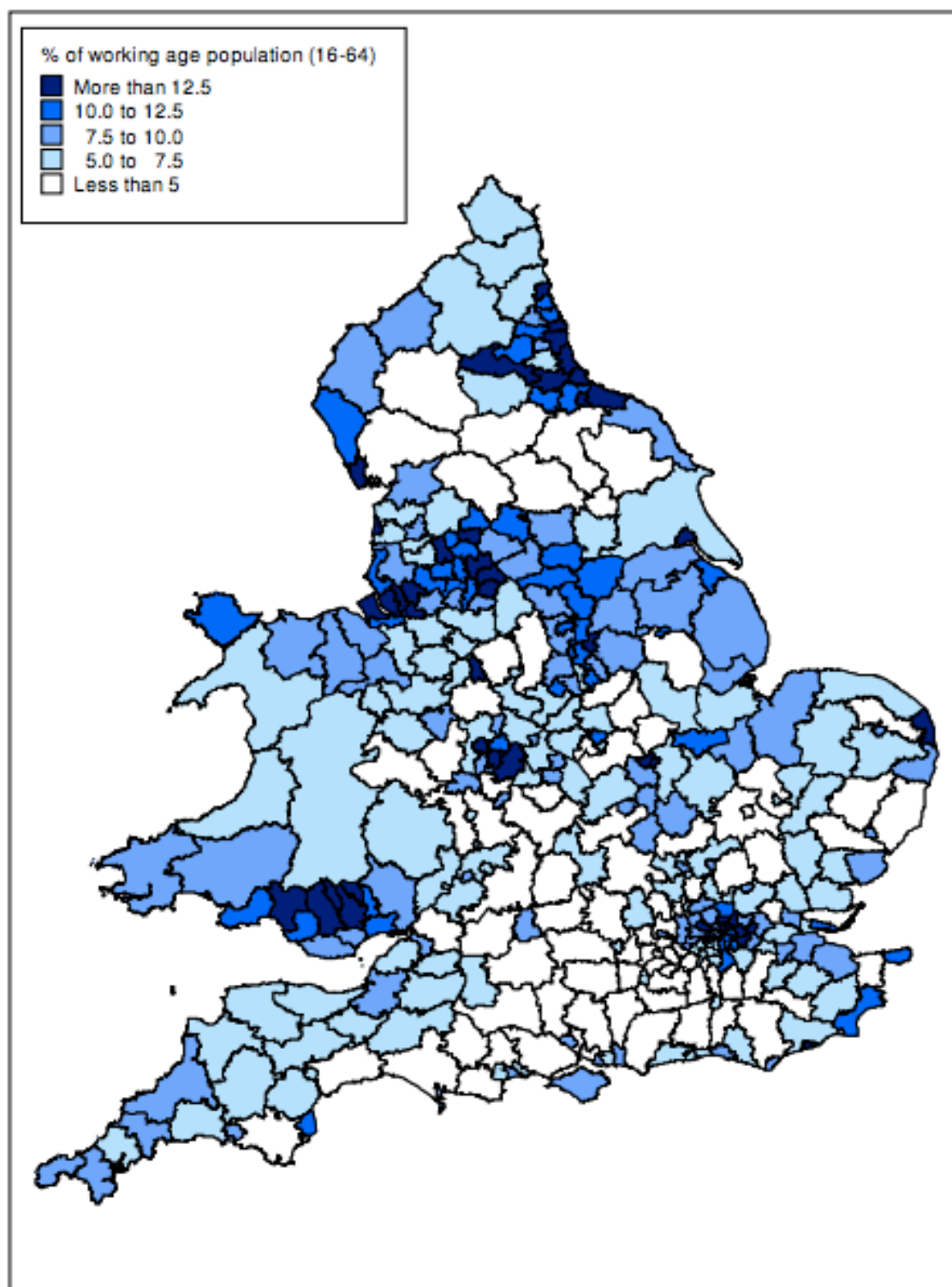
Source: Beatty et al (2012); reproduced with the permission of the author

The spatial variation in unemployment demonstrated above highlights the enduring impact of the decline of traditional industries in Britain, showing concentrations of higher unemployment in former industrial areas. This has particularly long-term implications, because many of the hidden unemployed stand at the back of the queue for jobs while those with more employable

attributes 'pushed in', leading to disillusionment and withdrawal (Beatty *et al*, 2000:620-621).

Full-time and part-time[1] employment

In addition to shifts in occupational sectors, there have also been changes in the mode of work from full-time to part-time employment. In 2013, 75% of UK employees worked full-time while 25% were part-time. This marked a steady shift from an 80:20 split in 1983 (source: OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics, 2014). The proportion of involuntary part-time workers (people working less than 30 hours a week because they could not find full-time work) has also increased. The proportion of involuntary part-time workers in the UK labour force was almost 4% in 2013; this increased sharply from a low of just 1% in 2004 (source: OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics, 2014). The proportion of involuntary part-timers as a share of all part-time workers has shown the same pattern of change.

Figure 2.2: Share of involuntary part-time workers as a percentage of UK part-time employment
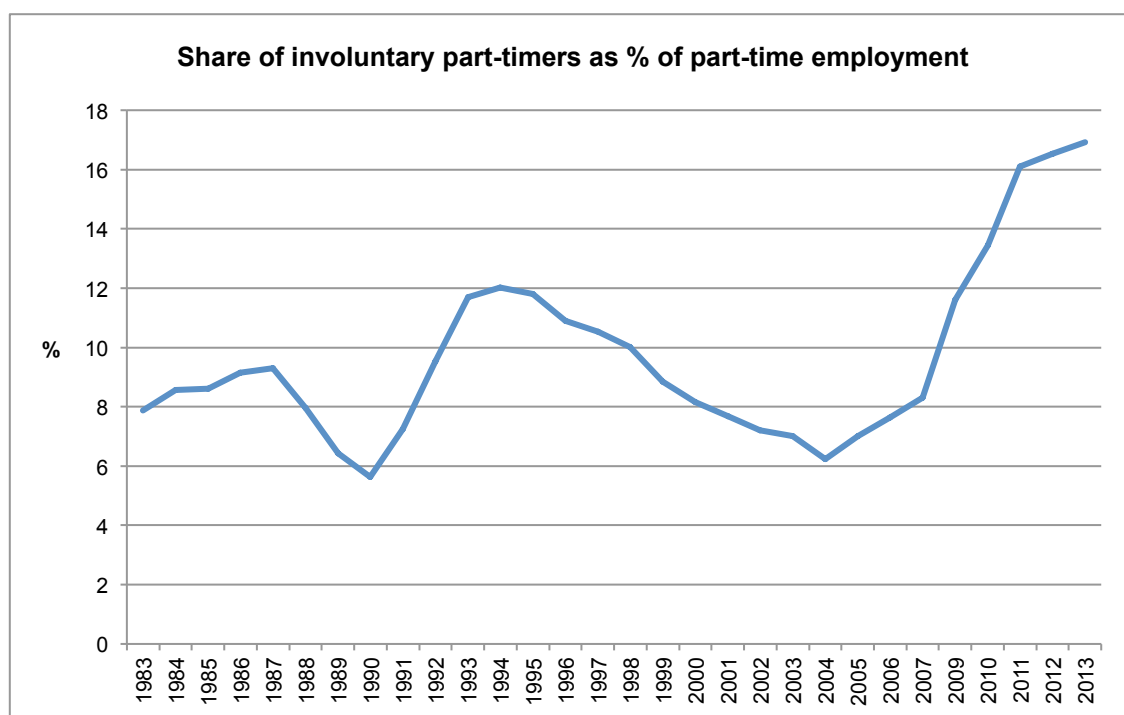
Source: OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics (2014)

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[1] Part-time workers are those working less than 30 hours per week

Involuntary part-time workers made up 17% of part-time workers in 2013, an increase of 11% since 2004. People's aspirations in terms of working hours are therefore increasingly not being met.

Job insecurity

Whether someone is employed on a permanent or temporary contract is one measure of job insecurity. As Figure 2.3 shows, the number of UK temporary workers has increased.

Figure 2.3: Number of UK temporary workers, 2012-2014
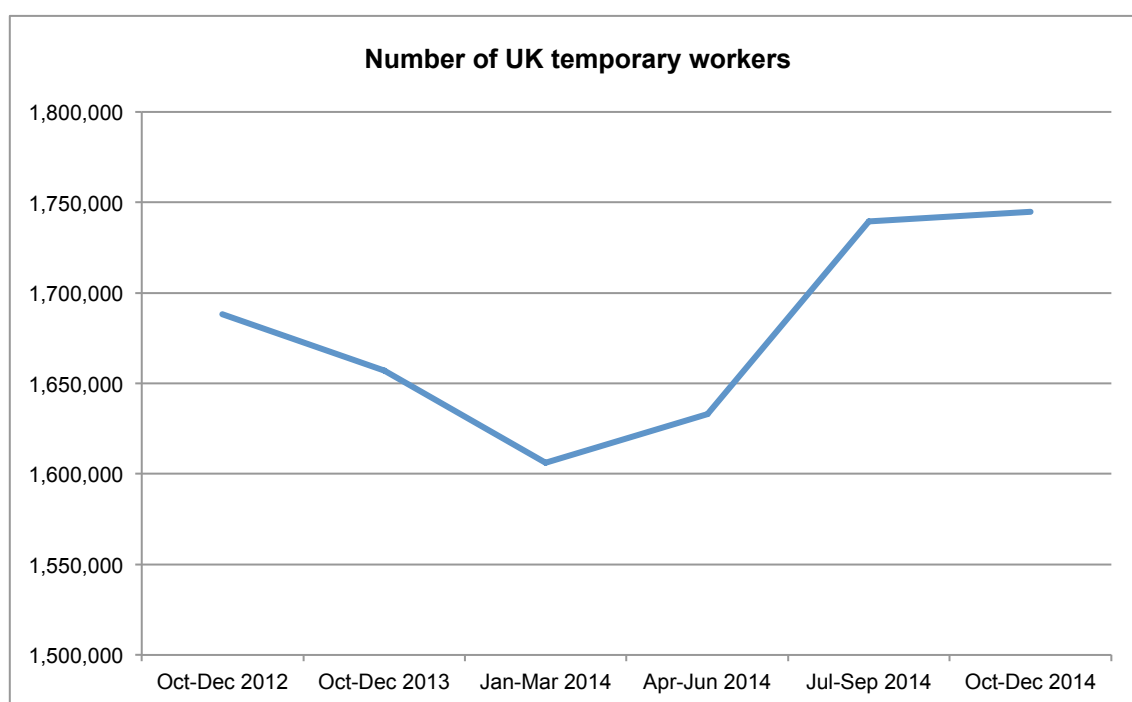
Source: Labour Force Survey

However, temporary contracts in general are not associated with low-pay sectors (MacInnes *et al*, 2014), and those on temporary contracts in high paying sectors may experience comparative security by virtue of their higher income. A more valid measure of insecurity may be contracts that do not guarantee a minimum number of hours, which are much more strongly associated with low-paying sectors (MacInnes *et al*, 2014).

According to the Labour Force Survey (2015), the number of people employed on a 'zero hours' contract in their main job represented 2.3% of all people in employment from October to December 2014, an increase from 1.9% in the same period in 2013. On average, someone on a 'zero hours' contract worked

around 25 hours a week, but around a third of these employees wanted more hours, compared to 10% of other people in employment (source: Labour Force Survey, 2015).

Taken together, these indicators suggest that there have been significant changes in employment over the last 30 years. A shift from manufacturing to service industries has left concentrations of unemployment and economic inactivity in particular geographical areas. More people are working part-time, an increasing proportion because they are unable to find full-time employment. There is also evidence of greater insecurity in employment, demonstrated by zero-hours and temporary contracts. Qualitative evidence (McDowell, 2003, Shildrick *et al,* 2012) strongly supports the notion that work has become less secure. Shildrick *et al* (2012) found that people moved in and out of unemployment and low-paid work, but repeated engagement with the labour market failed to provide a route out of poverty because there were insufficient decent job opportunities locally. The defining features of the lives of their participants were "poverty and economic marginality", despite strong work attachment and engagement with the labour market (Shildrick *et al*, 2012:195). It is timely to explore the role of work in residential mobility decisions, as perceptions and experiences of employment insecurity could have significant implications for the likelihood of people moving for work.

2.3 Housing market trends

The housing market profile has also demonstrated considerable change; this is relevant to residential mobility research because to some extent the housing market context structures moving decisions. Key trends in England are outlined in this section.

Tenure shift

As shown in Figure 2.4, the proportion of privately rented housing stock has increased significantly over a ten-year period, from 10% of overall dwelling stock in the financial year 2000/01 to almost 19% in 2011/12.

Figure 2.4: Dwelling stock by tenure type, England, 2000/01 to 2011/12

Dwelling stock by tenure, England (2000/01 to 2011/12)
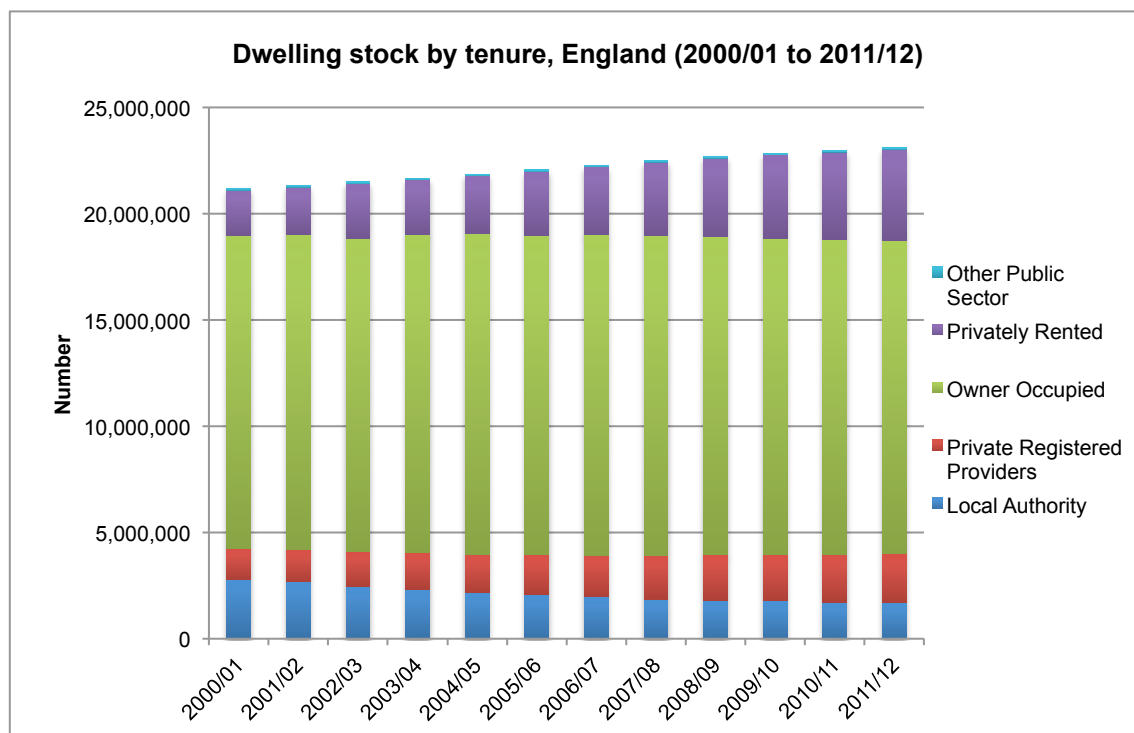
Source: DCLG Live Table 104

As more stock has transitioned into privately rented housing through buy-to-let, less housing has been available to prospective owner-occupiers – particularly first-time buyers – who often compete for the same housing, resulting in delayed owner-occupation (Sprigings, 2013).

House prices

House prices have increased substantially, from an average of £37,591 in England in 1986 to £260,850 in 2013 (source: House Price Index). However, a more nuanced approach to understanding affordability involves comparing changes in the ratio of median house prices to median earnings. As shown in Figure 2.5, this has increased substantially.

Figure 2.5: Ratio of median house prices to median earnings, England, 1999-2013

Ratio of median house price to median earnings, England, 1997 to 2013
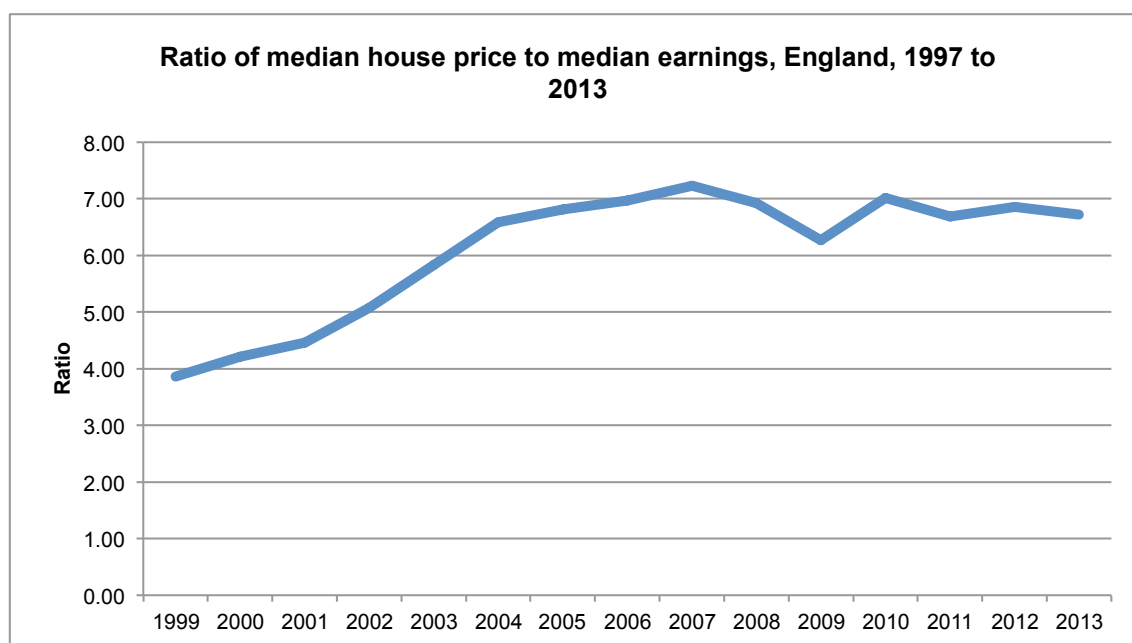
In 1999 median house prices were around four times median earnings; in 2013 it was almost seven times. Although housing has become less affordable overall, the English housing market is differentiated geographically. In Sheffield, for example, the ratio of median house prices to median earnings was 2.8 in 1999 and 4.8 in 2013. In comparison, Hackney had a ratio of 3.3 in 1999 and 11.3 in 2013 (source: DCLG Table 577). The unaffordability of housing has therefore been magnified in some local markets.

'Generation Rent'

This affordability gap has been encapsulated in the term 'generation rent' (Cole, 2015). For many people the idea of a housing career, progressively moving up a housing ladder towards the ideal of homeownership, is increasingly irrelevant. A number of studies (Feijten and van Ham, 2010, Kendig, 1984) of residential mobility focused on these middle-class housing trajectories, which are less relevant in today's market. Recent research by the Halifax bank (2014) suggested that 36% of 20-45 year olds fell into 'Generation Rent', those who were unable to buy a property (21%) and those who had no desire to buy (15%). Sprigings (2013) argued that key actors in the housing market, such as mortgage lenders, have fuelled the growth of the private rented sector, with the

resulting expansion of buy-to-let mortgages making landlords, rather than traditional homeowners, the key to sustaining the value of housing assets.

In addition to rising property prices, experimental data collected by the Office for National Statistics shows that in Great Britain private rental prices increased by 8.7% from January 2011 to December 2014, or 5.5% if London is excluded (source: Experimental Index of Private Housing Rental Prices). Current evidence suggests that as with house prices, there is a high degree of regional variation.

These housing market trends provide important context to the research presented in this thesis. The relationship between the cost of housing and the strength of the labour market suggests that people working in the low-pay economy may face particular financial barriers to moving to areas of greater employment opportunity, even if this was an important driver of their mobility.

2.4 Policy narratives of work(lessness) and (im)mobility

This section discusses key policy narratives and initiatives that directly inform the empirical research. These narratives explain the spatial dynamics of worklessness partly through perceived unwillingness to be residentially mobile. A number of strands of policy have focused on 'problem places', relatively deprived areas with high unemployment, economic activity, sickness and disability. Narratives have promoted the idea that places nurture a culture at odds with the work ethic, and that housing tenure can limit people's employment aspirations. These narratives try to reconcile the apparent benefits of employment in the formal labour market with the seeming unwillingness of people living in places with high levels of deprivation to find work, for example by being residentially mobile to the key cities of the "Northern Powerhouse" (Transport for the North, 2015). Although this section focuses on worklessness and mobility, it is acknowledged that this is one strand of policy and that other – contradictory – narratives exist, particularly around community-focused localism, which presupposes a stable population (Cameron, 2011, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015).

Re-socialising the workless

The underlying assumption of much policy thinking around out-of-work benefits is that some people were relying on "something for nothing" (Duncan Smith, 2011). Having faced escalating requirements under 'new' Labour (DWP, 2007:13), for example around job search expectations for lone parents and those receiving sickness and disability benefits, there has been "a transformation in who is now expected to look for work and what looking for work should actually entail" (Centre for Social Justice, 2014:1). For example, those receiving sickness benefit – who make up a large proportion of Beatty *et al's* (2012) 'hidden unemployed' – have undergone reassessment (Jobcentre Plus, 2011), and under the current benefits and welfare-to-work regime almost all benefit recipients were expected to look for or prepare for work (DWP, 2011:2).

Worklessness is conceptualised as a supply-side phenomenon, addressed though focusing on employability (Theodore, 2007). Individuals are expected to respond to labour market and employer needs, building their skills and demonstrating flexibility in terms of the distance travelled to work, type of role, and working hours (Centre for Social Justice, 2011:11). Those perceived as immobile have been increasingly problematised. In 2010, Iain Duncan Smith told *Newsnight* that jobless people in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales, could commute by bus to Cardiff:

> The truth is that there are jobs. They may not be absolutely in the town you are living in. They may be in a neighbouring town…We need to recognise the jobs often don't come to you. Sometimes you need to go to the jobs
>
> *Duncan Smith (BBC News, 2010)*

In this view, limited horizons manifest in an unwillingness to travel beyond the boundaries of the neighbourhood, blocking people off from labour market opportunities. The then Employment Minister highlighted the globalised labour market context, where "people travelled thousands of miles and found work. Those on welfare stayed down the road" (Grayling, 2011).

Refusal to be mobile – or the inability to be so – is "equated with the refusal to ensure one's individual promotion or to take part in the race for social status" (Kauffman and Montulet, 2008:53). Workless households are seen as lacking in

values – self-improvement, aspiration and ambition – essential to the functioning of a modern economy. Recent Universal Credit reforms were designed to:

> …get people who have fallen into benefits to get a sense of responsibility about what they do and to recognise that they should always be striving to change their lives so that they actually contribute rather than take
>
> *Duncan Smith, 2012*

Rather than a demand-side phenomenon stemming from lack of jobs, worklessness was conceptualised as arising from individual traits such as skills, values and culture. Active labour market policies have sought to tackle perceived low aspirations through re-socialising people into the habits and routines of working life, developing "the labour market discipline associated with full-time employment" (DWP, 2010b:29).

However, conditionality that requires people to accept any suitable employment jars with competing discourses of raising aspirations and ambition among those outside the labour market (Crisp *et al*, 2009:37). As Peck and Theodore (2000:123-125) noted, such policies seek to articulate a regulatory strategy that makes flexible labour markets work, re-socialising people for contingent work and relentlessly reminding people that 'any job is a good job'. However, many jobs available to those at the lower end of the labour market – likely to be low-paid, short-term, temporary, or part-time – may not be worth breaking a benefit claim for, given the financial strains that could result (Fletcher, 2007:74).

The psycho-social benefits of work

Various policy documents have identified a link between working and improvements in health, wellbeing and psycho-social indicators (Cameron, 2015, DWP, 2010:5, HM Treasury and DWP, 2003:1). However, these benefits may be less common in industries where insecurity, antisocial hours, poor conditions and low pay make in-work poverty a feature of many working lives (Crisp *et al,* 2009:26). As Smith (2005:103) argued, "the burden of unemployment may not be so heavy when compared to badly paid and mentally stupefying work". The benefits accrued from employment depend on social context and the nature and quality of the job (Waddell and Burton, 2006:34).

The impact of unemployment on mental wellbeing also relates to the role of work in self-identity. Many people who are not in formal employment engage in other kinds of work outside the labour market (Williams, 2010, Williams and Nadin, 2012). Others are able to adapt to unemployment by finding other roles through which to ground their identity (Nordenmark and Strandh, 1999). For example, many women are engaged in domestic work, caring for children (Craig and Powell, 2011, Lutz, 2007, Speakman and Marchington, 1999, Walby, 1997). For some of these women, performing the role of 'mother' is a route to a legitimate and respectable identity (Skeggs, 1997). In their review of the literature around work and wellbeing, Waddell and Burton (2006:32) noted that "it is not possible to say whether paid employment is what matters for health, or if any form of purposeful and meaningful 'work' may be equally good". Indeed, Batty *et al* (2011) found that workless individuals' engagement in unpaid activities delivered benefits that sometimes seemed equal to or greater than those delivered by paid work. It is perhaps the involuntarily underemployed who face the most difficulty, as they are not able to develop the same coping mechanisms as those who are out of work (Ritchie *et al*, 2005).

For it to be meaningful, the economic rationality of labour market behaviour must be *situated* (Smith, 2005:193), exploring household circumstances and motivations. There is potential for a qualitative approach to add to the literature in this area, exploring experiences of employment, underemployment and worklessness, and how paid work relates to other the roles that people undertake.

Targeting places and cultures of worklessness

As noted earlier, some policy strands have focused particularly on places that are seen as nurturing cultures at odds with the work ethic (Crisp *et al,* 2009:10). The Coalition government argued that an underclass persists in 'declining' places, "governed by a perverse set of values" (Duncan Smith, 2011). Social housing in particular was linked with "intergenerational worklessness, hopelessness and dependency" (Duncan Smith, 2011), although the notion of intergenerational worklessness has been robustly challenged (MacDonald *et al*, 2014).

Social housing policy has increasingly been used as a means of enforcing desirable behaviour, for example through tenancy probationary periods, fixed-term tenancies (renewal of which may include consideration of employment status and behaviour), and the potential for the employed or those making a 'positive contribution' to their neighbourhood to receive longer-term tenancies (Watts *et al,* 2014). The apparent problem of immobility has also been considered, with a range of commentators calling for greater mobility in social housing. Sprigings and Allen (2005:392) argued that 'community-building' policies fixed social housing residents to declining places, preventing them from moving to other areas. Calling for a scheme to enable social housing residents to move for work, the conservative think-tank Centre for Social Justice (2014:14) argued that "social housing can be a significant barrier to employment". Iain Duncan Smith has also called for tenure reforms to "look at how we get that portability, so that people can be more flexible, can look for work, can take the risk to do it" (Groves, 2010).

Attempts to increase mobility in the social housing sector – for example housing mobility projects exploring mutual exchange (Batty *et al*, 2014) – are based on the belief that "in the future society will profit from a more flexible…more mobile population" (Shapps, 2009). Mobility is seen as a route to changing "squeezed" aspirations and limited horizons (Shapps, 2009), while immobility is seen as reflecting a non-modern attitude towards employment (Schneider and Limmer, 2008:124). It is also an economic imperative: "this section of the workforce is too immobile and our economy ever more lop-sided as a result" (Shapps, 2009). Fitzpatrick and Pawson (2014:612) have highlighted significant reforms to the social housing sector which may result in greater mobility, for example through the use of fixed term tenancies, although they note that the greater impact may actually be in bolstering the narrative that social housing is 'not for normal people' and furthering the assault of the ontological security of disadvantaged groups.

Some commentators have suggested that whole places may even be abandoned, as people move away from areas with fewer opportunities to those with more opportunities (Lawless *et al*, 2011, Leunig, 2009). However, as Martin *et al* (2015) argued, given that 70% of the UK's population live outside London and the South East, it is less than desirable for those who cannot find work to

simply move to these areas. Nevertheless, as they highlight, the conceptual underpinnings of government spatial policy in recent years has been heavily influenced by 'new spatial economics', which suggests that natural spatial 'agglomeration' of economic activity in key regional cities will provide economic balance. The focus of government policy is to help markets work more effectively, something that previous regional strategy was seen as working against by stifling "natural and health competition between places" (HM Government, 2010:7). Agglomeration is primarily seen as the outcome of market forces, as highly mobile, information-rich workers sort themselves into more productive, higher-wage city-regions (Martin *et al*, 2015). However, places also influence people, and a high-skill, dynamic local economy will tend to produce spill-overs that reinforce that locality's high-skill environment, while the opposite is true of a low-skill economy (Martin *et al*, 2015).

This policy is not a-historical, but place-histories, geography and economic circumstances are seen as part of the way in which to determine "the prospects for growth" (HM Government, 2010:7). Regional policy, as in other areas (Flint, 2015), increasingly reflects the ceding of state authority to market forces. The implication is that some places will not grow, but rather will enter a process of "transition to better reflect local demand" (HM Government, 2010:8). Rather than this managed decline, however, Martin *et al* (2015) argue for the spatial decentring of the power structures that drive and manage economic growth, giving more areas the real resources to shape their economic future.

At the same time as highlighting the desirability of mobility, other reforms suggest that this movement may be forced, constrained, and directed only to particular types of places. Reform of non-dependent deductions, under-occupancy deductions, Local Housing Allowance rates, and an overall cap on benefits may encourage some households to be mobile from places that are no longer affordable. As Employment Minister Chris Grayling acknowledged, "there certainly will be people who have to move house as a result of this [benefit cap]" (Jones and Syal, 2012). Because of the interaction between housing cost and areas of stronger economic performance (Haas and Osland, 2014, Zabel, 2012), some of these reforms could compel mobility from high-cost regional cities to lower-cost places, which may have relatively weaker employment opportunities. Powell (2015) argued that LHA tenants are being spatially marginalised, with

claimants in London increasingly channelled to lower quality areas, while in more disadvantaged places there was potential for the reforms to compound existing "territorial stigmatisation" (Wacquant, 2008). Flint (2015:47) also noted that for some people, particularly younger generations, there may be new forms of "forced fixivity" as they remain in the parental home due to restrictions on Housing Benefit in the public and private sector, and reforms in the allocation of social housing.

However, results from research into Local Housing Allowance reforms suggests that households were more likely to plan to reduce expenditure or borrow money from family or friends and remain in-situ, than to move home (Beatty *et al*, 2014). Among people who had moved, most moves were local and encompassed a range of motivations. However, as the authors noted, impacts on residential mobility may have a significant time lag and could be difficult to disentangle from other factors. Cole and Powell (2015) also noted that some impacts may have been blunted or delayed by the use of Discretionary Housing Payments.

These policy narratives have particularly been targeted at low-income areas that are perceived as cultivating abnormal values. For some policymakers, this seems to be the only way that living in these places can be understood. As Mah (2009:289) asked in her exploration of former industrial areas, when places are seen through official measures as 'declining' and offering few opportunities, why would people want to live there? Lack of aspiration, lack of skills, and lack of motivation – personal failures – become the primary explanations. The research presented here aims to empirically explore how people relate to the places in which they have lived, providing a more nuanced picture of both mobility and fixity. While some policy narratives link residential and social mobility, through connecting people to new areas of employment opportunity, it is also possible that being stable and drawing on local networks facilitates both finding and being able to take-up this work.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the key trends in housing and labour markets that underpin the research presented here. It has particularly focused on setting out

the policy narratives that have problematised places like Nearthorpe and Eastland – both former industrial areas that have suffered from persistent unemployment, sickness and economic inactivity – as requiring intervention around worklessness and immobility. Some strands of policy suggest that people should be more flexible and mobile in responding to the needs of the labour market, including moving to areas with greater employment opportunities. This would see areas like Eastland – which has little connection with wider labour market areas – enter into a process of managed decline. This is contradicted by other reforms, particularly to housing, which may restrict access to stronger housing and labour market areas. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated by the chapters that follow, moving behaviour is not based on economically rational calculations. Attachment to place – be that emotional, practical, or habitual – is a crucial part of understanding why people may remain in places that are seen by official measures as offering little those who live there. The two chapters that follow consider how the research literature has addressed issues of residential mobility, attachment to place, and responses to labour market changes.

3. Themes from housing studies

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines key themes around residential mobility from the housing studies literature, while Chapter Four considers research on mobility and employment from the labour markets literature. Whilst policy narratives may assume a neat relationship between employment and mobility behaviour, the literature reveals a much more complex picture. The spread of disciplines that have looked at questions of mobility perhaps makes it inevitable that a range of methodological and theoretical approaches persist. While many of these different approaches have co-existed, it is possible to identify methodological and conceptual shifts that have had a significant impact at different times. This chapter is set out largely chronologically according to these shifts. Beginning with the earliest research, from the 1950s to the late 1980s the focus was on rational, predictive models, which sought to understand the main factors in residential mobility. These largely conceptualised household movement as a linear, planned, and rational approach to meeting particular needs, such as a larger house or better neighbourhood.

Few of these studies considered the barriers to mobility faced by households. Understanding the uneven experience of residential mobility has been the concern of much research from geographical and sociological perspectives, which is the second main body of literature addressed by this chapter. While earlier studies had focused on middle-class homeowners, from the turn of the millennium, research focused more on working-class housing consumption and the experiences of those living in low-income communities. Methodologically, qualitative approaches added to the largely quantitative literature, adding greater depth and complexity to understanding motivations for moving or staying in places, however work-related factors have rarely featured in discussions of mobility. The desire to articulate all-encompassing models has largely given way to research seeking to understand the complex interplay of the many variables associated with mobility decisions and a broader conception of people's relationship to place. With this has come a greater focus on emotional attachments to place, and how people belong in neighbourhoods, which is the third section of literature that this chapter addresses. Finally, qualitative methods have sought more in-depth understandings of household

behaviour, utilising biographical approaches to explain how people relate to the places in which they live (and have lived).

3.2 Rational, predictive models

Theories of urban mobility

Early theories of residential mobility attempted to explain large-scale urban growth patterns. Seminal works by Burgess (1928) and Hoyt (1939) both examined land-use in urban American cities. Based largely on the Chicago context, Burgess' city was one in which families responded to the appeal of more attractive residential districts that were further and further removed from the city centre. As the most enterprising members of each community 'escaped' their zone they were succeeded by those lower on the housing ladder, but their movement into these new places changed the community's make-up, prompting abandonment by 'old time' residents (Burgess, 1928). Rather than concentric circles, Hoyt (1939) conceptualised mobility as spreading along axial lines out of the city. His 'settled area maps' traced the movement of high, low and intermediate rent areas over time, concluding that people moved out of the city along established lines of travel, towards open spaces and the homes of community leaders.

These theories of residential mobility conceptualised occupants of lower income areas as engaged in attempts to 'escape' to better homes, left empty by households in middle and higher-income areas who had themselves moved up the housing ladder. The trajectory of households was upwards towards a clear and shared goal in terms of housing aspiration. Housing markets and income relative to housing were central to the models, with little accounting for the demographic characteristics of movers (Kendig, 1984:273), or individual motivations, desires or aspirations. Even if shared aspirations existed, those on lower incomes face significant barriers to residential mobility. As Short (1978:422) noted, "for some households, the escalator of rising real incomes and increased housing opportunities moves very slowly, if at all". The growing consensus on such all-encompassing models, following decades more research, is that they have been thwarted by "the idiosyncrasies and complexities of household motivation, intention and outcome" (Cole *et al*, 2006:4).

Life cycle

Life cycle approaches are based on the assumption that families have different space requirements at different life stages; residential mobility is the result of households adjusting their housing to meet these changing requirements. Peter Rossi's *Why Families Move: a study in the social psychology of urban residential mobility* (1955) had a profound and long-lasting influence on the shape and direction of research on residential mobility. Moving away from urban growth models, the study linked the household characteristics of people living on four census tracts in Philadelphia to satisfaction indicators and mobility behaviour, concluding that the major function of residential mobility was to bring the family's housing into adjustment with its housing needs (Goldstein, 1956:187). Demand-side factors, which had received little attention, were at the heart of subsequent research (Berkman, 1957:90).

Many studies following Rossi focused on the immediate motivations for household relocation (Clark and Onaka, 1983:47). In their systematic review of the literature on life cycle and housing adjustment, Clark and Onaka (1983) found that housing unit adjustment was the most common reason for relocating for all age groups, but the type of adjustment varied over the course of the life cycle, moving from housing cost and tenure at the start, to tenure and size at the mid-point, and location/neighbourhood quality for older households with children. Changes in household characteristics (not directly associated with initial housing dissatisfaction) also prompted a significant number of moves, providing some support for the life cycle approach (Clark and Onaka, 1983:52-56). The life cycle approach has also been applied beyond the US and UK context. In Germany, Kley and Mulder (2010), sought to understand the influence of life course events in mobility among young adults. Using a survey approach, the study found that moves out of the city were associated with a number of life course events, including the beginning and end of educational stages and employment (Kley and Mulder, 2010:85).

Almost all studies consider the role of the life course in residential mobility, even where it is not a central element. One inherent weakness of life cycle models is in focusing on 'traditional' family structures and seemingly universal life course events (Winstanley *et al*, 2002:815). It is difficult to incorporate diversity in

household composition and life paths through life cycle approaches, nor do they recognise different housing preferences and aspirations, instead placing people on a universal housing pathway with few barriers to movement. This may reflect the empirical evidence, which drew on the experiences of middle-income homeowners in more affluent neighbourhoods. There was little room for alternative ways of being towards housing, which Allen (2008) argued has resulted in the misconceptualisation of working-class values; rather than a middle-class concern with housing consumption, it is argued that working-class households have a more practical orientation to their dwelling. Such simplification is also seen in the tendency to assume that a single, primary reason prompts residential mobility, even though "there is little empirical evidence to support this assumption" (Clark and Onaka, 1983:51). Most of the studies of residential mobility discussed so far have also been based on the US urban context; it is difficult to transport such models to other sites (Huang and Deng, 2006, Li, 2004, Strassman, 2001).

Housing careers

The language of 'economically rational' approaches to understanding residential mobility stress behaving in a way that maximises (often financial) gain. Households embark on housing careers, consuming in a way that maximises their position on the housing ladder. Kendig (1984) examined the role of housing careers and life cycle adjustments in mobility among movers to Adelaide. Similarly, McLeod and Ellis (1982) analysed movers in Perth to understand the relative influence of income, wealth, and family size on housing consumption across the life cycle. As in previous research, households were seen as striving for home ownership – the term 'housing careers' suggesting linear movement along a pathway of housing consumption – although both studies found that housing consumption was constrained by wealth, savings, and income. The life cycle was also found to be important in enhancing predictive abilities in relation to mobility (Kendig, 1984) and explaining specific patterns of housing consumption at key points, for example partnering and children starting school (McLeod and Ellis, 1982). One of the criticisms of the life cycle and housing career models is their conception of the 'traditional' family. Feijten and van Ham (2010) sought to partially address this, examining the impact of divorce and splitting-up (of cohabitees) on housing careers in the UK.

Using British Household Panel Survey data, they found that such household changes had a long-lasting, downward impact on housing careers and encouraged frequent mobility as individuals sought temporary housing. However, the study failed to challenge the assumption that universal norms govern housing behaviour, arguing instead that marriage dissolution disrupts the ideal of progression up the housing ladder (Feijten and van Ham, 2010:488).

The idea that people's mobility decisions are guided by the pursuit of housing gains is pervasive, but increasingly at odds with a UK housing market context in which homeownership is delayed or unobtainable, and the private rented sector is growing. Although Kendig (1984:276-277) acknowledged that many households moved 'across' and 'downward' in the housing market, disrupting the linear pattern of housing improvement, "the most important aspect of a housing career is the ability to attain, retain or regain home ownership". Many studies also assumed that stages in the family life cycle could be used as proxies for fairly homogenous housing requirements and preferences (McLeod and Ellis, 1982:180). This view does not account for the multitude of different family and household types, nor does it allow for variation in personal preferences. Researching residential mobility using a population of movers (Kendig, 1984, McLeod and Ellis, 1982) excludes those who did not – or could not – move, who may have different attitudes to housing consumption and experience different barriers.

Cost-benefit and 'dissatisfaction threshold' models

A range of other studies can be conceptualised as cost-benefit models, considering the role of different variables in residential mobility. These studies incorporate various 'push/pull' factors, going beyond the dwelling to consider the neighbourhood context. In their review of over 100 empirical studies, Quigley and Weinberg (1977) moved away from narrow life cycle and housing career models to develop a more nuanced cost-benefit model. Despite differences between research in the definition and measurement of key variables, the basic assumption of the model was that if the dollar value of the benefits derived by moving exceeded the costs of the move, a household would be more likely to move (Quigley and Weinberg, 1977:56).

Böheim and Taylor (2000) applied rational economic ways of thinking in their analysis of longitudinal data from the British Household Panel Survey to understand the link between residential and job mobility. They argued that unemployed people were more likely to move than employed, supporting the classical economic hypothesis that individuals moved to escape unemployment. The study began from the assumption that "the decision to migrate is a choice variable determined by expected utility flows", and in making decisions people seek to maximise benefit above all else (Böheim and Taylor, 2000:2). This research is a rare link between the housing studies and labour markets literature but, like many studies on residential mobility from the labour markets perspective, it is weakened by attempts to assign motivations to perceived correlations in the data. The study fails to acknowledge that mobility among unemployed people could have many and varied causes beyond seeking to escape unemployment.

'Dissatisfaction threshold' models have some similarities to cost-benefit approaches. These models conceptualise mobility as the result of weighing up different variables and moving past a given tolerance threshold. Brown and Moore (1970) developed a mobility model which captured a range of satisfaction and dissatisfaction indicators, enabling variability in individual household preferences. However, as with life cycle and economically rational approaches, migration was still viewed as a process of adjustment whereby moves were made in order to better satisfy the needs and desires of migrants. 'Place utility' was a measure of satisfaction which would result in the search for a new property if it diverged sufficiently from immediate needs (Brown and Moore, 1970:1). Importantly, the model incorporated an understanding of negative 'push' factors (stressors) such as neighbourhood blight, beginning to recognise the salience of place and that mobility was not always a positive event.

Other studies went further, developing and testing threshold models using data. Speare (1974) argued that there was a threshold of dissatisfaction where someone would consider moving by weighing up the costs and benefits of mobility. Rather than seeing mobility as the result of the inexorable consumption of housing, Speare (1974) highlighted the bonds that connected people to places and properties; stronger bonds resulted in higher satisfaction,

decreasing the likelihood of considering moving. The empirical survey on Rhode Island supported the link between residential satisfaction, desire to move, and actual mobility. In contrast to life cycle and housing career approaches, the impact of variables like age and tenure were seen as indirect via their impact on satisfaction (Speare, 1974:181). Morris *et al* (1976) also developed a model based on the hypothesis that dissatisfaction with housing was the primary factor governing mobility, but housing was assessed in relation to cultural and family norms. If housing failed to meet needs, the 'normative housing deficit' could lead to mobility or adaptation. Through interviews with heads of household in New York and subsequent statistical analysis of variables, Morris *et al* (1976:318) argued that the life cycle indexed normative housing deficits, as families at some stages were more likely to experience certain deficits than families at other stages. Other research examined the role of triggers and stress-thresholds in moving intentions and behaviour, acknowledging the significant constraints facing households with a desire to move (De Groot *et al*, 2011). Finally, longitudinal research has focused on the triggers for mobility within specific groups of the population, such as older people, noting that considering moving was not a good predictor of actually moving (Hansen and Gottschalk, 2006).

The satisfaction/dissatisfaction models discussed here considered a wider range of variables in their explorations of mobility than life cycle and economically rational approaches. However, they are weakened by their "latent determinism" (Halfacree and Boyle, 1993:335), which sees mobility as a reaction to stressors. Quigley and Weinberg (1977) also noted that households do not possess perfect information so mobility thresholds would vary even for otherwise apparently identical households. Marsh and Gibb (2011:219) went further, arguing that residential mobility is a "particularly inappropriate candidate for the application of expected utility theory", not only assuming stable, well-defined preferences and considerable knowledge, but also "sophisticated information processing capabilities on the part of the decision maker". All the approaches discussed so far consider decision-making in a relatively sterile way, perceiving a logical, rational, step-by-step, linear process. This has placed "a misleadingly rigid temporal framework on migration" (Halfacree and Boyle, 1993:340). Mobility is more than a rational act; although people may provide a

rational narrative to explain mobility, there are many influences to consider including class, cultural experiences, education, character, and outlook (Hickman *et al*, 2007:27). Residential mobility needs to incorporate different ways of relating to housing and places, as well as a multitude of interacting variables.

3.3 Uneven geographies of mobility and immobility

The models of residential mobility discussed above tended to smooth over the variations that exist between and within different place contexts, and often focused on middle-class experiences of moving and homeownership. More recent research has focused on low-income neighbourhoods and working-class experiences of mobility. A number of studies have explored residential mobility – and immobility – in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, questioning what factors drive it and whether mobility is always positive. These studies have largely drawn on large-scale survey data.

Bailey and Livingston (2007) used Census data to explore whether migration flows in and out of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in England and Scotland reinforced spatial segregation. Overall, they found that individuals with higher qualifications tended to gravitate away from disadvantaged areas, although the strength of this effect was modest (Bailey and Livingston, 2007:23). However, personal characteristics related to the Census date, after any move had taken place, making it more difficult to link personal characteristics to moving behaviour (Bailey and Livingston, 2007:8). Understanding the characteristics of movers and non-movers was a key aim of Cole *et al's* (2007) research on New Deal for Communities regeneration areas. Large-scale survey data tracked individuals over two years, exploring the characteristics of 'outmovers', 'inmovers' and 'stayers'. In general, the findings concurred with Bailey and Livingston (2007), with some support for the idea of a "moving escalator" with those in jobs and moving towards owner occupation being replaced by renters and people less likely to be employed (Cole *et al*, 2007:2). Robson *et al* (2008) expanded on this typology, identifying four functional types of neighbourhoods in deprived areas – transit, escalator, isolate and improver – based on household mobility. It is possible that in some area less, rather than more, mobility may be preferred (Cole *et al*, 2006, Strassman, 2001) in order to

ensure that neighbourhoods are not left behind by those with the greatest resources, however as Robson *et al* (2008) noted, residential churn can have a varied impact depending on the type of neighbourhood.

A study of regeneration policies in the Netherlands sought to find out whether 'social capital' – the resources of social ties, networks, interactions and links with friends and colleagues – was an important factor in tying people to an area, or in enabling them to 'bridge' to new places and positions (Kleinhaus, 2009). While more 'bridging' capital may encourage the outmigration of those with more qualifications and greater spending power, too much 'bonding' capital could lead to critiques of places as containers for people lacking resources and aspirations. Kleinhaus (2009:641-645) found that the effect of social capital was mediated by the primary mobility drivers of dwelling and neighbourhood satisfaction, with social capital neither inhibiting nor encouraging mobility. However, in the US research on the inter-regional moves of families with children found that social ties and the density of childhood networks deterred mobility (Dawkins, 2006:867). This was especially the case for low-income families who may have relied on social networks for childcare (Dawkins, 2006:878-879). This is supported by findings from UK research in low-income areas, where people – particularly those out of work – relied on complex webs of informal support through family and friendship networks, necessitating 'immobility' (Hickman, 2010:43). Broad arguments linking urban decline with the lessening of social interactions in neighbourhoods (Putnam, 2000) have been challenged by these bodies of research, which suggest that levels of withdrawal have been overstated (Blokland, 2003) and changes in sociability are also a feature of affluent places, not just a 'problem' of low-income communities (Crisp, 2013).

Research on the housing market context also demonstrates a diverse geography of residential mobility. Kearns and Parkes (2003) carried out longitudinal analysis of the English House Condition Survey to identify 'movers' and 'stayers' in different places. Dissatisfaction was higher in deprived areas than the country as a whole, but this did not necessarily result in higher mobility in poorer areas. The housing market context was an important factor in households realising their mobility aims; those living in London inner city estates, for example, were significantly less likely to move after controlling for

perceptions, which was not the case in deprived northern districts (areas of lower demand) (Kearns and Parkes, 2003:843). Cole *et al* (2007:4) also highlighted the importance of setting residential mobility within the housing market context. However, the housing market should not be conceptualised as an independent entity. Wallace (2004:2) called for qualitative data to "enrich the evidence base" of local housing market interventions, incorporating societal forces and the perceptions and actions of key actors and institutions to give a full picture of the housing field. Smith *et al* (2000:93) put estate agents – key actors in the housing market – at the forefront of their research on market construction, challenging the presentation of the housing market as a fixed, independent entity and uncovering an "emotional version of the economy". It is this emotional element to residential mobility behaviour, involving an in-depth understanding of how people relate to places, to which this chapter now turns.

3.4 Emotional geographies, belonging and attachment to place

Understanding the role of emotions was an important feature of a number of studies that challenged the dominant paradigm of mobility research using pre-existing data sets and large-scale surveys. Such approaches limited the scope of research, since generally it was not possible to explore motivations in-depth, nor draw out how people's perceptions of living in an area and emotional connection to places may have influenced their mobility behaviour. It is difficult to explore the complex temporal and geographical influences that shape an individual's experience of a particular neighbourhood through quantitative research (Livingston *et al*, 2010:410). Calling for a shift in paradigms, Moon (1995:504) argued that adherence to inflexible assumptions about the nature of social behaviour had hindered the progress of research in migration, since detached ways of looking at the world can only provide a partial understanding. Emotions, for example, have little place in rational, objectivist studies, yet they transform people's lifeworld, meanings and actions (Crossley, 2001:85). Behaviour, then, is not just a response to stimuli as stress threshold, life cycle and rational approaches suggest – it is purposive and orientated to meaning (Crossley, 2001:89).

A range of studies sought to draw an emotional geography of place, including the role of attachment to place in mobility decisions. Moon (1995:519) argued

that migration was less a single event, and more an ongoing process of change in perceptions of moorings – things that bind people to places – so understanding personal experience is crucial. These 'moorings' were explored in a study of emotional and functional attachment, social mix and stability in four deprived areas in Greater Manchester (Livingston *et al*, 2010). In-depth interviews demonstrated that place attachment was mediated by individual experiential, historical and personal factors (Livingston *et al*, 2010:409). Some newly-arrived individuals became quickly attached to the area, in part because they had left behind worse situations, demonstrating the importance of personal histories (Livingston *et al*, 2010:417). Attachment to place was more emotional than functional, stemming from the family and friendship networks that shaped the geographical boundaries of perceived neighbourhoods (Livingston *et al*, 2010:418-423). This demonstrates the importance of understanding places as constructed through social relations, "rather than an autonomous reality in which things or people are located" (Tilley, 1994:17). Production of places is achieved through the performance of different practices with others, such as those in social and familial networks, and through these performances people achieve a certain attachment to place (Leach, 2005:301). A sense of belonging in place can therefore be said to be relational, a negotiated accomplishment (May, 2011).

Some prominent studies of place have focused on notions of belonging. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of capital, which broadened understandings of capital beyond merely economic capital to encompass social and cultural capital (for example relationships with others, qualifications), and symbolic capital (for example recognition), creating a system of perceived differences and power relationships (Bourdieu, 1984). Savage *et al* (2005) examined local belonging in four contrasting – but not poorer, working-class – residential areas around Manchester. The study developed the concept of 'elective belonging', the idea that belonging is fluid and individuals link their residence to their biographical history in order to feel that they belong. Communities became sites for new kinds of solidarities among people who explicitly choose to live in a particular place, while 'locals' had no automatic claim to belonging (Savage *et al*, 2005:29-30,53). Belonging was not seen as the result of strong social ties (neighbours were often kept at a distance), but reflected the confidence of those with a

middle-class orientation and the cultural capital to pick exactly where they wanted to live (Savage *et al*, 2005:87-92). The process by which people choose to live in certain places is at the heart of contemporary battles over social distinction; places are "sites chosen by particular social groups wishing to announce their identities" and so places come to signify social characteristics (Savage *et al*, 2005:207). Savage (2008) explored the historical roots of elective belonging, finding that the 'locals' do not have access to this 'choice' narrative and turn instead to nostalgia, which defines a group of 'us' who remember, as opposed to the newly arrived who do not (Savage, 2008:153). It is possible, therefore, to feel attachment to place (for example, through historical ties and memories), and yet to also feel that you do not belong.

Savage *et al* (2005) explicitly focused on middle-class areas to explore ideas of capital. Paton (2013) sought to explore 'elective belonging' among those with less capital, in a working-class, gentrifying neighbourhood in Glasgow. Attachment to place and electively belonging was not only a functional or financial imperative, but allowed people to express working-class identity without naming class (Paton, 2013:86). However, in a gentrifying neighbourhood, the potential for immobility ('elective fixity') was under threat; this ability to control one's mobility was the key difference between working-class and middle-class relations to place (Paton, 2013:93-94). For Allen (2008) however, the key difference was not control; working-class people were seen as having a different 'way of Being' towards housing consumption, a practical relationship rather than a middle-class, aspirational orientation. The research into Housing Market Renewal Areas drew on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, seeking to understand working-class forms of being in the world, primarily understood as proximity to economic necessity (Allen, 2008:61).

In contrast to Savage *et al's* (2005:90) finding that middle-class participants were able to articulate a narrative of their arrival and 'place' in a community, Allen (2008:66-68) found that working-class respondents were less able to present themselves as the subject of a narrative, instead providing accounts of their lives-lived-with-others. This highlighted the importance of social relationships and networks in people's narratives of place. Allen (2008:103-105) argued that dominant groups have labelled working-class neighbourhoods as "failed", "problematic", and "run-down", constructing an official narrative of

decline that has resulted in policy interventions to instil middle-class values in relation to housing. The labelling of such communities can impact on mobility intentions; in Denmark, Andersen (2008:97) found that perceptions of the area as having a poor reputation among outsiders was the most important reason for plans to move away from regeneration areas.

Other research has also noted the way in which official discourses problematise certain places as areas from which people would 'escape' if they were able. As Mah (2009:289) questions, "in the economic context of low employment opportunities, physical dereliction, and trends of depopulation, why do people still attach great value to their homes and communities?". Researching former industrial communities, Mah (2009:295) argued that place attachment can be seen as a yearning for stability and continuity amidst significant social and economic change. Noting that US migration rates have been declining for nearly 40 years, particularly since the economic crisis of 2007, Cooke (2011:203) argued that "the time may be right to attack the 'grand narrative' of hypermobility, modernity and dislocation and call for social and behavioural scientists to ask new questions…about immobility".

Cole (2013) considered the impact of socioeconomic change on belonging and mobility. Narratives of loss – particularly in relation to the economic foundations of the neighbourhood – were particularly important in eroding historic sources of place-based identity and giving rise to new forms of belonging (Cole, 2013:73). Watt (2006) found that such sense of loss could foster nostalgic ways of belonging among long-standing residents of changing working-class neighbourhoods, those who remembered 'how it used to be'. Importantly, for Cole (2013:74), notions of loss did not lead to mobility, either because people lacked the resources to move, or had a strong desire to remain. Indeed, perceptions of decline were often countered by high levels of social and emotional connections to place (Cole, 2013:77). Kan (2007:454) argued that such social ties limited residential mobility, particularly in relation to long-distance moves. Understanding belonging, then, requires an understanding of immobility, although the two are not synonymous (Savage *et al*, 2005). As Gustafson (2009:502) argued, residential mobility may be associated with less belonging, particularly at the local spatial scale. This quantitative study called for quantitative and qualitative approaches to belonging, mobilities and spatial

scale, to represent more diverse experiences than closed survey questions could account for (Gustafson, 2009:504).

It is important to consider spatial scale when exploring perceptions of place. Permentier *et al* (2007:203) noted the tendency for residents to apply 'micro-differentiation', a more refined classification of the neighbourhood at the block, street or building level. Residents can hold multiple reputational perceptions of different areas, potentially disassociating from less positive reputations and reducing the impetus to be residentially mobile. Similarly Watt (2006) highlighted the nuances involved in understanding perceptions of places, arguing that as places have become more significant as sorters of social distinction, residents draw a "geography of roughness", contrasting positive place images of their own immediate area with negative associations of other places. Blokland (2003:162) argued that the designation of 'inferior folk' or 'inferior streets' was a mechanism of distinction where the ability to delineate classed boundaries had waned. The 'neighbourhood' can therefore be used, challenged, or remembered to perpetuate many different communities (Blokland, 2003:207). To understand why people may not move from seemingly 'declining' places, therefore, one must consider how people perceive the places in which they live. If participants could insulate themselves from stigmatising discourses around place then residential mobility may be less affected by notions of decline, or could be off-set by smaller adjustments such as moving to a neighbouring street. Creating these "geographies of exclusion" allow people to selectively belong on a local scale (Watt, 2006, Watt, 2010). Individuals can also acquire the know-how to achieve status through alternative value systems, which are place-bound in nature (McKenzie, 2015).

3.5 Biographical approaches

A number of studies have recognised the importance of personal histories in understanding how people relate to the places in which they live. One way of foregrounding this temporal element is through biographical research. Unusually, Coulter and van Ham (2013) took a quantitative approach, constructing residential mobility biographies through British Household Panel Survey data, tracking moving intentions and subsequent moving behaviour. Particularly after the age of 30, immobility "seems to be the norm for many

individuals", and the authors call for more analysis of "why people do not move, especially when relocating may provide them with new opportunities" (Coulter and van Ham, 2013:1053). One limitation of the research was that it could not explore the reasons for moving or staying in place. Qualitative research can address this gap. Migration biographies have voiced the complexities of mobility decisions on the small-scale, responding to the call to see migration as "a part of our past, our present and our future; as part of our biography" (Halfacree and Boyle, 1993:337). These approaches unpack the multiple currents that feed into decision-making and action, building on the work of quantitative approaches, but enabling individuals to tell their own mobility stories. Ní Laoire (2000:234) explored Irish rural youth migration using a biographical approach; by allowing people to tell their own stories, the research highlighted that the question "why did you move?" did not yield a straightforward answer. While most people indicated job or educational reasons for mobility on a survey, this concealed a range of inter-related influences and pressures on decision-making, such as desire to escape the local area, a sense of growing up, and guilt at leaving, which came out through interviews. It is crucial to unpack the many layers of decision-making (Ní Laoire, 2000:237-238).

Clark (2009:523) also used biographical interviews in two Scottish neighbourhoods to understand how individuals negotiated and positioned themselves within representations of deprived places. Participants constructed their sense of belonging and not belonging in relation to other places, which were in part understood through past experiences and future aspirations about mobility (Clark, 2009:532). Winstanley *et al* (2002) took a similar methodological approach to studying mobility in Christchurch, New Zealand, undertaking in-depth ethnographic interviews with whole households to understand how household members interacted and made decisions. As Cole *et al* (2006:4) noted, there may be diverse and conflicting views within a household about moving; carrying out household interviews is one way to draw this out. Although histories were collapsed into themes during analysis, the researchers acknowledged that it was the inter-connectedness between different factors that shaped individual and household decisions (Winstanley *et al*, 2002:819-829).

Qualitative research has also turned its focus to specific groups, for example harder to reach communities. Bartlett (1997) spent a year and a half conducting

an ethnographic study into the experiences of three low-income families in the US that moved on average every seven to eight months. For these households, far from family connections tying them to places, seeking family support was an act of desperation (Bartlett, 1997:124). The study argued that moving offered the prospect of a temporary escape that was worth the potential difficulties in a new place. Moving was a relief, a distraction, and a way of asserting control over the situation (Bartlett, 1997:129-130). Skelton (2002) made similar conclusions in his study of frequently moving Aboriginal single mothers in Winnipeg. Moving behaviour could only be understood with reference to Aboriginal identity and the capacity for action in the face of dire social circumstances. Although the most common motivations for moving were housing affordability and size of housing, as with the families in Barlett's (1997) study, moving was portrayed as taking action and exercising control to open up the possibility for alternative outcomes (Skelton, 2002:136-140). Notions of 'home' can be seen as complex, and for households that are frequently mobile it can be a mobile concept, involving multiple social fields of attachment and belonging (Ní Laoire *et al*, 2010:159). Although much research has been concerned with the relationship between immobility and attachment to place, immobility is therefore not a pre-requisite for the existence of enduring attachments.

Some have questioned the value and practical applicability of research that is "too micro and introspective" (Strassmann, 2001:11). Others have cautioned that it is still important to understand the structures and constraints that influence mobility, such as the decisions of landlords and financial institutions, variation in market conditions, and money (Kendig, 1984:272). Constraints may be especially important in higher demand markets where patterns of mobility are mediated by housing market position, not just household characteristics and perceptions of the home and neighbourhood (Cole *et al*, 2006:8-9). A balance between understanding the role of broader social structures and household motivations is therefore required. One way of balancing these issues lies in considering 'housing pathways' – the continually changing set of relationships and interactions which a household experiences over time in its consumption of housing (Clapham, 2002:64). This recognises that housing in not consumed in isolation from other aspects of life, and the meaning attached to a house may

be an important part of personal identity. Clapham (2002:65-66) argued that biographical methods could elucidate meanings, investigate practical consciousness, boundaries of knowledge, and elaborate the structural factors which may constrain actions. This is one way of combining structure and agency in mobility research; other prominent studies discussed in this chapter have used Bourdieusian concepts to the same end.

3.6 Conclusion

One of the most prominent conceptualisations of residential mobility behaviour has drawn on life cycles. This suggests that households have different housing requirements at different points in their life, and that mobility is related to meeting these changing needs. One critique of life cycle models is their inability to represent diversity; Allen (2008) argued that working-class 'ways of being' towards housing have been misconceptualised as a result of the dominance of middle-class practices of housing consumption. Much contemporary research has been concerned with broadening out understandings of residential mobility to different places and groups that were not well-represented in the literature, for example low-income communities. There has also been a methodological broadening of approaches, moving from predictive models, quantitative surveys and analysis of existing data sets, to a range of qualitative approaches. These have added complexity to our understanding of why people move, or do not move, from particular places. The challenge for mobility research now is perhaps to ask new questions about immobility (Cooke, 2011), particularly when there may seem to be important drivers, such as better opportunities elsewhere (Coulter and van Ham, 2013). This requires approaches which can understand not only mobility, but also how people construct a sense of belonging in places, which may be significant in their mobility behaviour.

These are some of the areas on which this research seeks to focus. In addition, there is a particular gap in understanding around the relative role of labour market experiences and perceptions in residential mobility. Most studies have conceptualised this as a relatively unimportant part of residential mobility decisions (for example in low-income areas, see Cole *et al*, 2007, Kearns and Parkes, 2003), yet there has been little reporting of explicit interrogation of this area. A qualitative, biographical approach has the potential to explore how

people's relation to places may shift over time as a result of broader social and economic changes. As noted above, understanding why people may remain in a place despite such changes is an under-explored aspect of migration research, which has focused more on mobility than immobility. This is particularly relevant to a study bridging housing studies and labour market research, as the relationship between mobility and labour market changes (such as job losses in an area) is often seen as symbiotic, as the next chapter will show.

4. Labour market studies and residential mobility

4.1 Introduction

While research from the housing studies field has tended to view work-related factors as less important in the decision to be residentially mobile, the largely quantitative research on labour markets has often highlighted the strong – albeit differentiated – relationship between residential mobility and work, while neglecting some of the more emotional housing and place-related elements discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter begins with consideration of how labour markets are conceptualised, before discussing broad labour market trends. The long-term decline of key industrial sectors and manual occupations and the increasing flexibilisation of employment have been framed as key factors in changing the relationship between people and place.

However, the ways in which people respond to such broad social and economic changes is complex. While there have been some calls for demand-side action, for example job-creation, the focus of policy has largely been on supply-side adjustments such as improving employability and the ability for households to adjust through migration and commuting. Yet, there are a range of other – often involuntary – responses to changes in labour markets, for example down-skilling or dropping out of the labour market altogether. Understanding the role of labour market factors in residential mobility involves understanding how individuals perceive labour markets as well as the opportunities that may be open to them. It is also crucial to consider that different groups may have alternative labour market narratives to tell, and broad narratives of 'decline' are not necessarily congruent with local perceptions of place.

4.2 Conceptualising labour markets and 'work'

'Work'

This research will frequently refer to 'work' and 'employment'; these terms are used interchangeably to mean paid work in the formal economy. There are broader understandings of 'work', particularly unpaid work in the home, caring, volunteering, and undeclared work. In their review of the literature, Williams and Nadin (2012:1) argued that informal economic activities have been a "persistent and ubiquitous feature of the economic landscape". Informal working and reciprocal aid provide a hidden contribution to the functioning of formal welfare

and labour market institutions (Smith, 2005:10). There is a significant literature discussing broader notions of work (Craig and Powell, 2011, Lutz, 2007, Speakman and Marchington, 1999, Taylor, 2004, Williams, 2010, Williams and Windebank, 2002), which will be referred to at key points, particularly in seeking to contextualise worklessness and understand the importance of caring roles.

Labour markets and perceptions of opportunity

The most common distinction in the spatial conceptualisation of labour markets within economics is between a single, beautifully integrated, national market and many disconnected sub-markets (Gordon, 1999:199). In the neo-classical market, spatial concentrations of excess labour are dispersed through migration and commuting as people react to changes in supply and demand (Bailey and Turok, 2000:632). Actors are attuned to market signals such as relative wage rates, adjusting their behaviour to seek optimal outcomes (Peck, 1996:46). Unemployment results from barriers, friction and the characteristics of residents in particular places (Martin and Morrison, 2003:9, Webster, 1999:195).

The main alternative view conceptualises labour markets as a series of disconnected, overlapping, shifting spheres, an imperfect mosaic of sub-markets subject to barriers and structural disequilibrium (Martin and Morrison, 2003:9). Any single, national labour market would represent a "fairly arbitrary aggregation of many heterogeneous regional dynamics" (Decressin and Fatas, 1995:1628), as well as heterogeneity in the capabilities of the labour force to adjust to changing market signals (Bailey and Turok, 2000:632). Indeed, if labour supply was genuinely elastic, it would respond to trends such as the movement of jobs out of urban areas (Ihlanfeldt, 1997:219); the histories of many urban areas confound this expectation. The perception of a mismatch between labour force skills and job opportunities ('spatial mismatch') has been the starting point for many policy interventions. Developed in the racialised US urban context, suburbanisation of jobs and the growth of 'knowledge intensive' industries was seen as creating the paradox of a surplus of workers alongside employment vacancies (Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, 1998:849, Wilson, 1990:101-102). Importantly, the labour force is seen as essentially immobile, facing multiple barriers to adjustment.

Although conceptually divergent, the language used in these perspectives – market forces, equilibrium, disequilibrium – has much in common. Labour markets are constructed through measures such as travel to work distances, which fail to take into account the different perceptions of individual actors and their job search behaviour (Green *et al,* 2005:302). Arguing that labour markets are constructed sites of regulation and control, Peck (1996:4) identified the labour market as a "contradictory, complex, social institution", something that is not considered by much of the economic literature. Rather than natural equilibrium, the relationship between supply and demand is "one of jarring adjustment, contradiction and conflict" (Peck, 1996:40). Reassuring notions of market clearing and equilibrium are transformed into a political programme in which inequality, flexibility and mobility are promoted as virtues (Peck, 1996:238), particularly impacting on more marginalised groups (Sugrue, 2005).

Conceptualising labour markets as fields of active construction rather than structural determination recognises the importance of actors' perceptions of job markets. These perceptions may be influenced by numerous factors, including cultural expectations of work. For example, Willis' (1977:99-100) classic study of working class 'lads' transitioning from education into employment showed that conventional notions of 'job choice' were not relevant to the way in which "the lads" perceived work, which focused on the potential for self- and masculine-expression, diversion and 'laffs'. The specific type of work undertaken was not important, as long as it fell within socially and culturally defined limits. Labour markets can therefore be seen by labour market actors in a highly variable way, tied to their own experiences and cultural contexts. Research on social networks has further drawn out the way in which aspirations and perceptions of labour market opportunities are constructed (Green and White, 2008:214-218). Importantly, networks can deliver imperfect information ('jobs and training can be found locally'), and when combined with strong attachment to place, individual actors were reluctant to move away when (real or imagined) opportunities existed nearby (White and Green, 2011:55). Kan (2007) also argued that social ties limited residential mobility in relation to long-distance moves, noting that local social connections may prevent mobility to seek employment opportunities. Research from the field of econometrics has also noted the importance of networks in labour market outcomes, from getting jobs

through family and friendship networks (Blau and Robins, 1990), to staying in work for longer when contacts had referred people for work (Simon and Warner, 1992).

4.3 Labour market trends: deindustrialisation, flexibilisation and insecurity

The persistent geographical unevenness of concentrations of high unemployment and low economic activity bolsters views of labour markets as intrinsically spatial (Martin and Morrision, 2003:3). Deindustrialisation has had extreme and long-term consequences for urban areas; British cities lost manufacturing jobs at twice the rate of the rest of the country from the 1970s (Bailey and Turok, 2000:633), whilst job growth largely occurred outside the places where jobs were lost (Turok, 1999:894). Job creation has typically been in the new urban and suburban core of service and financial activities, often sharply differentiated from previous jobs in terms of skill level, pay, and security (Sassen, 1996:68). Deindustrialisation has also been linked to depopulation; migratory trends in the UK have been described as an "urban exodus", with the largest cities losing residents to most other sizes and types of place (Champion, 1999:60). However, this mobility was not experienced evenly throughout urban populations, but was sharply differentiated, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

In Chapter Two, more contemporary changes were outlined, which included an increase in involuntary part-time working – or underemployment – people working part-time because they could not obtain full-time work (source: OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics, 2014). Indeed, one of the reasons for lower than expected levels of unemployment during the current down-turn has been diversion into part-time work, temporary work, and self-employment. In 2014, self-employment in the UK was higher than at any point in the previous 40 years, accounting for 15% of those in work; the rise in total employment since 2008 has been driven by the rise in self-employment (source: Office for National Statistics). However, average income from self-employment fell by 22% since 2008/9. The problem of unemployment has in some respects become one of insecurity and underemployment, where more people are working lower hours or for themselves.

This links to a wider "insecurity thesis" which argues that economic risk is being increasingly transferred from employers to employees through shortened job tenure, contingent contracts and expectations of mobility (Heery and Salmon, 2000:1-3, Shildrick *et al*, 2012). Increasingly, insecurity is not so much associated with no work but with low-paid work (Shildrick *et al*, 2012); as MacInnes *et al* (2014) noted, half of those in poverty in 2014 lived with a working adult. The insecurity thesis also argues that employment change has had a corrosive impact on the construction of individual identities. Bauman (2005:27-28) noted that work has historically been an important anchor for social identity, but a steady, durable career is now so rare that the "workplace is still a source of living, but not of life-meaning" (Bauman, 2005:66). Instead people must embrace flexibility of job and identity. Charlesworth (2000:5) made a similar point, arguing that "the elementary solidities of family, work and place…have been washed away by the corrosive cleansing of *laissez-faire* economic practice".

The threat of downward mobility in insecure, flexible markets serves as a pervasive warning, which Peck and Theodore (2000:123) argued is exploited by welfare programmes that provide a continuous supply of job-ready, 'forced' labour for the lower end of the contingent jobs market. Lupton's (2003:8) community study identified this "reserve army" of low-paid, low-skill workers who were available in times of economic expansion and discarded in times of contraction. Bauman (2005:52) cautioned that "presently redundant labour may never again become a commodity", instead creating a "structural underclass" (Gans, 1996:146) of excluded workers. This is exacerbated by the rise of employment agencies as intermediaries in the labour market, taking over the supply of a range of skills and occupations under highly flexible conditions (Sassen, 1996:73). The overall trend is to casualisation of employment, not only in traditionally 'casual' jobs but also highly professional roles (Sassen, 1996:73). Atkinson (2010:414) cautioned that this is still highly differentiated by class, with low-skilled, low-paid, manual workers experiencing immobility and fragmented employment pathways to a greater degree than professionals. However, the 'insecurity thesis' has been challenged by Fevre (2007) and Doogan (2005) who have argued that work is more stable than often thought, and insecurity less prominent in people's feelings about work.

Some empirical research has explored economic changes through specific case studies. Considering labour market processes more qualitatively can generate understandings "rooted in the scale at which labour markets are lived – the local" (Peck, 1996:112). As Charlesworth (2000:12) noted from research in Rotherham, people's individual fates were tied to apparently random events ('shit happens'), yet they obeyed a logic embedded in the politics of place, economic context and class. Lupton (2003:13) focused on 12 disadvantaged areas in England and Wales, tracing the roots of deprivation through a mixture of quantitative data, qualitative interviews, participant observation and photographic methods. Although job-creation followed the severe contraction in manufacturing employment in the 1970s, job numbers obscured "a picture of increasing differentiation in wages, loss of full-time employment and opportunities for progression, and more limited security" (Lupton 2003:52). Lupton (2003:87-88) perceived a "vicious spiral of decline" as those with the choice moved or stayed away and transient, problematic or vulnerable households moved in (the 'moving escalator' in housing studies, see Cole *et al*, 2007:2). In the US, Sugrue (2005) focused on just one city – Detroit – to explore the growth and decline of the American 'rust-belt', advancing understandings of housing and labour markets as constructed entities, not independent economic forces. As corporations sought to exploit urban geographies to minimise union strength, avoid taxes and exploit new markets, mortgage companies, insurance brokers and white homeowners redrew the city's racial boundaries, reinforcing patterns of racial inequality (Sugrue, 2005:11-12).

Smith (2005) explored the responses of largely white, working-class residents in South London to wider social and economic changes. Networks of shared interest and reciprocal aid demonstrated how local (rather than neighbourhood-wide) social capital ameliorated the impact of low income levels and economic insecurity (Smith, 2005:81,132). Indeed, the importance of reciprocal relations and localised social networks may have increased as a result of the same global processes that Beck and Giddens argues is eroding them (Smith, 2005:204). This effect is also highlighted by Watt (2003:1784) in Camden; as jobs took on increasingly casualised forms, well-connected social and familial networks were more important in finding employment, yielding greater social capital. Calling for a situated understanding of economic rationality in labour

market behaviour, Smith (2005:193) argued that in the absence of any intrinsic satisfaction, for many the material rewards of employment were the only incentive to enter formal work, yet these considerations were largely eclipsed by concerns of security, lifestyle, autonomy, and family obligations. The labour market opportunities of low-paid, part-time workers and women with families were particularly tied to the fortunes of their immediate locality because of limited ability to travel (Smith, 2005:109). Some people maintained a regular income by underpinning undeclared, informal working with state benefit claims, moving in and out of menial work (Smith, 2005:157, see also Fletcher, 2007:74). Work was seen as perpetuating and reproducing social exclusion, a further source of fragmentation and insecurity rather than a means to security, improved standard of living and source of collective identity (Smith, 2005:195).

Alternative labour market narratives

One criticism of some research on labour market experiences is the implicit focus on full-time, male employment in the formal labour market. As McDowell (2003:51-52) noted, narratives of change and transformation in working lives as a result of deindustrialisation and flexibilisation have been exaggerated, since for many groups – including women, ethnic minorities and young people – the labour market has long been "fragmentary and discontinuous". As Decressin and Fatas (1995:1648) noted in their analysis of labour market shocks in Europe, changes in labour force participation levels, rather than unemployment, have been a particularly common response among women as lower or second earners. Peck (1996:3) went further, arguing that the labour market does not just reflect these wider social inequalities, it magnifies them. The social production of men as wage earners, for example, relies on the unpaid domestic labour of women (Peck, 1996:40). Generating a more nuanced view of the response of labour market actors to changes in employment means exploring differences in perceptions and experiences for different people, in different places.

McDowell (2003) sought to present an under-explored narrative, that of young men at the end of compulsory education, during a period of labour market transformation from well-paid manufacturing work to comparatively unstable service sector roles. Importantly, McDowell (2003:6) recognised the importance

of geography as local housing and labour markets differentiated the opportunities that were open to people. Although debates about individualisation may have some resonance, McDowell (2003:221) argued that for people with few skills and little social capital, notions of increased agency and the ability to construct an employment career based on reflexive choice have little relevance; older patterns of class and geographical location have a more persistent influence on the shape of the lives of working-class young people. However, this was not the "misery born of hopelessness" of Charlesworth's (2000:10) exploration of the working-class experience in Rotherham. These young men were

> …neither rebels nor yobs, neither failures nor successes…they lead careful, constrained local lives in an attempt to construct a version of acceptable working-class masculinity in the face of economic circumstances that militate against their efforts
>
> *McDowell, 2003:237*

McDowell avoided overly-romanticising her participants' lives, since accepting low-wage work brought financial hardship, little prospect of occupational mobility, and social stigma. Although some people were engaged in additional training, the qualifications they were pursuing would not necessarily lead to well-paid work (McDowell, 2003:228).

Walby (1997) highlighted increasing female participation in the formal labour market, although experiences were often fractured, structured by gender, age and ethnicity. Middle-aged women without qualifications, who married and had children at a young age, were disadvantaged not only compared to men, but also younger women, while ethnically specific forms of gender regime, focused on care of the home and family, further fractured labour market experiences (Walby, 1997:12,62). Women's more frequent experience as lone parents creates additional barriers to participation in the formal waged labour market. Smith (2005:131,199) argued that the economic rationality of lone parents needs to be situated within a model that emphasises socially negotiated, non-economic understandings about what is morally right and socially acceptable, since undertaking paid work may conflict with culturally constructed notions of 'good mothering'. Walby (1997:120) highlighted that for women, the intersection between structural and biographical change is especially relevant because of the importance of childbirth and childcare. Biographical understandings are

therefore crucial because people's "current choices are constrained by choices made earlier in their lives" (Walby, 1997:64). This approach "prevents false assumptions that the individual experience is represented by aggregate change" (Walby, 1997:135), which is particularly relevant to studies of labour market change and residential mobility which have been dominated by aggregate data and population flows.

The intersection of gender and ethnicity further complicates female labour market narratives. Although there has been a large increase in economic activity for women of all ethnic groups, for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women this increased dramatically 1984-1994 (Bhopal, 1998). However, economic activity is still lower than for white British women (Catney and Sabater, 2015), and particularly among married women and those with dependent children (Dale *et al*, 2002b:942). Researching Muslim women in West Yorkshire, Afshar (1994:141) argued that although education was seen as a route to success, daughters faced a complicated pathway in which education was important but their primary role was as a wife and mother. However, Brah (1994) cautioned against 'culturalist' explanations for Muslim women's (lack of) labour market participation, arguing that the *'racialised gendering'* of labour markets is crucial. The desires of women themselves are also complex, as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2009) noted from their research in Bradford. Muslim women had varied aspirations, with many expressing an interest in running their own businesses, and most wanting to live "modern lives".

Although for some families, the prospect of young women working away from home could threaten notions of honour and respectability (Brah, 1994:164, Dale *et al*, 2002a:12), only one-quarter of women in Brah's (1994:164) research cited family opposition as a reason for not doing paid work; for many, as with women of all ethnic backgrounds, caring responsibilities took up most of their time. Women who wanted to work used a variety of strategies of persuasion to be able to obtain consent to working, including recruiting sympathetic relatives to help negotiate the desired outcome (Brah, 1994:166). Dale *et al* (2002a:10) noted in their research among Asian communities in Oldham that some older women regretted missing an opportunity to gain qualifications and felt it was important that their children gained the benefits of education which they had not. Parents often emphasised the importance of education in structuring future life

chances (Dale *et al*, 2002b:951). Importantly, there was considerable variation among respondents as to whether the extent of labour market participation was presented as their own choice, a negotiated outcome, or the result of family or community pressures (Dale *et al*, 2002a:15).

4.4 Policy prescriptions for worklessness

The policy problem of worklessness has been addressed by two main policy responses, a demand-side focus on creating jobs in areas of concentrated unemployment, and supply-side action focused on the employability of individuals.

Job-creation

Demand-side theories of labour markets focus on the availability of work. For some, the extent of job loss in former industrial areas is such that focusing on training and employability "cannot work unless more jobs are created" (Webster, 1999:197). Crisp *et al* (2009) called for a debate about how demand-side measures may play a greater role in strategies for tackling worklessness. The type of jobs created is also important, since professional and managerial roles are more likely to draw in commuters compared to less skilled occupations, and therefore would not benefit the intended population (Bailey and Turok, 2000:632, Gordon, 1999:201). However, who ultimately benefits depends on outcomes along a chain of consequential vacancies where there are multiple opportunities for vacancies to leak out producing a diffuse impact on unemployment (Gordon 1999:201). For each job lost during a downswing it may take the creation of multiple jobs to restore employment levels among local residents (Gordon 1999:201).

Creating more jobs at the local level also does little to address concerns over the quality of jobs (Crisp, 2008:174), and fails to recognise powerful barriers to responding to seemingly close employment opportunities. Shuttleworth and Green (2009:1108) noted that physical proximity is not the same as accessibility, and jobs that are physically close can still be distant in social space. Gordon (2000:202) and Lupton (2003:12) both argued that smaller area-based initiatives are ineffective in the absence of 'macro' approaches to address more fundamental problems. Gordon (2000:201) advocated raising the pressure of

demand for labour across the broader region within which areas of concentrated unemployment exist. However, there is no guarantee that the resulting vacancy chains will eventually filter through to manual workers who are more vulnerable to unemployment (Turok, 1999:904).

Employability

A key element of supply-side interventions is the notion that training and learning new skills may enable workless individuals to be better matched to nearby job opportunities, as well as providing transferrable skills to seek opportunities further afield. Turok (1999:906) argues that this focus dismisses a significant body of evidence which suggests that lack of demand for labour has been a more important influence on rising inactivity than supply-side factors. While acknowledging that there are a mixture of supply- and demand-side barriers, the focus on employability is often at the expense of engaging with concerns about the quantity and quality of work (Crisp, 2008:174). Smith (2005:201) also noted that such supply-side interventions fail "to appreciate the practical and psychological restrictions that poverty and insecurity impose on people".

Although relatively disadvantaged and less employable groups experience a higher share of unemployment, 'converting' them into more skilled workers does not mean that they will suddenly become employed, because variation in demand creates variation in hiring standards (Cheshire, 1979:34). General deficiency in demand means that unemployed workers may be forced to 'price themselves back into work' through a downward move to a less skilled job (Gordon, 2003:60), or "bumping down" (Watt, 2003:1770). An uneven distribution of unemployment, falling heaviest on the least skilled, can therefore develop from a uniform fall in demand across all occupation levels (Gordon, 2003:60).

4.5 Individual responses to changing labour markets

Commuting

Commuting might reasonably be expected to be a more common response to changes in labour demand than residential mobility, as it is less costly. However,

for those with fewer resources and lower pay there are still significant barriers to mobility, such as car ownership (Shuttleworth and Green, 2009:1112). Research in Northern Ireland has focused on commuting intentions and accessibility, using surveys, focus groups, interviews, and Census data (Green, *et al* 2005, Shuttleworth and Green, 2009). Green *et al* (2005:318-320) found that young people had accurate basic knowledge of the geography of employment opportunities and were willing to travel, but most 'mental maps' were highly localised and indicated that the majority of jobs 'for them' were in their immediate area. A job located near an area that was perceived as 'unsafe' was seen as 'inaccessible', whether or not it was possible to travel there, showing how the language of mobility provided a post-hoc rationalisation of perceived opportunities (Green *et al,* 2005:321). Perceptual barriers such as fear, imperfect knowledge and lack of confidence meant that some people did not even get to the stage of confronting physical obstacles (Shuttleworth and Green, 2009:1112). Northern Ireland is, however, unique in the UK in terms of the duration and intensity of civil conflict, which may weaken the transferability of findings to other, albeit socially segregated, settings.

Further research by Shuttleworth and Green (2011) extended their work on commuting to explore the commuting intentions of Incapacity Benefit claimants in Northern Ireland, asking them how far they would be willing to travel for work and the time they would be prepared to spend travelling. Greater labour market involvement for people who are sick is a key way to increase economic activity and employment rates, however although the study found that the mobility intentions of claimants were close to the actual commuting behaviour of those in work, a large amount of variance was not explained by their model and those who had narrower spatial horizons tended to have other characteristics associated with economic weakness and social marginalisation. This suggests that such individuals would find themselves pushed further back in the queue for jobs by more 'employable' individuals (Beatty *et al*, 2000). In addition, intentions are also generally held to be a poor indicator of actual behaviour.

Migration

The focus of this research is on the role of residential mobility as a mechanism of adjustment to labour market change. The policy narratives highlighted in

Chapter Two draw on a particular theory of labour markets (Martin *et al*, 2015), that people can make supply-side adjustments through being spatially mobile. However, the research presented here suggests that people's responses are more complex. Much labour market research on migration has identified a strong relationship between changes in employment demand and residential mobility among sections of the labour force, however, this is structured by the characteristics of the population. This makes spatial adjustment less likely for people living in low-income communities, who may be on lower incomes or out of work.

Utilising the 1991 and 2001 UK Census, Champion (1999:67) and Champion and Coombes (2007:464) demonstrated that migration from major urban areas was a selective process, skewed towards the more skilled and better off, favouring those in higher managerial and professional occupations. Out-migration among these groups is also associated with commuting back to employment, so the remaining population cannot necessarily be 're-skilled' to fill the roles of out-movers (Champion, 1999:65-66). Using the Labour Force Survey 1983-1986, McCormick (1997:584-588) also found that manual labour was "spatially inflexible" and less responsive to changes in demand (unless relative wage rates changed); regional unemployment was therefore "a manual worker phenomenon". Analysing employment and population trends 1971-1991 in 20 large British cities and conurbations, Turok (1999:902) argued that the fundamental problem for Britain's cities has been the loss of full-time male jobs. The largest response by men to job loss was net out-migration, but this was a selective process favouring home-owners and the employed, and less common among manual workers, the unemployed, and economically inactive people of working age (Turok, 1999:903-904). Meen *et al* (2005:30-36) also found that older households, those on low incomes, the unemployed, and those in social housing were less mobile than the wealthy, younger and higher skilled.

One of the main weaknesses with studies utilising aggregate data is their inability to disentangle the many possible drivers of mobility. Although the trends are linked, the processes of employment and population decline are independent in important respects; people may be residentially mobile for many reasons not related to changes in levels of employment (Bailey and Turok, 2000:634, Turok and Edge, 1999:5). Mobility is often presented as a linear and

logical response to changes in demand and the location of growth areas, without discussion of time lags and imperfect knowledge. Bailey and Turok (2000:632) sought to overcome some of these weaknesses, using Labour Market Accounts and regression models to explore different adjustment processes among populations in Britain's largest 20 conurbations and free-standing cities 1981-1991. They identified important gender differences; men showed considerable adjustment to changes in labour demand through migration and commuting (although a substantial number were unable to adjust), whilst women were more likely to become economically inactive, perhaps because they were a higher proportion of second earners in dual-income households and on lower incomes (Bailey and Turok, 2000:640-643). Women in professional and managerial occupations adjusted to employment change primarily through commuting flows, but the primary adjustment among less qualified women was inactivity (Bailey and Turok, 2000:645-646).

Barnes *et al* (2011) went further in trying to separate the variables involved in mobility and changes in employment, utilising DWP individual-level data 1999-2008 to explore whether persistently high worklessness in deprived areas was due to the out-migration of employed individuals and their replacement by unemployed people. However, it was not possible to establish whether an individual moved after (rather than before) the transition into employment, which affects their attempt to identify transition areas as places where individuals became employed, moved, and were replaced by unemployed people in a continuing cycle. Although the study concluded that the replacement of employed individuals with workless individuals cannot explain the persistence of high worklessness in some areas (Barnes *et al,* 2011:41), there were considerable challenges with the data and assumptions used in the analysis.

Most analyses of migration flows infer that employment considerations are a strong reason for migration, but there is "inconsistency between the micro motives inferred from net flows and those that the migrants themselves report" (Morrison and Clark, 2011:1948). According to Morrison and Clark's (2011:1949) analysis of a migration supplement to the New Zealand Labour Force Survey, most movers "hold passive rather than active expectations of their employment prospects; family and consumption motivations take priority". Analysing why people had moved within New Zealand in the last year, less than

one in ten movers cited employment reasons. Housing cost and housing size/satisfaction accounted for over half of all reasons for moving. Most moves were local, driven by desire to adjust housing, but moves among the smaller sub-set of working-age movers to other local labour markets were more likely to be influenced by employment, as well as social and educational factors (Morrison and Clark, 2011:1954). However, the research was unable to incorporate household context, and responses only related to individuals interviewed separately (Morrison and Clark, 2011:1953). Interestingly, results lacked "any indication that movement to denser, metropolitan markets raises movers' perception of their employment prospects" (Morrison and Clark, 2011:1961). The authors postulated that perhaps employment was so important that it was a pre-condition to mobility, resolved before a move took place and therefore not present in people's active motivations; employment was a means to moving, but not a primary reason in itself (Morrison and Clark, 2011:1962).

A number of commentators have called for more wide-scale migration from areas which have suffered considerable job-loss. Leunig (2008:28) argued that governments should build in housing hotspots, providing more accommodation in high demand cities like London and its commuter satellites. This would encourage migration from failed 'regeneration towns' (Leunig and Swaffield, 2007:18). Lupton (2003:219) also concluded that some places may be "simply economically redundant", necessitating managed decline and the transition to smaller communities. The prospering of certain areas has been described in terms of "luck", while the decline of other areas is inevitable and impossible to reverse; as Leunig and Swaffield (2007:5) argued "we can't buck economic geography". However, the emphasis on 'luck' as the deciding factor explaining prosperity in the South ignores the ways in which governments intervene to encourage business and growth in certain areas – the economic geography of the UK is not shaped by the free hand of the market. This argument also ignores the connections that people may have to places, even those which are seen to be 'declining', as housing studies research has shown (Cole, 2013, Livingston *et al*, 2010, Mah, 2009).

4.6 Labour markets and housing markets

The housing market can impact on household mobility because the ability to move depends in part on the cost of housing (Zabel, 2012:267). The perceived interaction between housing and labour markets has been one of the reasons for viewing elements of the labour force as relatively immobile. Unemployed households may be unlikely to move to high-wage cities because of the combination of higher housing cost and lack of social housing, whilst they may remain in, or move to, a low-wage area in order to take advantage of the lower cost of housing and possible low-demand in social housing (Head and Lloyd-Ellis, 2012:1560). Access to labour markets is reflected in house prices (Haas and Osland, 2014); areas of high employment are often also areas of housing market strength, making it difficult for some people to move into areas of strong growth. High in-migration to certain areas may result in greater increases in house prices as demand for properties increases (Haas and Osland, 2014, Zabel, 2012). Conversely, home owners may also find it more difficult to sell properties in low-demand areas to move to higher demand markets; this is particularly an issue for those in negative equity as a result of the economic downturn (Zabel, 2012:267). Housing research has highlighted the importance of setting residential mobility within the broader housing market context (Cole *et al*, 2007:4). Constraints on mobility may be particularly significant in higher demand, sub-regional markets (Cole *et al*, 2006:6-8). Kearns and Parkes (2003) also found that the housing market context was an important factor in restricting mobility from more disadvantaged communities.

Housing markets can therefore be seen as restricting residential mobility. However, it may also be the case that people with characteristics that put them in a weaker labour market position are also attracted to certain places because of differences in local housing market strength, compounding disadvantage and building up pockets of deprivation. Cheshire (1979:32-35) argued that cheaper housing at high densities in the inner city attracts people with low incomes who experience disproportionate unemployment. In London, for example, above average rates of unemployment reflect residential concentrations of groups in a weak competitive position in the labour market, rather than spatial variations in labour market conditions, and is associated with areas of rented accommodation, high population density and large proportions of manual

workers (Smith, 2005:28). This is particularly drawn out in relation to social housing stock; in Camden, Watt (2003:1779) noted that processes of residualisation resulted in a concentration of residents with the weakest labour market capacities in Local Authority rented housing.

4.7 Conclusion

Enduring methodological differences in research approaches have resulted in strikingly different interpretations of the same phenomenon. While housing studies research has focused on the range of factors involved in decisions to be residentially mobile, asking individuals and households about their mobility behaviour, labour market research has been more focused on the aggregate flows of people and jobs. Both therefore could be said to suffer from a degree of sub-disciplinary insularity. One of the weaknesses with econometric approaches is their inability to explore the motivations and meanings of actors in the labour market, how they view the opportunities available to them, and how work considerations interact with a range of other factors in residential mobility behaviour. Community studies have also demonstrated the importance of considering geographical context when seeking to understand the impact of broad social and economic changes. There is therefore room for geographically and temporally situated, qualitative insights into how people respond to labour market changes, through possible mobility or through in-situ adjustments. While there has been qualitative work around commuting and the construction of labour markets by individual actors, there has been less qualitative exploration of migration as a potential mechanism of adjustment to labour market changes.

5. Analytical framework

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is based on a range of theories and concepts that were seen as particularly relevant to a study exploring how people respond to labour market changes, relate to the places in which they live, and perceive the opportunities that are open to them. The role of government in directing movement is discussed and then situated within broader individualising discourses. Theories of individualisation and liquid modernity are particularly relevant to studies of labour market change, since both link changes in employment relations to altered ways of being in the social world. In contrast to the individualised actor, isolated in social space, the concept of the historically constituted, unconscious habitus focuses on enduring, situated experiences, which are likely to share commonalities derived from (classed) positions. Finally, the concept of belonging offers a useful way of understanding how people develop feelings of comfort, or discomfort, in particular spaces.

The concepts used in this chapter are drawn from a diverse literature; the purpose is not to represent all ways of seeing all forms of mobility, rather, it seeks to bring together a range of theories and concepts to shed light on residential mobility and labour market experiences. Broad topics such as stigma (Goffman, 1963), class and gender (Skeggs, 1997), or social networks (Crossley, 2011) could each have been utilised as part of a framework through which to interrogate the empirical research. However, concepts from Bourdieu (1990), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and May (2011) were seen as the most useful.

5.2 Use and application of the analytical framework

As noted above, this study utilised theories that had a strong relationship with the topics of research and with the initial themes that had arisen from analysis of the existing literature. The analytical framework served as a tool with which to analyse data from the two case study sites. As such, the framework was conceptualised as a 'live' document, which would not only shape the analysis by shedding light on connections to theories, but would also adapt to the themes that were coming out most strongly through the analytical process. Seeing the framework as 'live' meant that although it provided a structure around which to

understand the data, it also changed as some elements moved in (or out) of greater prominence.

Therefore, although originally a range of theorists from the broader 'mobilities field' had formed a part of the analytical framework (for example, Canzler *et al*, 2008, Cresswell, 2011, Kauffman, 2002, and Kesselring, 2008), these theories – more focused on hyper-mobile forms of transport, the transmission of information and new forms of communication technologies – were of less use in understanding the more residentially stable lives of participants in Nearthorpe and Eastland. Consequently, these theories brought little to the analytical process. In contrast, analysis brought the concept of belonging into greater prominence. Whereas it had occupied little space in the framework prior to the commencement of fieldwork, analysis brought this concept to the forefront of the research, necessitating new theories through which to ground the different ways in which belonging could be understood. This process demonstrated the important of being open to the emergence of new themes through which the framework could be re-shaped, rather than rigidly imposing a framework that did not fully capture key elements of the research.

5.3 Public policy and mobility

The 'mobilities turn' in social theory seeks to address the ideologies that underpin the performance and representation of movement (Dufty-Jones, 2012:219). Governments and their institutions attempt to subtly influence the behaviour of the population ('governmentality'), for example through reforming the welfare system to encourage movement and employment (Dufty-Jones, 2012:216-217). Being residentially mobile from one place to another is not, therefore, solely a result of 'free' decision-making. As Bourdieu (2005:89) argued, demand for certain types of homes is socially produced, fostered by schemes of perception and appreciation that are socially maintained and re-activated. Explanations of residential mobility must therefore consider the important role of government, institutions and the discourses they construct.

Mobility is seen by some theorists as a structuring mechanism in social space. For Bauman (2001:39-40), mobility stratifies because of the different effects that are exerted on individuals depending on their circumstances; lightness of being,

mobility and spontaneity turns into a negative fate as it moves down the social ladder. Stratification is fostered by the valorisation of certain types of mobility in policy discourses, for example spatial mobility using new forms of transport, while immobility and more sedentary forms of mobility are problematised (Kauffman and Montulet, 2008:44). Residential mobility is promoted as a positive good, with individuals making calculated decisions to maximise opportunities in a flexible, fluid world (Groves, 2010, Shapps, 2009, Sprigings and Allen 2005). Spatial mobility embodies the idea of freedom, supposedly enabling individuals to establish social contacts and respond to opportunities without spatial or temporal bounds; contemporary discourses also frequently link spatial and social mobility (Kauffman and Montulet, 2008:53). Policy discourses stress the importance of spatial mobility among the working-age population to enable them to respond to flexible employment opportunities, moving to places that offer greater opportunities (BBC News, 2010). Mobility is tied to individual advancement and social fluidity, whilst ignoring the social constraints and demands that make mobility inequitable. For Kauffman and Montulet (2008:53), "the refusal to be spatially mobile – or the inability to be so – is therefore equated with the refusal to ensure one's individual promotion or to take part in the race for social status". This can be situated within broader individualising discourses.

5.4 Institutional individualism and the liquid modern world

The individualisation of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) is not just the neo-liberal, subjective phenomenon concerning reflexivity in the construction of self-identity. Institutionalised individualism is a structural phenomenon arising from people's relation to institutions, which are increasingly geared to the individual rather than the group, and is then internalised in individual biographies (Atkinson, 2007:353). As Beck (2007:681) cautioned, "individualisation is misunderstood if it is seen as a process which derives from a conscious choice or preference on the part of the individual"; rather, it is imposed by modern institutions. Individualism in Bauman's (2000:13) understanding is perhaps more closely related to neo-liberalism, which enabled the 'settled majority' to be ruled by the nomadic, extra-territorial elite. Freedom to move becomes a major stratifying factor (Bauman, 2001:38-39). These theories tend towards viewing the past as having stable, predictable, clearly identifiable social structures which

determined people's lives, compared to a present that is more responsive to our actions, characterised by fluidity, uncertainty, and change (Burkitt, 2004:220, May, 2011:365). This is particularly drawn out in relation to changes in labour relations.

Both sets of theorists emphasise the importance of changes to labour relations. Bauman (2000:58,116) argued that cutting the ties between workers and workplaces was the decisive change in contemporary society. Whereas work was once a prime tool in the construction of social identity, for most people today constructing an identity on the basis of work is "dead and buried" (Bauman, 2005:28). In the consumer society, "habits are…continually, daily, at the first opportunity thrown aside, never given the chance to solidify into the iron bars of a cage" (Bauman, 2005:25). For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002:33), labour markets have driven individualisation by fostering mobility – of occupation, place of residence, place of employment, type of employment – giving people's lives an independent quality free from ties. Individualism does not result from the free choices of individuals, but derives from their adaptation to the conditions of labour markets, housing and welfare systems (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:4). Mobility therefore implies *loss* of autonomy rather than increasing freedom.

Similarly for Bauman (2001:46), individualisation is a fate, not a choice. Individuals face a world of possibilities where every decision requires the calculation of potential gains and losses (Bauman, 2000:139). Policy discourses subtly link spatial mobility to other outcomes, for example workplace mobility and social mobility, especially when relating to places and groups that have been problematised as suffering from low aspirations (Duncan Smith, 2011). Willingness to be mobile becomes an important social skill, while immobility increasingly bears negative connotations of inflexibility and a non-modern attitude to employment (Schneider and Limmer, 2008:119). The necessity of mobility – demanded by employers and institutions – becomes the driving force behind mobility, rather than a desire to be mobile (Schneider and Limmer, 2008:124). Individuals are therefore seen as adapting to the requirements of the labour market.

Insecurity and flexibilisation of employment is seen as affecting individuals across the occupational spectrum (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:37). The threat of downward social mobility is therefore omnipresent for all social classes (Kesselring, 2008:77). The relative salience of class position weakens because risks are distributed temporally by life stage, as people dynamically move in and out of poverty and unemployment across their life course (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:49). However, the experience of frequent and long term unemployment remains a predominantly working-class experience (Atkinson, 2008:13). As Shildrick *et al* (2012:128) noted in their exploration of "poor work", the jobs that united working-class men and women were typically low skilled, low paid and insecure, with few exceptions. Bourdieu (1998:85) argued that casualisation of employment is part of a mode of domination based on the creation of a generalised and permanent state of insecurity, embedding a system of "flexploitation". The impact of changing labour markets is not felt evenly across the population. As Bauman (2001:29) argued, those who are less mobile are particularly vulnerable to the whims of investors and market forces.

An important part of individualisation theory is the internalisation of social phenomena, turning social problems into individual psychological dispositions that are reflected in individualistic narratives in people's biographies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:24). Rather than outside forces, people perceive their fate as the result of their own free decisions (Atkinson, 2010:1.1). The individualisation of life narratives prevents experiences from travelling beyond the enclosure of the private and 'subjective self' (Bauman, 2001:9,12). Consequently, the 'rules of the game' seldom come under scrutiny and individuals are less likely to perceive a 'common cause', leading to the "falling apart" of class structures (Bauman, 2001:9-11). Working life is "saturated with uncertainty", providing little impetus for mutual loyalty or a 'common cause' (Bauman, 2000:147-148). Identities become light, temporary, and flexible (Bauman, 2005:28), in contrast to the fixity of class 'zombie categories' (Beck, 2002:207). For Beck (2002:207), social theory requires concepts that can draw a picture of a differentiated society with various cultures of individualisation and collective life situations. This does not mean the end of social inequality, but rather signals the beginning of radicalised inequalities (Beck, 2007:680). Although for many individuals, the persistence of relative inequalities remains

an important structuring element of people's lifeworlds, under individualisation collective action on class grounds is unlikely to result because inequalities are redefined in terms of individual crises that are seldom rooted in the social realm. While people do form alliances, these are short-lived, temporary coalitions that are not necessarily based on class affiliations (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:39-40).

For Beck (2007:681-682) the 'truth' of the individualisation thesis is not to be found in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals, but the relationship between the state and the individual whereby civil, political and social rights are addressed to the individual rather than the collective. However, the 'mobile actor' – potentially deploying strategies and tactics to manage mobility pressures and constraints – is arguably an important perspective to research (Kesselring, 2008:94). Only the individual can elucidate the impact of institutionally constituted individualism on their behaviour and perceptions. Person-centred research can also provide a nuanced view of individualism and mobility. Over-emphasising liquidity can lead to the perception that all individuals have equally fluid lives, moving along spatial and temporal flows in response to the demands of institutions and flexible labour markets. In reality, understanding mobility means examining the many consequences for different people and places located in the 'fast' and 'slow' lanes of life (Hannam *et al,* 2006:11). For example, for some people frequent mobility increases their power and influence, but others who move often – for example migrant workers, refugees – are not 'in charge' in the same way (Massey, 1993:61). Access to mobility is therefore differentiated, structured and unequal, and such differentiated access produces further inequalities (Dufty-Jones, 2012:215).

5.5 Habitus and dispositions

While theories of individualisation highlight individuals' adaptation to changing labour market conditions, Bourdieu emphasises the importance of long-running, inflexible dispositions that guide behaviour. Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice aimed to bridge the gap between structure and agency to provide a comprehensive account of social behaviour. The habitus is a structuring mechanism that operates from within agents (Wacquant, 1992:18). Although it cannot be observed, it can be seen in the actualisation of particular situations

(Vandenberghe, 1999:48). Experiences associated with a particular position in the social structure inscribe on the habitus and shape dispositions, generating practices and giving meaning to the world (Bourdieu, 1984:170). The 'rules' governing behaviour are embodied in each of us, expressed as habitual practices or customs wherein the 'rules' disappear from consciousness and practices are produced unconsciously by each of us who 'just know' how to carry on in social life (Burkitt, 2004:221). Agents are guided in their actions by intuition arising out of a practical sense or feel for the game (Bourdieu, 2005:9). In conceptualising residential mobility, the habitus can be used to understand how opportunities for mobility are viewed by individuals. Looking historically one can understand how the act of moving – whether at the micro-scale or across continents – is tied into sets of meanings that go on to play a role in the production of future mobilities (Cresswell, 2011:2).

As the habitus operates below the level of consciousness, it shapes agents' subjective aspirations not through a conscious calculation of what is (or is not) possible, but through a set of dispositions that 'pre-adapt' the possibilities that are seen (Bourdieu, 1990:54). It therefore "transforms necessity into a virtue by inducing 'choices' which correspond to the condition of which it is the product" (Bourdieu, 1984:175). It follows that some options will not be consciously seen or considered by households, as they exist beyond the boundaries of the adaptive habitus. This is a situated, rather than absolute, freedom to choose (Crossley, 2001:134). Although there are an infinite number of practices guided by the habitus and they are relatively unpredictable, Bourdieu (1990:55) also argued that they are "limited in their diversity" since people who experience similar lives may develop shared dispositions. This embodied 'sense' of how to behave contrasts with the conscious calculations of the reflexive, disembedded, individualistic actor (Bottero, 2010:4). Although Bourdieu (1990:53) did not rule out that responses of the habitus "may be accompanied by a strategic calculation", the first response is defined without calculation, in relation to the potential options that people have been conditioned to recognise. The "embodied history" of the habitus results in the prioritisation of past experiences over the immediate present (Bourdieu, 1990:56).

However, there is something more to human action than the concept of habitus can fully capture, something creative and generative which makes and modifies

habits (Crossley, 2001:116). Indeed, a disposition towards certain attitudes, values or ways of behaving does not exclude the possibility of being open to modification rather than simply being passively re-inscribed (Webb *et al,* 2006:38-41). A more adaptive understanding of the habitus accepts the power of dispositions but acknowledges that there are an increasing array of overlapping social fields in everyday life that force reflexive consciousness to play a role (Burkitt, 2004:223). In this way, a distinction can be made between the "strong version" of the habitus, which is always inaccessible to human perception, and a "weak version" in which much of social action is unconscious, embodied, and not reflected upon, but which can be accessed through systematic research (Uprichard and Byrne, 2006:669). Burkitt (2004:221) cautioned that we must pay attention to people's experiences of "living presence" – emerging, indistinct, yet to be articulated experiences.

Bottero (2010:5) argued for a greater emphasis on context-specific, shared, negotiated lifeworlds, through which identities are constructed, a product of the relationship between agents, rather than simply between the habitus and the field. However, Bourdieu's emphasis on the group habitus as harmonised in the absence of any explicit coordination belies the active interpretation and negotiation that is a part of any shared activity (Bottero, 2010:13). Bourdieu consequently tends towards overstating the uniformity of group dispositions in generating joint practice, conversely understating the adjustments, constraints and challenges that are a part of joint practice (Bottero, 2010:14). Lahire (2003:343) also argued that Bourdieusian frameworks tend to homogenise and that the search for general dispositions and habitus is at odds with the plurality of individual life and experience. Researchers need to replace coherent pictures of group dispositions with a more complex vision of the individual as the bearer of heterogeneous dispositions (Lahire, 2003:344).

The habitus is embodied, visible in "the most automatic gestures or the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body" (Bourdieu, 1984:466). An actor's understanding of the social world is demonstrated through their bodily know-how; their practical sense is encoded in the way the individual is carried and projected in public space (Taylor, 1999:35). Through the properties and movements of the body, all kinds of social distinctions are expressed (Bourdieu, 1990:71). As such, "when a stranger comes into our presence…first

appearances are likely to enable us to anticipate his category and attributes, his 'social identity'" (Goffman, 1963:12). For Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:124), human action was not an instantaneous reaction to immediate stimuli, and knowledge of the stimulus does not enable an understanding of action unless one has an idea of the habitus that responds to them. Looking solely at changes in how institutions relate to individuals or groups, for example, does not provide an understanding of how an individual will respond to or interpret the changing relationship. One must understand how they interpret and filter the world through their life experiences. The durability of the habitus is such that practices may be poorly adapted to conditions because they were adjusted to a different context and have outlived the economic and social conditions in which they were produced (Bourdieu, 1990:62).

Forms of capital (economic, social, cultural) shape an individual's existence, generating particular dispositions to act and see the world in certain ways (Atkinson, 2010:2.2). The production of social space involves the production of difference, positions of distinction between holders of differential amounts of capital (Burkitt, 2004:213). The capacity people have to be mobile can be considered a resource or form of capital (Kauffman and Montulet, 2008:45). The potential for mobility is a resource that enables people to negotiate spatial constraints (Kauffman, 2002:103). It structures because it moderates mobility behaviour and intentions, enabling mobility for some, but restricting choices for others. In considering the potential to be mobile as a form of capital, its relative value in different fields must be accounted for. Capital is not fixed – its value differs across different fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:98). Mobility may be more valued in, for example, the employment field than the field of education. Actors recognise this fluidity and the power of capital, engaging in struggles to change the relative value of different forms of capital, valorising that which they possess and attempting to discredit that possessed by others in the 'game' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:99). Fields are therefore the locus of competition and conflict (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:103). However, the view of mobility as a kind of capital suggests that its counter – immobility – is negative, denoting lack of resources. It is also questionable whether the potential to be mobile is a form of capital in itself; it may simply be the spatialisation of other forms of capital, for example social capital derived

through knowledge about other places, or the economic capital to afford a deposit for a property elsewhere.

Although Bourdieu (1990:53) argued that individuals could act strategically, adapting their habitus and changing their position in social space (fields), his view of agency remained somewhat limited:

> The schemes of the habitus…owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will

Bourdieu, 1984:466

For Bourdieu (2005:73), strategies were more unconscious than calculated. Though people may be conscious of making moves and acting strategically, they are unaware that their motives, goals and aspirations are not spontaneous or natural but are given to them through the habitus (Webb *et al,* 2006:58). Bourdieu left little room for the idea that individuals could rationally challenge the habitus to make different choices (Verdaasdonk, 2003:360). Yet everyday life must include not only the routine repetition of past and habitual behaviours, but also creative actions which challenge what is regarded as 'commonplace' (May, 2011:367). From a critical perspective, Bourdieu's framework is too reductive – quick to reduce agents' ideas to their position in the field – and in emphasising the role of enduring dispositions he denies agents the capacity to critically reflect on their situation and identity (Bottero, 2010:10). The unconscious nature of the habitus also has important implications for research. Individuals may not have access to subconscious motivations as governed by the habitus, and "their most spontaneous declarations may express something quite different from what they seem to say" (Bourdieu, 2010:620). If the habitus is "internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history" (Bourdieu, 1990:56) then how can it be uncovered in research processes? Researchers may dismiss social agents' ability to reflect on their own behaviour (Verdaasdonk, 2003:360). This leaves the researcher in the unwelcome position of having to account for why individuals are 'deluded' but the researcher is not (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1999:90).

5.6 Belonging and place

Belonging is "a sense of ease with oneself and one's surroundings", developed through a process of identifying with one's social, relational and material surroundings, and of recognising the self in 'the other' (May, 2011:368). There are links between the concepts of belonging and the habitus, since a sense of belonging is partly achieved on the basis of knowing how to behave, having a 'feel for the game' in the Bourdieusian sense (May, 2011:368). However, May (2011:363) argued that the concept of belonging offers a more person-centred approach to understanding responses to social change than the habitus, depicting social structures as actively lived. Understanding belonging necessitates a focus on emotions, the relations between individuals and social interaction (May, 2011:369). For Burkitt (2004:222), emotions were central to human relations, which are formed over time and reproduced not so much through fixed habit but through the shared desire, need, and interest to constitute them again in a future time and place. In this view, belonging derives from conscious negotiation with others, rather than just internalising shared conditions of existence as in the habitus (Bottero, 2010:413, May, 2011:369).

For Bourdieu, the habitus belongs in a particular social field, and if we remain in this field it feels 'natural'; the concept of belonging demonstrates how people can be embedded in a familiar and everyday world and yet feel that they do not belong there, because people make claims to belonging that others may reject (May, 2011:370). Simply being familiar with a place or a group of people is not enough to guarantee a sense of belonging, since there are hierarchies of belonging and not everyone is allowed to belong (May, 2011:369-370). However, for a number of researchers utilising Bourdieusian concepts (Savage *et al*, 2005, Watt, 2006), this is not incompatible with the idea of the enduring habitus; rather, through ongoing processes of distinction people create spaces in which they can belong, often with people 'like them' and excluding 'others'. Places become sorters of social distinction as other signifiers such as occupation have lost their purchase (Savage *et al*, 2005:101). Research should consider, however, that 'not belonging' is not always a negative experience; May (2011:373) argued that for many people there is a tension between wanting to be similar to and belong with others, and wanting to be unique and different from others.

A sense of belonging is inherently spatial. Fortier (2000:112) showed how Italian immigrants in London constructed a sense of belonging in habitual spaces, such as churches – "architectures of reassurance" – which generated an instinctive sense of how to behave. Forms of belonging emerged from processes of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, rooted in place (Fortier, 2000:2). May (2011:371) argued that the concept of belonging goes further than the habitus in considering the sensory nature of our connection to the natural and built environments; we come to know the world around us "through our sensuous embodied experiences of touch, sound, smell and taste". In phenomenological approaches, perception (seeing, hearing, touching), bodily movements, and emotions are key to understanding the world (Tilley, 1994:12). Fortier (2000:6), for example, saw bodies as sites for the display of cultural identity, not just through what is visible but also through the expressions and movement of the body, while Crossley (2001:85) considered the way in which emotions transform lifeworlds, meanings, and how people act in the world.

In moving through space, people develop a sense of belonging and come to understand who they are as individuals and groups (May, 2011:371). For De Certeau (1988:97), "the act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered"; as people move through places they perform "pedestrian speech acts". Walkers transform the spatial environment:

> …if on the one hand he actualises only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes only here and not there), on the other he increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts and detours) and prohibitions (for example, he forbids himself to take paths generally considered accessible or even obligatory)
>
> *De Certeau, 1988:98*

Habitual processes of movement, covering and re-covering the same routes, enable people to territorialise space, giving meaning to the spatial (Leach, 2005:299). Through stylised spatial practices – "corporeal memory acts" (Leach, 2005:302) – groups can appropriate spaces and form attachments to places (Blokland, 2003:159). This view holds that we cannot 'read' the environment as though meaning was inherent in places, rather meaning is given to the environment through collective and individual behaviour (Leach, 2005:302). As such:

> Space can only exist as a set of relations between things or places…there is no space that is not relational. Space is created by social relations, natural and cultural objects. It is a production, an achievement, rather than an autonomous reality in which things or people are located or 'found'
>
> *Tilley, 1994:17*

Places have different "densities of meanings" to people depending on the events and actions they have seen, experienced and remember, therefore a sense of attachment to place is frequently derived from the stability of meanings associated with the place (Tilley, 1994:18).

Belonging is also a fluid state, changing over time in response to changes in our own circumstances, such as becoming a parent, and changes in the environment around us (May, 2011:372). The living memory of places challenges commonly held assumptions about the stillness of space and the fluidity of time (Fortier, 2000:174). It is therefore an appropriate concept to use in the study of social change over time. As De Certeau (1988:108) argued, "the places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences" as people refer to what used to be but can no longer be seen, creating "haunted places" with "pasts that others are not allowed to read…symbolisations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body. 'I feel good here'". Daily movements through places become "biographic encounters" for individuals, recalling past activities, events and signs (Tilley, 1994:27).

For Tilley (1994:27), "personal biographies, social identities, and a biography of place are intimately connected"; places are understood in relation to other places that people have experienced in their life history, but places can also acquire their own history as a result of the events that have taken place there. Because memories constantly provide modifications to a sense of place, it "can never be exactly the same place twice" (Tilley, 1994:27). Understanding place must therefore "fundamentally be a narrative understanding involving a presencing of previous experiences in present contexts" (Tilley, 1994:31). However, public discourses of place affect how communities are defined, perceptions of their needs, and who belongs or does not belong (Blokland, 2009:1594). Dominant images of places are influenced by partial collective histories that reflect powerful sections of the population (Blokland, 2009:1608).

5.7 Conclusion

A range of different theories and concepts can be utilised to understand why people move, or remain, in places across their life course, and how they respond to broader social and economic changes. While theories of individualisation highlight individuals' adaptation to changing labour market conditions, the concept of the habitus emphasises the importance of enduring, historically constituted, inflexible dispositions in guiding behaviour. Proponents of the concept of belonging argue that the habitus does not go far enough in considering how people develop a sense of comfort in place, particularly through movement and the relationships people have with others. Extending Bourdieusian theories using the concept of belonging could be especially useful in exploring attachment to particular places and how this may change over time.

While Bourdieu argues that class continues to structure experiences through the habitus and cultural practices, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim propose that people across the occupational spectrum face the same risks and as such class is lessening in relevance. However, in light of the literature that has been discussed in the preceding chapters, class-based insecurity is likely to be highly relevant to the lives of people living in Nearthorpe and Eastland, making class an important lens through which to consider people's experiences. The habitus will therefore be a key theory through which household behaviour can be explained. Applying these different theories to empirical research of household mobility behaviour has the potential to add to a literature which has less of a sociological focus. This is particularly the case with much of the literature around labour markets, which has been dominated by economics. The concepts of the habitus and belonging will enable emotional and experiential factors to come to the forefront of analysis.

6. Methodology

6.1 Introduction

There is a gap in the research literature around qualitative understandings of the role of employment factors in residential mobility, which biographically-focused research could address. Although they have long been used in life history work, biographical research methods have become more prominent in a number of social science disciplines in recent years. It may be tempting to link this methodological turn with broader individualising narratives, however much research in the biographical tradition emphasises the historically situated, context-specific, culturally related nature of personal narratives. Biographical approaches are therefore well-suited to exploring how people respond to social and economic changes, the expression of the habitus, and the interweaving of individual lives with others.

The chapter starts with a broad methodological discussion focusing on biographical research. It then moves on to outline the research approach, comprising two semi-structured interviews with 18 households in Nearthorpe and Eastland (nine in each location). A whole-household approach was taken, aiming to add to a literature that has largely been based on data from heads of household. Semi-structured interviews with nine stakeholders were also used to illuminate the place-context, alongside phone interviews with six estate agents. The fieldwork process is then discussed, from initial piloting to final data analysis. The end of the chapter focuses on a more reflexive discussion of some of the limitations of the research, and key ethical issues.

6.2 Ontology and epistemology in biographical research

Biographies are case histories where the person's own narrative and evaluative account of their life is the centre (Bertaux and Delcroix, 2000:73). It is a story told in the *present* about someone's life in the *past* and their expectations for the *future* (Brannen and Nilsen, 2011:609). Biographical methods seek to go beyond the presentation of facts to understand the meaning that events have for individuals, and how this connects to wider society. As Brah (1994:169) argued, "the micro world of individual narratives constantly references and foregrounds the macro canvas of economic, political and cultural change". The validity of utilising the narratives of 'ordinary people' in research lies in building

these connections between individual histories and wider social theory (Merrill and West, 2009:163).

Acknowledging that such methods cannot stand tests of verifiability, reliability or representativeness, biographical researchers have called for different evaluative criteria – evidential support for claims, consideration of different interpretations, plausibility, coherence, and persuasiveness (Kohler Riessman, 1993:64-65). Narrative richness, the quality of the research relationship, and depth of insight are other potential evaluative criteria (Merrill and West, 2009:164). The focus is on the quality of data, not on the volume of cases; as Mason (in: Baker and Edwards, 2012:29) noted, hundreds of superficial interviews may be of little use, whilst just a few quality cases could generate considerable insight.

The individualised narrator

Although biographical methods assume that the study of individuals is an important route to understanding the social world (Rustin, 2000:46), researchers in the biographical tradition do not have a single ontological and epistemological position. The biographical subject has been conceptualised differently by researchers depending on the lens through which they perceive the social world. At one extreme, the biographical subject is the self-conscious and reflexive narrator, knowledgeable about their past and 'telling it like it was', providing the researcher with an authentic account and some 'objective' knowledge of reality. Some have seen the shadow of postmodernism in the broader turn to biographical methods, foregrounding individual accounts in place of 'grand narratives' (Roberts, 2002:4-5). Rustin (2000:34) argued that contemporary theories of individualisation and liquidity (Bauman, 2000, 2001, Beck, 2002, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) have given new prominence to the individual in society, leading to renewed interest in biographical methods.

However, the focus on 'individualisation' and 'liquid modernity' ignores the different ways in which the biographical subject is conceptualised by researchers of different traditions, conflating the narrative form with the idea of an individualised narrator (Mason, 2004:178). Although people tell personal narratives, they are often full of relational content (Atkinson, 2010, Mason, 2004:178). May (2011:367) argued that the social embeddedness of people's lives should be recognised by using the term 'personal narrative' instead of

'individual narrative'. Others have questioned the existence of the individual, reflexive author of their own biography, arguing that this is a lived reality for only a small minority of (white, middle class, male) people (Mason, 2004:163). Biographical methods should not be limited to reflecting individualised accounts of society. Indeed, they can explore the tension between structures and agency, linking micro and macro levels of analysis and re-engaging with lived realities (Wengraf *et al*, 2002:245). In mobility research, biographies have the potential to illuminate the impact of macro-level economic changes on individual lives and people's relationship to places.

Biographies as construction

At the other epistemological extreme, constructionists reject the idea of the authentic voice. Stories are not simply referential of experience, rather subjects are seen as vehicles for articulations which can be traced to cultural context, contemporary ways of understanding, social interactions and performances (Harding, 2006:2.2-2.3, Roberts, 2002:7). Back (cf: Baker and Edwards 2012:12-13) cautioned qualitative researchers against conflating a socially shaped account with some 'authentic' voice of truth. Biographical methods do not enable one to glimpse a life 'as it was', but show how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold (Bruner, 1987:31). Individuals move between past, present, and future, summarising, re-sequencing, and emphasising events (Roberts, 2002:84). As Hankiss (1981:203) argued, people build their own theories about the course of their life, classifying successes, failures, and life choices into a coherent explanation of their history, building their own "ontology".

> Human memory selects, emphasises, rearranges and gives new colour to everything that happened in reality…it endows certain fundamental episodes with a symbolic meaning, often to the point of turning them almost into myths, by locating them at a focal point of the explanatory system of the self
>
> *Hankiss, 1981:203*

These symbolic episodes may occupy a much larger slice of an individual's 'temporal identity' than could be understood by calendar measures of time (Temple, 1996:90-91). Biographical research must therefore recognise that memory does not just store experiences and events through time in an easily retrievable and unaltered form – it is itself socially constructed (Temple, 1996:89).

The impression of an 'authentic voice' should therefore be treated with caution. Individuals and groups may deliberately present events and experiences in a certain light. Telling life stories can be a way of giving meaning to the present through re-interpreting the past (Bertaux-Wiame, 1981:258). Levy (1981:100-102) noted that families used "imaginative generalisations", selectively making use of facts and events to tell stories that projected particular values. As the Personal Narratives Group (1989:261) noted:

> When talking about their lives, people lie, sometimes forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they *are* revealing truths. Those truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was', aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences…Unlike the reassuring Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to truth nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them

For Bruner (1987:15), context is crucial because the prevailing discourses about 'possible lives' structure how people perceive and present their own lives. In constructing a personal narrative, people are influenced by the many available social, public and cultural narratives, i.e. narratives 'not of our own making' (Somers, 1994:625-629). Narratives are therefore culturally and historically contingent (Kohler Riessman, 1993:5). However, it is precisely because of the rootedness of personal narratives in time, place and personal experience, that they are valued by many researchers (Personal Narratives Group, 1989:263-4).

In reality, many researchers work between the two extremes for the individualised narrator and the socially constructed narrative (Kohler Riessman, 1993:70). In this research, life stories will be seen as drawing on real events and experiences, while acknowledging that how these events are perceived, selected and placed within an individual's life is an important aspect of analysis (Roberts, 2002:8). Memory can be seen as concerned both with the representation of events as well as an active process of producing meanings (Harding, 2006:2.3).

6.3 Conducting biographical research

For some biographical methodologists, it is crucial for the interviewee to provide an uninterrupted narrative of their own life (Wengraf, 2000:141). Biographical-interpretive methods encourage individuals to speak extensively and freely with minimum intrusion (Merrill and West, 2009:119). This enables the researcher to analyse an uninterrupted narrative in the individual's own words, which is crucial for approaches which seek to understand the structure of the narrative form. Approaches that focus on the construction of stories are more likely to view 'narratives' as having formal properties, with a beginning and end, and detachable from the surrounding life story, rather than seeing life stories or biographies are synonymous with narratives (Kohler Riessman, 1993:31). However, the biographic-interpretive approach is time-consuming, requiring multiple interviews to first generate the uninterrupted life narrative and then focus around particular research questions.

Other researchers argue that biographical approaches do not need to be so open, or encompass a 'whole life' (Harding, 2006:1.2). Brannen and Nilsen (2011:609), for example, directed interviewees to particular times in their life, rather than freely covering their whole history in a less structured way. Indeed, it is often necessary to direct interviewees to specific elements of their life story as the researcher (and researched) has limited time. Where research projects are more focused on events and what they mean to people, limiting the scope of the interview is especially common. The approach has commonalities with semi-structured interviewing, albeit with a strong biographical focus, as the interviewee is in dialogue with the researcher, rather than telling an uninterrupted narrative. Participants may be more comfortable with this, rather than being asked to 'tell me about your life history'; very open questions like this can yield disappointingly brief responses, and stories often flow more freely when questions are asked (Merrill and West, 2009:120).

Whatever approach is taken, to be scientifically compelling biographical methods must find the right people to study and the right questions to ask so that wider societal context can be brought to bear (Brannen and Nilsen, 2011:610). As Josselson (1999:x) noted:

Researchers are often attracted to unusual people with unique life stories, but they do not manage to go beyond the presentation of a good story toward some kind of wider, theoretical meanings or implications. This is the most challenging aspect of narrative research

The essential problem for biographical sociology is to retain a sociological frame of reference and demonstrate that original knowledge of the social world can be derived from the study of individual life stories (Rustin, 2000:45).

6.4 The research approach

Semi-structured, biographical interviews

The research presented here seeks to explore the range of ways in which people respond to post-industrial change. One of the key strengths of biographical methods is in exploring levels of personal meaning (Wengraf *et al*, 2002:253); this is something that quantitative studies struggle to draw out. Macro approaches miss important nuances concerning variations in individual experiences, the meaning people give to their lives and how their agency is shaped by different layers of context and experience (Brannen and Nilsen, 2011:614). Many mobility studies have also assumed rational decision-making processes, failing to consider emotional relations.

Mason (2004:166) argued that personal narratives reveal the significance of context, contingency, constraint and opportunity over abstract residential strategies. Instead of ordering and prioritising different push/pull factors in residential mobility, biographical approaches seek to understand mobility as an event situated within life history, representing the complexity of competing and conflicting rationales. Although there have been some qualitative, biographical approaches to researching residential mobility (Bartlett, 1997, Bertaux-Wiame, 1981, Clark, 2009, Ní Laoire, 2000, Skelton, 2002, Winstanley *et al*, 2002), these have largely focused on specific groups (migrants to Paris between the wars, rural Irish youth, frequent movers, Aboriginal single mothers), and have not drawn out the role of labour market experiences and perceptions.

Interviews seek to provide an understanding of people's lived experience, beliefs, and values (Forsey, 2010:567). Through interviewing a participant, researchers seek to uncover both factual descriptions and what is said 'between

the lines' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:30). In this research, two interviews were carried out with 18 households, using a semi-structured, biographical approach. The first interview focused on explaining the research and understanding the household, employment, mobility, and neighbourhood context. The second interview focused on past residential mobility, starting from 'where did you grow up?', and enabled clarification of any points from the first meeting (for topic guides, see Appendix One).

Household interviewing

Interviewing all members of a household can reveal the contested and negotiated nature of household relationships (Valentine, 1999, Winstanley *et al*, 2002). Much of the research around residential mobility has relied on a single head of household, denying the relevance of gender and/or family decision-making processes (Winstanley *et al*, 2002:816). However, in seeking to include multiple household members, the researcher is faced with the methodological dilemma of whether members should be interviewed together or apart (Valentine, 1999:67-68). Separate interviews provide each household member with the space and privacy to discuss their own accounts, particularly where household histories separate. Hertz (1995:437) argued that in couples, people often develop a division in remembering stories, with one person asked to tell the story since 'you tell it better'; conducting separate interviews detangles merged stories to reveal individual accounts. Separate interviews may also reveal differences in accounts of mobility behaviour and intentions.

However, interviewing household members together may provide an opportunity for the researcher to see how issues are negotiated and mediated to produce a single collaborative account (Valentine, 1999:68). Once separate interviews are conducted, it may be difficult to create a picture of the household which incorporates all members and is sensitive to how they negotiate differences or challenge interpretations (Hertz, 1995:431). Of course, joint interviews may not result in an agreed, collaborative account – people may challenge each other's account or point out inaccuracies – but this too can provide insight for research projects (Valentine, 1999:69, Winstanley *et al*, 2002:827). The dynamics of joint interviews can also produce richer, more detailed accounts than those

conducted with individuals, as participants jog memories or encourage each other to elaborate (Valentine, 1999:68).

This research was carried out using joint interviews where there was a couple living together. In two cases this was not possible as only one person spoke English, and in one case where a partner had work commitments. The whole household approach meant that more households could take part, as conducting separate interviews would have extended the duration of fieldwork resulting in fewer overall households. Furthermore, on a practical note it may have been difficult to conduct separate interviews in people's homes because in most cases there was only one living area.

Case study research

The term 'case study' refers to research that investigates a number of cases in-depth (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000:3). The research approach outlined here can be conceptualised as case studies (biographies) within case studies (geographical areas). Case studies are often criticised for lacking generalisability, however for many using this approach capturing cases in their uniqueness is one of the key rationales for the design (Chamberlayne, 2004:19, Hammersley and Gomm, 2000:3). Nevertheless, qualitative researchers do need to appeal to the general relevance of the cases they study in order to establish that their work has scientific value (Gomm *et al*, 2000:99), including considering how the cases can enhance the understanding of other situations (Ward Schofield, 2000). Stake (2000:23) sought to redefine the concept of generalisability, arguing that research does not necessarily seek to generalise from a single case to a whole population, but to other similar cases. It is therefore crucial that the case is described so that one can judge similarities and differences. Lincoln and Guba (2000:38-39) argued for a focus on the fit and transferability of conclusions between specific types of cases. It is hoped that the descriptions of the case study areas in Chapter Seven will be useful to those seeking to understand how conclusions may be relevant to other cases.

Cases must be selected from a clear sociological rationale, while also considering practical issues (Brannen and Nilsen, 2011:607-615). A case study approach enables comparisons to be made between two areas with contrasting characteristics. Although selecting two or more case study areas would have

enable more typologies to be defined and explored, it would have necessitated significant compromises on the depth of the research. As Ward Schofield (2000:80) argued, there is a trade-off between the increased potential for generalisability flowing from studying a large number of sites and the depth of understanding that comes from focusing on a small number of cases. Focusing on two areas balances being able to contrast places on certain criteria with gaining an in-depth understanding of the places and the participants' lives.

Two case areas were selected and given pseudonyms: Nearthorpe (Sheffield) and Eastland (Grimsby). The areas were selected through consideration of a range of data, such as indices of multiple deprivation, labour market statistics and housing market characteristics. A number of practical considerations, such as access to the area and fieldwork resources, also guided decision-making. Further detail about the process of case selection can be found in Appendix Two, although it is worth acknowledging here that another person, guided by the same principles of selection, could have chosen different areas.

The areas were selected on the basis of certain criteria. Common criteria around levels of disadvantage and tenure mix were used in conjunction with contrasting criteria around: the strength of labour market, proximity to/isolation from employment, and transport links. While Nearthorpe was situated in a stronger labour market, Eastland was relatively isolated from labour market opportunities. It may be expected that – if employment was an important driver of residential mobility behaviour – people living in Eastland would be more likely to move, as they were in a weaker labour market with fewer transport networks to areas of greater opportunity. Conversely, the employment outcomes of those living in Nearthorpe may also be expected to be positively influenced by the wider labour market context (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001:2295).

6.5 Conducting the fieldwork

Stakeholder interviews

In 2011, initial interviews were carried out with nine stakeholders from the two case study areas to gain an understanding of how different professionals working with these places viewed the employment, housing, and community context. Although data from these interviews is largely confined to Chapter

Seven, in which the Nearthorpe and Eastland are described in depth, stakeholder interpretations are not privileged as 'truths' but used to increase understandings of the professional narratives that surround places. Initial contacts were identified through local authorities and voluntary and community sector organisations and snowball sampling was used where individuals provided additional contacts. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, with the exception of one telephone interview, and lasted around an hour. The stakeholders in Sheffield were:

- Rachel, a Local Authority manager working with communities in east Sheffield

- Katie, a Local Authority manager with a focus on skills, training and employability

- Sarah, a manager at a local charity focused on training, skills development and employability

- Joanna, a manager at a local charity focused on training, skills development and employability

- Tom, a Local Authority employee working in planning and regeneration

The stakeholders in Grimsby were:

- Louise, a Local Authority employee working on policy

- Rosie, a Local Authority manager with a focus on housing and communities

- Chris, a manager at a homelessness charity

- Faye, a Local Authority employee working in regeneration

In addition, short telephone interviews with six estate agents were also conducted to elicit their view of local housing markets. Where possible stakeholders signed consent forms, but for telephone interviews participants provided verbal consent. An information sheet about the research was sent to stakeholders (this was posted to estate agents in advance of the call) and discussed at the start of the interview. Information sheets, topic guides and consent forms can be found in Appendices Three to Five.

Research pilot

The initial aim was to recruit ten households per area, enough to enable themes to emerge and a range of different households to participate, whilst also

allowing for an in-depth, multi-interview approach. As there was no gatekeeper through which to recruit participants, consideration was given to different approaches. Snowball sampling was one method of recruitment, although as Smith (2005:14) noted, this promotes a relatively homogeneous sample within social networks. For the research presented here, a more heterogeneous sample, covering a range of different criteria, was preferable. Carrying out a survey to generate a population from which to draw a sample was also considered, but discounted on cost grounds.

The pilot tested an alternative approach, hand-delivering a flyer (Appendix Six) about the research to 50 households in Nearthorpe (Sheffield) in November 2012. This approach relied on people contacting the researcher by phone, text, or email, to express an interest in participating. A telephone-based 'screening survey' (Appendix Seven) was designed to gather key details to facilitate sample selection. The aim was to interview two households that – if successful – would be the first participants of the study, whilst enabling adjustments to be made to the research design.

After three days, no participants had come forward. The flyer was simplified to be one-sided, provide a landline, and highlight home-based interviews (Appendix Six). 150 flyers were printed for hand delivery. Half were put in envelopes hand written 'To The Occupier'; half were folded. A small poster (Appendix Six) was posted at local shops and community facilities. The same day, three people got in touch having seen the flyers and two were selected.

In terms of learning from the pilot, the simplified flyer in an envelope was used in the main research as a more effective way of recruiting participants. Conducting the interviews also revealed that it would be unrealistic to expect participants to deliver complete timelines for their life histories, as they struggled to recall specific dates or locations, especially where histories were complex. Understanding the meanings and motivations that participants gave for their behaviour were more important. The combination of interview and transcription time confirmed that the target of 20 households was appropriate given the timeframe of the research.

Recruiting participants to the main research

In November 2012, an additional 300 flyers were delivered to addresses in Nearthorpe, giving a total of 500 target households (including the pilot). In total, 16 people expressed an interest in participating (a 3.2% response). The nine selected households were drawn from a possible set of 15, as one potential participant could not be contacted. Including the pilot, interviews were conducted between November and January 2012.

After these interviews were complete, recruitment started in Eastland (Grimsby) in February 2013. 400 flyers were delivered, however due to a low response rate an additional 500 flyers were delivered in April 2013. The lower response rate in Eastland may partly have resulted from a higher proportion of empty properties and greater population turnover. 15 people expressed an interest in taking part in the research (a 1.7% response). The researcher was unable to make contact with one person, and in another case someone opted out due to the time commitment. Screening surveys were conducted with the 13 remaining. One household was unable to fit into the fieldwork schedule due to work commitments. Contact was lost with another person, and one participant withdrew before the first interview because they had started a new job. As a result, potential participating households shrank from 13 to ten; interviews were conducted with nine households in February and April 2013. Given the low response rate, one limitation of the research is potential response bias, as there may have been something unique to the people who responded, and something could have been missed from not having generated more potential participants.

Sampling

The low response rate meant that sampling played a limited role, especially in Eastland. The main characteristics of interest included:

- Age
- Employment status
- Tenure
- Length of time at current address
- Number of moves in previous ten years
- Past work-related mobility and future mobility intentions

The screening survey also collected information on the reasons for moving to their current address and potential future mobility. The aim was to achieve a purposive sample which included unemployed and employed people, long-term residents and newer arrivals, frequent movers and more stable households, a mix of tenure types, and – if possible – some people who had previously moved, or wanted to move, for work reasons. Brannen (in: Baker and Edwards, 2012:16) argued that for qualitative studies it is not sample size *per se* that is critical, but the inclusion of a particular case. Although a mix of the desired characteristics was achieved, this was largely a function of who had expressed an interest in participating. However, there was 100% retention for households who started the research. Once the research got underway, it also became clear that a large amount of data was being gathered from households, and the final sample comprised 18 households with 25 individuals.

6.6 Profile of research participants

Household composition

Most households comprised married or cohabiting couples, with or without children. In Nearthorpe, a dual-person household with children was most common, while in Eastland households were more evenly spread across different types.

Table 6.1: Household structure of research participants

Household structure			
	Nearthorpe	Eastland	Total
Married/cohabiting, with child(ren)	5	2	7
Married/cohabiting, no child(ren)	1	2	3
Single person, with child(ren)	1	2	3
Single person, no child(ren)	2	2	4
Shared house	0	1	1

As explained in the methodology, although in most cases couples were interviewed together, for three households in Nearthorpe it was only possible to interview one person from a two-person household.

Employment

When considering individuals, the most common employment status was economic inactivity; in Nearthorpe this was mainly due to looking after children (Table 6.2), and reflects the role of gender in shaping experiences of work outside the formal economy (MacDonald *et al*, 2014:11). A larger number of participants in Eastland were unemployed and actively seeking work, although in practice some participants resisted this requirement. One person had recently obtained work but had not yet started; he has been classed as unemployed. Of six unemployed individuals, only one wanted to move to improve their employment prospects. The economic activity of participants therefore largely reflects the broader neighbourhood profiles, with more participants looking after family in Nearthorpe and more unemployed participants in Eastland. However, the experience of part-time work was more common among participants in Eastland than Nearthorpe, in contrast to the wider neighbourhood profiles.

Table 6.2: Employment status of research participants

Employment status (by individual)			
	Nearthorpe	Eastland	Total
Unemployed	2	4	6
Employed full-time	3	1	4
Employed part-time	1	3	4
Economically inactive	6	5	11
– retired	*1*	*1*	*2*
– long-term sick	*0*	*2*	*2*
– looking after children	*4*	*1*	*5*
– carer	*1*	*0*	*1*
– other	*0*	*1*	*1*

Participants in Nearthorpe were more likely to be employed in professional and educational sectors than those in Eastland, who were concentrated in care work, retail and food industries. This fits with the wider neighbourhood profile. Although not included in the table presented here, of the three spouses/cohabiting partners in Nearthorpe who were not interviewed, one was economically inactive and two were in full-time employment in the accommodation/food service industry and the manufacturing industry.

Age

Within households, research participants ranged in age from 23 to 73, but with a higher proportion of people in their 30s.

Table 6.3: Age range of research participants

Age range (by individual)			
	Nearthorpe	Eastland	Total
18-24	0	1	1
25-34	5	4	9
35-44	3	1	4
45-54	1	4	5
55-64	2	3	5
64+	1	0	1

Tenure largely reflected differences in the housing stock, with more owner-occupiers in Nearthorpe and more private renters in Eastland.

Tenure

Table 6.4: Tenure of research participants

Household tenure			
	Nearthorpe	Eastland	Total
Owner occupier	6	3	9
Private rent	1	5	6
Social rent	2	1	3

Length of tenure in the current home has sometimes been used as an indicator of expected attachment to place and likelihood to move (Hansen and Gottschalk, 2006), however for these households it was a relatively poor predictor of attachment to place.

Table 6.5: Length of tenure in current home of research participants

Length of tenure in current home			
	Nearthorpe	Eastland	Total
< 1 year	1	5	6
1-4 years	3	2	5
4-10 years	1	1	2
10-20 years	1	1	2
>20 years	3	0	3

Some people who had lived in their current home for only a short space of time actually had longstanding connections to the local area, whilst others who were new to the area demonstrated strong attachment to place in comparison to people who had lived there for many years (Livingston *et al*, 2010).

Frequency of mobility

Almost all participants had periods in their life when they could be considered 'settled' (making no moves in a ten-year period). Ten of 12 individuals in Nearthorpe and 11 of 13 individuals in Eastland had lived in one home for at least a ten-year period at some point in their life course. However, no participants were immobile; all individuals had lived in more than one home as an adult, and most had lived in several. Very few participants could be characterised as *either* settled *or* frequently mobile (more than four moves in a five-year period). Most participants moved between periods of relative stability (no moves in a five-year period) and longer or shorter tenures in other homes.

Frequent moving in childhood was relatively uncommon, and tied to growing up in a military family, and a family newly arrived in the country. Only one participant (Jo, Nearthorpe) had experienced on-going frequent moving for most of their childhood. Indeed, childhood was a period of relative immobility for most participants (eight of 12 in Nearthorpe, and 11 of 13 in Eastland). For five participants in each area, this immobility was repeated in adulthood, yet four of the 11 individuals in Eastland who had a 'settled' childhood then experienced frequent moving in adulthood. These periods of frequent moving took place at a young age, when participants were in their late teens and 20s.

Frequent moving as an adult was more likely among participants in Eastland than Nearthorpe (five participants compared to two). In three of five cases, these periods of frequent moving occurred while they were living in Eastland and surrounding areas, while only one of the cases in Nearthorpe occurred when the participant was living in the city. The higher proportion of frequent movers in Eastland is likely linked to the housing market, which features much more private rented stock and lower cost housing, as described earlier. Nearthorpe has less private housing, higher demand, and fewer empty properties, potentially restricting mobility.

Distance travelled

Only one participant (Nadira), had never lived outside Nearthorpe, having grown up next door to the house she was living in. Such localised residential mobility histories were not abundant, as might have been expected given the presentation of deprived communities as containers for immobile populations (HM Treasury and DWP, 2003, Duncan Smith, 2011, Grayling, 2011, Shapps, 2009). Five of 12 individuals in Sheffield had always lived within a three-mile radius of their current home, but most saw these locations as distinct from Nearthorpe. It was less common for participants in Eastland to have always lived so close to their current home; only two of 13 had always lived within three miles of the neighbourhood. Participants in Eastland were more likely to have lived elsewhere in the Local Authority area or the wider region; this may be partly related to the smaller scale of the urban area and higher cost of rural areas on the periphery of Grimsby. In both places a significant minority of participants (half of Nearthorpe participants and five of 13 in Eastland) had previously lived outside the region. Three of these participants (Matt, Helen, and Justine) had lived overseas.

Table 6.6: Furthest distance of a previous home of research participants

Furthest distance of a previous home (by individual)*			
	Nearthorpe	Eastland	Total
Within 3 miles of study area	5	2	7
Within Local Authority area	0	2	2
Within region (Yorkshire & Humber)	1	4	5
Within country	6	5	11

*Excluding homes outside the country

Approach to categorisation by social class

The assignment of people to social class categories is a highly contested area with no standard approach to definition or measurement (Skeggs, 1997). The research presented here took a mixed approach to classifying participants, identifying them as more working-class or more middle-class on the basis of a number of characteristics and orientations. Class was seen as "dynamic" (Savage *et al,* 1992:211), something that was "materially based but not determined" (Paton, 2013:85). Therefore, while participants were given a particular class position, in another context they may have been categorised differently. Occupation, which has often been used to group people into class categories, was combined with other characteristics such as educational background, and orientations such as career strategies, to determine class position. In this research, discussions of career pathways and career strategies were significant indicators of a middle-class orientation. Savage *et al* (1992) highlighted the importance of career strategies in the differentiation of the middle-class. They argued that spatial mobility was in part driven by the pursuit of a promising career, therefore "embedded in the very notion of the middle-class person is the expectation that the relationship of that individual with that place or region of residence is a contingent one" (Savage *et al* 1992:33).

By contrast, more working-class participants, as in Allen's (2008) research, tended to work in lower labour market positions and were more likely to take work to 'get by' rather than pursue a career pathway. While some working-class participants had a clear sense of employment aspirations and, for example, refused to take-up work that did not fulfil certain expectations, or sought to develop their skills in order to pursue different opportunities, their position at the

time of the research was typically precarious. Interviews generated a sense of the relative precariousness of participants' lives, another important part of class position. Indeed, Allen (2008:6) argued that "a defining characteristic of working-class existence is proximity to economic necessity". Lack of access to resources and opportunities is therefore also an important part of understanding classed experiences; as Skeggs (1997:13) argued, it is useful to think about "what people do not have rather than what they have". The research presented here therefore brought together a range of factors in order to understand participants' class positions from a qualitative position.

Household profiles: Nearthorpe

Aisha: Age 25-34, Aisha had one child who was almost school-age. She was born in Nearthorpe but had lived in other places across her history. Aisha had previously been a frequent mover due to domestic violence, but had lived in her current home for three years. She rented her house from the Local Authority. Aisha was looking after her child full-time, but had previously worked in a range of jobs, for example in a call centre and as a support worker.

Dave: Age 55-64, Dave lived alone in a house that he owned outright. He had lived there for about 11 years and had lived most of his life nearby, and had always lived in Sheffield. He worked for a manufacturing firm nearly 40 years but was made redundant about a year and a half before the interview, and had been unable to find work. Dave thought that there may be possibilities working in a supermarket, but his health was not good.

Hasan: Age 55-64, Hasan lived with his wife and school-age children in a house that he owned with a mortgage. They had lived in Nearthorpe for over 20 years but were originally from Bangladesh. Hasan had spent some of his youth there. He had previously worked in cleaning jobs but had been out of work for around five years at the time of the interview. He was looking for cleaning jobs, security and warehouse work. Hasan wanted to move to Bradford where he had some connections and felt that he would be able to find work but he was unable move because he would not be able to sell his house in the current market.

Helen: Helen was over 70 and had moved to Nearthorpe less than a year before the interview. She was living in a house adapted for older people that

was owned by the Local Authority. She was retired but had previously run small businesses with her then husband, who died about five years before the interview. She had four grown up children. Helen had lived in various places across England, and had spent most of her life in the South. She had moved from the family home to be nearer to her daughter, and provided support looking after her grandchild.

Jo and Steve: Age 25-34, Jo and Steve had moved to Nearthorpe two years before the interview, having previously lived in Hull. They owned the house with a mortgage. They were both university educated and worked in the education and health sectors. At the time of the interview, Jo was looking after their three children and Steve was working part-time whilst also training to work with their church.

Nadira: Age 35-44, Nadira had lived in Nearthorpe all her life, growing up in the house next door to the one she now lived in. She owned the property outright and lived there with her husband and children. Two of her children were at school but Nadira had recently had a baby that had some health issues and she was her full-time carer. Most of Nadira's family lived nearby and provided support to the household. Before she was looking after her children, Nadira had done some work as a youth worker, but she had little formal work experience.

Sue: Age 45-54, Sue had lived in Nearthorpe for most of her life. She owned her house outright and had lived there for more than 20 years. She lived with her partner, who worked in the manufacturing industry and her grown up daughter lived in the same city. Sue was retired but had previously worked in the care sector.

Yasmin and Amir: Age 25-34, Yasmin and Amir lived in a house that they rented from family members. They had lived there for about three years at the time of the interview and had one child which Yasmin was looking after at home. Both were educated to degree level and had taken further qualifications. Amir worked as a surveyor and Yasmin in the media sector.

Zahir and Sumera: Zahir was age 35-44 and Sumera age 25-34. They had lived in their house in Nearthorpe for eight years. They were both working, in the Local Authority and the education sector, and had two children at school.

Unusually, they did not have any family nearby, but preferred this to living in close proximity to family members.

Household profiles: Eastland

Carol: Age 55-64, Carol had lived in Eastland for many years but had only moved into her current home six weeks before the interview. She had previously lived with her daughter and grandchildren nearby, and before that had lived with her family in a neighbouring street. Her previous homes were Local Authority owned, and her current home was also social housing, provided by a fishermen's dependent fund. Carol was not working due to a long-term illness, but had previously worked in local factories. Before his death her husband had worked in the fishing industry.

Jack and Mary: Jack was age 55-64 and Mary age 45-54. They lived in Eastland with their two school age children, moving from the South coast about nine years ago and into their current home just over seven years ago. Jack was working at a local supermarket and Mary in the catering industry, however part way through the research Mary left her job. She had dealt with various periods of mental health crisis across her life and before starting her most recent job had received Incapacity Benefit for about 14 years. In later years, Mary had started volunteering and then began paid work.

James: Age 18-24, James had lived in his shared house with a friend for just under a year at the time of the interview. The house was rented from a private landlord. Earlier in his housing history, he had spent a period cycling between his mother's house, the YMCA and informally staying with friends. James had been out of work for over a year at the time of the interview and had been placed on the Work Programme several months before. Having moved in and out of factory work, at the time of the interview he was just about to start a permanent factory job.

Justine: Age 55-64, Justine had lived in Eastland for a year and a half at the time of the interview. She had previously lived overseas with her husband and returned to the UK when he died. She owned the house outright and was retired. She lived alone but had several grown up children who lived elsewhere in the country, mainly in higher housing market areas in the South. Previously, Justine

had worked in various jobs including housekeeping in a nursing home, factory work and cleaning jobs.

Mike and Ann: Mike was age 45-54 and Ann age 35-44; they had lived in their house, which was owned with a mortgage, for 13 years. Mike had lived in and around Grimsby for all of his life. Ann had lived in Sheffield for university but had lived in Grimsby since then. Mike worked in the care sector, and was also a carer for Ann, who had a long-term illness. He did not have any qualifications and this was a barrier to leaving his current job. Ann worked in the third sector but was unsure whether her job would remain after a restructure.

Rachel: Age 25-34, Rachel had lived in her privately rented house for two years at the time of the interview. She had a son who attended a local school. Rachel had moved frequently in her early 20s, following friends to different cities, mainly moving between Hull and Grimsby. She had not worked formally since she was pregnant seven years ago but had recently started a part-time undergraduate degree and hoped to train to pursue a career in education.

Ros: Age 25-34, Ros lived in a privately rented house, which she moved to less than a year before the interview. Ros had one child that lived with her, and she was looking after him full time receiving Income Support. Before having children, she had done a variety of work such as telesales, factory work, home working, care work and catalogue work. She had spent most of her life in the Grimsby area but had moved frequently and had struggled to find somewhere she felt settled.

Sarah and Matt: Age 25-34, Sarah and Matt lived in a privately rented house with their school-age child. They had lived there for less than a year, but Sarah had grown up in Grimsby. Both were unemployed at the time of the interview but neither were actively looking for work. Matt was taking a course in the hope of building up skills to open his own business. He also did occasional paid work that was not reported to the Job Centre. Previously both had worked in cleaning and factory jobs.

Tina and Chris: Age 45-54, Tina and Chris lived in a flat rented from a private landlord. They had lived there for about a year at the time of the interview but had been on the waiting list for Local Authority housing for about five months.

They were struggling to afford to heat the flat and Tina suffered from long-term illnesses. Tina had recently received Incapacity Benefit but moved onto Employment Support Allowance and found to be fit for work. She was appealing the decision but as a result of appealing her benefits were reduced; at the time of the interview it had been four months since the appeal was sent but Tina had not heard anything. They had started to be given food by a local church group.

6.7 The interview process

Interviews took place in people's homes and were audio recorded. The first interview included full explanation of the research. A written information sheet was provided and consent forms were completed (Appendix Eight and Nine). Additional forms were signed to acknowledge receipt of payments, in line with University procedures. All households received compensation for taking part in the research, £5 for the first interview and £10 for the second. This was in recognition of the relatively time-intensive nature of the research, the involvement of two household members (where there was a couple), and to encourage people to make initial contact. The ethics of payment is discussed later in this chapter.

The interview is a site for the production of knowledge "co-authored by interviewer and interviewee" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:54). An interview is a "social relationship" (Bourdieu, 2010:608), and as such the relationship between interviewer and interviewee impacts on the data. Developing rapport is therefore important, however it is difficult to articulate how this was generated, as it is a natural, fluid and context-dependent process. It was hoped that the home-setting would create a more relaxed environment in which power relationships were more likely to be flattened. Seeing the participant more than once also enabled a relationship to develop, albeit short-lived and context-specific.

In many cases, it was surprising how much participants revealed about their lives, suggesting a level of comfort. However, the interview is a negotiated encounter through which the interviewer accesses a version of reality. As Matt (Eastland) asked his partner during the interview: "shall we tell her the truth?". Another participant (Rachel, Eastland) highlighted the unequal nature of the relationship that is forged during the interview process, commenting that while

the researcher knew everything about her, she knew little about them. This illuminates the reality of a research process that is focussed on the participant.

Ensuring that the interviews kept to time was one way in which participation was maintained. The gap between interviews was also minimised, as initial participants preferred interviews close together. Most second visits were carried out within a week or two of the first. Payments were divided into a £5 and £10 payment, which protected the research budget in case any participants dropped-out, although none did. A single longer interview was conducted in two cases, one due to difficulties in arranging access and another because the participant was shortly to start work.

Recordings were transferred onto a password-protected computer on the University network then deleted from the digital recorder. Files were labelled with a participant number and date. Transcripts were anonymised using a participant number, and references to other people were altered during transcription. Participants' real identities were linked to their participant number on one encrypted file. Consent forms were stored in a secure office, in a locked drawer. These will be placed in a secure facility, as per University data protection procedures.

6.8 Data analysis

A summary was written after each interview to highlight key events, themes and issues for clarification arising from the interview. These were particularly useful when it was not possible to transcribe the first interview before conducting the second. All interviews were transcribed into Nvivo. The process of transcribing is itself a form of data transformation. The researcher makes decisions about what to include and exclude, while the meanings that tone, intonation, rhythm, gestures, and emphasis create can be lost in the transition from the spoken to written form (Bourdieu, 2010:622). Conducting transcription enables the researcher to reflect on "the feelings manifest in the grain of the voice, in the remembered moments of the interview, and of living through the described dilemmas of the persons involved" (Charlesworth, 2000:26). However, it is questionable whether a written transcript can ever reflect the impression and feeling of the interview itself. In transcribing an interview with Nadira

(Nearthorpe), it was impossible to convey the emotional weight of some of her stories. Listening to the interview recordings as part of data analysis is therefore as important as reading the words on paper.

Although we may want participants to provide a self-conscious, reflexive account of their lives (Alldred and Gillies, 2003:156), in reality we cannot expect people to provide sociological insights into their subjective worldview (Miller and Glassner, 2011:133). Data analysis aimed to generate themes (or codes) that would be connected to wider sociological theories. This began with listening to and reading the transcripts as initial codes were developed (Richards, 2009:85). Then, taking each household individually, lines of transcript were coded according to particular themes.

This lengthy list of codes was then rationalised, for example combining similar themes under a broader heading. For each household, these themes were then grouped according to four headings, derived from the research questions: residential mobility, employment, place, and any other themes. The strongest themes within each household were highlighted (Appendix Ten). From this, cross-cutting themes from all participants in an each case study area were formed (Appendix Eleven). These key themes formed the basis for the results chapters. This approach took the data as the starting point for analysis, with key research questions serving to group the themes around particular broad topic areas. Inevitably, not all themes were written about.

Coding data thematically could be seen as diluting the meanings that participants expressed through their life stories. Something is lost when the whole of a life is disassembled. Indeed, for Thompson (1981:292-293), thematic analysis of biographical data required the researcher to "work against the grain of the material". As Smith (2005:16) argued, presenting a few hundred words from a whole transcript does not do justice to the sense of a person's social world that reading the whole text evokes. However, presenting the whole text was not seen as a practical way of presenting life stories. One way to address this is in presenting participants' stories alongside the researcher's interpretation (Thompson, 1981:293). Chapter Eleven seeks to create this balance, presenting the lives of three participants in-depth using biographical

analysis and longer sections of transcript. This aims to follow McDowell (2003) in blending fairly detailed narratives with a degree of conceptual focus.

6.9 Limitations of the research

In reflecting on the research presented in the following chapters, it is important to ensure that it is contextualised with an understanding of the limitations of the research. All research projects engage in compromises and must balance resources with research plans. This research was conducted in two case study areas in the Yorkshire and Humber region. As a small scale piece of research, the findings are not intended to be generalisable to all places and people. However, given that Nearthorpe and Eastland are former industrial areas it is hoped that some of the issues discussed here will be of relevance to similar kinds of places. Choosing the two places was a difficult endeavour which involved various limitations due to the constraints of time and budget. For example, it was necessary for one area to be local in order to carry out the fieldwork, and the cost of transport to the other research site was also considered.

Many studies of people and place share a common issue – that in drawing participants from a geographical area, people who do not live there are excluded. In a study concerned with movement, there are questions about whether the people who leave a place are different to the people who remain. This is known as the problem of outmovers (Cole *et al*, 2007). Ideally, one might seek to interview people who live in a place now (and may or may not intend to move) as well as some people who used to live there. However, it is very difficult, time consuming and expensive to trace people once they have left (Cole *et al*, 2007).

One way that the research presented here sought to address this was in utilising biographical methods; many of the participants had been outmovers from these places at points in their histories. However, these households still represent a sub-set of outmovers, since they are people who not only left, but who later came back. There are concerns that people who leave low-income communities are better qualified and better off than those who remain, and therefore that those who would have been most likely to move for work as a

response to post-industrial changes have already left. During the research process this was addressed by also asking participants about moving intentions. Whilst intentions do not necessarily accurately measure behaviour (Hansen and Gottschalk, 2006), this was the best available instrument to capture potential future outmovers. A longitudinal approach (as discussed in Chapter Twelve) would be a useful way of tracking these potential outmovers.

Participants were selected to take part in the research in part for their heterogeneity, to cover a wide range of characteristics from employment status to past moving behaviour. However, in a small scale study this has some limitations, as it becomes difficult to generalise within these groups. There may have been some advantages to focusing in on a particular sub-set of the population, for example solely those who were out of work, and drawing out commonalities and differences within this group, rather than between a range of different 'types' of people.

It was also necessary to strike a balance between the number of participants recruited for the research and the time spent with each household. The smaller sample of 18 households enabled two interviews to be conducted, however it may have been preferable to carry out additional interviews in order to explore housing and employment biographies in more depth. It is not uncommon for a series of relatively lengthy interviews to be conducted in order to fully draw out an individual biography. This may have been possible with a smaller number of participants.

One way to achieve greater depth of understanding around participants' biographies could have been to involve participants in the construction and interpretation of their own stories, outside of the interview setting. At the research design stage, it was planned to share some of the broad findings with participants where this was of interest, but not to engage in 'co-construction'. How much to involve participants in the interpretation of their own life stories is a difficult ethical dilemma; not allowing participants to control how their biography is re-told leaves the researcher privileging their own interpretation. If participants had been more involved in the construction of their stories, gaps may also have been filled and lingering questions answered. Keeping the

fieldwork to a particular timeframe involved some sacrifices, one of which may have been greater insight into some of the life stories discussed here.

With the benefit of hindsight, it may have been preferable to interview household members independently of each other. Although there are some things to be gained from interviewing couples together, for example seeing processes of household negotiation, there are also negatives, for example reticence to discuss previous relationships in the presence of a current partner. The ideal solution would be to conduct separate interviews first, and then one joint interview. Although this option was considered, it would have required an additional visit to the home and so would have increased the time and money needed for fieldwork, which could only have been achieved by reducing the number of households involved.

6.10 Ethical considerations

Full ethical approval was received prior to the commencement of fieldwork; key ethical issues are discussed below.

Insider/outsider positionality

Reflexivity commonly features in qualitative studies, with the researcher attempting to locate their position within the research (Finlay, 2002). Insider/outsider debates are particularly relevant; can a white, middle-class woman who has never been out of work or lived in place that has been subject to "territorial stigmatisation" (Wacquant, 2008) effectively represent the experiences of working-class participants who had often held precarious labour market positions, experienced considerable challenges across their lives, and been characterised in popular debates as "lacking" (McKenzie, 2015) in essential values and attributes? Would a comparative 'insider' be more accepted by participants and therefore facilitate greater openness in the research encounter (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009)? For example, Charlesworth's (2000) research in his hometown of Rotherham painted a bleak picture of a deindustrialised community; this view was largely lacking among participants in Nearthorpe and Eastland, despite similar place-histories. One explanation is that participants did not feel able to present such a portrait to someone who had not lived there. However, other personal and sensitive topics were discussed at

length, suggesting that participants were reasonably comfortable in sharing their experiences. In relation to housing studies, Allen (2009) argued that middle-class academics impose their own ways of seeing on working-class communities, misrecognising practices and facilitating the imposition of policy prescriptions that are orientated to middle-class ways of being. One way around this is for researchers to have experienced life in the places they seek to understand, as in McKenzie's (2015) ethnographic account of St Anns, or Hanley's (2008) study of social housing estates.

However, as Flint (2011) argued, it is not the class position of academics but the scientific-academic habitus that creates misunderstandings of participants' ways of being, something that is fundamental to social science enquiries. Furthermore, merely sharing class, gender, or ethnic commonalities with an individual does not equate to sharing common experiences, nor provide automatic, unfiltered access to some 'truth' of another's life. Identities are complex, contradictory and shifting spheres. As an 'outsider' researching in Nearthorpe and Eastland, time was invested in facilitating a thoughtful and trusting encounter with research participants, answering questions that they had and attempting to understand their lives through their own words in order to adequately represent the meaning of their experiences. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argue that creating an open, authentic, honest and interested encounter, whilst committing to accurately represent experiences is the key to valid research, not 'insider' status. The research presented here has been conducted in this spirit, and the many personal stories that were told by participants suggests that an open environment was created.

Compensation payments

For some, payment for participation in research is controversial (Buyx, 2009:330). It is not the incentive *per se* that is the problem, but that wider social inequalities may lead some people to make different choices than others in the face of payment (Grant and Sugarman, 2004:727). However, others see compensation as part of ethically sound research practice (Head, 2009). Sullivan and Cain (2004:616) advocated the use of cash payments as a way of avoiding patronisation or marginalisation of participants. In this research, the money given to participants was both an incentive and a form of compensation.

In their systematic review of methods used to influence postal survey responses, Edwards *et al* (2002) found that the odds of a response were more than doubled when a monetary incentive was used, while Head (2009) found that advertising a £10 payment for interviews had a positive effect on recruitment via flyers. It was hoped that the provision of a monetary incentive (£15) would encourage potential participants make contact, as well as recognising the time that participants would be investing. Payments were given at the start of the interview and participants were told that they could end the interview at any time. This reduced the chance that participants would continue the interview when they did not want to as well as giving the message that participants were being rewarded for participating, not for what they said (Head, 2009:341).

Informed consent

In household research, relying on one household member to act as a 'gatekeeper' to others introduced complexities around informed consent (Valentine, 1999:68). Informed consent was obtained in this research before the first interview; each participant received information about the research and a written information sheet, then they signed consent forms. However, it is good practice to view consent as an active and ongoing part of the research process. In one interview with Justine (Eastland), for example, it was requested that a section of conversation not be transcribed. On-going consent was also discussed at the start of the second interview.

When household members are being interviewed together, individuals have less control over the direction and content of the interview, since the joint interviewee may introduce unexpected or unwelcome topics of discussion (Larossa *et al*, 1981:307). Researchers must be particularly mindful of this, seeing consent as a part of the research process rather than something that is filed away at the beginning of an interview and then forgotten about (Miller and Bell, 2003:53, Silverman, 2006:324). This is especially the case when interviewing in the home setting, where an unexpected phone call or visit from a friend or relative could yield information that the researcher sees as significant (Larossa *et al*, 1981:308). There were occasions when additional people were present during interviews. One couple asked if their child could sit in on the interview; although this was their choice, it was important to provide a reminder

of the scope of the interview. When some sensitive topics came up, the interviewee self-censored her contribution noting that she had excluded some "harrowing parts" that "wouldn't be appropriate with [my daughter] here" (Mary, Eastland). The presence of others demanded that the researcher be sensitive to the changing boundaries of consent, and whether it would be appropriate to develop particular areas through more detailed questioning.

Interpreting lives and participant involvement

All researchers face the question of how much to involve participants in the research process beyond the initial data collection phase. Should interview transcripts be shared with participants? Should they be involved in the analysis of their own data? Whose interpretation should be privileged? These questions are perhaps even more fundamental when conducting research which concerns people's life stories because "participants enjoy a certain epistemic privilege by virtue of the fact that the story is about their own experience and no-one can know an experience as intimately as the one who has lived it" (Smythe and Murray, 2000:326). As Bar-On (1996:20) reflected, "we hold the meaning of people's lives in our hands". Although informed consent forms are a crucial part of ethical research practice, it "cannot possibly capture the dynamic process of interpretation and authorship" (Chase, 1996:57). Time was provided before the interview to explain what would happen to data during analysis.

Smythe and Murray (2000:321) argued that one of the biggest risks for participants in narrative research relates to the emotional impact of having one's life story reinterpreted and filtered by the researcher. Whilst the researcher tries to describe their own understanding and interpretation of someone's life, they must also try to remain faithful to the way in which participants have formulated their own stories (Bar-On, 1996:16). Where interpretations are shared with participants, they may be disappointed that their life story has not been preserved in its uniqueness, but has been connected to wider social processes (Chase, 1996:50) or that the account does not 'feel' like them (Smythe and Murray, 2000:324). For Josselson (1996b:70) the process of writing other people's lives felt like talking about them behind their backs in a public place.

Sharing interview transcripts with participants is one way to bolster consent, as participants can think about their representation through the interview (Swartz,

2011:61). Participants were asked whether they wanted to receive a copy of their transcript, but only one person did. A further 14 participants expressed an interest in seeing some of the results of the research. Once fieldwork had been carried out and initial analysis had taken place, a letter and leaflet summarising the key themes was posted to these participants (Appendix Twelve). Participants were asked to get in touch if they wanted to see any further information as analysis continued, but no further contacts were received. Some things would not have been practical to share with participants (for example the full thesis), but it would have been possible to send parts of a chapter if participants were interested in understanding more about a particular theme. This would have enabled participants to see some of the ways in which their experiences used and could have been an additional way of gaining their approval. However, as Josselson (1996a:xii) notes, "even if we ask our participants to corroborate our interpretation, it is still our interpretive framework that structures our understanding". There are limits to the control which participants have over the use and interpretation of their lives.

Anonymity

Conducting biographical research presents significant challenges in the area of anonymity. This is particularly the case when people's relations to specific places in times of economic change are an important part of the research. Even if place names are changed, it is possible that locations could be traced through detailed description. There have been a number of cases where anonymised places have been 'revealed' after research has been widely published (for example, *Coal is our Life*).

Once the place is known, an individual would likely still have their anonymity protected if, for example, they were filling in a survey or participating in a structured interview. However, this this is less certain in biographical research, which results in a unique narrative that may be recognisable to family and friends. As Smythe and Murray (2000:320) noted, detailed narratives are "saturated with identifying markers". The chances that participants could be identified are greater if narratives are left largely whole (Kázmierska, 2004:187). Households must be made aware that public exposure is a possibility (Larossa *et al*, 1981:309-10). In this research, issues of anonymity were discussed with

participants, and it was made clear that it was possible their identity could be revealed even where identifying details were changed. In addition to changing the names of streets and the case study areas, participants were given pseudonyms and some details (such as precise careers, number of children, extended family details, specific ages) were amended where there was a concern that their identities may be revealed. This was particularly relevant in relation to the individuals whose life stories were analysed in Chapter Eleven.

Doing no harm

Although the research did not consciously aim to explore sensitive topics, discussing someone's life history introduces a large degree of uncertainty about the issues which may be covered. Although participants were largely in control of the direction of the conversation, particularly around the life stories they chose to share, there was potential for distressing memories and emotions to surface. Participants did bring up emotional parts of their life history, for example bereavement and domestic violence. Other areas that may not have been thought of as particularly emotive, for example educational pathways, held a special meaning to a participant like Nadira (Nearthorpe), and discussing this with her generated a powerful sense of sadness and loss. Reacting in the moment and understanding what something means to that individual was therefore a crucial part of conducting the interview without causing distress.

Household research can also disrupt people's lives, by changing household dynamics during the interview process, or bringing to light hidden and long forgotten tensions (Bailey, 2001:107-108). This may have consequences long after the interview has concluded and the researcher has left (Valentine, 1999:70). In one case, Mike (Eastland) framed buying a house with Ann as a decision to commit to the relationship; Ann, however, was surprised by this interpretation, wondering how he saw their relationship before this decision. However, the potential for anxiety would not necessarily be lessened by interviewing household members apart. Although separate interviews could have been carried out with the intention of giving each person the space and confidentiality within which to tell their own biographies, once the material is published other household members would be able to read it and recognise their partner's contribution (Larossa *et al*, 1981:311).

6.11 Conclusion

Biographical research can be seen as telling someone more about the present than the past, since past events are interpreted and re-told from the present life context. However, these past experiences also arguably have an enduring role in how people see their lives and the choices that are open to them. The relationship between past and present is therefore mutually contingent. In the mobilities field, biographical methods have been used in a small number of studies in specific contexts, however this approach is a less common way to understand the different ways in which people respond to post-industrial change and why they remain in places that are seen as having fewer opportunities. It is hoped that the research approach outlined in this chapter will provide new insights into immobility as well as mobility because it is able to represent multiple and competing motivations that have been less prominent in other research. Although only a relatively small number of households were recruited to participate in the research, the in-depth nature of the research design ensured that detailed data was generated. The next chapter provides important contextual background about the case study areas and the participants living in these places, before the presentation of the main research findings.

7. Introducing the case study areas

7.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the case study areas: Nearthorpe, Sheffield, and Eastland, Grimsby. These places are situated within their broader urban contexts, drawing on housing and labour market data, before focusing on the neighbourhood level (Lower Super Output Area) using Census data[2]. Data from stakeholder interviews with nine people working in Local Authorities and third sector organisations[3], and a further six interviews with local estate agents, are woven throughout. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data aims to recognise that places are constructed and understood in ways that are more complex than statistics alone can reflect. At the end of the chapter, Nearthorpe and Eastland are compared, before concluding with an outline of the key characteristics of the research participants.

Figure 7.1: Location of the case study towns
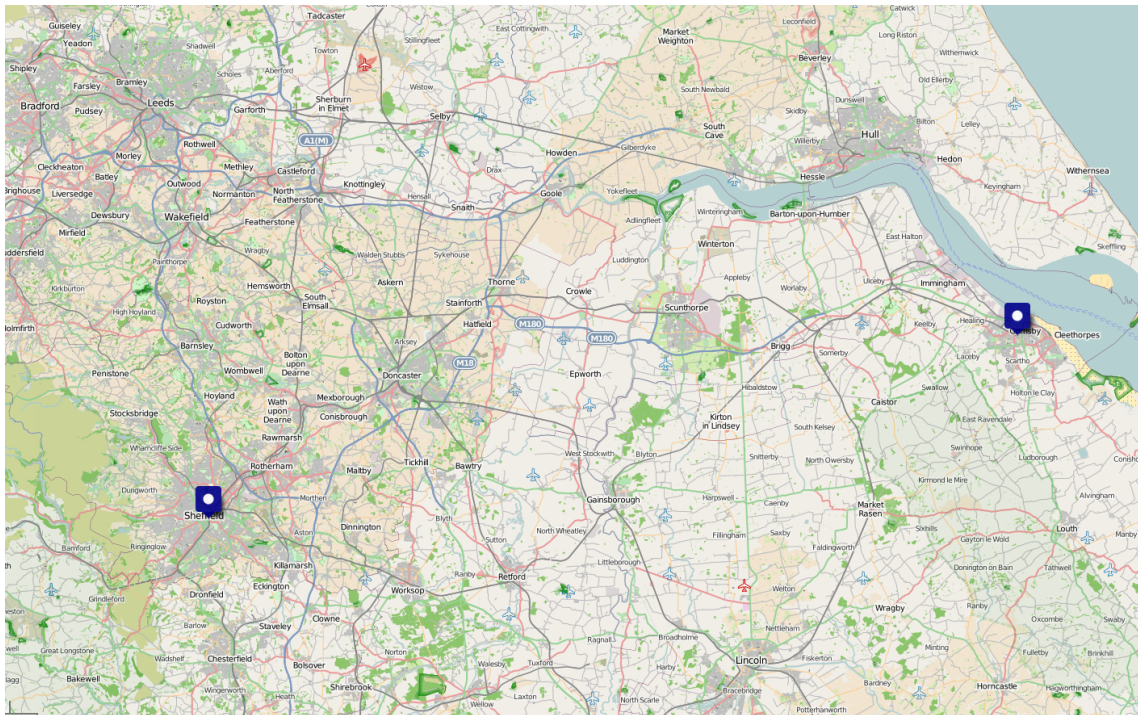
Source: © OpenStreetMap contributors; umap.openstreetmap.fr

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[2] Although Census data provides useful and detailed data at a very local scale, one of its disadvantages is in giving a snapshot in time. Two sets of Census data are used in this chapter; it is acknowledged that there will have been variations in the effect measured during the ten-year interval, and that while 2001 was a relative boom in the UK, in 2011 the country was in recession. References to a general increase or decrease between the two Census points should therefore be understood in context, and also with the knowledge that there may have been variation over time.
[3] Stakeholder role descriptions can be found in section 6.5.

7.2 Sheffield

The growth and decline of 'steel city'

South Yorkshire remained a backwater until its mineral wealth and new transportation made it one of the fastest growing regions in the country (Pollard, 1976:4-5). From the 1830s, "under its thickening veneer of soot", Sheffield grew from a town into a city (Binfield, 1993:1), with dramatic expansions in transportation, coal mining, metal manufacturing, and population (Coates, 1976:17-19). The creation of hundreds of jobs in the booming steel industry led to an influx of population from other parts of the UK, demonstrating the importance of historical working-class migration for employment (Farnsworth, 1987:5). Villages were engulfed as vast parallel rows of terraced houses were built to house these workers (Craven, 1993:72). The city was divided into western wealthy, residential areas and the working-class, industrial east (Hey, 1993:14), a division which persists today.

During two World Wars, Sheffield was the arsenal of the country and remained among the most prosperous industrial areas in the years up to 1980 (Pollard, 1993). As in other industrial cities, cheap migrant labour undertook the less desirable shifts (Dale *et al*, 2002b:944). However, demand slackened and then levelled off from the mid-1970s leading to a "depressing pattern of mergers, plant closures, strikes and redundancies" (Tweedale, 1993:187). Steel was of such importance that its collapse affected a long chain of associated industries (Beattie, 1986:69). Unemployment in the Sheffield travel-to-work area reached 16.3% in 1987 (compared 11.9% in the UK), while the number employed in steel fell from 45,000 in 1971 to 13,000 in 1987 (Pollard, 1993:278). Industrial decline left "a scarred and derelict landscape of vacant sites and abandoned factories…a poignant and physically tangible expression of the painful changes in Sheffield's economic base" (Marshall, 1993:30-31).

Current labour market context

Jobs in mining and manufacturing no-longer dominate Sheffield's labour market profile. In 2013, the Local Authority had 67% full-time and 33% part-time jobs (source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) Business Register and Employment

Survey, 2013). Figure 7.2 details the main sources of employment, with public administration, education, and health sectors occupying 35% of employees.

Figure 7.2: Employee industry of employment, Sheffield, 2013

Employee jobs by industry Sheffield, 2013
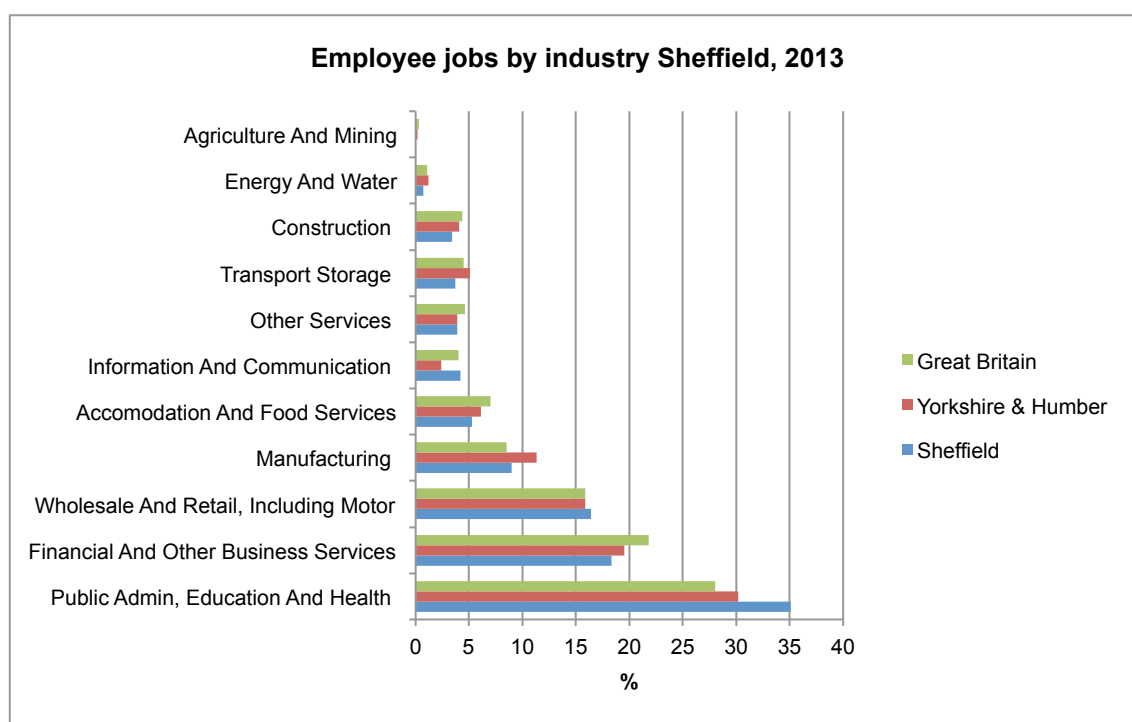
Measures of labour supply in Sheffield matched the regional profile, with 70% of working-age residents in employment and 9% unemployed (source: ONS Annual Population Survey, 2013). Jobs density was 0.74 jobs per working-age person, compared to 0.73 for Yorkshire and Humber and 0.78 nationally (source: ONS Jobs Density, 2012). The Local Authority had 13,375 enterprises of which 85% were micro-enterprises with nine or fewer employees, 12% were small with between ten and 49 employees, and 0.4% large (250+ employees) (source: Inter Departmental Business Register, March 2014).

Sheffield is also close to other larger labour market areas, such as the Leeds City Region. With strong transport links by rail and road, commuting across overlapping labour market areas was more common in the Sheffield City Region when compared to the more self-contained Grimsby labour market (One NorthEast, 2009:23).

Current housing market context

Compared to the UK average, Sheffield has a relatively affordable housing market. Figure 7.3 shows that average house prices in 2013 were £156,000 compared to £251,000 nationally. Although average prices increased over time, the rate of increase has not kept pace with the national trend.

Figure 7.3: Average annual house prices 1995-2013, UK and Sheffield
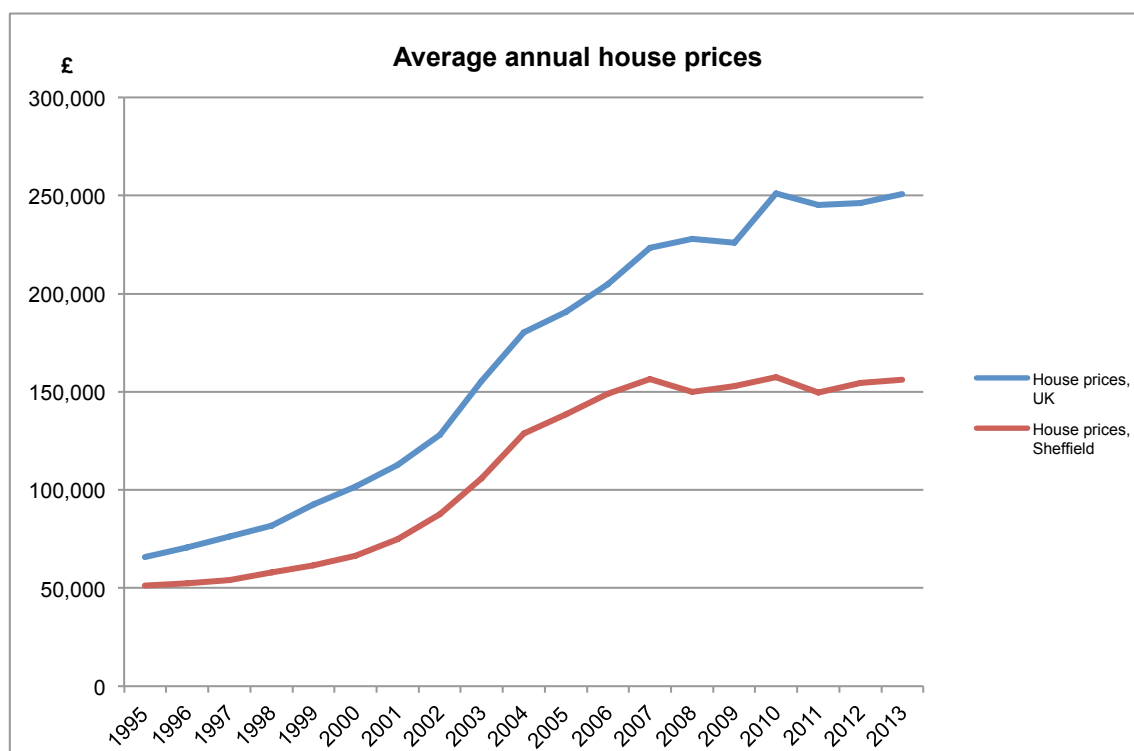
Source: Land Registry and ONS

The volume of house sales in Sheffield dropped sharply in 2007 as a result of the recession, as seen in Figure 7.4

Figure 7.4: House sales and average annual house prices 1995-2013, Sheffield
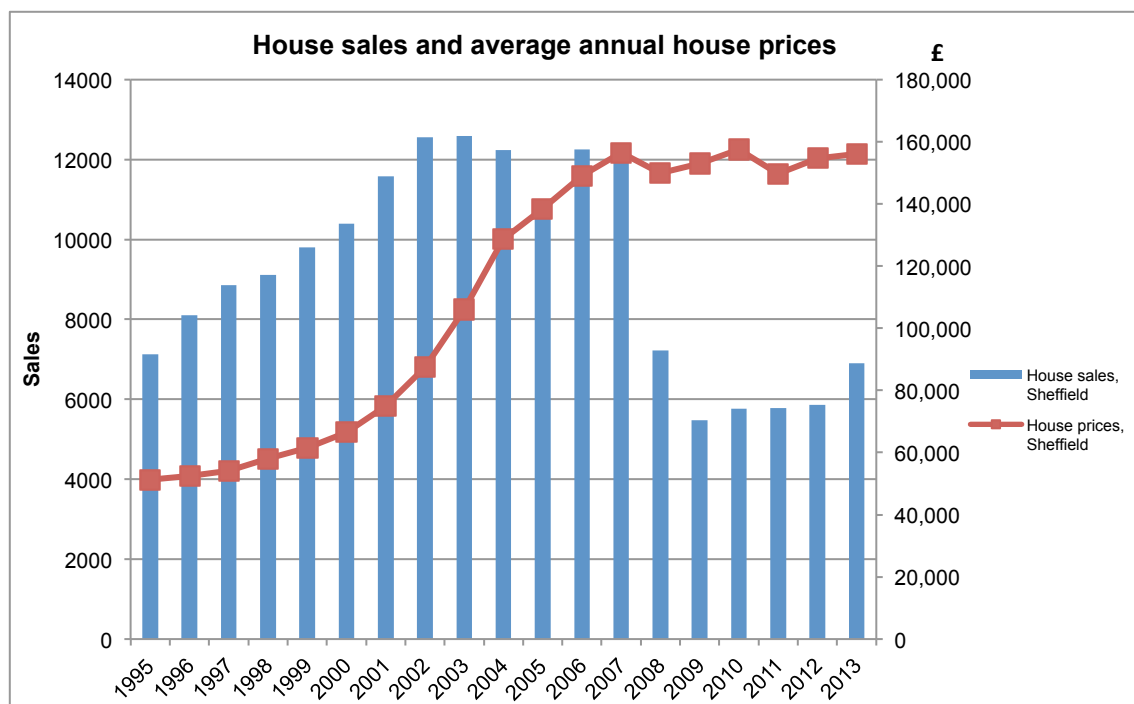
Publically available statistics for the private rental market are only available for recent years. Figure 7.5 demonstrates the relative accessibility of Sheffield in terms of rental prices, which in 2014 were a mean of £537 per month compared to a national average of £742.

Figure 7.5: Average monthly private sector rents 2011-2014, Sheffield and England
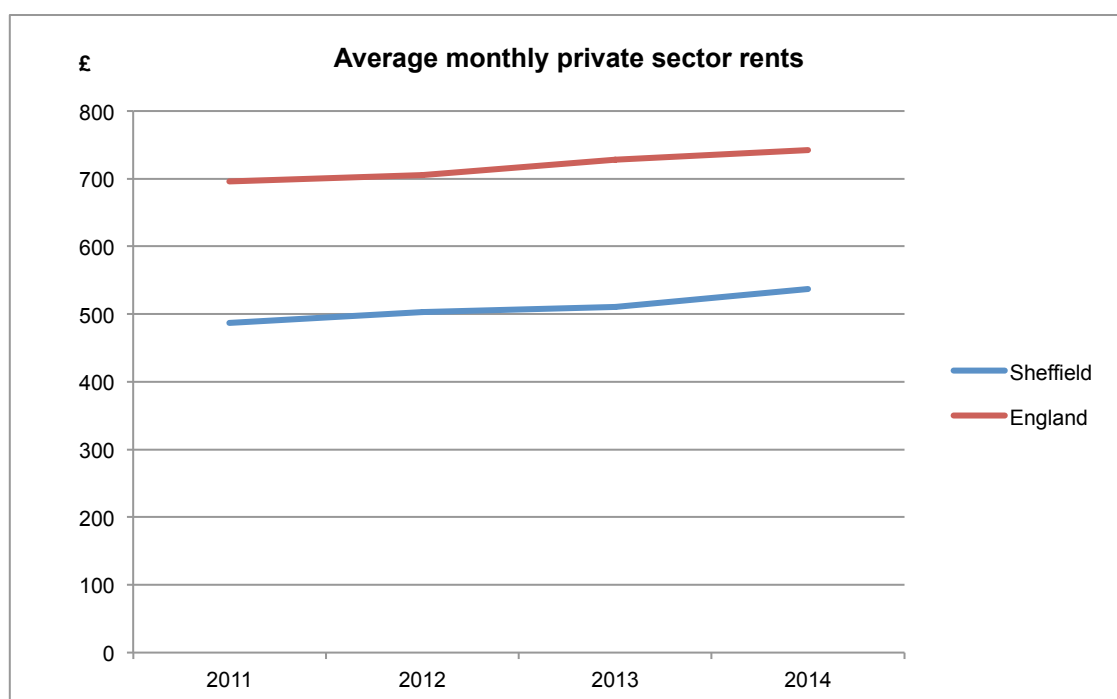
Within Sheffield, there is also a divide in house and rental prices, with Nearthorpe significantly more affordable than average, as will be demonstrated in the next section.

7.3 Nearthorpe

The anonymised case study area is situated in the industrial east of the city. The neighbourhood covers an area of approximately 26 hectares and at the 2011 Census contained within it around 630 households with some 2,000 individuals. The density of the neighbourhood was around 75 people per hectare (source: 2011 Census). It is well-connected to the city centre via various transport options. A well-served bus route runs along a main road lined with old and new terraced homes, as well as independent shops that lead into a central hub of shopping and community facilities. Rather than a sprawling suburb, Nearthorpe retains a distinctive sense of place, something that survived its absorption into the city during the expansion of the steel industry. Shops are concentrated in a few streets and lots of people use these facilities, giving the impression of a busy centre. Local facilities include general stores, grocers, butchers, bakery, pub, newsagents, takeaways, bookmakers, small food shops,

off-licences, and clothes shops. There are a number of well-established community groups and charities operating locally. There is some green space in the neighbourhood, with one park inside the boundaries of the case study area and substantial area of green space situated about half a kilometre from the centre of the neighbourhood.

There is one primary school at the centre of the neighbourhood and a local children's centre. The nearest secondary school is approximately 1.5km from the centre of the neighbourhood, as the crow flies. Like many areas of Sheffield, the housing stock is comprised primarily of rows of two-storey terraced housing. Moving away from the main roads, mid-20th century semi-detached homes can be found. A number of cul-de-sacs are made-up of council-built homes, typically bungalows providing accommodation for older people, as well as some terraced and semi-detached properties. To the west of the area new homes are being developed for sale, laid out along winding streets and cul-de-sacs. These large homes dominate the landscape, giving the impression of growth and change, perhaps even more so for residents who remember the manufacturing history of the site. Although Nearthorpe is far from a gentrifying neighbourhood, there are signs that the area is being marketed as a convenient and affordable location for people to buy homes, with easy access to the city centre and the motorway network, nearby green spaces, and local shopping facilities.

Population

The demographic make-up of Nearthorpe has changed significantly in the last ten years. Increasing ethnic diversity was one change highlighted by some long-term white British residents, and can be seen in Figure 7.6.

Figure 7.6: Ethnic group, Nearthorpe, 2001-2011
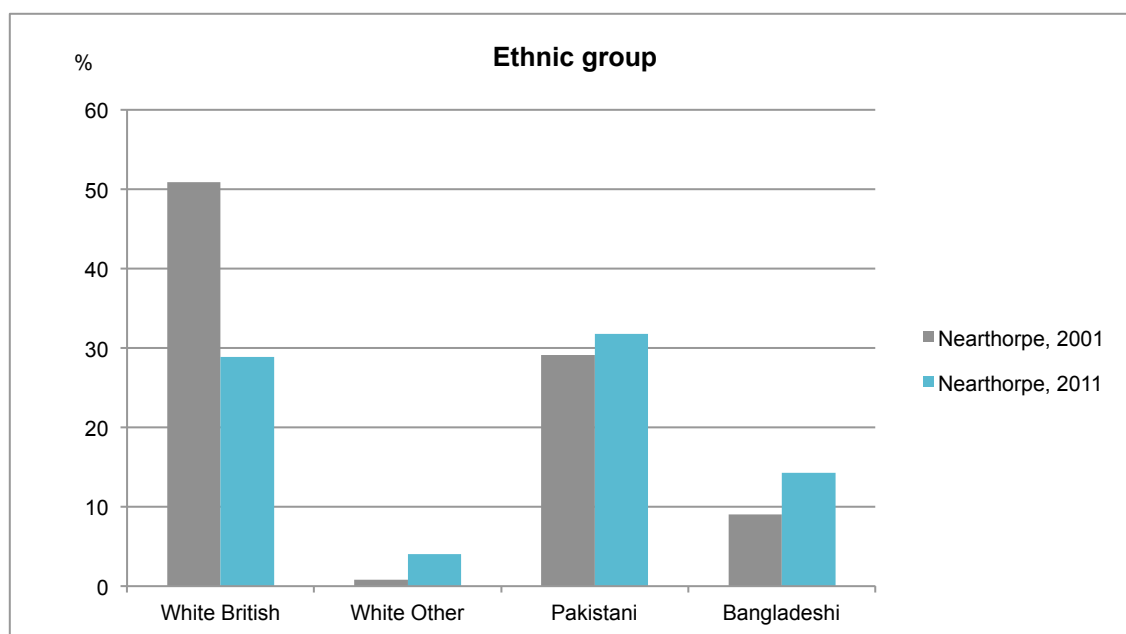
A number of residents and stakeholders referred to an increase in the eastern European population. Rachel, a Local Authority (LA) employee working with local communities, noted that Nearthorpe had a long-standing Asian population and in recent years increases in the Slovakian Roma population. Census data lends some support to this view, recording 83 'other White' residents in 2011, up from 12 in 2001 (although this includes other groups).

Industry and employment

Unemployment levels among the working-age population in Nearthorpe were 9% in 2011, more than double the national average (4%).

Figure 7.7: Economic activity, Nearthorpe, 2001-2011

Economic activity (aged 16-74)

Legend:
- England 2011
- Nearthorpe, 2011
- Nearthorpe, 2001

X-axis: % (0 to 45)

Categories (top to bottom):
- Permanently sick/disabled
- Looking after home/family
- Retired
- Unemployed
- Self-employed
- Employees full-time
- Employees part-time
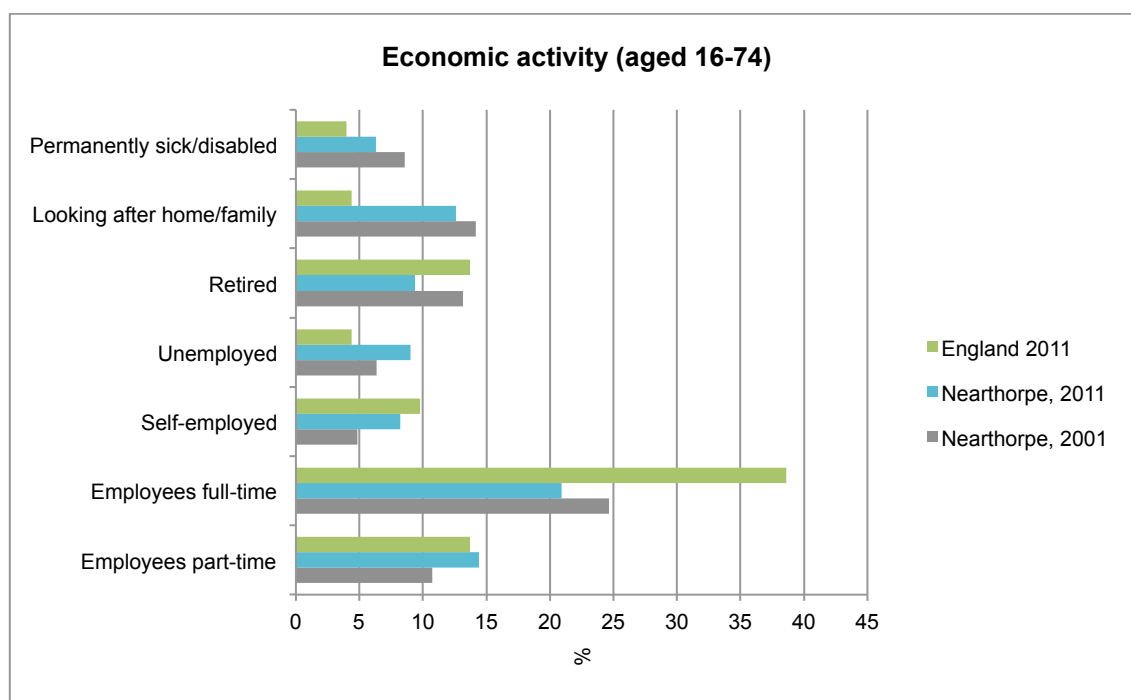
Long-term unemployment [4] decreased from 41% to 26% of unemployed residents in Nearthorpe 2001-2011, but the proportion of unemployed residents who had never worked increased from 22% to 37% (Source: ONS). Among the total working-age population of Nearthorpe in 2011, 20% had never worked, compared to 5% in Sheffield and 4% nationally. Katie, a local authority (LA) employee working on employability, highlighted a range of issues in east Sheffield, including "those people who are essentially almost third generation unemployed…where…young people, parents, grandparents possibly have never worked". This statement reflects a particular narrative of intergenerational cultures of worklessness. Research by MacDonald *et al* (2014:8) challenged these pervasive narratives; despite using many techniques, they were unable to find any families where three generations had never worked, and even found it difficult to locate families that had experienced very long-term worklessness over two generations in areas with very high unemployment. Nevertheless, the image of households transmitting worklessness across generations persists in policy discourses. One reason for the higher proportion of people who have

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[4] People in the 2011 Census were classified as long-term unemployed if they had last worked in 2009 or earlier.

never worked in Nearthorpe may be due to a greater proportion of women undertaking caring roles; 23% of working-age women in Nearthorpe were looking after the home or family in 2011, compared to 7% in Sheffield.

Sarah, working at an employability charity (abbr. CH), pointed out that the lower-skilled and longer-term unemployed were "furthest away from the labour market"; they stand at the back of the queue for jobs (Beatty *et al,* 2000). As Figure 7.7 shows, a much smaller proportion of Nearthorpe's population were in full-time employment than nationally. This decline was off-set by increases in part-time working and self-employment. As discussed in Chapter Two, labour market trends have seen increasing insecurity in work, through more part-time work, underemployment and self-employment (source: OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics; ONS); this is mirrored in Nearthorpe.

However, stakeholders viewed the east as an economically important site of employment. Rachel (LA) highlighted large employers, arguing that "the lower Don Valley was the place to be for jobs, and it still is. People always think it's gone but it hasn't, it's just changed". Katie (LA) also highlighted the proximity of "key employers sat very close to [Nearthorpe]". Rachel questioned the link between these "major employers…and the community so close to it". Similarly, Katie highlighted the common perception that "'nobody in Nearthorpe has a job in Meadowhall'" and failure to consider the hospital as a potential employer. A policy document also highlighted poor links between employment assets and communities (Building Design Partnership, 2007). This narrative links back to the idea of a spatial mismatch, where job opportunities exist alongside concentrations of unemployment (Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, 1998, Wilson, 1990).

Other stakeholders were more positive about the role of large local employers. Sarah (CH), who had links with local employers, thought that the shopping centre did "proactively recruit people from the local area where they can…in positions like…the customer service team, the cleaning staff, the security staff, the landscape gardeners". Figure 7.8 shows that the most common area of employment was the wholesale and retail trade, and vehicle repairs, which could lend support to the idea that some people work in the local retail sector.

Figure 7.8: Industry of employment, Nearthorpe, 2001-2011

Industry of employment
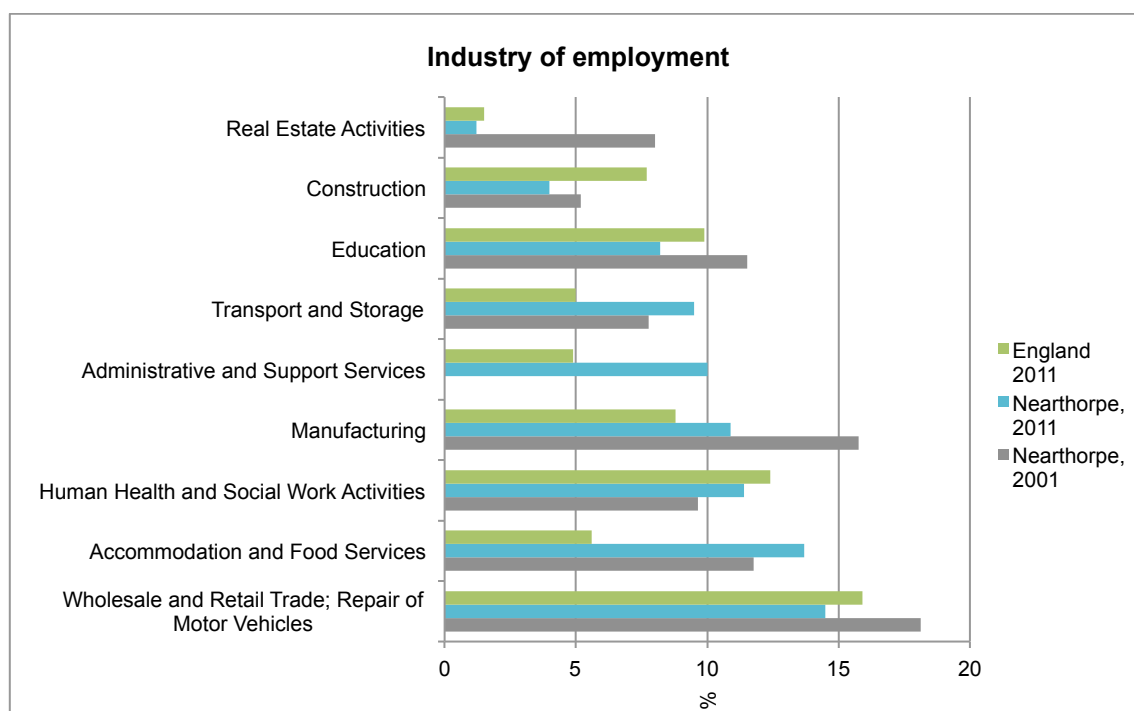
In 2011, residents in Nearthorpe were more than twice as likely as people in Sheffield, or England, to be working in accommodation, food, administration or support services. They were less likely to be working in education, or health and social work. Manufacturing – once the mainstay of the local area – employed only 11% of the local population in 2011. In 2011, 14% of the working-age population of Nearthorpe worked in routine occupations, while 9% worked in lower – and 3% in higher – managerial, administrative and professional occupations. Self-employment was also high (Figure 7.7). Katie (LA) described the area as "an incredibly entrepreneurial culture…a lot of small businesses…it's very vibrant".

Stakeholders described an increasingly flexible and insecure employment context. Katie (LA) pointed out that although people were remaining employed, benefit support was also increasing because of "flexibilities in the marketplace and more part-time working". Sarah and Joanna (CH) had seen more zero-hours contracts, which could create "nervousness…about leaving benefit" (Sarah). Figure 7.9 highlights the shift, particularly among working men, from full-time to part-time employment. The proportion of men in Nearthorpe working 16 to 30 hours in 2011 was more than twice that in 2001, and was almost three

times the national average in 2011. A similar but less pronounced trend can be seen among female workers.

Figure 7.9: Hours worked, males 16-74, Nearthorpe, 2001-2011
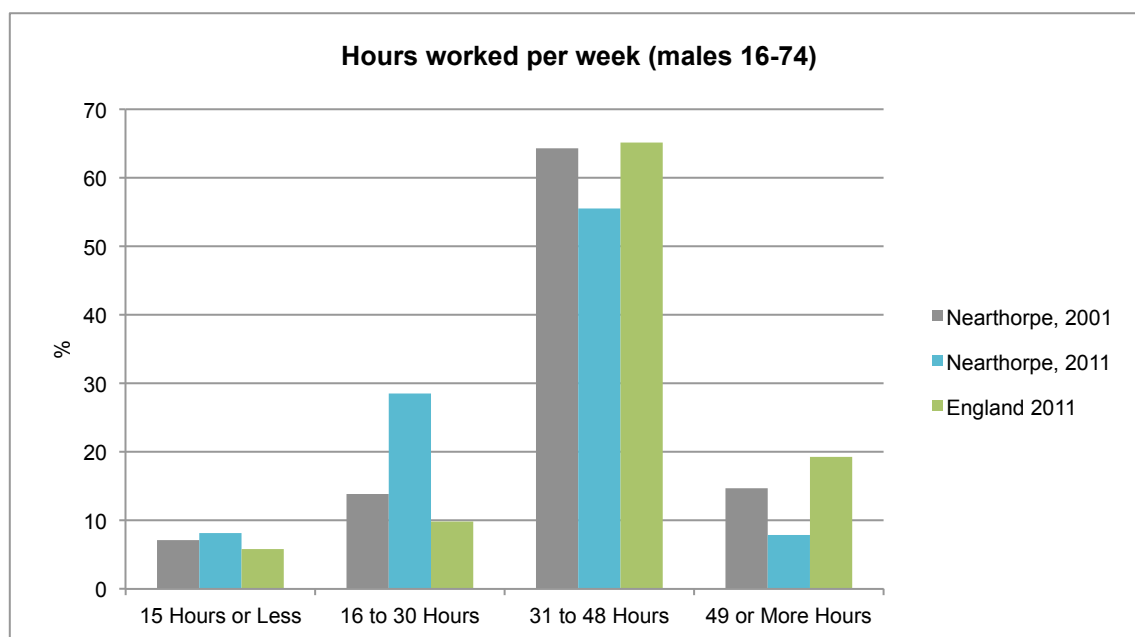
Figure 7.10: Hours worked, females 16-74, Nearthorpe, 2001-2011
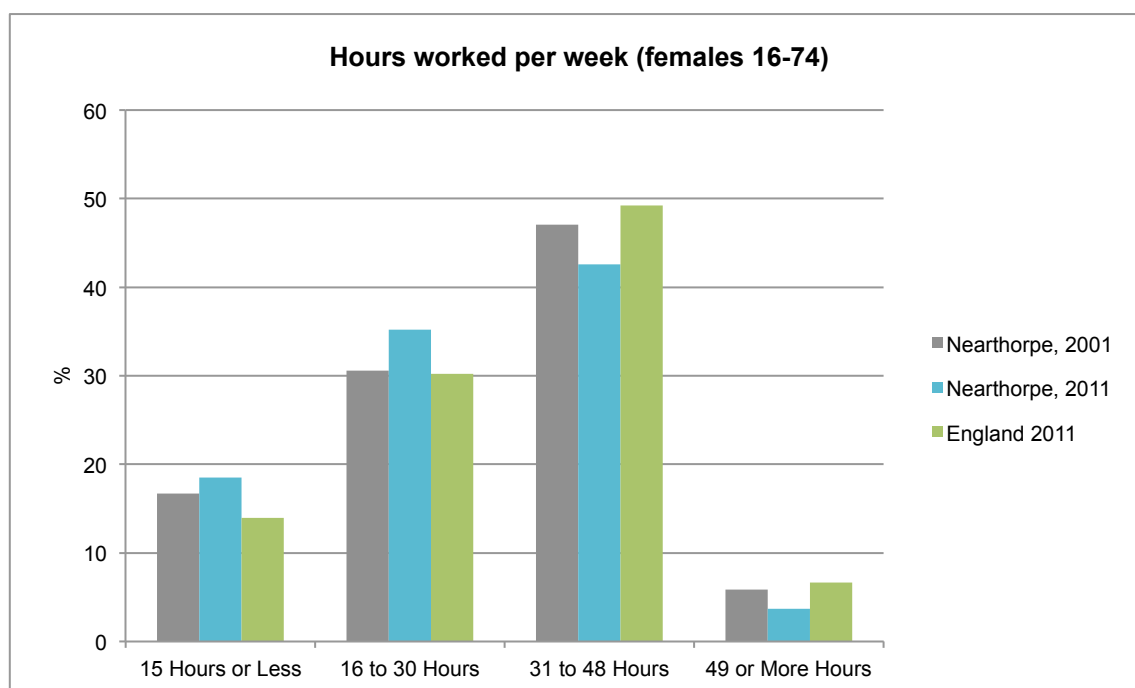
As noted earlier, increases in part-time employment and underemployment in the wider UK labour market are featured at the micro-scale in Nearthorpe.

Housing

Almost half of homes in Nearthorpe were in private ownership in 2011 (Figure 7.11). The proportion of private rented stock increased from 16% to 21%, 2001-2011. Some estate agents felt that the private rented market was more buoyant because the on-going economic downturn had restricted people's mortgage options.

Figure 7.11: Tenure, Nearthorpe, 2001-2011
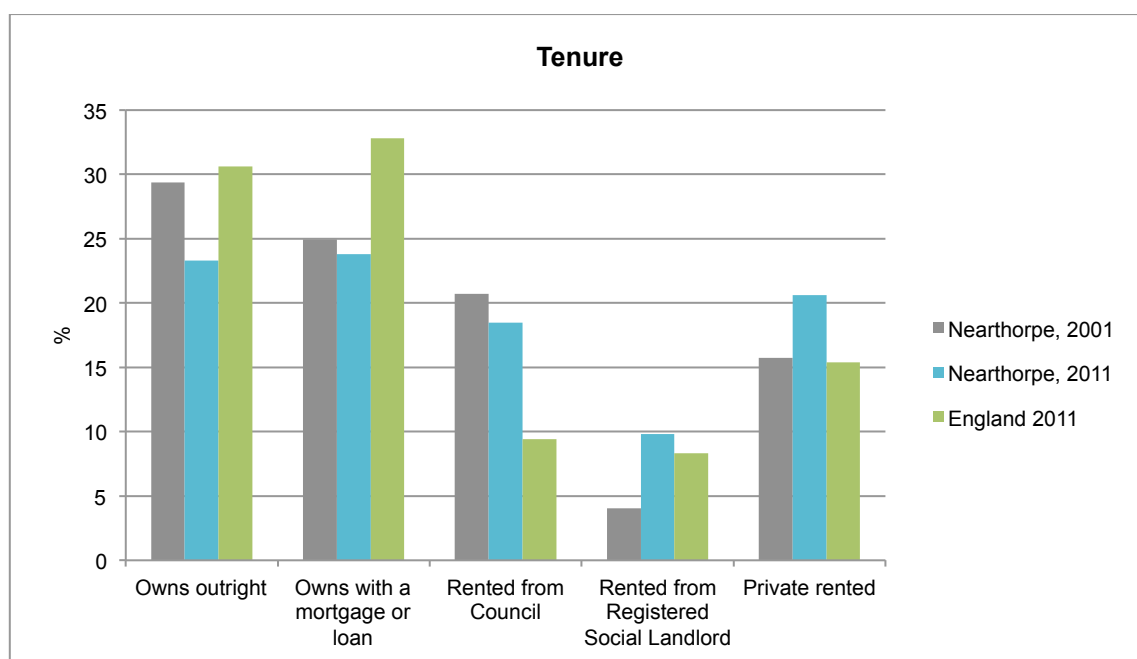
Housing was seen as an important element in the regeneration of east Sheffield, with developments having the potential to "change the perception" of this area (Tom, a Local Authority employee working on regeneration). Rather than attracting people from other disadvantaged areas, "you might be looking to try and get a different mix…with home-buyers…Young professionals that would traditionally go to places like Crookes, can we try and attract those down there?" (Tom). This reflects a concern to avoid the "moving escalator" whereby the better-off move out of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and are replaced by vulnerable households (Bailey and Livingston, 2007, Cole *et al*, 2007), as well as a belief that mixed communities are of inherent benefit. However, the assumption that residential segregation is inherently negative has been challenged (Drever, 2004, van Ham and Manley, 2009:420). Furthermore, Gibbons *et al* (2014) argued that neighbourhood segregation was the outcome

– not the cause – of inequalities in income and wealth; the reduction of spatial inequality therefore required resources to be targeted at individuals rather than places.

Some estate agents were sceptical about attracting different households to Nearthorpe. Although there was a steady market for properties, for one agent "you wouldn't just move out to those areas" without a reason, such as family connections (Tim). Andy, working at a small agency in Nearthorpe, was more positive; the neighbourhood amenities meant that "you probably don't even need to go out of Nearthorpe". Although private rental market statistics are not available at the local level, Andy found that Nearthorpe was popular with renters (particularly because of mortgage restrictions), but if a landlord wanted "a professional, English family they'd struggle".

House price and sale statistics show that the housing market in Nearthorpe is considerably more affordable than Sheffield on average.

*Figure 7.12: House sales and average annual house prices 1995-2013,
Nearthorpe[5]*
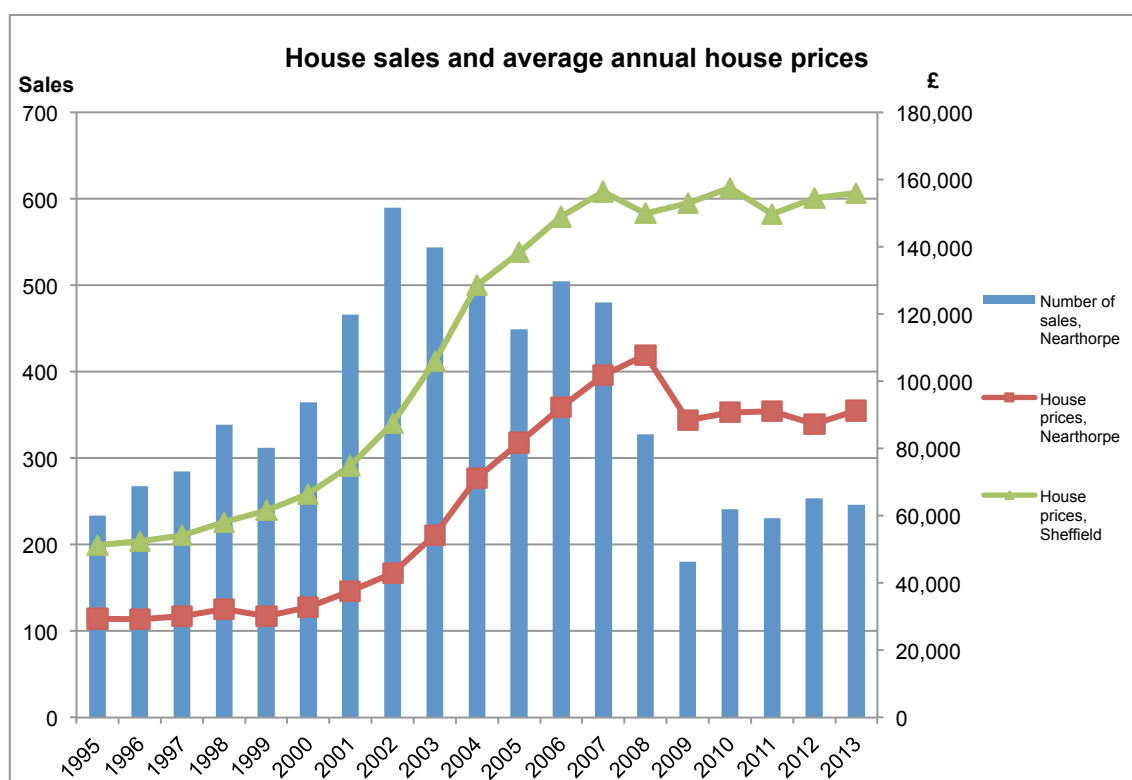
As in the wider housing market, house sales and prices in Nearthorpe contracted as a result of the economic downturn, and have largely been stagnant since 2009.

There was little evidence of housing market failure in Nearthorpe in terms of empty properties but the housing stock restricted households (Building Design Partnership, 2007). Tom (LA) noted that there was "a recognised demand" for homeownership, particularly larger homes. A new private development was offering up to five-bedroom properties. However, Rachel (LA) perceived these as "commuter houses" aimed at "people who may not live round here", people who were "more mobile…with a bit more affluence and ability to travel". Indeed, marketing highlighted attractive features for commuters.

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[5] This data is based on a wider geographical area, based on the first half of the postcode for the case study area. It therefore comprises a larger number of households than Census LSOA data.

Migration and commuting

Stakeholders expected residential mobility in Nearthorpe to be low. Tom (LA) felt that in many Sheffield communities residential mobility was low because "people…have their network of families and friends, they've lived next door to or with those people for their whole lives and they walk out the door and always bump into people that they know". Rachel (LA) agreed that the case study area was "very settled", with people living there because "they've always lived here", rather than because there were employment opportunities.

According to the 2001 Census, 60% of those in employment and living in Nearthorpe travelled less than 5km to their place of work, compared to 40% in England. The working population of Nearthorpe were correspondingly less likely to commute longer distances. Some stakeholders perceived travel as a barrier to unemployed people accessing work. Rachel (LA) noted the familiar refrain that "'I can't travel to town, it's too far'". Sarah (CH) also questioned the limits of delivering services within communities:

> If people are really serious about getting a job it's gonna mean travelling further than the end of the street…there's got to be that realisation that they're never gonna get a job because there aren't any immediately in Nearthorpe…yet if they're prepared to travel two, three miles down the road it opens up an array of other opportunities

Joanna (CH) noted that residents were so used to being in an area that "anything outside there is too frightening to them…it's just a shock to the system". In this view, people living in low-income communities are seen as immobile, with highly localised spatial routines. However, Robinson (2011) challenged this notion, arguing that the spatial routines of people living in low-income neighbourhoods regularly extended outside the neighbourhood (also see Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001).

This narrative of immobility largely relates to white, working-class communities, contrasting with the perceived mobility of other groups. Joanna (CH) talked about the increase in young Slovakian clients, whose families "tend to go where the work is" and sometimes moved overnight. Other charities noted circular mobility patterns between Sheffield and Slovakia (Yorkshire & Humber Roma Practitioner Network, 2012).

7.4 Grimsby

Growth and decline of a fishing boom town

Before the 1850s there was no fishing industry of any importance at Grimsby (Kaye, 1981:83). The extension of the railway line into Grimsby in 1846 and the construction of the docks facilitated the rapid growth of the industry. By 1904 there was "scarcely a market of any size in this country in which during the early hours of the morning fresh Grimsby fish cannot be purchased" (James, 1904:675). This opened up a huge trade in fish and fish derivatives (Ekberg, 1984:20). By 1872, 97 ship-owners were registered in Grimsby, with the number of fish merchants increasing from 89 in 1872 to 486 in 1922 (Kaye, 1981:83). One visitor to the town in 1904 vividly described the scene at the docks with "monster cod-fish" and "men who had been made familiar for many years with salt breezes and healthy toil" (James, 1904:674).

By the 1920s, Grimsby had become the largest, most prosperous fishing port in the world, directly employing more than 7,000 men with another 21,000 in merchanting, curing and other associated industries (Ekberg, 1984:77). The rapid growth of industry and influx of population gave rise to shanty towns (Shinner, 2012:165-166). As in Sheffield, workers primarily occupied long rows of terraced housing close to the docks, while owners and merchants built large houses on the outskirts (Mitchell, 1984:10).

The Anglo-Icelandic "cod wars" from the 1950s had disastrous consequences for British deep-sea fishing (Ekberg, 1984:97). Limits on fishing around Iceland left ships with nowhere to fish, affecting not only deep-water fishermen but also thousands of dependent shore jobs (Ekberg, 1984:11). In the post-war period, the local council fostered diversification into other industries such as engineering and chemicals (Mitchell, 1984:10), but these could not replace the thousands of jobs that were shed in this period.

Current labour market context

In 2013, most jobs in North East Lincolnshire Local Authority were full-time (67%), while 33% were part-time (source: ONS Business Register and

Employment Survey, 2013); the biggest sectors were public administration, education, and health, followed by wholesale, retail and motor trades.

Figure 7.13: Employee industry of employment, North East Lincolnshire, 2013

Measures of labour supply for North East Lincolnshire were slightly weaker than across the region, with 68% of working-age residents in employment, compared to 70% for Yorkshire and Humber, and 72% nationally (source: ONS Annual Population Survey, 2013). Jobs density in North East Lincolnshire was also slightly weaker than the region, with 0.70 jobs per working-age person, compared to 0.73 for Yorkshire and Humber, and 0.78 nationally (source: ONS Jobs Density, 2012).

In 2001, Grimsby was named 'most profitable town in the UK for big business', news accompanied by headlines professing "It's Still Grim in Grimsby", where unemployment was twice the national average and large industries were highly automated (Bowers, 2001:24). Of 3,995 enterprises in North East Lincolnshire in 2014, most (86%) were 'micro', employing up to nine people. 12% were small enterprises employing ten to 49 people, and 0.5% (20 enterprises) employed more than 250 people (source: Inter Departmental Business Register, March 2014).

Grimsby's labour market is seen as relatively self-contained, with little interaction with other areas (except Scunthorpe) in terms of commuting flows (One NorthEast, 2009:23). It also does not have the strength or size of labour market demonstrated by other independent cities (One NorthEast, 2009:55).

Current housing market context

Average annual house prices in Grimsby are significantly below the national average, a gap which has widened over the last 15 years. In 2013 the average cost of buying a property in Grimsby was around £124,000, just under half the UK average (£251,000).

Figure 7.14: Average annual house prices 1995-2013, UK and Grimsby
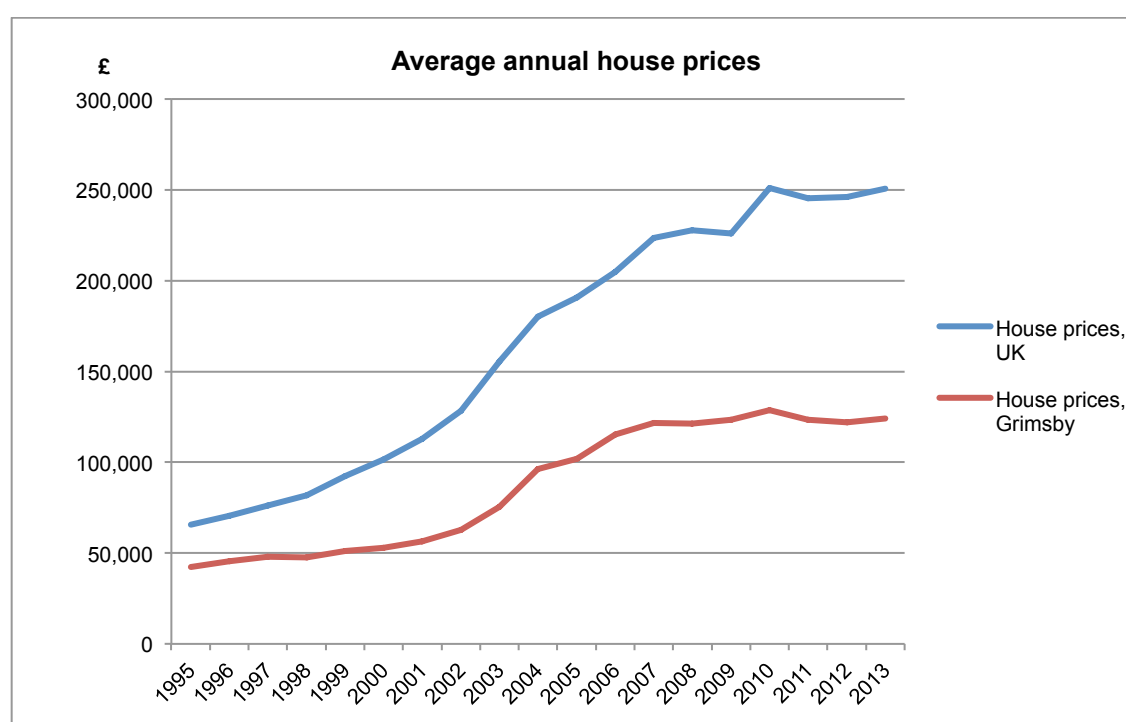
Source: Land Registry and ONS

Average house prices in Grimsby doubled between 2002 and 2009, and have remained largely stagnant since then. Figure 7.15 shows that the number of sales in Grimsby more than halved between 2007 and 2009.

Figure 7.15: House sales and average annual house prices 1995-2013, Grimsby

House sales and average annual house prices
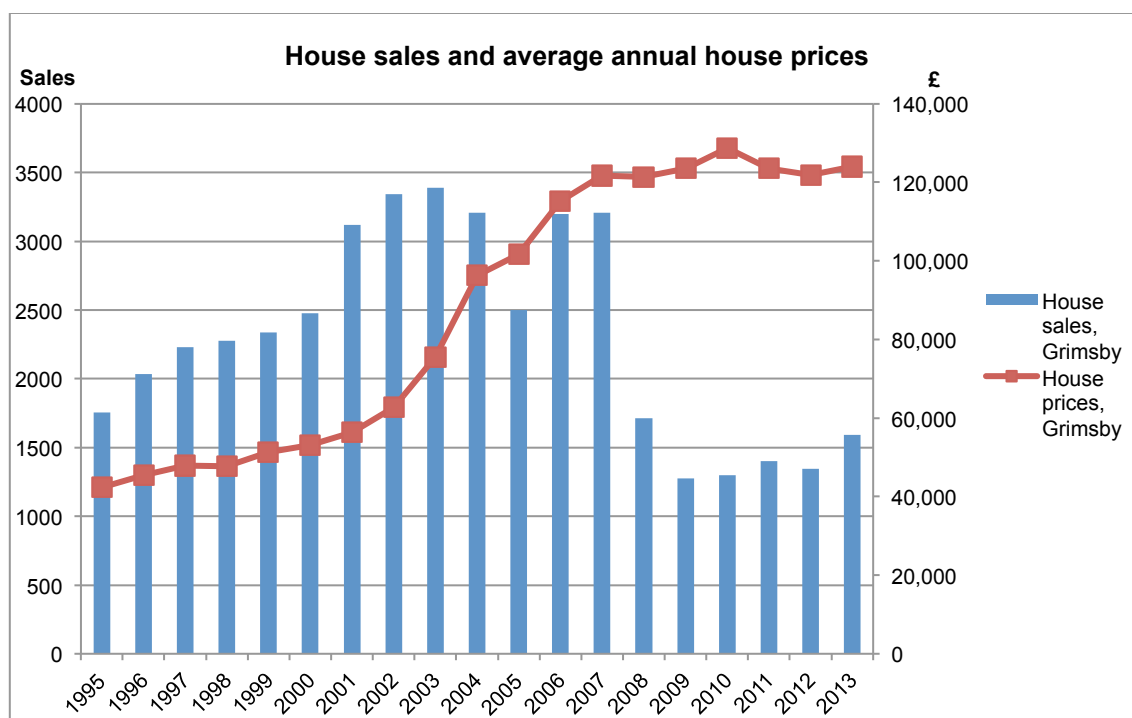
As noted earlier, publically available data on the private rented market is less extensive. Figure 7.16 shows mean monthly rents in the private rented sector.

Figure 7.16: Average monthly private sector rents 2011-2014, North East Lincolnshire & England

Average monthly private sector rents (£)
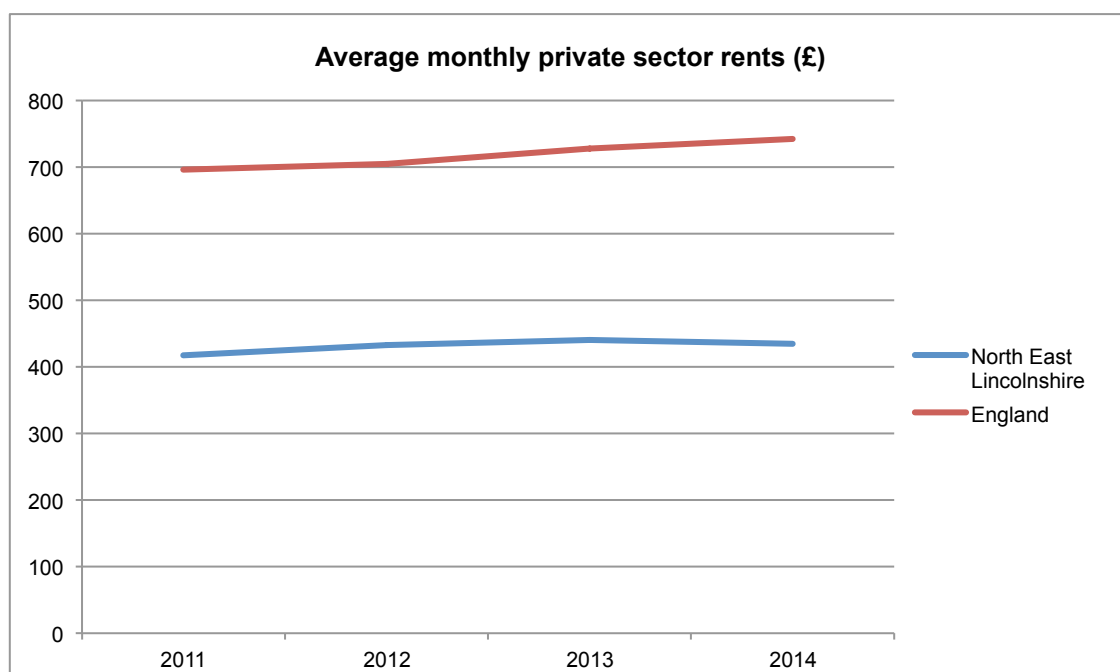
Average rents in North East Lincolnshire have been consistently lower than for England and have shown little variation over the last four years. Average rents for the Local Authority also mask considerable variation, with Eastland likely to have lower than average rents.

7.5 Eastland

Eastland is situated close to the town centre. Grimsby dock tower rises from the skyline, a lasing reminder of the proximity of the fishing industry. The case study neighbourhood covers an area of approximately 26 hectares and at the 2011 Census contained within it around 600 households with 1,350 individuals. The density of the neighbourhood was around 52 people per hectare (source: 2011 Census). Long rows of terraced housing stretch through Eastland, with only a few more modern developments. Imposing villas have largely been subdivided into flats and bedsits. There is one primary school within the boundaries of the neighbourhood and another just outside. The nearest secondary school is approximately 1.5km from the centre of the neighbourhood, as the crow flies.

In comparison to Nearthorpe, Eastland has a less clear neighbourhood identity, with no obvious 'centre'. Its layout is largely on a grid pattern, with long streets running the whole length of the neighbourhood, and side streets crossing to form blocks. Although there are some shops – an off-licence, hairdressers, general store, butchers – primarily located along one street, there were fewer people visible and the area does not project a sense of bustling community when compared to Nearthorpe. This carried over into conversations with residents, who struggled to give 'Eastland' a neighbourhood name. Living in Eastland was seen as convenient for its proximity to other places – the town centre, a large supermarket, a park, and local school – rather than for anything inherent in the place itself.

A number of boarded-up commercial and residential properties were pepper-potted throughout the streets. Some properties, although occupied, had one or more boarded-up windows and door panels, presumably as a result of damage or disrepair. From the street-level, this created an immediate impression of a more disadvantaged neighbourhood than Nearthorpe, where the only boarded-up properties were pubs. There was no green space directly situated within the

boundaries of the neighbourhood. There is a large park approximately 0.75km from the centre of the neighbourhood, although it is separated from it by a large road. There are two smaller parks slightly closer to the neighbourhood, but beyond its boundaries for this study and one of those is again separated by the same busy road.

Population

The population of Eastland was overwhelmingly White British at the last Census, although a number of interviewees perceived an increase in eastern European immigration. Indeed, the white British population of Eastland declined from 98% in 2001 to 90% in 2011, while other White groups increased from 1% in 2001 to 5% in 2011 (source: ONS).

Industry and employment

As discussed earlier, Grimsby's labour market is perceived by key stakeholders as relatively isolated but not strong enough for this self-containment to be positive. In Eastland, unemployment had changed significantly from 2001 to 2011, and in 2011 was more than three times the national average. Local estate agents described the area as a "poverty area" (Claire), with "lots of DSS" (Matthew). As in Nearthorpe, the decline in full-time employment has been matched by a rise in part-time employment.

Figure 7.17: Economic activity, Eastland, 2001-2011

Economic activity (aged 16-74)

Legend: England 2011 (green), Eastland, 2011 (blue), Eastland, 2001 (grey)

Categories (top to bottom): Permanently sick/disabled, Looking after home/family, Retired, Unemployed, Self-employed, Employees Full-time, Employees Part-time

X-axis: % (0 to 45)
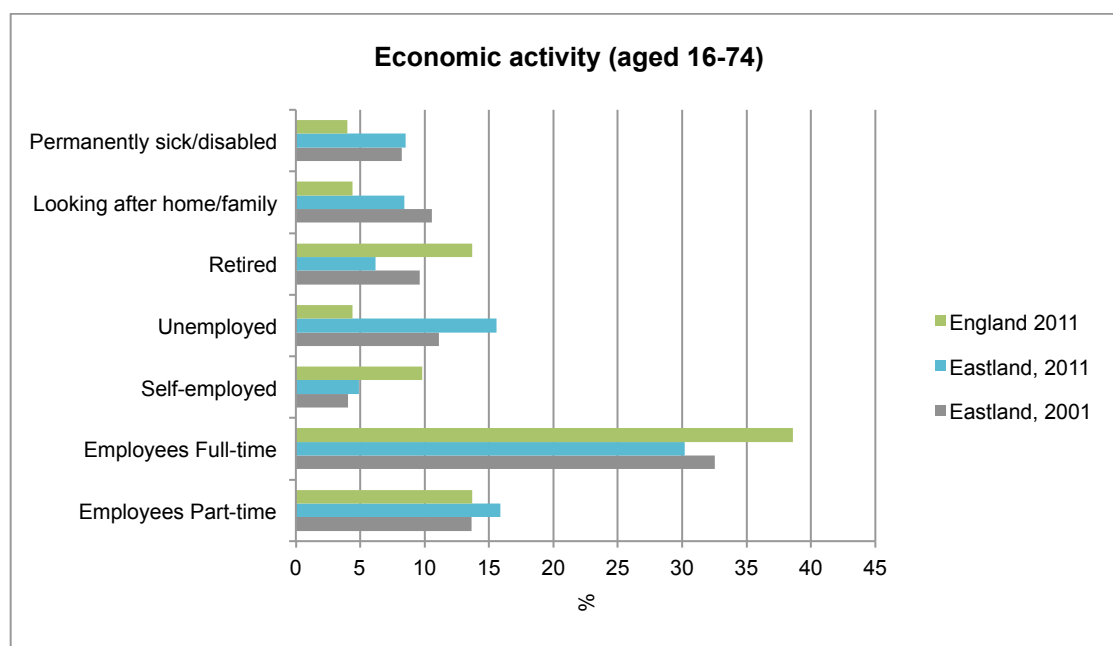
In Eastland, there was less full-time employment and more part-time employment, unemployment, sickness/disability, and people looking after the home than nationally.

In 2011, 46% of unemployed people were classed as long-term unemployed compared to 40% in 2001 (source: ONS). The proportion of unemployed people in Eastland who had never worked was also three-fold higher in 2011 at 12% compared to 4% in 2001 (source: ONS). Louise, a local authority (LA) employee working in policy, described attempts to reframe the available workforce as an advantage to businesses: "we've got high unemployment, we've got people to work in these sectors, come and find us". She hoped that this would "give people…aspirations that these sectors might have opportunities for them". The problem of unemployment is therefore linked to lack of jobs, but also wider narratives of limited aspirations.

As in Nearthorpe, some stakeholders highlighted the issue of intergenerational cultures of worklessness, where in some areas "we've got fourth or fifth generation unemployed" (Rosie, Local Authority employee focusing on housing). Chris, a manager at a homelessness charity (CH) noted that these households may have multiple vulnerabilities, making it "very easy" not to employ them because "there's other people who can do the jobs". As noted earlier, the notion

of intergenerational worklessness has been robustly challenged by MacDonald *et al* (2014). However, stakeholders also highlighted lack of appropriate jobs as an issue, particularly for those finishing training courses designed to help them into work.

According to Census data, 21% of working-age people in Eastland in 2011 worked in routine occupations, while only 7% worked in lower – and 2% in higher – managerial, administrative and professional occupations. Fitting with the dominance of routine occupations, food processing was a major area of work. Louise (LA) noted that building-up this industry was part of post-war planning, with an industrial park located near the motorway "so food could be landed, taken to the big industrial park…manufacture it and then get it straight on the motorway".

Figure 7.18 shows that the wholesale and retail trade, and repair of vehicles employed the largest proportion of the population in 2011, followed by manufacturing; both industries employed a higher proportion of the population than nationally. Unlike in Nearthorpe, there was more congruence between the occupations of those in Eastland and those in the wider North East Lincolnshire population, although Eastland residents were more likely to be working in accommodation and food services.

Figure 7.18: Industry of employment, Eastland, 2001-2011

Industry of employment
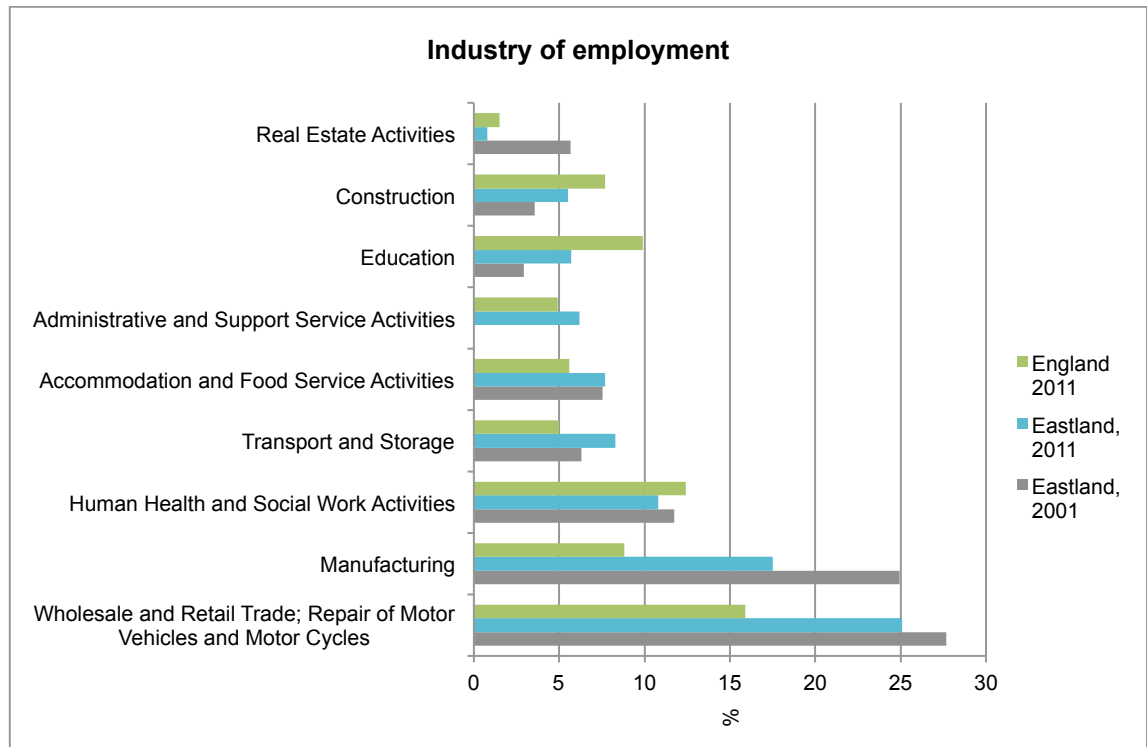
Residents and stakeholders emphasised the dominance of agencies in factory work. As Chris (CH) explained, "they used to be employed by a factory, now they're employed through agencies…it doesn't actually give them enough hours to actually live on". This is characteristic of wider changes in employment in the UK economy – increased flexibility, insecurity, and underemployment – as highlighted in the earlier analysis of labour market literature (Bauman, 2005, Heery and Salmon, 2000, OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics, 2014, Peck, 1996, Shildrick *et al*, 2012). However, Census data on hours worked does not demonstrate a significant shift in working patterns over the last ten years. As Figure 7.19 and 7.20 show, there has been a slight fall in the proportion of men and women working full-time, and a corresponding increase in part-time working, but this was not as pronounced as in Nearthorpe. Nevertheless, the key issue with agency employment is not the number of hours per se, but the variability week-on-week.

Figure 7.19: Hours worked, males 16-74, Eastland, 2001-2011

Hours worked per week (males 16-74)
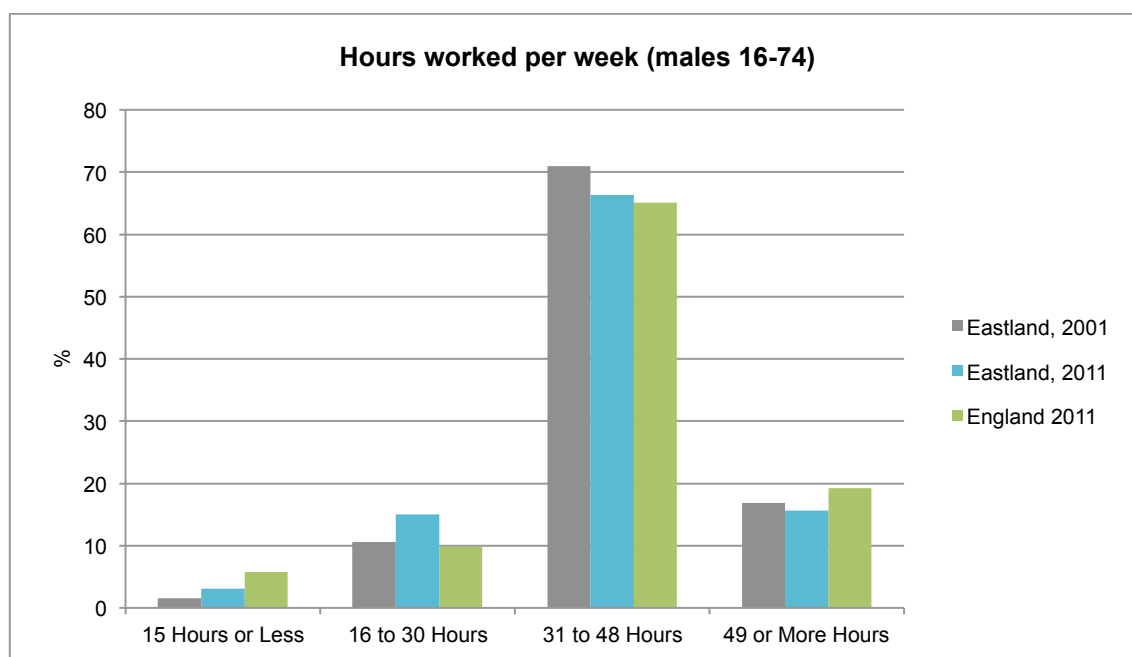
Source: ONS

Figure 7.20: Hours worked, females 16-74, Eastland, 2001-2011

Hours worked per week (females 16-74)
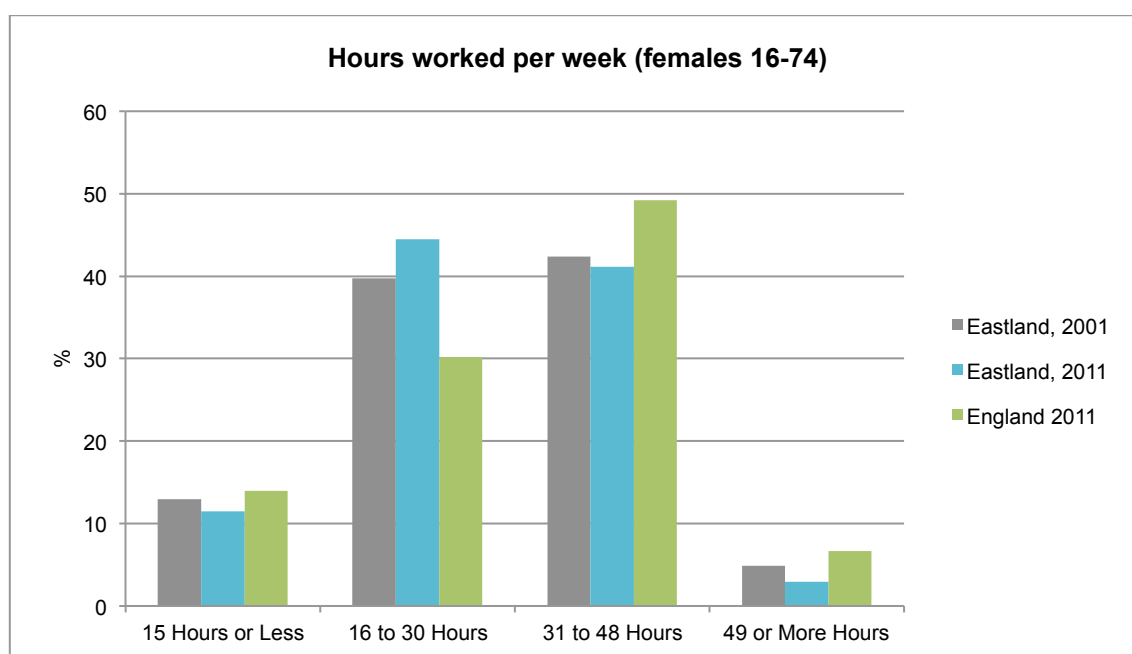
Source: ONS

Stakeholders also highlighted emergent sectors such as wind farms. Chris (CH) was sceptical about the "idea that these jobs on wind turbines are going to be for unskilled people in Hull and Grimsby". Other stakeholders were more positive; Rosie (LA) emphasised the "huge opportunity for the…maintenance elements for all of the off-shore wind farms" noting suggestions that Grimsby was on the cusp of being "as Aberdeen is to the oil industry". Rosie saw

potential for regenerating areas like Eastland, which historically housed the fishing workforce and could "provide the majority or a huge amount of…the labour force that feeds into the docks as it develops these new technologies". In this view, Eastland is home to a 'reserve army' of labour, ready to be trained to meet the changing needs of industries (Lupton, 2003).

Housing

Eastland is a low-cost area in the national and town context; terraced houses, built to house workers in the fishing and railway industries, "haven't really got a function, other than for very cheap…accommodation" (Louise, LA). Figure 7.21 supports the impression of local estate agents and stakeholders that Eastland has a high proportion of private rented stock. Already 28% in 2001, it was 35% of housing in Eastland in 2011, more than twice the national average.

Figure 7.21: Tenure, Eastland, 2001-2011
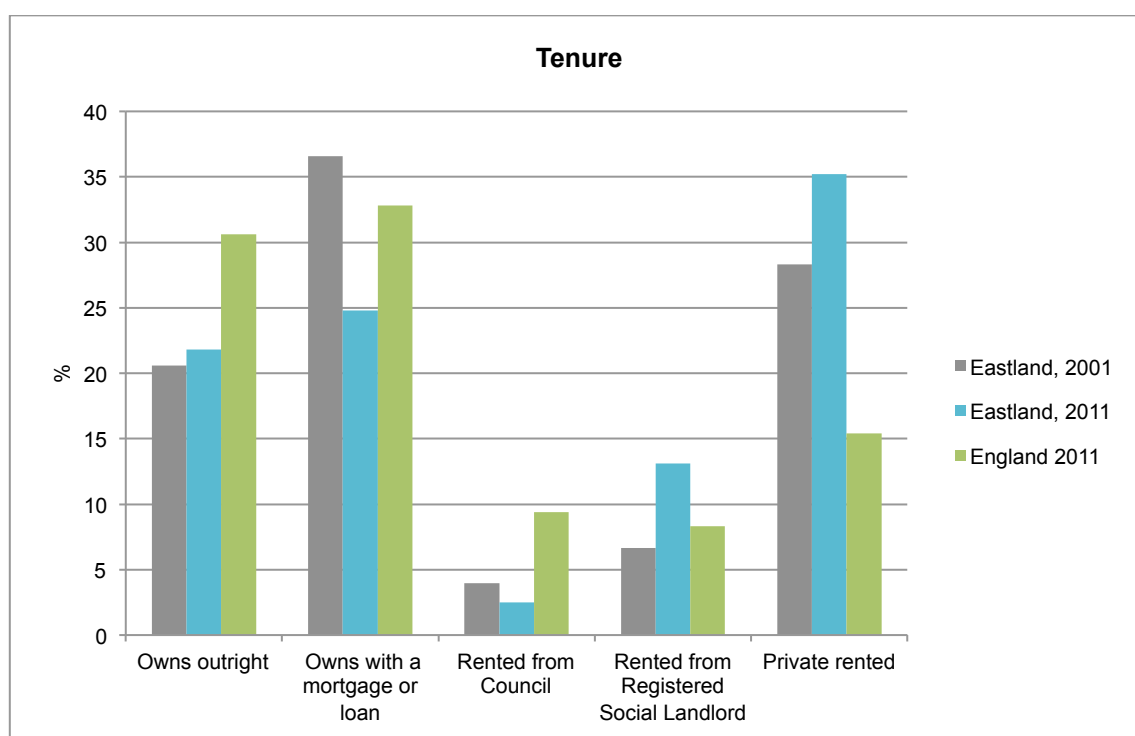
Source: ONS

Rosie (LA) described Grimsby as having "very localised", "very extreme" housing markets, from "millionaire's row" to "social housing properties that have been advertised probably 18, 19 times and not taken by people who are desperate for housing". The housing market "is probably one of the lowest in the country in terms of house prices", which can create issues with absentee

landlords, disrepair, and vacant properties. Local estate agents perceived fewer people buying properties to live in themselves because of poor area reputation. As one agent, David, commented "it isn't the same private housing it used to be", and although he would recommend Eastland for buy-to-let investment, he would not recommend it as somewhere to live.

Private rental statistics are not available at the very local level, however Eastland was seen by agents as an affordable area in Grimsby, which was itself a cheaper town. Average house prices in Eastland were also lower than in Grimsby, a gap that grew from 2004. The volume of sales also suffered a steep fall in 2008.

Figure 7.22: House sales and average annual house prices 1995-2013, Eastland[6]
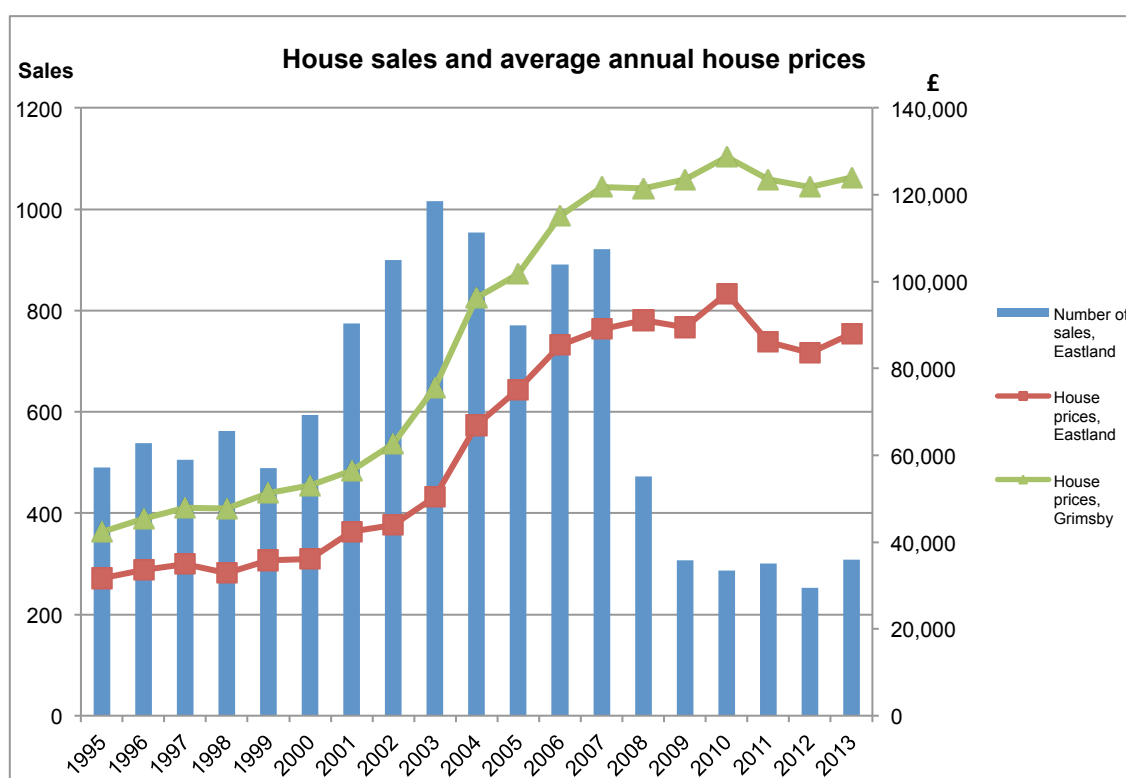
<div align="right">Source: Land Registry</div>

Interestingly, Eastland recorded twice as many sales as Nearthorpe in 2007, and suffered a much sharper fall in sales in 2008.[7] However, even after financial

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[6] This data is based on a wider geographical area, based on the first half of the postcode for the case study area. It therefore comprises a larger number of households than Census LSOA data.

collapse, there were around 50% more sales in Eastland than Nearthorpe. Given the insight drawn from different stakeholders, this may indicate a housing market driven by buy-to-let investment, cycling of properties between investors, and the turnover of private housing into rental stock.

Vacant properties were seen as a significant problem in Eastland by stakeholders and residents. The Local Authority had recently bought and demolished 100 properties on a street that was "notorious" for drugs, break-ins, and crime (Matthew, a local estate agent), and had "much higher than average private rent…a higher turnover of tenants…crime…absent landlords…empty properties" (Rosie, LA). The new development was to be entirely social rented homes. However, low demand was also an issue in some existing social stock; Shoreline Housing Partnership (2014) announced plans to demolish six tower blocks in Grimsby, partly aimed at mitigating "the over-supply of (all types of) rented accommodation in the area and thereby increase the effective level of demand for remaining properties".

The interaction of low demand, negative equity, and the buy-to-let market was particularly difficult for the Local Authority, as investors "put the shutters down" and "pay…the mortgage in the hope that the market's gonna improve" (Rosie, LA). With no equity in the property, the Local Authority could not provide financial assistance. Estate agents highlighted the downward spiral of negative equity, repossession, and house price decline, which then pushed more people into negative equity. Although "for some investors, these are no-go areas", "if you're renting out and you don't mind DSS, these are the sorts of places they will buy in" (Matthew). Indeed, low rents made Eastland attractive to some households and there was high spatial variation; one agent, Claire, described Eastland as a popular area with lots of demand among renters.

Migration and commuting

In 2001, 47% of people living in Eastland travelled less than 2km to work, compared to a national average of 20%. A further 27% travelled 2km to 5km, with few people travelling further (source: ONS). This may reflect the lack of a

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[7] Because house price data for the case study neighbourhoods is drawn from a wider area (based on the first part of the postcode), it cannot be guaranteed that the data for each place contains the same number of addresses.

'work corridor' as Rosie (LA) explained: "you haven't got that sort of central band where you can travel to Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds, all within about an hour". Grimsby is relatively isolated in terms of its connections to other labour market opportunities, providing limited commuting potential.

Chris (CH) argued that work would not be an important driver of mobility for everyone: "I think for people who's intelligent and switched on…they will travel to where the best jobs are. But those that don't have that experience and don't have the qualifications and they've never even been brought up that way, would never consider that". In this view, people's experiences of residential mobility, their class orientation and the type of work they were likely to access affects the likelihood of moving. Faye, a Local Authority employee working in regeneration, felt that insecurity in employment made work-related mobility less common:

> Nobody has a job for life anymore do they…there's a certain reluctance to uproot everything that…is familiar, for a job that may or may not exist in 6 months' time, I think everybody feels that, no matter what level you're at

This view links to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) argument that changes in employment relations have exposed more people to risks, with uncertainty of employment not solely an issue for the working-class.

7.6 Comparing the case study areas

This research seeks to understand the experiences of those living in low-income communities; according to the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Eastland fell within the top 5% most deprived areas in England, while Nearthorpe fell within the top 10%. A key difference is their situation in relation to broader labour market areas. While Grimsby is relatively isolated and self-contained, Sheffield is more connected to other labour market areas. While there may be potential for greater commuting from Nearthorpe to other locations, this would be less feasible from Eastland because of its geographic isolation. It is therefore an area from which people might be expected to move in order to access better employment opportunities.

While both wider housing markets are more affordable in comparison to average UK house prices, average house prices in Nearthorpe in 2013 were 41% lower than average prices in Sheffield (Figure 7.12). In comparison,

average house prices in Eastland in 2013 were 29% lower than the average price in Grimsby (Figure 7.22). Nearthorpe therefore represents a relatively more affordable location within a stronger housing market and labour market area. Figure 7.23 also demonstrates that before the current recession, average prices in Nearthorpe were increasing at a greater rate than in Eastland, suggesting a rising housing market, although prices suffered a more significant fall post-2008.

Figure 7.23: Average annual house prices 1995-2013, Nearthorpe and Eastland[8]
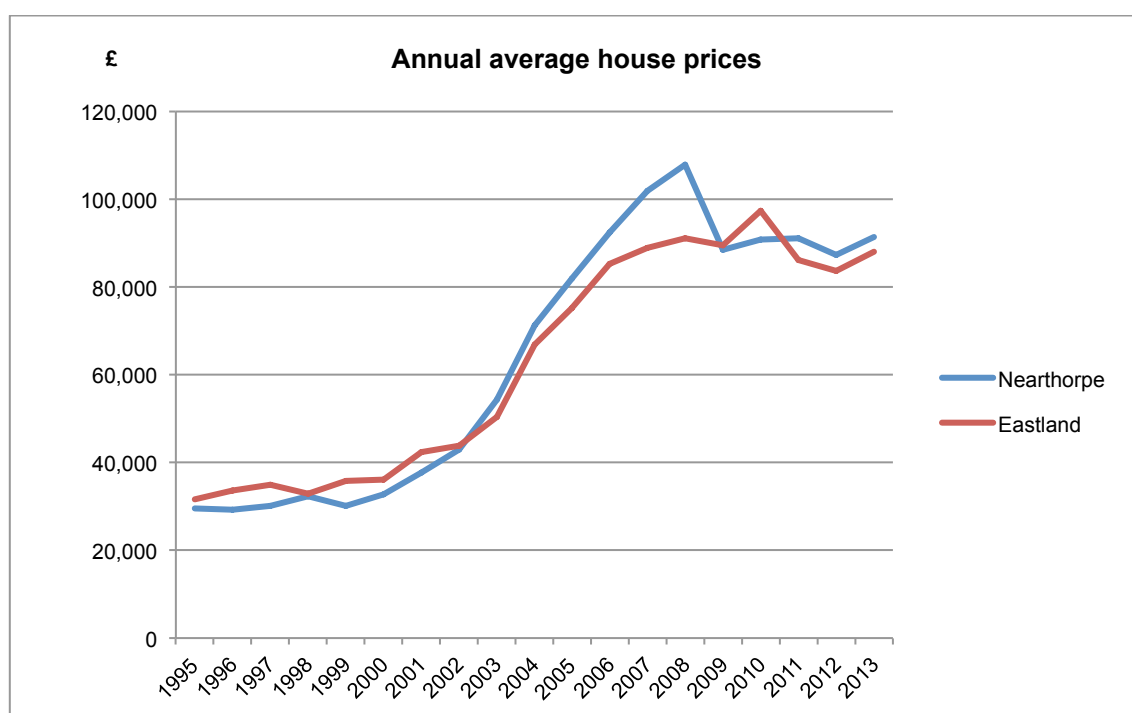
As has already been highlighted, the volume of house sales in Eastland was also much higher than Nearthorpe (Figure 7.24). This may be indicative of more local residential mobility, although given the high proportion of private rented stock it may also reflect cycling of properties through investors, and the transition of properties from private homes to buy-to-let.

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[8] This data is based on a wider geographical area, based on the first half of the postcode for the case study area. It therefore comprises a larger number of households than Census LSOA data.

Figure 7.24: Average annual house sales 1995-2013, Nearthorpe and Eastland[9]

Number of house sales
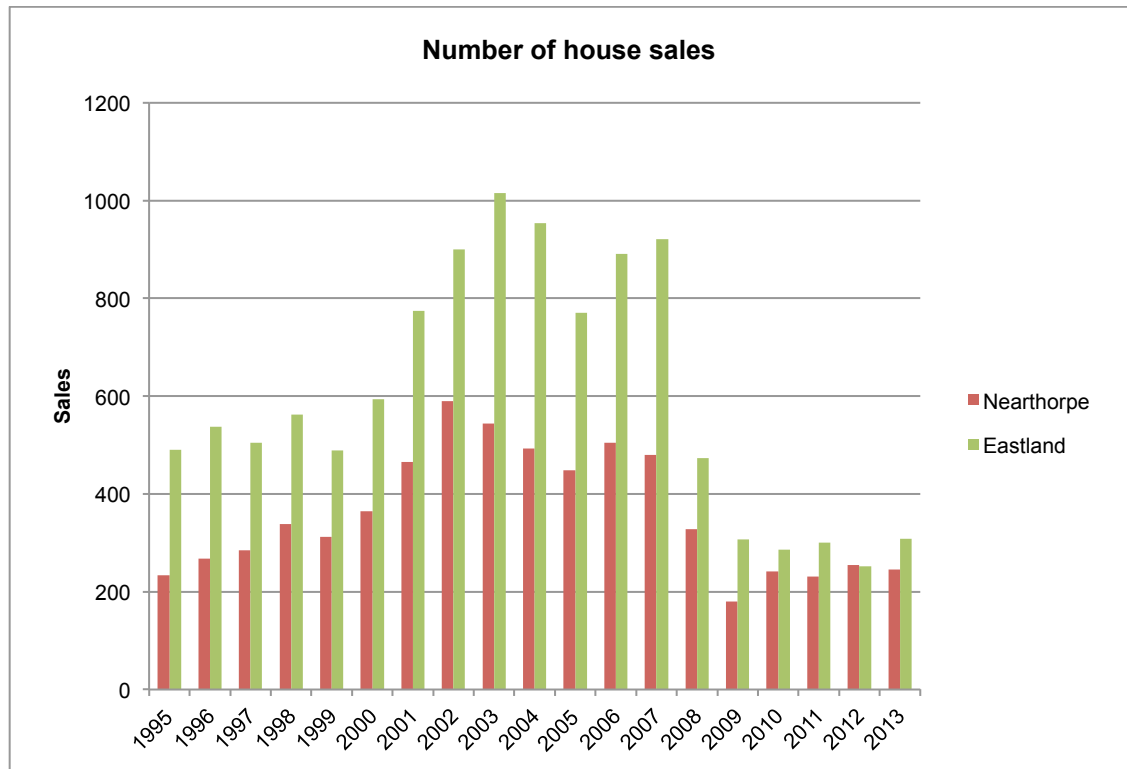
While stakeholders in Sheffield characterised Nearthorpe's housing market as relatively strong, with little failure in terms of empty properties, in Eastland empty homes were a significant issue.

In terms of the labour market profile, both places had a strong industrial history followed by significant job losses. Eastland had a greater proportion of the population occupied in routine occupations (21%, compared to 14% in Nearthorpe), and fewer people engaged in higher and lower managerial, administrative and professional roles. The most common industry of employment in both areas in 2011 was the wholesale and retail trade, and the repair of motor vehicles, although this was more dominant in Eastland (Figure 7.25).

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[9] This data is based on a wider geographical area, based on the first half of the postcode for the case study area. It therefore comprises a larger number of households than Census LSOA data.

Figure 7.25: Industry of employment, Nearthorpe and Eastland, 2011
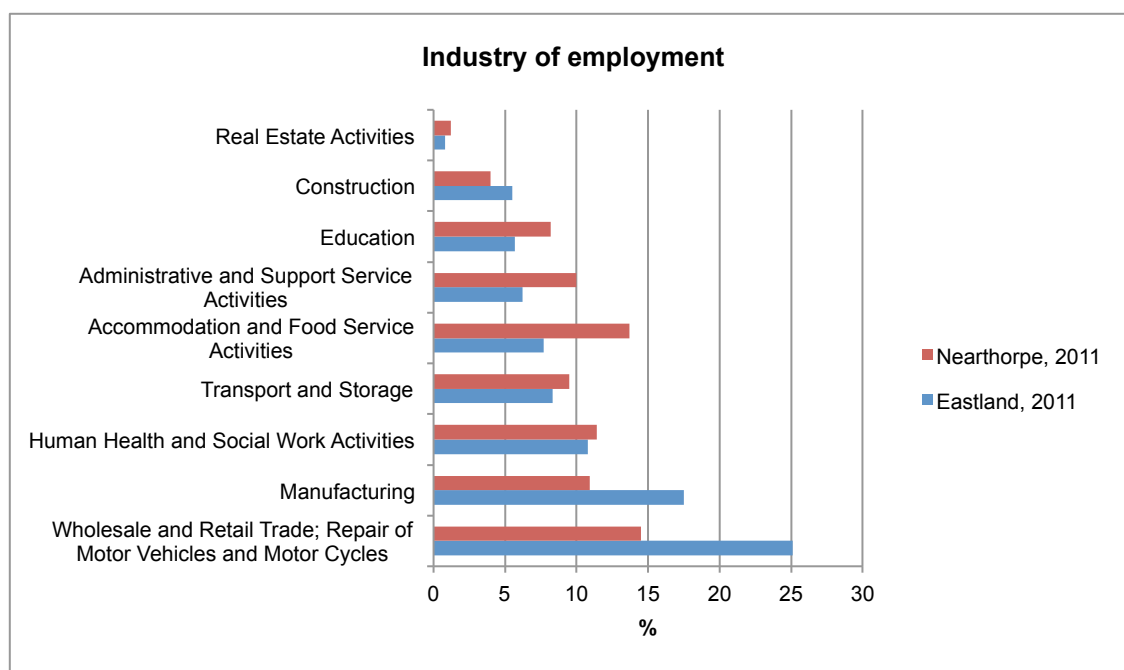
Although a higher proportion of the working-age population of Eastland was in full-time employment in 2011 compared to Nearthorpe, it also had higher unemployment and a higher proportion of permanently sick/disabled residents (Figure 7.26). By contrast, a greater proportion of people in Nearthorpe were self-employed or looking after the home.
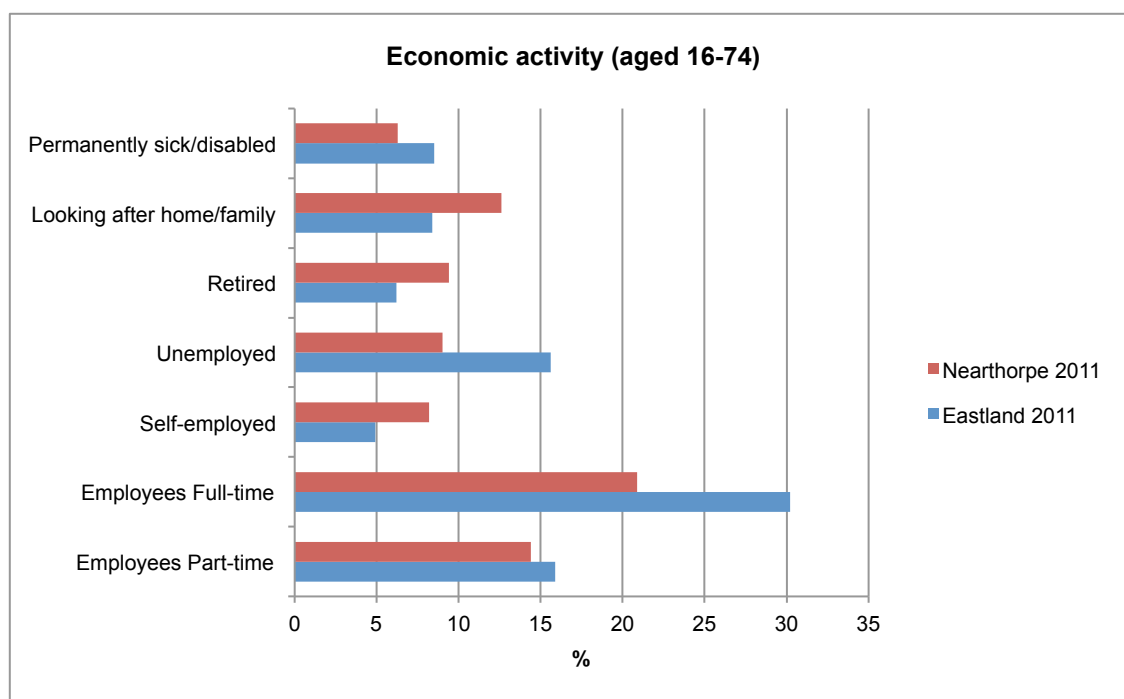
Nearthorpe can be summarised as having a more evenly distributed employment profile, with more residents in employment that was likely to have better pay or conditions. Residents in Eastland were more likely to work in routine occupations, for example factory work in the food processing industry. If they were working, Eastland residents were also likely to live close to their place of work; in comparison, more residents in Nearthorpe travelled outside their immediate neighbourhood for work. This highlights the different labour market contexts, with Grimsby relatively isolated from other labour market areas. This may leave those residents in a more precarious labour market position, more vulnerable to insecurity than those living in Nearthorpe.

7.7 The research participants

This section outlines the key characteristics of the participants in the research; a more detailed profile can be found in Appendix Fourteen. The 25 participants ranged in age from 23 to 73, with the highest proportion of people in their 30s. Most of the 18 households were married or cohabiting couples, but women were over-represented as participants by a ratio of 3:2 as a result of their more common experience as heads of lone parent households. The most common employment status was economic inactivity; in Nearthorpe this was primarily

due to mothers looking after young children. A larger number of participants in Eastland were unemployed or in part-time employment, while in Nearthorpe there was higher employment and more employment in professional and educational sectors. In Eastland those in work were concentrated in care work, retail and food service industries. In line with the wider neighbourhood profile, there were more private renters in Eastland and more homeowners in Nearthorpe.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the case study neighbourhoods and the wider contexts in which they are situated. Nearthorpe and Eastland reflect the criteria for case study selection presented in Chapter Six. Both places are relatively disadvantaged, with industrial histories that chart the rise and fall of a dominant sphere of (male, working-class) employment. The loss of thousands of jobs had a stark impact on the case study areas, and in many respects they are similar to other post-industrial towns and cities across the UK. A key question for research is "why people do not move, especially when relocating may provide them with new opportunities" (Coulter and van Ham, 2013:1053). Policy explanations have highlighted places as containers for people with low aspirations and intergenerational patterns of worklessness (HM Treasury and DWP, 2003, Duncan Smith, 2011, Grayling, 2011, Shapps, 2009). These narratives seek to cast unemployment and economic inactivity as individual failures. Some of these narratives were also evident in the views of stakeholders in Sheffield and Grimsby, although they have been robustly challenged in the research literature (MacDonald *et al*, 2014).

Moving away from personal attributes, a more nuanced explanation of mobility and immobility in places like Nearthorpe and Eastland must take into account the context in which people make decisions. This was a key reason for one of the case study areas being in a relatively isolated and weaker labour market position. If work was an important driver of residential mobility for people living in areas with weaker employment markets, then the absence of a strong 'work corridor' may further enhance the desirability of moving. By contrast, Nearthorpe is situated in a stronger and well-connected labour market area where people may be able to reach employment opportunities without relocating. Nearthorpe

could be seen as an attractive mix of relatively affordable housing in the city context and connection to employment opportunities.

In many respects, the households that contributed to the research reflected the wider neighbourhood from which they were drawn, with more white British, unemployed, and privately renting participants in Eastland, and greater ethnic diversity, people looking after the family/home, and owner-occupiers in Nearthorpe. The next chapter will explore the experiences of participants living in Nearthorpe and Eastland, considering the multiple reasons that people moved between places across their lives, the structuring impact of past experiences, and the role of some of the key themes from the literature highlighted in Chapter Three.

8. Understanding (im)mobility

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the first research findings, addressing the question: what factors do people draw on to explain residential mobility and immobility? The next chapter will specifically draw out people's responses to changing labour markets. Overall, this research aims to present a nuanced understanding of residential (im)mobility, using a household approach to illuminate the multiple motivations for residential mobility and immobility, between and within households. A historic focus on prioritising one main reason for moving (Clark and Onaka, 1983) simplified what is often a varied and complex decision. This chapter seeks to acknowledge the contributions made by other approaches whilst highlighting the advantages of a more rounded understanding. This broader focus includes consideration of immobility, a neglected feature of the research literature. At the outset, the chapter emphasises the complex nature of mobility decisions, moving on to situate mobility within a Bourdieusian frame of reference by highlighting the enduring impact of past experiences on behaviour. Residential mobility is, at least partly, a habitual process involving the acquisition of skills to negotiate housing systems, and relates to individual biographies.

Although this chapter foregrounds qualitative insights, a number of themes link back to the more quantitative research literature. Drawing on some of the key themes presented in Chapter Three, the relative significance of the life course in residential mobility decisions is considered. While acknowledging that household decisions are often multi-layered, diverse, and contested, there are common patterns in mobility around key life course events. The role of tenure in restricting or facilitating mobility is discussed, followed by consideration of the extent to which mobility behaviour is guided by active strategies. Utilising a biographical approach across mobility histories, enabled a key finding to emerge: that for many households, decision-making was emotional and guided by personal experiences and perceptions rather than housing strategies. Mobility decisions were seldom presented as a calculated and rational act; where they were, this was largely driven by career strategies rather than housing strategies. Finally, the chapter highlights the importance of understanding housing market context as a constraint on behaviour.

8.2 A many-layered decision

As outlined in Chapter Six, one advantage of a qualitative methodology lies in the ability to carry out in-depth investigations. Although, for example, Morrison and Clark (2011:1953) asked people to offer a primary reason and any additional reasons for moves, most respondents still only provided one reason for moving. It may be that respondents simplified their own mobility decisions in the face of structured computer-assisted and telephone interviews. By contrast, the research presented here sought to actively draw out additional motivations. Rather than simplifying behaviour into a 'model' of residential mobility, this chapter emphasises the many influences reported by households.

Very few participants could be characterised as *either* settled *or* frequently mobile; most moved between periods of relative stability (no moves for a five-year period) and longer or shorter tenures in other homes. Frequent moving (more than four moves in a five year period) in childhood was an uncommon experience, but in adulthood a number of participants had been frequent movers. This was more common in Eastland than Nearthorpe, perhaps linked to the tenure profile of the area. However, all but one participant had lived outside the area in which they now live, challenging the view (for example from key stakeholders) that people living in these areas were immobile.

Jack and Mary[10], a couple in Eastland, had been relatively stable, having moved to Grimsby nine years ago from their home on the South coast. Multiple factors were involved in both deciding to move, and where to go. The relationship with Jack's sister, with whom they lived, was deteriorating but they were priced out of the local housing market. They wanted outside space for their children and to be closer to Mary's mother, who lived in the North, to provide support. Reflecting on their move from Cornwall to Eastland, Sarah and Matt also discussed a range of motivations: lack of local jobs, high rents and fractures in the relationship with their landlord, coupled with the belief that there would be more opportunities for work and education in Eastland, as well as outside space for their child. They also had connections in Eastland, where Sarah had grown up.

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[10] Household profiles can be found in section 6.6.

Sarah: …we knew everyone here, so, getting a bit lonely wasn't we?

Matt: You was

Sarah: Well, I was

Sarah and Matt, Eastland

Sarah's mobility was partly motivated by proximity to her friendship networks. Matt described the factors involved in moving as his own "selfish reasons", wanting to be closer to his children who were in care. Moving lowered the cost of travelling to regular meetings about his children, and was "one major reason" (Matt) for his move. Interviewing only Matt, or only Sarah, may have left these different motivations unarticulated, whereas a household interview uncovered the many layers of decision-making.

In discussing the move to their current home in Nearthorpe, Yasmin and Amir highlighted different motivations. Amir reflected on his connection to the area.

> We always wanted to come back to Nearthorpe, 'cos…it's where I've been brought up and…we're a lot more comfortable with the community round here

Amir, Nearthorpe

Although Amir framed their motivation in the 'we' form, Yasmin highlighted different priorities.

> I don't feel it as strongly as Amir and his siblings feel it about this road…So, when this house became available it was a bigger house, it was a more spacious house, and it was what we were looking for obviously…wanting to start a family

Yasmin, Nearthorpe

Yasmin emphasised the practical attributes of the house and its orientation to their future needs, rather than the emotional connection to place that Amir placed at the centre of their move. Such differences in motivations could leave one person driving mobility decisions. Sarah (Eastland), for example said "'I'd like to move to Cornwall with me mum' and [Matt] went 'ok, when?'" (Sarah). Sarah's desire to be close to family and leave a difficult situation in Grimsby were key drivers for the move and the destination. Similarly Ann (Eastland) said that Mike "sort of went along with it" when she "got the idea that I wanted to be nearer town" (Ann).

Drawing out multiple reasons for mobility opens up the possibility of different and competing explanations within a household. For Mike (Eastland), transitioning from the private rented sector to owner-occupation was tied-up with a commitment to "move our relationship forward" (Mike), although this interpretation of their shared history was a surprise to Ann, who framed the move as "about having space" (Ann). In Nearthorpe, Helen had "never really moved for work", yet there were several instances in her mobility history when the household seemed to move for work reasons – to open a shop, or to run an off-licence. Significantly, these related to her husband's career. Helen's motivation for moving was not necessarily work-related, but about keeping the family together and supporting her husband: "I've always sort of followed my husband around…whatever suited him" (Helen). She felt that this reflected different gender roles; her generation were "more or less brought up to follow your husband" and did not have "so much independence as women have got today" (Helen).

Even a seemingly 'simple' account of residential mobility could be broadened through qualitative enquiry. Carol (Eastland) presented the move to her current home as a result of changes to Housing Benefit, which meant that – with her daughter planning to move from the home they shared – she would have two additional bedrooms and be subject to an unaffordable 'Bedroom Tax'. However, as the interviews progressed Carol revealed her longstanding desire to escape the neighbourhood, which she perceived as declining, and a more strained relationship with her daughter. Her mobility was therefore not a simple effect stemming from a policy change, but also driven by longer-running motivations.

Immobility can also have multiple interconnected rationales. Although Nadira (Nearthorpe) had considered moving, property prices were expensive where she was looking, and when her sister became ill she needed to remain close to provide support. Now caring for her own sick child, Nadira received support from other family members, which necessitated the immobility of several households. She was also emotionally connected to the place in which she had always lived. Aisha (Nearthorpe) too relied on a network of place-based support, but her immobility was also an assertion of control over her own pathway, which had been dominated by mobility forced by domestic violence. In these cases, immobility was a conscious choice, but for Dave (Nearthorpe) immobility

seemed habitual. Moving had not really been considered; he had everything he needed, so he would "stay put" where he was "comfy". His relationship to his home was practical – everything he needed was on his doorstep, it was convenient for family and friends. Housing was not something to be consumed, but a practical space directed to meeting particular needs (Allen, 2008).

8.3 Mobility as habitual

From a Bourdieusian perspective, people have a 'situated freedom' when they make decisions (Crossley, 2001:134); because the habitus pre-adapts the possibilities that are seen by individuals, some avenues of action are hidden from view (Bourdieu, 1990). People are guided in their decisions based on their 'feel for the game' or practical sense (Bourdieu, 2005), which draws on long running experiences associated with classed positions in the social structure (Bourdieu, 1984). Drawing out the role of the habitus is not to deny the importance of factors which have been emphasised by much of the literature around residential mobility – neighbourhood characteristics and changing space requirements – but a deeper understanding of motivations utilising a sociological framework can draw out the experiential roots of these explanations.

Forms of capital – economic, but also symbolic and cultural – generate value in specific fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), structuring schemes of perception and guiding dispositions to act (Atkinson, 2010).

Cultural capital and the negotiation of housing systems

Experience of 'the game' of negotiating housing systems can be conceptualised as a form of 'cultural capital' in the housing field. Sumera (Nearthorpe) highlighted how lack of familiarity with the 'rules of the game' hindered access to housing and support. Her father "wasn't educated, he didn't have any knowledge…it was just through some family friends…he kind of got some support" which led to their obtaining council housing. The social capital of family connections improved their cultural capital by building up a stock of knowledge with which to negotiate housing systems.

Other participants reflected on using their experience to realise mobility options that – without this stock of knowledge – may have been hidden from view. Aisha

(Nearthorpe) knew from prior experience that there was little choice in social housing allocation, but she went "to Town Hall, went and saw an MP, saw a Councillor…I were fighting for this house", trying to create an option that may not otherwise have existed. In Eastland, Carol approached the Local Authority for a transfer, but was offered older person's housing or tower block accommodation that she did not see as appropriate. Instead, she contacted a fishermen's dependent fund, visited them a couple of times and told them she "was desperate"; "I did pester…I went and phoned…a couple of times I was nearly in tears". Earlier in her housing history Carol had "pestered" the Local Authority and been given a home quickly, and she applied this lesson to her most recent move. Only Rachel (Eastland) spoke of having direct access to a contact who "got me the house", which she would not have been able to obtain "properly". Her knowledge of eligibility criteria and past experience of obtaining housing gave Rachel important capital in the social housing field.

Conversely, Ros (Eastland) demonstrated how problematic a lack of capital could be: "because we didn't know the area and how things worked up there…we couldn't get help with the council or find a private landlord". Moving to a new area, Ros no longer had a useful stock of knowledge or contacts. The cultural capital that she had in the housing field was place-specific because you had to "know where to look" to get "cheap deals". In a different context, Ros no longer knew the 'rules of the game', limiting the options that were available.

The enduring role of past experiences

The choices that people make structure their future, building on each other and intersecting with structural changes to shape the choices that are perceived as open later in life (Walby, 1997:11). In mobility, life experiences give meaning to the possibilities that exist, therefore household choices must be understood in the context of biographies. For less mobile participants, mobility was an exceptional event that they would not automatically (*habitually*) know how to manage; immobility was more natural. Those with histories of more frequent moving had the experiential resources with which to manage moves. Residential mobility was un-exceptional, routine, and for some an expected part

of their future. Similarly for households with a more middle-class orientation[11], there was no expectation of being immobile in one place, and households adapted to the realities of the labour markets and career pathways that were open to them (as argued by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:4). However, for others the experience of being mobile did not translate into a desire to be mobile. Indeed, frequent mobility could lead to a strong desire for stability.

The childhood home had an important role in shaping some participants' current housing expectations. For Sarah and Matt, this made it difficult to adjust to a different housing market context.

> S: If I'd grown up in Cornwall I'd have different expectations probably of what, constitutes as a family home…a family home to me is, is 3 bedrooms…a decent size bathroom and a garden…that's what I've always grown up knowing what a family home is...

> M: See my expectations were completely different…a lot higher

Sarah and Matt, Eastland

Housing choices were interpreted not just in the local housing market context, but in household members' biographical contexts. Similarly Ros (Eastland) perceived housing options through the lens of her stable childhood home, a place of comfort which she sought out in her own housing pathway.

Only a couple of participants had moved frequently as children, and there is no evidence that this made it more likely for them to become frequent movers as adults. However, it could influence the way that residential mobility was approached; Matt (Eastland), who moved frequently in childhood, was "used to moving big distances…it's just another day for me". Mobility was normal and unexceptional. For others, the impact of frequent moving in childhood was more complicated.

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[11] A discussion of the classification of participants by social class can be found in section 6.6

I wanted my boys to be more static, I <u>loved</u> the idea of them having one home that they always lived in, because I moved around so much, but we're not giving that to them, we've moved once already…I think I was always envious of people that'd lived in the same house all their life…And, yeah, all the houses, and even the temporary places we stayed, like we took our <u>home</u> with us, whatever the essence of home is, we made it wherever we went, and my Mum I think was really deliberate about being really positive about the moves, 'cos a lot of them were out of our control…so…I'm not particularly scared about passing that on to the kids, anymore

Jo, Nearthorpe

Jo's experience of frequent moving led her to want the opposite for her children, but they had already moved once and so had not achieved immobility. This was resolved by drawing on the positive elements of her childhood moves and the role her mother played in maintaining a (mobile) sense of home.

By contrast, Ros (Eastland) felt that the stability of her childhood was one of the reasons she had moved frequently as an adult: "I've always grown up in that house, and once we've moved I've never found anywhere to settle yet, besides here". Although there were often multiple motivations for mobility, Ros was searching for somewhere to settle, a feeling of comfort that reflected how she felt in her childhood home. Mobility had become an automatic, habitual, response to not feeling settled in an area: "I knew I wasn't gonna settle there…something always draws me back to Grimsby…I get bored and I just don't feel settled anywhere" (Ros). Ros struggled to provide reasons for some of her moves other than not feeling settled, or feeling restless. Mobility was more habitual than immobility, so in not feeling settled her natural response was to move and try somewhere else. For Rachel (Eastland), frequent mobility was also a routine event in her life. In part, this was driven by peer-group outlook, a collective habitus (Bottero, 2010) which normalised frequent mobility, staying with friends, and sofa surfing: "we were <u>all</u> doing the same things" (Rachel).

For many households that were not frequently mobile, moving was nevertheless an expected part of their future. Yasmin (Nearthorpe) felt that if they needed to move because her husband Amir lost his job "we'd be more than happy to…uproot and go elsewhere". Jo (Nearthorpe) also thought they may move for work in the future, although they would "like to stay here". Although not inevitable, residential mobility was likely, normal, and expected, particularly for

households with a more middle-class orientation where work had an important role in shaping their lives. For other participants, immobility was a more common experience. Whilst most other participants with relatively settled biographies had considered moving, this was largely discussed in relation to meeting specific needs or aspirations and was a major decision.

> I've always been a bit of a stick in the mud…'cos when [Ann]…was originally at uni…you wanted to move back to Sheffield, and I was like 'I don't wanna go!'…I've lived here all my life, I'm from round the corner really…that's as far as I've got
>
> *Mike, Eastland*

Household mobility involves negotiation, and Mike resisted moving from Grimsby. The idea of moving was uncomfortable, removing Mike from a place that he knew to somewhere unknown.

Perceptions of residential mobility are not fixed and change over time. Although this is not necessarily inconsistent with the idea of the habitus, since it can be conceptualised as adaptive (Bourdieu, 1990:53, Crossley, 2001:116, Webb *et al*, 2006:38), it is also important to consider the role of individualisation as a structural force shaping behaviour and perceptions (Bottero, 2010:4). This seems particularly evident in the way in which Carol linked residential and social mobility.

> People like seem to want more, like when we was children we, we wasn't encouraged…it was like leave school, you get a job…but nowadays…if you don't do something with your life, there is nothing here
>
> *Carol, Eastland*

Individuals needed to "do something" with their life, which necessitated moving away from a place without opportunities for advancement. Residential mobility had become an essential requirement of modern society; it was an asset, a form of capital (Kaufmann and Montulet, 2008:45). Carol's hopes for her grandchildren were for them to "do something…I just hope they do well, move out of Grimsby altogether". Being immobile was equated with failure to participate in modern society (Scheneider and Limmer, 2008:119). In Carol's experience, insecurity was not just reserved for those in lower-paid roles; she told stories of a relative in a professional role who had faced potential redundancy. Insecurity therefore affected people across occupational

spectrums, as in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) 'risk society', but the impact could be ameliorated by hard work, a notion that Atkinson (2010) argued is disproportionately internalised by the dominated. Carol reflected that she had not "encouraged" her children and "now they're stuck". The choices that Carol made in one context were seen as constraining the current choices of her daughters who faced a different labour market where qualifications and labour market participation were expected (Walby, 1997:64).

8.4 The life course

In emphasising the multiple factors, different motivations and enduring influences related to household residential mobility, the aim is to add new insights and interpret behaviour using sociological theories. However, this is not to deny the importance of insights generated by alternative approaches, particularly from the extensive quantitative literature outlined in Chapter Three. Life course explanations for residential mobility have been particularly prominent (Clark and Onaka, 1983, Kendig, 1984, Kley and Mulder, 2010, McLeod and Ellis, 1982), although there have also been strong critiques (Huang and Deng, 2006, Short, 1978, Strassmann, 2001, Winstanley *et al,* 2002). The research presented here supports the idea that there are common life events and stages that are associated with greater or lesser propensity to mobility. This has different implications, for example, many women's lives have been organised around key life events such as marriage and childcare (Walby, 1997:9). However, this commonality must not be conflated with universality, nor do particular events automatically trigger mobility; research participants had heterogeneous 'life courses', displaying different trajectories and responding to common events in different ways. Nevertheless, with these qualifications in place, a number of common patterns will be highlighted.

Youth

As noted already, periods of frequent moving occurred when participants were relatively young, between late teens and early 30s, and living alone or with friends. Frequent mobility was accompanied by a sense that moving was easy, with ties to people stronger than ties to place. When friends moved, Ros

(Eastland, 25-34[12]) went to stay with them and then moved into her own place; when they moved, she again followed them. Similarly Rachel (Eastland, 25-34) talked about going "for a night out in Leeds, where a couple of my mates had moved to, and they said 'you should move here'", so she did.

Peer groups were an important influence in the mobility of younger people. As will be shown in Chapter Ten, this continued through the life course in a diluted fashion, with locational preferences influenced by existing family and friendship networks. Narratives of frequent moving when younger demonstrated a flexible approach to housing and the ability to move quickly, in some cases facilitated by periods spent in informal living arrangements. Younger people were also less likely to need to negotiate housing decisions with other household members.

Children

Rachel's (Eastland, 25-34) life changed when she became pregnant, moving from a mobility history characterised by frequent mobility and informal accommodation to one of fixed addresses and comparative stability. Other participants with children also expressed a desire for stability in place, particularly when children attended school.

> It's not fair to keep uprooting him from house to house…every ten minutes…going from different classroom to classroom and teacher as well, having to move and everything…it wouldn't be right

> *Ros, Eastland, 25-34*

Yasmin (Nearthorpe, 25-34) wanted to be "settled" in the future because she did not want to be "uprooting and changing schools with children". Although parents expressed a desire for educational stability, where the educational offer was poorly perceived mobility may be considered. Several households in Nearthorpe talked about their desire to move in order to be closer to better schools. This was one of the few 'housing strategies' in evidence, as will be discussed more in Chapter Nine. A number of participants also talked about

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[12] In this section, in addition to case study location an age range is also given for each participant to enable the reader to easily identify the 'life course stage' of the participant

mobility in relation to providing more space for their growing families, from additional bedrooms to outside space.

Relationship formation and breakdown

First moves from the family home typically resulted from a breakdown in family relations, or by marriage/partnering creating a new household. In Nearthorpe, where a greater proportion of participants had a degree, the most frequent reason for moving out of the family home was to go to university (five of 11 participants), closely followed by marriage (four participants). In Eastland, family relationship breakdown was more common (four of 13 participants) than in Nearthorpe (two of 11 participants). Mike (Eastland, 45-54) was "booted out" by his older brother and sister; Rachel (Eastland, 25-34) left the family home after increasing arguments; and James (Eastland, 18-24) moved into the YMCA after "my mum kicked me out". These moves often resulted in temporary living arrangements, such as staying with friends, rather than longer-term housing.

Relationship formation and marriage was a common reason for first moves among participants in both areas, particularly for women. Tina (Eastland, 45-54) moved out of the family home at 16 when she "met a boy…I moved in there and that was a bit of a disaster so, then I went back to me mum's again". Carol (Eastland, 55-64) was 17 when she married and moved out of the family home; Helen and Sue (Nearthorpe, 65-74 and 45-54) were both 19. Relationship formation and breakdown continued to influence the mobility behaviour of many participants as they moved in and out of different relationships across their lives.

Old age

Older participants were not immobile, but mobility for many of these participants was bounded or tied to a specific purpose. Although Carol wanted to move to a better area, she was limited by her age and family support.

> I'm older now, there's me mam, there's me grandchildren, I couldn't, I wouldn't do it now, I wouldn't know where to start…I won't go anywhere now…I might go a bit further into like Cleethorpes

> *Carol, Eastland, 55-64*

Residential mobility was presented as something that was seemingly no longer for her. Family support networks were also a limiting factor, as was the case in

Helen and Sue's (both Nearthorpe, 65-74 and 45-54) narratives, which illuminated intra-household negotiation. Although Sue wanted to escape neighbourhood decline, she countered that she was too old and had invested too much in the house to contemplate moving. However, her daughter wanted her to leave the neighbourhood for a smaller property with support nearby as she got older. Helen had also faced pressure from her daughter to move: "her Dad…made her promise that she would look after me…and, she said 'I can't do that Mum, from 300 miles away'". Mobility in older age was partly related to reconciling housing with anticipated future needs, while these experiences suggested that decision-making was not the preserve of a 'head of household' but could encompass a wider network. Immobility could spread through these family networks, for example Helen's resolve not to move again tied her daughter to the area.

Bereavement

The death of a spouse or partner could have a profound and long-lasting effect. Justine and Carol were residentially mobile in order to escape painful memories.

> My husband's been dead over four years, but it feels like yesterday…I don't know if going back there would be a help, or it…would go further into my heart
>
> *Justine, Eastland, 55-64*

> I just kept having the memory of him collapsing on the floor and dying…and I just don't know why…I just wanted out, I just thought 'I can't live here, there's too many memories'
>
> *Carol, Eastland, 55-64*

Memories were encoded in the fabric of the home and residential mobility represented an attempt to escape a painful event. However, Carol regretted moving at such an emotional time, feeling afterwards that she made the wrong decision and that a more rational consideration of her options may have been better.

Death also often represented a transfer of wealth or resources to another person, impacting on their future housing options. For example, Dave (Nearthorpe, 55-64) bought a house with money inherited from his father; Justine bought a house with money inherited from her husband; Sue bought a

house when her parents died at a young age; and Helen moved into her mother's home after she died.

8.5 Tenure

The role of tenure in residential mobility has been discussed in many studies of residential mobility (Böheim and Taylor, 2000, Feijten and van Ham, 2010, Groves, 2010, Kendig, 1984, Speare, 1974, Wallace, 2004), as well as in the wider policy context (Groves, 2010, Shapps, 2009, Sprigings and Allen, 2005). Tenure is thought to influence residential mobility by placing different costs on mobility, with owner-occupiers facing higher costs to moving (Böheim and Taylor, 2000). As noted in Chapter Two, the tenure structure of the UK housing market is changing, with a growing private rented sector and reduction and delay in homeownership. Although the expectation may be more fluidity among private renters, barriers to mobility should not be underestimated. Furthermore, as has already been noted, in this research tenure is confounded by age as those living in rented accommodation were younger and moved more frequently than (typically older) owner-occupiers.

Participants rarely explicitly drew on housing tenure as an important element in mobility decisions. Although there are significant transactional and time costs associated with moves in the owner-occupied sector, owning a property did not necessarily foster immobility; much depended on the resources available to the household and the motivation to move. Nevertheless, some participants linked a sense of stability with owner-occupation. Sarah (Eastland) spent most of her childhood in the same house "'cos that was their own house", but when it was sold they "moved round from rented for a few years". Yasmin (Nearthorpe) linked her desire to own a home with stability, security, and feeling "settled". Only one participant (Hasan, Nearthorpe) articulated a strong narrative of being trapped by owner-occupation.

Although in general participants renting privately moved more frequently and spent less time at each property than owner-occupiers or those in social housing, this trend was confounded by life stage, since frequent movers in the private rented sector were also younger. It is therefore difficult to separate out the influence of life course and tenure factors, particularly as participants often

did not articulate these factors in their own explanations for mobility and immobility. However, there were some tenure-specific motivations for moving among private renters, such as the breakdown in the relationship with the landlord and dissatisfaction with the condition of the property. Some moves were therefore linked, at least in part, with tenure-specific forms of dissatisfaction. Although these reasons could also be a feature of the social rented sector, they were rarely drawn on by participants.

Private renters moved more frequently but they still faced costs – moving items, deposits, redecorating – to realising mobility. Rachel (Eastland), for example, had taken out a social loan to cover the cost of her last move; she could not borrow more until it had been repaid, making any future mobility unlikely. Many participants negotiated with landlords, performing in-kind exchanges. James (Eastland) fixed up the house in lieu of paying a deposit, while Chris (Eastland) fitted a new bathroom for his landlord.

Mobility into and within the social housing sector was limited. Some participants had experienced social housing as a scarce resource years ago, for example when she was first married Carol (Eastland) and her family spent three years on the waiting list, living with her mother until they were offered a council home. Sue (Nearthorpe) explained that when she was a child people had to negotiate waiting lists: "your dad then automatically…put your name down when you're 16, and then you're way up ladder when it comes to wanting a place". Perhaps surprisingly, in more recent years Ros was able to move quickly into a social housing property when she was inadequately housed in the private sector. However, she found herself unable to move within the sector.

> They just…wasn't interested because as far as they saw it, I was in a place, I was sheltered, with my little 'un, I was in an ideal house, it wasn't too big, wasn't too small, no overcrowding or owt like that, so they had no reason to rehouse me
>
> *Ros, Eastland*

Ros' experience reflects the shift from waiting lists to prioritisation in allocations policies. Without a priority need to be rehoused, she was unable to move, even in an area of relatively low demand.

Tenure-specific policies could also impact on mobility behaviour. For Carol (Eastland), the introduction of the 'Bedroom Tax' was a key element in the

timing of her move. Conversely, Aisha (Nearthorpe) was resisting the pressure to move having already started "all over again" in her current home. Other participants receiving Housing Benefit in the private rented sector had also seen a shortfall in their rent; although this was often highlighted as the 'Bedroom Tax', the shortfall was likely caused by reforms to Local Housing Allowance.

Tenure was rarely highlighted by participants in their discussion of moves. The extent to which tenure impacts on mobility depends on the strength of drivers to be mobile and the resources to which households had access. Although owner-occupiers faced significant transactional costs, this did not deter moves. Conversely, although the costs of moves were lower for those renting privately, the resources required were still significant. When the need to move was strong, households drew on a number of strategies, such as abandoning properties, selling belongings to fund deposits, staying with friends, and negotiating with landlords. As Sarah (Eastland) reflected, "if you really wanna move, that badly, you'll find the money, one way or another".

8.6 Housing strategies and careers

The idea of a housing career featured prominently in some explanations for residential mobility (Feijten and van Ham, 2010, Kendig, 1984, McLeod and Ellis, 1982). However, changing UK housing market trends towards private renting suggest that the notion of a housing career may be lessening in relevance. In this research, no households presented their housing histories in terms of a 'career', moving in a strategic way to increase housing resources (for example, from renting to owning). For some participants it was difficult to even present active reasons behind their decisions to move or remain in a place. As Allen (2009) argued, people frequently just "do things" and so have no reasons to give. There may be an instinctual and habitual element to this decision-making. While practical considerations (proximity to facilities) and emotional connections (memories of places, 'feelings' about a property) did feature in narratives, strategic calculations were largely absent. Often moves were not the result of careful weighing up of the costs and benefits (monetary or otherwise) of moving or remaining in place, although this has been privileged in much literature (Böheim and Taylor, 2000, Brown and Moore, 1970, Quigley and Weinberg, 1977), over more emotional and habitual explanations (Crossley,

2001, Livingston *et al*, 2010, Moon, 1995). This may be because the notion of a housing pathway is a useful analytical tool but one which lacks a theory of practice to understand human action in the world.

The process of making decisions was not necessarily linear. The anticipated standard model – considering a move, deciding to move, searching, and actual mobility – was confounded by participants' descriptions of their behaviour. Active searching between locations and properties was not a universal feature of mobility behaviour. Some households were presented with an opportunity to move before they had considered where, or whether, to move. These decisions involved choosing to accept, or not, a specific option. This was most common when households heard about properties through word of mouth, or by chance. James (Eastland) moved when "someone I know just kind of said it's available…you should probably go for it, and we did". Sarah (Eastland) was staying with her mother when their landlord came to visit; her mother said "'she needs a place to stay'…he went '…well there's a flat down there, d'you want it?'". Even though Yasmin and Amir (Nearthorpe) were "quite comfortable where we were", when a property owned by a family member became vacant they "just moved straight in". This was not solely a feature of renting; looking to buy, Jo (Nearthorpe) "went out driving, like 'let's just look for houses'…and we saw this, and we just rang up…and somebody came out straight away to show us round". Strategic calculations between different options were not part of the mobility process for many households. When presented with an acceptable option compared to their current housing, households may move without considering a range of other possible pathways.

Across their lives, many participants moved to escape negative situations. On these occasions, the idea of planned, strategic mobility had little relevance, as the primary focus was on what they were leaving, rather than where they were going to. Mobility was reactive, a way of exerting some control over their living situation (Bartlett, 1997, Skelton, 2002). When he was kicked out by his mum, James was "desperate" and moved into the YMCA. His first moves were fractured as he cycled between family, friends, and the YMCA, and housing pathways came to a premature end through eviction or abandonment. Ros similarly moved quickly to escape problems in her neighbourhood.

> You had loads of kids rioting up and down the street…So that made me move…Proctor Street…was the first convenient thing that come up, so I just took it for quickness, and then obviously I'd basically moved from one bad area to another, but I knew Proctor Street was a bad area anyway, but it couldn't have been any worse than what I was going through
>
> *Ros, Eastland*

Moving to another "bad area" may be seen as irrational, unlikely to be successful in the long-term, but in moving Ros did *something* to change her housing situation. The focus was not on following a long-term housing career, but on escaping a difficult living environment in the short-term. The consideration of long-term implications perhaps requires a more privileged position, with fewer immediate pressures on a household.

To the extent that strategies existed, residential mobility was driven more by strategic career pathways than a strategic housing pathways. Professional households with a more middle-class orientation presented the freedom to choose between a range of options.

> I mean it could've be anywhere within sort of like, I…geographically preferred Greater Manchester, South and West Yorkshire…I went for a couple of interviews and…didn't like the employer…or they didn't like me
>
> *Zahir, Nearthorpe*

> Majority of jobs that I were looking at were actually…London, Northampton, Southampton, Birmingham, at a couple of points we were very, very close to moving to…Northampton was one, Leicester was one…Birmingham was one as well, but then this came up
>
> *Amir, Nearthorpe*

These households had a sense of choice and freedom in their mobility decisions. Although all households faced some degree of constraint, these examples emphasised the range of options and choices, of different possible pathways, and of calculations about where they would be willing to move under particular circumstances. Strategic calculations about where to move and what it would provide were largely driven by careers, for example in Amir's case the household nearly moved to Northampton to enable him to progress his career, but the housing costs were too high compared to his salary. Strategies were also evident in relation to future moves to improve children's educations prospects.

8.7 Housing market and affordability

The housing market context provides an important backdrop to mobility decisions, and could provide one explanation for the lack of focus on 'housing careers' by participating households. Although the desirability of home-ownership has been suggested by some models (Feijten and van Ham, 2010, Kendig, 1984, McLeod and Ellis, 1982), its absence from narratives may reflect the local housing market context. Although house prices in Eastland and Nearthorpe have fallen significantly (see Chapter Seven), the volume of sales has also fallen, suggesting that restrictions on mortgage lending may have blocked off 'housing careers' for many people, while some homeowners faced negative equity.

Participants were certainly aware of the housing market context, talking about the cost of housing and the barriers to moving to more desirable areas (Cole *et al*, 2007, Kearns and Parkes, 2003). Jack and Mary (Eastland), for example, could not afford the size of property they wanted where they lived on the South coast, so they began looking in other areas. They were attracted to Grimsby specifically because of the lower cost of housing: "when we saw the price of the properties we nearly fell off our seats…same price as what a dustbin was down [on the South coast]" (Jack). Although the housing market was lower in Grimsby, households were still restricted by price; Sarah was restricted to moving into a "rough" area, Rachel a "bad area". Low demand therefore facilitated cycling between properties locally, but did not support mobility to higher demand areas.

Zahir described his house search, with people out-bidding each other to live in more desirable south-west Sheffield. Although "I could've…gone to that side…on the salary…I don't want to get sucked into that". Instead, Zahir presented the area as changing around him.

> A lot of the educated young people growing up here, they could've gone somewhere else, but they're not…you've got people, trained teachers from Leicester coming here
>
> *Zahir, Nearthorpe*

The narrative of moving to Nearthorpe is framed in terms of rejecting participation in a competitive housing market. Presenting a narrative of choice rested on their ability to see Nearthorpe as being attractive to other

professionals, to people who – like them – had options to live elsewhere. It was somewhere for people with choices to *actively* choose to be as opposed to a place that people ended up through *lack* of choice. However, his wife Sumera (Nearthorpe) noted that "we would love to move areas into a better place, but we can't afford to". Jo and Steve (Nearthorpe) also presented their move as one of choice from a range of places, although again the housing market constrained, with Jo later reflecting that "this was probably all we could've afforded".

Although the housing market was constraining, many households still exercised choices within boundaries, making subtle distinctions between places at the local level. Although Carol (Eastland) needed to move quickly, she was unwilling to accept inappropriate housing like tower blocks: "they can give you one o' them tomorrow". Instead, Carol was able to use the informational resources she had built up in order to secure a more desirable property. In the private rented market, other households were also able to exercise choice over where they lived.

> We had quite a lot of offers though before that…and one was…Speare Road, which I have heard is not very desirable, so I said…'we want to move to Grimsby, but we're not that desperate'…I thought, no, if we're gonna move we still want it to be in a nice, quiet area
>
> *Sarah, Eastland*

Although Sarah and Matt wanted to move to Grimsby and were constrained in terms of the financial resources they had, they nevertheless made active choices about where they were willing to go. The high proportion of available private rented housing in Eastland provided more options for people living in that area when compared to the tighter owner-occupied housing market in Nearthorpe.

> There wasn't any houses for sale at that time…they were horrid places, there were no piping, electric wiring, no windows, no doors, no handles...and this was the only place that I could find
>
> *Hasan, Nearthorpe*

The housing market was such that Hasan did not find any other properties he could have afforded in a decent condition, in the area that he wanted. At the

time of the research, Hasan felt trapped in the area, unable to move because of the weak housing market.

8.8 Conclusion

One contribution to knowledge is made by using a household, biographical approach to understanding mobility decisions emphasising the multiple, competing, and inter-related reasons that people move or remain in places, rather than ranking or prioritising one main reason. Explanations for mobility which have focused on housing needs and aspirations shifting along a pre-defined and common pathway – such as life course stages, seen as proxies for uniform housing requirements, or a housing career focused on housing consumption – are too simplistic. By seeking to understand residential mobility behaviour at the small scale using a sociological frame of reference, the research presented here aims to generate an in-depth understanding of the varying motivations that exist between and within households.

Carrying out research at the household level has enabled an understanding not only of the many reasons for mobility, but also immobility. This responds to calls from Coulter and van Ham (2013) to analyse why people do not move, and Cooke (2011) to challenge the image of the hypermobile actor, free from ties, moving easily from place to place. While the results presented here draw out some of the barriers to mobility faced by households, they do not support the image of households trapped in 'declining' places as represented in some strands of policy literature (HM Treasury and DWP, 2003, Duncan Smith, 2011, Grayling, 2011, Shapps, 2009). Although particular needs, such as support from social networks (Dawkins, 2006, Hickman, 2010), may fix people to places, there were also often positive associations with places that promoted immobility. These issues will be explored in more depth in Chapter Ten.

An in-depth understanding of mobility behaviour requires research that extends beyond the immediate circumstances surrounding a move. Much existing research has been temporally limited, considering only the immediate period before or after a move (Bailey and Livingston, 2007, Böheim and Taylor, 2000, Clark and Onaka, 1983, Kendig, 1984, Kley and Mulder, 2010, McLeod and Ellis, 1982). In an influential article, Halfacree and Boyle (1993:337) called for

migration to be seen as "a part of our past, our present and our future; as part of our biography". A small number of studies have sought to apply biographical approaches to understanding mobility in particular contexts (Clark, 2009, Winstanley *et al*, 2002). Linking this with a Bourdieusian framework illuminates the enduring habits and dispositions that influence behaviour. Consequently, the results presented here emphasise the embedded and historically situated nature of decision-making, something that will be a recurring theme throughout the following chapters, particularly Chapter Eleven, which presents biographical analysis.

A qualitative approach to understanding residential mobility has the potential to explore not just the range of factors involved in deciding to move, or not, but also *why* and *how* individuals and households make these decisions across their lives. Attempting to develop catch-all models for mobility has led to an overly rational framework for household decision-making. In-depth examination of these decisions suggests that housing strategies are largely absent, and that decision-making sometimes proceeds in a non-linear way, with unexpected outcomes. This was especially the case when people were seeking to escape difficult living environments, suggesting that following strategic pathways perhaps requires a position of relative comfort. Allen (2008) argued that much research has misconceptualised working-class interest in housing, imposing middle-class values of consumption and aspiration and ignoring practical relations to the home as simply a dwelling. Allen's (2008) argument conflicts with theories of housing strategies and careers in particular, which present home-ownership as a universal goal (Feijten and van Ham, 2010, Kendig, 1984, McLeod and Ellis, 1982). However, in this research households with a more middle-class orientation also failed to foreground housing as an aspirational or strategic good, suggesting that their relation to housing may also have been misconceptualised and essentialised by Allen (2008), a point also made by Flint (2011:83). Indeed, strategies were more apparent in relation to career pathways than housing pathways. The next chapter explicitly focuses on the role of work in residential mobility behaviour, considering how people's experiences of work across their lives structures their perception of the opportunities that are open to them, and influences their responses to changing labour markets in post-industrial neighbourhoods.

9. "Is it worth leaving your family and friends and the place you know?" Residential mobility and work

9.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to address the research question: in what ways do experiences and perceptions of labour markets influence households' residential mobility behaviour and intentions? It begins by discussing participants' experiences of work, suggesting that experiences of finding work and of flexibility and insecurity in employment play an important role in how people perceive the opportunities that may be open to them. The second section argues that these experiences shape perceptions of local and wider labour markets. The third major section in this chapter discusses people's responses to the labour markets in which they were situated. Responses are grouped into the broad categories of residential mobility, adaptation, resistance, and a future focus.

Although immobility is not problematised by all government policy – for example, the Big Society agenda (Cameron, 2011) and planning policy (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015) rely on stable populations to set priorities for local communities – some policy literature more focused on economic growth suggests that people who are out of work or living in weaker labour market areas should be mobile in order to access better employment opportunities (BBC News, 2010, Leunig, 2008, Leunig and Swaffield, 2007, Shapps, 2009). However, the research presented here suggests that work-related residential mobility was relatively uncommon. The contingent nature of many people's work meant that it held a less privileged place in the organisation of the rest of their life; indeed, for many this insecurity increased the importance of being stable in one place as they moved in and out of work. Other roles and relationships could become more prominent as markers of identity and routes to fulfilment, challenging some of the policy emphasis on work as a route to psycho-social wellbeing (as discussed in Chapter Two). However, immobility was not a non-response to labour market change. Rather, participants demonstrated a range of responses to labour market challenges. While for more professional households residential mobility for work was more likely, those oriented towards lower-paid roles demonstrated different responses, from adjusting their expectations downwards, to resisting this expectation.

9.2 Experiences of work

Experiences of work-related residential mobility

Many participants had family members who had moved long distances for work in the past. Helen's (Nearthorpe, 65-74, retired[13]) mother moved from Jarrow when she was 14 to work as a servant in a house in the South; migration was "the norm in those days, there was no work ". Other families also had histories of industry-related mobility that would have been common in Nearthorpe (Sheffield) and Eastland (Grimsby). The steel works attracted international migrants, such as Nadira's (35-44, looking after family) father to Nearthorpe. In Eastland, the fishing industry necessitated highly mobile lives.

> We'd grow up not even really knowing our dads 'cos he used to go away for three weeks and it was in one day, land the next day, day off the next day and gone the next, and that was your life…for years and years

Carol, Eastland, 55-64, permanently sick/disabled

The context of such mobility is important; for Helen's mother it was "the norm" to move if work could not be found locally, while for fishing families spending long periods apart for work was habitual, it was your life. Although households had these experiences of work-related mobility, it was relatively uncommon across their own biographies. While there were often multiple influences, only four out of 12 participants in Nearthorpe, and three of 13 in Eastland had moved for work reasons in the past, including starting a new job, opening a business, and to access better work opportunities. It was not a prominent feature of most moving histories.

A qualitative approach enabled exploration of the ways in which moving could be bound up with work, even when households did not frame their mobility in this way. Although Helen had moved several times in relation to running small businesses, these moves were prompted by her husband, so for Helen they related more to keeping the household together and supporting her husband in pursuing these opportunities. Jo (Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family)

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[13] In this chapter, in addition to case study location an age range and employment status is also given for each participant to enable the reader to easily identify relevant labour market characteristics

reflected on the complex motivations of employment-driven moves within her network of friends, pointing out that although "they move for work…they're also choosing a job that they wanna do". For these professional households, being mobile was more than moving for work; it was a route to achieving fulfilment.

Some research has suggested that those seeking work are more likely to move to look for work than those in work (Böheim and Taylor, 2000). However, only one participating household had moved when unemployed in order to access (perceived) better work opportunities, and this was one of several motivating factors. Sarah (Eastland, 25-34, unemployed) talked about her experience of the job market in Cornwall: "there was…hardly any job opportunities, at least here [Grimsby] you've got a few agencies you could…maybe get a job". However, when they "found out that the factories all closed…I think there's about five left…out of 50" Matt (Eastland, 25-34, unemployed) focused on improving his future employability by going "back to college, crack on with the course". Despite finding out that their initial picture of the availability of employment was out-of-date, the household still moved. This supports the idea that they were not driven by a rational calculation of labour market opportunities.

Work-related mobility was more common among those who were in work and seeking to pursue a particular career. As noted in Chapter Eight, where housing strategies existed, these were largely driven by the career strategies of more middle-class households. Zahir (Nearthorpe, 34-45, Local Authority employee), for example, had moved several times in relation to pursuing career opportunities and moving up a career ladder. As will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, households where people were seeking to pursue a career pathway were more likely to perceive a wider labour market within which they could operate, and more likely to consider residential mobility. This suggests that mobility for work is a classed experience and provides qualitative support for quantitative research on aggregate population flows that demonstrated the uneven experience of mobility (Bailey and Turok, 2000, Champion, 1999, Champion and Coombes, 2007, McCormick, 1997, Turok, 1999).

The importance of networks in finding work

The relatively modest role of work in the past mobility of households may be linked to experiences of accessing work. Many people, especially those in low-paid roles, used word of mouth contacts to find out about employment opportunities, thus spatially restricting search behaviour and making immobility an important part of accessing job opportunities (Smith, 2005, Watt, 2003). If people perceived an increasingly insecure labour market, remaining close to these networks – through which they had successfully found work in the past – could be seen as even more important, even if they may deliver imperfect information (Ritchie *et al*, 2005:50, White and Green, 2011). As White and Green (2015) noted, localised social networks can play a key role in shaping how people perceive the places in which they live, extending or limiting young people's cognitive spaces and awareness of employment opportunities. In the research presented here, experiences of insecurity promoted connections with others 'like them' who could provide links to opportunities.

> Her mum, was the supervisor first, I then turned around and said 'well if you have a spot open up, give me a shout', and that's what she did
>
> *Matt, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed*

> I don't feel like I would struggle to find employment…because of connections that I've got, with [the school]...I've kind of put things in place…to keep that employment door open
>
> *Jo, Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family*

> I definitely need to keep contacts in the construction industry…I know people all over really…in terms of through work, because in case, you know, maybe work's low
>
> *Amir, Nearthorpe, 25-34, surveyor*

Although the use of networks in finding work was common, there were important classed differences. While Matt used existing family and friendship networks to find work, Jo and Amir talked about building networks specifically to facilitate work opportunities. This was a more planned, future-oriented approach. Amir, for example, was building networks in locations in which he perceived more opportunities for his career, while Matt used local networks in a more ad hoc way.

Narratives of contingency and insecurity in work

If people's search behaviour had implications for work-related mobility, so too did their experiences of work. Almost all participants talked about changes in conditions of employment towards greater contingency and insecurity, whether through agency work, fixed-term contracts, not having guaranteed hours, or balancing multiple jobs. This was particularly prominent in Eastland, where factory work was dominated by agencies. For participants working in non-professional roles, many work histories showed mobility between different low-skill jobs, interspersed by periods of unemployment or economic inactivity. A common refrain was "I've done all sorts" (Sarah, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed). This suggests 'churning' at the bottom of the labour market, and situates personal experiences within the labour market trends that were identified in Chapter Seven and the broader research literature (Charlesworth, 2000, Lupton, 2003, McDowell, 2003, Shildrick *et al*, 2012, Smith, 2005). The experiences of insecurity discussed here reduce the likelihood of flexibility manifesting through residential mobility, because stability in place performed an important function in helping people to manage an insecure work context.

In Eastland, many participants told stories about their experiences of highly flexible labour markets. James (25-34, unemployed) described the "random" way that hours were distributed in factories, "calling people in the morning and just giving you what people had called in sick with". For Sarah and Matt, this flexibility was a common experience.

> I went back there on the third day and they turned around and said 'yeah we haven't got any work for you, so I don't know why they've sent you', and it took me a two hour walk to get home
>
> *Matt, 25-34, unemployed*

> If you're not worried about stability of work, you can go and get work. It's like Matt was offered…one shift
>
> *Sarah, 25-34, unemployed*

Experiences of a highly flexible agency working environment made people question the type and quality of work available, as Sarah demonstrates. Carol (55-64, permanently sick/disabled) talked about agencies suddenly saying "'we don't need you, we'll ring you'…so if you get a full week's work in, you're lucky".

This contrasted with her own experience of the labour market in Grimsby when she was younger.

> If you wanted a job in a factory, it was decent money…that's where the money was to be earned, if you wasn't qualified to do anything …But now, you go to town, to an agency
>
> *Carol, Eastland*

Factory work was seen as previously providing the security needed to support a family or buy a home. Erosion in conditions at the base of the occupational structure can be seen in the expansion of low-grade, low-paid jobs, which are less able to sustain households, resulting in the expansion of in-work benefits (Roberts, 2009:360). The dominance of agencies created a sense of persistent insecurity. Rather than freeing people from ties to place, these changes could have the opposite effect, as people relied on place-based networks of support to manage in a volatile employment market. Although people often talked about luck and chance in their experiences of finding and keeping work, the consistency with which different people recounted their experiences of insecure, low-pay work speaks to the importance of the combined impact of class, place and economic context, as Charlesworth (2000) argued.

Contingency was less prominent in the work experiences of those living in Nearthorpe; agencies were not as dominant and more households were working in professional roles. This suggests that the wider labour market context is important in the employment outcomes of those living in low-income communities (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001:2293), with Nearthorpe situated in a comparatively stronger labour market area. However, flexibility was an important part of the narratives of those working in lower-paid roles. Hasan (Nearthorpe, 55-64, unemployed) had worked in cleaning jobs where the low-pay and shift work meant that "these days you won't be able to get a proper straightforward waged job, you have to have two jobs, one early morning, one evening". Similarly Aisha (Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family) noted, "I've got qualifications, I've been to college, what job did I get? Nothing. I had to do three jobs just to live". Her experience challenged the pervasive discourse that individual hard work results in rewards.

Longevity of service was no guarantee of security, as Dave (Nearthorpe, 55-64, unemployed) had found. Having worked for the same firm for 37 years, he was

made redundant, and now found himself at the back of the queue for work. Now long-term unemployed, Dave was looking for work collecting trolleys at supermarkets. He was perhaps typical of MacDonald *et al's* (2014) description of economically dispossessed older, working-class, long-term unemployed people, facing multiple barriers to working, from ill health to lack of qualifications.

Research was being carried out during a recession and severe contraction in public funding, and a number of participants working in professional roles found their jobs under threat. Although they had relative day-to-day security when compared to those in low-paid roles, these participants also experienced insecurity, telling tales of restructuring and job loss.

> I don't know if my, my job's secure or not
>
> *Ann, Eastland, 35-44, third sector employee*

> Me niece…found out her boss had been made redundant, and she took over her boss's work for her pay, not the bosses pay…well she was happy that she kept her job
>
> *Carol, Eastland, 55-64, permanently sick/disabled*

> I could've taken time off work you know for a couple o' years…but then it's like, getting back into work…I was looking at it in a way that I'm quite lucky I'm still in a job, 'cos there's so many people that are losing jobs
>
> *Sumera, Nearthorpe, 35-44, education employee*

The threat of losing one's job was pervasive even for those in more professional roles, and reflects broader trends towards casualisation of employment (Sassen, 1996, Shildrick *et al*, 2012). This provides some support for the idea of a 'risk society' in which the threat of downward social mobility is present for many groups, not merely those at the bottom of the employment ladder (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:37, Kesselring, 2008:77). Participants repeatedly referred to the fear of losing their job as a moderating influence on their behaviour or people they knew, leading to the acceptance of poorer conditions of employment. Although Mike (Eastland, 45-54, care worker) wanted to leave his current job he also felt "lucky 'cos nobody's been saying to us 'we think we're laying people off'". Ros (Eastland, 25-34, looking after family) talked about friends who were "scared" to ask about the security of their job, but "looking for back-up work".

However, those working in more professional roles arguably experienced comparative stability, contracted for a few years rather than facing one or two days of work.

> When the contract run out funding wasn't renewed, then…ended up taking a short term job in [North West]…that was a nine month contract…after that it was another temporary contract…it's like the first three or four years was on contract but…I was progressing…so it wasn't too bad
>
> *Zahir, Nearthorpe, 35-44, Local Authority employee*

The relative length of these contracts enabled households to develop a more planned approach to securing work. For participants like Zahir, the insecurity associated with fixed-term contracts was also compensated for by a sense of progress along a career ladder. Yasmin (Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family) also talked about making a "sacrifice" in considering moving, if it would help the household achieve the strategic aim of a stronger career position and greater stability. Those operating in the low-pay economy were less able to off-set compromises against strategic gains.

For good reason, then, considerable flexibility in the *type* of work undertaken – bar work, security, cleaning, call centres, sales, and factory work – was not matched by flexibility in the *location* of employment. Flexibility was non-geographic because people's labour market experiences highlighted the challenging nature of insecure employment and disrupting benefit claims. Far from flexibility in work freeing people from ties to place (Bauman, 2000, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), at the bottom of the employment ladder it can inhibit mobility. Participants needed a level of security to be able to re-enter or sustain paid employment, or to move to take up work. As Rachel (Eastland, 25-34, unemployed) commented, she would move for work "if it was something with a career prospect, even though it was maybe not financially that much better off to begin with, if you know you're going somewhere, then I'd do it". However, the types of work on offer provided few guarantees, reducing the likelihood of residential mobility to find this work. Experiences of instability in employment therefore structured the way in which possible opportunities were evaluated by households. Participants with more defined career paths were more likely to talk about mobility in relation to future employment; the pay-offs, whether now or in the future, were greater and the roles offered more security.

Although changes in working relations may have resulted in people across the occupational spectrum adapting to the conditions of labour markets (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), they have adapted in different – and importantly, in classed – ways; people do not experience insecurity and flexibility in even ways, as Atkinson (2008:13) argued, and their responses are also likely to differ.

Experiences of work and personal identity

Despite their experience of insecurity in the labour market, for some participants work was still seen as having inherent benefits, promoting "self-respect" (Rachel, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed), "self-esteem" (Helen, Nearthorpe, 65-74, retired), and "self-worth" (Sarah, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed). These benefits accrue to the individual, suggesting the potential for work to play an important role in self-identity. However, it has been argued that increasing flexibility and insecurity in work makes it an increasingly difficult field around which to construct an identity (Bauman, 2005:28), as James' experience suggests.

> I like to get physically involved…even labouring or something like that, just summit I could get my teeth into, just summit a bit more <u>alive</u> than processing…Or like a job you can get mates out of as well and just become a team…nothing seems to be like that anymore though
>
> *James, Eastland, 18-24, unemployed*

Like Willis' (1977) working-class lads, James sought a work environment in which he could assert his masculine identity through physically demanding labour, somewhere that friendships could develop. Food processing work had not enabled him to meet this need; there was a sense that the loss of traditional industry had removed an arena in which he could legitimately perform this identity (Butler, 1999). Instead, he was now focused on just getting "some money making job on the go", supporting Bauman's (2005:66) assertion that the "workplace is still a source of living, but not of life-meaning".

Yet it does not necessarily follow that identities take on a displaced, flexible quality; instead people may seek meaning through other routes, such as attachment to people and places, as will be argued in Chapter Ten. As Nordenmark and Strandh (1999) argued, the impact of unemployment on mental wellbeing depends on the centrality of work to someone's identity, and

some people are able to adapt to unemployment by finding other significant roles through which to ground their identity (for example, motherhood). More complex was the role of underemployment, which is thought to have similar economic and psychological consequences to unemployment, but without the corresponding coping resources that can be developed by the long-term unemployed (Ritchie *et al*, 2005:30).

Many participants challenged the notion that work automatically played a central role in self-identity, and suggested that its relative importance could change over time in response to other events (Nordenmark and Strandh, 1999). This was particularly the case when people became parents, changing the way they perceived the opportunities that were open to them.

> Being older and having children…if I put a lot more work into building the business, and if I wanted to work Saturdays and Sundays…or travel to Sheffield or Manchester, I could've probably done it. But…it's been nice being there when the kiddies are young and being able to do stuff with the kids, and pick them up from school…that would always have been more important to me than building a business
>
> *Jack, Eastland, 55-64, supermarket employee*

Jack balanced work with other aspects of family life, including at times concentrating on facilitating his wife's recovery from mental health crises. Although Jack was working, it was not the central organising force of the household. Ros also talked about the important role of childcare in her life.

> You don't wanna be the one that misses out on everything…if you was working and you have a baby, you miss out on the first steps, the first words…it doesn't just stop at being a baby, there's all different things all through their lives…they learn more, they develop more, and chances are you're gonna be missing out
>
> *Ros, Eastland, 25-34, looking after family*

Caring for children is work outside the formal labour market, a role which is more likely to be carried out by women (Craig and Powell, 2011, Lutz, 2007, Speakman and Marchington, 1999, Walby, 1997). Ros' fear of missing out by working outside the home draws on deep-seated cultural and normative expectations about motherhood and parenting (Duncan and Irwin, 2004, Smith, 2005). Rachel (Eastland, 25-34, unemployed) also talked about restrictions on her ability to work due to childcare: "I'm not having him being picked up by

strangers or whatever and, I don't like the idea of bouncing him from babysitter to babysitter". Aisha also emphasised the need to care for her daughter:

> I've put so much work into her, and she's so bright…I've put that effort in…it's upsetting me that's gonna go to waste…I'm not gonna have that time with her if I'm working

Aisha, Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family

These households – all single parent families – were centred on spending time with children; formal paid work in the labour market had a less prominent place. There was considerable resistance to the idea of using paid childcare in order facilitate employment. This links to notions of respectability, the idea that caring for children and performing the role of 'mother' is a particularly important route to legitimate ways of being in the world for working-class women (Skeggs, 1997). For women who did work, for example Helen and Carol's daughters, the informal childcare that they provided was a crucial part in facilitating their employment, which would otherwise be financially impossible. This will be discussed in Chapter Ten.

Others demonstrated the negative impact work could have.

> At that particular point [the Jobcentre] were putting quite a lot of pressure on, and I just fell to pieces…I ended up on long-term Incapacity Benefit, I became reclusive, I lost all my confidence, wouldn't go out of the house

Mary, Eastland, 45-54, catering employee

Mary's experience supports the notion that for some people, it can be counter-productive to push people towards working before they are ready (Ritchie *et al*, 2005). Although Mary had started working again after a long period receiving Incapacity Benefit, in between the interviews work pressures reached a critical point: "In the space of three and a half weeks I have really, really lost my confidence, and I was feeling lower than I've felt in the last five years". Shortly after this interview, Mary left her job. General claims about the benefits of paid employment do not therefore translate well to the complex nature of some people's lives.

For other participants, work was an important part of their identity and something around which other things, like mobility behaviour, may be organised.

Crucially, this related to participants who had a more middle-class orientation and were pursuing a career pathway. Yasmin and Amir (Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family/surveyor) talked about making a short-term sacrifice in considering moving to somewhere that they did not know anyone, because Amir was "at a crucial stage in his career". This suggests a strategic approach to mobility and the importance of career development. Jo and Steve also highlighted that work could become an important part of one's identity.

> J: If you're investing a lot of your family life into moving…you don't do that for jobs that aren't also a big part of your life, and I think once you've trained for a job for a long time, it becomes something different in your head doesn't it?
>
> S: Yeah…it stops being…primarily about earning a living, and it becomes…something that defines you a bit more, that also you earn a living with

Jo and Steve, Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family/education

Work is not just a job but says something about you. Steve, for example, was training to work in the church, but he did not view this as a job. It was something more than a 'career' because it was bound-up with his identity. For other people, perhaps "home and family life have…a higher place than employment in terms of…your psyche" (Steve).

9.3 Perceptions of labour markets

Although some households had experiences of work-related residential mobility, it did not play a major role in participants' biographies. The expectation that work should be an important driver of residential mobility behaviour is insensitive to different experiences of searching for work, job insecurity, and the role of work in the construction of identities. For many people, work was not something around which the rest of their lives were organised; it was not stable or significant enough. Labour market experiences, through the historically constituted habitus, structured the way in which households perceived the labour market opportunities around them (Bourdieu, 1990).

With the exception of those working in more professional roles, many participants had poor knowledge of opportunities both locally and in the wider labour market context. Linking back to experiences of accessing work through

local networks and working in poorly-paid and unstable sectors, we can begin to understand why, for many people, situating yourself within a broad labour market area is irrelevant. As Green *et al* (2005) argued, official labour markets are constructed without taking into account the different perceptions of individual actors, which affects their job search behaviour. The experiences people had of moving in and out of work guided perceptions of, and responses to, labour markets, providing insights into why people do not move when there are seemingly better opportunities available elsewhere, a key question for Coulter and van Ham (2013:1053).

Local labour markets

Although some participants drew on narratives of industrial decline in their discussion of the local labour market, this was not a particularly pervasive narrative and was associated more with those who had worked in these industries. Chris (Eastland, 45-54, economically inactive), for example, recalled that "you could walk straight across the other side o' the docks on the decks of the ships…that's how packed the dock used to get", and as a painter he could always pick up extra work painting boats. Today, he was unable to find work and relying on food banks. Although he had heard about plans for jobs on wind farms (which some stakeholders in Chapter Seven believed could be a valuable source of employment for people in Eastland), he did not think "it's gonna employ the sort of people (laughs) that the fishing industry did". Among older participants it was common to hear that when they were younger they could "walk out o' one job and go into another one" (Sue, Nearthorpe, 45-54, retired), in contrast to their perception of the local labour market today. This demonstrates changes from the 'golden age' of full employment and relatively smooth transitions between school, work, and other workplaces (Roberts, 2009). Younger participants also perceived fewer job opportunities.

> I know there isn't half as many job opportunities here now as what there was…when I turned 18…up to about 21 there was loads of different opportunities, you could've took, and now you're lucky if you even get factory work round here
>
> *Ros, Eastland, 25-34, looking after family*

Factory work, which had once been seen as a stable and desirable field of employment, was now placed at the bottom of the pile in terms of work choice, but even that did not mean it was easy to get work.

However, it was not just the quantity of work that seemed to have changed, but also the quality. Sarah and Matt's experience of contingent employment markets resulted in the redefinition of notions of 'security' as they focused on local seasonal jobs.

> I used to work for an agency down south, and I used to be doing three or four jobs a day, and I used to have six month contracts at a time, and I prefer to have that than wondering where my next pay cheque is coming from
>
> *Matt, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed*

> Work is so scarce…that six months does feel like it's secure…at least we know where our money's coming from for the next six months
>
> *Sarah, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed*

They adjusted perceptions of security to respond to the local labour market in which they found themselves, where there was seasonality in work. Six-month contracts became 'secure' compared to single factory shifts. Rachel (Eastland, 25-34, unemployed) felt that the lack of security in the local labour market made work less attractive because having done "a shift or two…you're back on the dole again, and it's waiting for paperwork and, it's not worth getting a job, place like that". This is one way in which people resisted the expectation to accept any work, as will be seen later in the chapter.

It might be expected that people who were unemployed or looking to change jobs might have more knowledge of the opportunities available in the local labour market because they are likely to be actively engaged in job searches. However, this assumes that a person's response to unemployment is to actively search for job opportunities – either locally or elsewhere. As will be discussed in the next section, this was not necessarily the most likely response, with some people dropping out of the labour market or focusing on training. This may help to explain why specific knowledge about opportunities was uncommon. Impressions of the local labour market were often vague. James (Eastland, 25-34, unemployed), for example, talked about a large industrial park in which he thought a number of employers were concentrated, but he did not know the

area well or where exactly it was. Mike and Ann were both in work but looking for new jobs; they were actively engaged in job searching and had a good knowledge of the types and location of opportunities available.

> It used to be fish docks and now they all seem to have died a death, there's more…peripatetic care jobs, and a lot of things are agency workers now
>
> *Mike, Eastland, 45-54, care worker*

> There isn't such a broad spectrum of jobs, it is all service sector and care sector. There's no manufacturing or anything like that
>
> *Ann, Eastland, 35-44, third sector employee*

The opportunities in the local area were seen as relatively restricted, and were not necessarily appropriate for Ann. This mismatch between skills and available opportunities was one reason the household was considering moving in the future.

Employed people who were not necessarily looking for work also had some knowledge of the local labour market. In Nearthorpe, Amir (25-34, surveyor) highlighted taxi driving, packing and warehouses, local businesses and the school as important local employers. Jo (25-34, looking after family) perceived lots of small businesses, shift work with anti-social hours, and fewer professionals. Although it was "difficult to quantify the amount of employment available" (Steve, 25-34, education employee), the area was seen as within reach of several areas of employment and with good links "within an hour in a car you can get really far on the M1". The local labour market for Steve was much broader than for someone like Matt (Eastland, 25-34, unemployed), which links back to their different experiences of looking for and travelling for work. While Steve's career was something that had an important place in his life, and mobility was expected, Matt was resistant to travelling for work within the local area because he may be left out of pocket.

Participants who were less engaged with paid employment, for example parents looking after children, or the long-term sick and disabled were not unaware of the challenges of finding work. Their impression of work opportunities was formed via the experiences of friends and family. Ros (Eastland, 25-34, looking after family) talked about people complaining "about how hard it is to get work", and friends in work who were "worried about losing their jobs". Similarly Carol

(Eastland, 55-64, permanently sick/disabled) formed her impressions of the current labour market from her daughter's experience: "when she come out o' work, she was on, on the internet every day, to the job centre, she tried all over". Where people did have some knowledge of the labour market in Grimsby, there was a general impression of care work and factory work as the dominant sectors of employment. In Sheffield there was less agreement about a dominant sector, with participants pointing to a range of different occupations and some ability to access other centres of employment.

Perceptions of the wider labour market

If detailed knowledge of the local labour market was not necessarily evident among participants, knowledge of the opportunities available elsewhere was even more limited, particularly for participants without professional roles. Places were seen as essentially similar, suffering from the same problems.

> I imagine…places of a similar size are all gonna go 'we once had a thriving whatever industry, and it's all gone down the tubes'

> *Mike, Eastland, 45-54, care worker*

> It's the same as anywhere…the only work there is, is agency work, and if you want a job I think you, you need so many qualifications, to get the simplest of jobs

> *Carol, Eastland, 55-64, permanently sick/disabled*

Their own experiences of labour market changes and the stories told by others in their networks fostered the perception that the labour market for low-paid work was essentially the same wherever you were; there was no imperative to move elsewhere. By contrast, Amir (Nearthorpe, 25-34, surveyor) had a much clearer sense of the location of future opportunities, perhaps because he had already looked nationwide for work. He cited several locations with greater opportunities for him "to progress" his career, particularly in the South.

It might have been expected that unemployed participants would have better knowledge of the opportunities available in other areas if their mobility was to be driven by work considerations. Chris (Eastland, 45-54, economically inactive) had a general impression of there being "more work down South than there is in the North", something that fitted with his experience of undertaking well-paid contracting work in London when he was younger. Hasan (Nearthorpe, 55-64,

unemployed) also felt that "there were loads of jobs in London", and that other areas where work was more plentiful included "Bradford and Leeds…there's loads of jobs in Manchester as well". However, James (Eastland, 18-24, unemployed) had very limited knowledge: "I have no idea, in terms of like how anywhere else is doing, just don't know at all, so…I don't know like if I was to think about moving away I'd have no information". Significantly, Chris and Hasan had both lived and worked in the places where they felt there were more jobs; their impression of the availability of work may therefore come in part from their lived experiences and memories of these places, whereas James had never lived anywhere else.

Competition

In Eastland, a number of participants perceived competition from highly mobile migrant populations. This was seen as affecting the opportunities that were available to the 'local' population. In the globalisation thesis, nation states are increasingly interconnected and their boundaries increasingly porous (Beck, 2000). Finance and employment are not the only things decoupled from place; workers, too, can utilise global flows. Chris Grayling, Minister for Welfare Reform, juxtaposed such highly mobile workers with a seemingly immobile 'local' population when he commented: "people travelled thousands of miles and found work. Those on welfare stayed down the road" (Grayling, 2011). The perception from some participants was that Polish people were "getting all our jobs" (Tina, Eastland, 45-54, permanently sick/disabled). These "foreigners'll work for cheap…and then there's people like me sat at home doing nothing" (Matt, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed). Participants perceived mobile 'others' seeking out employment at a cheaper rate, leading to worsening conditions for all. This provides support for a sense among participants of an individualised approach to work, that there is little 'common cause' between those vying for low-paid employment (Bauman, 2000). However, the interaction of class and ethnicity is complex; 'local' populations could be seen as forging a stronger identity in opposition to a visible 'other'. Rather than being irrelevant, class becomes fractured, creating multiple inequalities.

In addition to these mobile 'others', some participants also perceived that qualifications had become a crucial part of competing in the labour market.

Carol (Eastland, 55-64, permanently sick/disabled) argued that when she was young "you could come out o' school, you could take your pick where you wanted to work, within reason…now you need <u>loads</u> of qualifications". Hasan (Nearthorpe, 55-64, unemployed) agreed that even cleaning work required "a certificate". For these participants, the changing labour market context left them finding it harder to compete; the routes they had taken earlier in their lives had an ongoing impact, closing off some pathways (Walby, 1997).

Work opportunities could be seen as individualised – failure to get work related to individual failures to gain qualifications, work hard enough, compete, and to be attractive to employers (Bauman, 2000), something that has been a feature of other research (Bashir *et al*, 2011). Some participants internalised this, feeling that the only way they could achieve was through their own hard work and entrepreneurship. Mike (Eastland, 45-54, care worker) had no qualifications and talked about his failure to find alternative work: "perhaps I just don't sell meself well". He thought that success would only come through becoming "an entrepreneur" with his own big idea. The notions of competition discussed here place the 'blame' for failure to find work or progress in a career firmly at the feet of individuals, for failing to be mobile, flexible, with relevant qualifications. However, alongside this participants also frequently highlighted lack of good jobs, suggesting the importance of structural problems such as lack of demand for labour.

9.4 Responses to changing labour markets

For many participants who had fewer qualifications and were oriented towards lower-paid occupations, labour market narratives were saturated with insecurity. As well as perceiving little demand for labour, the quality of work was poor, with little security and few prospects for advancement. Responses to these labour market conditions were varied, but residential mobility was uncommon. Professionals and those with a more middle-class orientation, with a greater sense of stability and progression along a career path, were more likely to perceive residential mobility as a route to better work opportunities, but it had little to offer those in the low-pay economy. Although contingent work was common, it did not follow that this somehow facilitated residential mobility in search of other, better, opportunities. Indeed, being residentially mobile could

break apart the very structures that enabled people to get by – informal networks of mutual aid, word of mouth job opportunities, childcare, and stable benefit claims, as will be discussed in Chapter Ten. For many households, being immobile was a positive response to labour market pressures rather than passive inactivity. Households actively adapted, resisted, and focused on the future in order to adjust to the labour market context in which they were situated.

Residential mobility

The insecure nature of low-paid work and its limited role in the construction of personal identity makes it an unlikely driver of residential mobility. It could be difficult to know whether employment was just around the corner, especially where shift work is given out on a day-by-day basis. Hasan talked about opportunities failing to materialise.

> This chap said, 'Hasan, you've been selected and the job's yours and we'll telephone you'…somebody rang…'is that Hasan…you've been offered the job haven't you', 'yeah', 'I will contact you next week'…nobody did, he said 'I'll send it in writing I'll telephone you'. I went to sign on again…he said 'oh somebody's gonna write to you and do this', they never did
>
> *Hasan, Nearthorpe, 55-64, unemployed*

Hasan's experience suggests that he was part of a labour pool to be used according to changes in demand. At another interview he was told "'if we don't get the right amount of people, we will call you'", but never heard back. This makes it hard to know if there are jobs at the end of a recruitment process and may encourage people to remain in place to see whether work does materialise (Gordon, 1990). Lacking a firm job offer may also make people less likely to move elsewhere, because "if it's not guaranteed low-paid work…is it worth leaving your family and friends and the place you know?" (Jo, Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family). Residential mobility may not be seen as worthwhile, especially when considering leaving friends and family. Indeed, the very flexibility that is seen as severing the links between people, place, and employment could actually inhibit mobility rather than encourage it, with people seeking retain some security by remaining in places where they have networks (Smith, 2005).

Some participants had not really considered the option of moving in order to find employment elsewhere. Their immobility was not based on a rational calculation, weighing up their options; for participants like Dave (Nearthorpe, 55-64, unemployed) and Ros (Eastland, 25-34, looking after family), the option of moving for work did not form part of the choices that seemed open to them. Other participants articulated a sense of calculation in their decisions, feeling that for many jobs it did not make sense to move.

> If I wasn't doing the Open University, I would move to get a career-based job. I don't wanna work in MacDonalds or anything like that…I don't mind going somewhere I can start at the bottom and work my way up
>
> *Rachel, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed*

For Rachel, the type of work she could get – likely low paid and insecure – meant that it had little influence on her mobility decisions. For work to be an important driver of mobility in her life it had to offer something more, the prospect of being better off, of advancing along a career ladder. In comparison to the uncertainty of low-paid, insecure work, regular benefit payments meant that she could "manage", and there was no point in moving away from everything that they knew

> …and starting again just to be on not that much better off than we are no now. Whereas if it was something with a career prospect, even though it was maybe not financially that much better off to begin with, if you know you're going somewhere, then I'd do it, 'cos I wanna be an example for [my son]

Rachel was not just making a cost-benefit calculation based on her situation in the present, but was also considering the possible impact of future gains. Financial gains could be replaced by a sense of security and progress in work.

The way that Rachel discussed her mobility pathway linked to the experiences of participants with a more middle-class orientation, working in more professional occupations. Indeed, Rachel described her background as more middle-class, with "the two cars…quite well-to-do". Participants with a sense of career pathway were more likely to talk about moving for work reasons.

> I don't think a lot of people round here would move for work…It's just the kind of work you do. Maybe it's the mentality as well, or…maybe the more educated you are, the nicher your ability to…find employment becomes
>
> *Steve, Nearthorpe, 25-34, education employee*

> I probably will be looking at moving…towards the south, towards like Birmingham…there's more happening, more available down there, more opportunities to progress
>
> *Amir, Nearthorpe, 25-34, surveyor*

Amir and Steve talked about specialist work requiring more mobility as these roles were more likely to be concentrated in particular geographical locations. Yasmin (Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family) had also identified specialist firms for her sector in "places like Leeds, London, Birmingham". Residential mobility then becomes a more expected part of these participants' futures.

Where participants talked about moving for work reasons, the language of cost-benefit suggested rational, economic calculations in terms of monetary gain. Yasmin and Amir, for example, almost moved to Northampton in order to take up a job offer, but the cost of living was too high:

> What stopped us was really…the wages compared to…the cost of living there, they just weren't balancing up... I think we were about £100 pounds out of pocket, and there's no point working…if you're gonna be out of pocket
>
> *Amir, Nearthorpe, 25-34, surveyor*

> So came here basically for about a tenth of the work for the same money…I mean I went for a couple of interviews…some were more money than what I was on and some were…as minimum exactly the same money…and so, it was… a better deal
>
> *Zahir, Nearthorpe, 35-44, Local Authority employee*

For these participants, residential mobility for work was contingent on not being worse-off. This economic rationality led some of the same participants to reflect on mobility related to work for other households working in lower paid roles. Housing costs in areas of greater employment opportunity were seen as a significant barrier to residential mobility because of the type of work people would be able to access.

Are they really saying that someone who's living in Nearthorpe, or Manor…if they went to London to, to get a job, they might get a slightly better paid job, but…will the housing costs suddenly evaporate for those people?

Zahir, Nearthorpe, 35-44, Local Authority employee

So you're unskilled, so where're you gonna go? Because you're not gonna be able to pay the rent down South…your mobility stops with the fact that you work out that this job pays x amount of pounds, but it's gonna cost me x amount of pounds for rent, so what's the point of moving

Justine, Eastland, 55-64, retired

The idea of people on lower incomes moving to areas where there was more employment was seen as financially impractical. The nature of the housing market and wage levels were seen as constraining mobility (Cole *et al*, 2006, Head and Lloyd-Ellis, 2012, Zabel, 2012). Amir (Nearthorpe, 25-34, surveyor) noted that people could be trapped by homeownership because they "aren't worth anything anymore", whereas "if there's a community where there's a lot of work, obviously properties are gonna be expensive". Hasan (Nearthorpe, 55-64, unemployed) was in this situation: "If I put it on the market now I won't get much". Despite wanting to move he felt trapped by his tenure.

It was not only residential mobility which was affected by the nature of work available; a number of participants talked about the impact on commuting, making calculations about the value of travelling for low-paid insecure work. The local labour market in Grimsby was described by many participants as being dominated by agencies. The concentration of factories beyond the boundaries of the immediate neighbourhood, coupled with the type of work on offer, could inhibit commuting behaviour.

A lot of the places…you have to get there to find out if you're working or not…if you can't afford to get there to find out if you're working…you get there and it's how many people have turned up

Mike, Eastland, 45-54, care worker

Coupled with travel costs, the lack of a guarantee of work could restrict mobility. Although Nearthorpe had strong transport links to other places of employment, this was not necessarily of benefit to participants where employment opportunities were not seen as making travel worthwhile: "if it was more hours

like 40 hours I wouldn't mind going for it…it was only 21 hours…all the money would be wasted on the fares" (Hasan, Nearthorpe, 55-64, unemployed). It was not just the cost that inhibited mobility to sites of work, but also a sense that it was not worth the time travelling.

> There's no point…it's £2.70 to get out there…and they want me to work two til ten tonight…it's not really worth my time
>
> *Matt, Eastland, 25-35, unemployed*

> There's a bus that runs from here…but it only runs every certain hour…you're just, basically sat around for like half an hour, waiting til your shift starts...to be honest it is just time wasted in your life
>
> *Ros, Eastland, 25-34, looking after family*

In addition to calculating the monetary costs and benefits of travelling for work, Matt and Ros also attached value to their time. There was a sense of a tipping point where costs (monetary and non-monetary) outweighed gains. For some participants, like Hasan (Nearthorpe) there were also perceptual barriers about travelling to unknown places, in addition to cost concerns. Perceptual barriers may prevent people from even getting to the stage of confronting physical obstacles to accessing sites of employment (Shuttleworth and Green, 2009:1112).

Adaptation

People could respond to a disjuncture between the type of work available and the type of work they wanted in a range of ways, including adapting to the conditions of the labour market by adjusting employment expectations. Participants exhibited considerable flexibility in terms of their responses to changing labour market conditions, but it was largely non-geographic in nature, resulting in in-place accommodations and adjustments. Jo and Steve's (Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family/education employee) careers meant that they "would've got a job anywhere" because there was "always a scarcity" of people wanting to work in their sectors, especially in places that may be perceived as less desirable. A number of friends, however, had to decide whether to pursue a professional career elsewhere; some remained, and adjusted their labour market expectations, taking "'McJobs'" (Jo), working in "Dominoes, factory, retail" (Steve). Many participants talked about forms of adjustment, from the type of work – "I'd do anything" (Matt, Eastland, 25-34,

unemployed) – to the volume – "I was working and going to all the recruitment agencies just to find another part-time job" (Aisha, Nearthorpe, 25-34, looking after family). James explained his own adaptation to the local labour market.

> I didn't really wanna go back into this, so I kinda held out on it…the reason I've gone back for it is 'cos it was quite a good opportunity…but I was kind of holding out on like going back into factory again, 'cos I, I do hate it…I was looking out for summit a bit better, but I just gave in.
>
> I was…looking for a good position I could see myself doing for a few years, but…it wasn't happening, so I was just like 'yeah, let's…just get some money making job on the go'

James, Eastland, 18-24, unemployed

James' recent experience of trying to find work demonstrates his transition from initial resistance to eventual adaptation. He described attempting to conduct his own job search to find something better than food processing work, but in the end gave in to the pressure from the Jobcentre. Rather than looking for a "good position" that he could see being a long-term job, he adapted to the local labour market.

Although there was considerable evidence of adaptation in the type of work, participants were less likely to compromise on the conditions of employment. Matt (Eastland, 25-34, unemployed), for example, frequently expressed his willingness to do any sort of work, yet – as will be discussed later – also resisted the expectation to look for and take-up any available work. Sarah (Eastland, 25-34, unemployed), his partner, acknowledged that there was work available locally "if you really wanted to work <u>anything</u>". Matt's flexibility referred more accurately to the type of task, but he was unwilling to adapt to the conditions of agency work. Ros (Eastland, 25-34, looking after family) expressed a similar sentiment: "the work itself doesn't bother me, it's the hours".

Willingness to adapt to the needs of the labour market was no guarantee of getting work, especially for those at the back of the queue for jobs, for example those without qualifications, the long-term unemployed, and those with health conditions. Mike, for example, felt trapped in a care job that he did not enjoy, unable to go elsewhere because his lack of qualifications would be a disadvantage in the contemporary labour market context. As he explained, in

the context of weak labour markets and economic recession, "everybody you would talk to who's got a job hates it, but you've gotta think 'I've got a job'" (Mike, Eastland, 45-54, care worker).

Resistance

Not all participants adjusted their employment expectations to fit with the requirements of the local labour market. Participants were engaged in various acts of resistance, negotiating the boundaries of the local labour market in complex ways. Informal working whilst receiving benefits was one form of resistance, whether cash in hand (one participant was a tarot card reader, another did cleaning jobs for cash) or doing odd days of agency work without informing the Jobcentre. Local labour market opportunities were therefore viewed alongside the comparative security of regular out-of-work benefits (as noted by Fletcher, 2007 and Smith, 2005). Fear of disrupting benefit payments led Matt to "hardly ever tell them that I'm working".

> I'll sit in front of my adviser…'have you done any work, paid or unpaid', I say '<u>no</u>', <u>they</u> don't check, so it's their fault, not mine…this is through the agency, this is on the books…I did four days, I didn't tell the Jobcentre, and they've done nothing about it

> *Matt, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed*

This response must be seen in light of the household's experience of their benefits being disrupted when they moved to the area, leaving them in a financially precarious situation.

> Last time…we said that we was out of work, they left us without money for eight weeks, while they worked it out and dragged their feet, so we're thinking…for six hours work is it just really worth telling them?

> *Sarah, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed*

Engaging in work whilst claiming benefits was seen as justified based on their previous experiences. The insecurity of the sort of work that was open to them presented a major risk to the functioning of the household if they were left without the relative security of regular benefit payments.

Sarah and Matt also resisted the expectation by the Jobcentre to actively look for any available work. They were focused on getting a good job with prospects,

rather than *any* job. Matt was undertaking a college course to pursue a skilled career.

> At the moment we see that as more important than getting a job because at the end of the day he's gonna get the qualifications and get a job that he wants to do, and it's better than being stuck in a dead end job doing something that you despise

> *Sarah, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed*

Resistance to taking any job was based on the aspirations of the household for work to be enjoyable and have some security. Rachel (Eastland, 25-34, unemployed) was in a similar situation: "officially I'm looking for work (laughs), but at the minute I'm working on getting my school work up-to-date". Her focus was on completing a university course so that she could "work towards getting a decent job". Again, Rachel was pursuing a long-term strategy rather than adapting in the short-term to take any available work. She resisted adjusting her expectations downwards to meet local labour market opportunities.

Career strategies were therefore not just the preserve of more middle-class participants who were already involved in pursuing a particular career. Work was considered for what it would offer; according to Bauman (2005:34), some occupations are elevated whilst monotonous, routine, repetitive roles are denied value, only to be undertaken if people are "denied access to any other means of survival". As these participants could survive on stable benefit claims, they were able to resist taking any available work. However, these participants faced the greatest pressure to accept work. Far from lacking in aspiration, these households perhaps faced the opposite issue, of high aspirations in the context of a low-pay labour market context. Young people were perhaps excessively ambitious relative to the jobs that the economy offered (Roberts, 2009:365).

Future focus

These forms of resistance were linked in with the future aspirations held by households. Far from the image in some policy discourses of households lacking in aspiration, trapped in 'declining' communities with little motivation to improve their situation, many households focused on their hopes for the future. These aspirations were tied in with ideas about mobility, residential and social – to move forward, to get ahead rather than just get by. As James (Eastland, 18-

24, unemployed) explained, "I don't wanna live in Grimsby all my life…I'd like to move up and go (laughs) live in a more alive town".

In some cases, the future aspirations held by participants were clearly linked to residential mobility, tying together social and physical mobility. Mobility was seen as progress, tied together with social mobility. In Rachel's case, for example, fulfilment of her employment aspirations will eventually necessitate residential mobility. At present, she is engaged in a process of resistance; upon completion of her course she would need to be geographically mobile in order to continue her education.

For a number of participants, residential mobility was linked to a focus on the the next generation.

> The secondary schools are <u>appalling</u> round here…So I'm gonna choose where we move to based on…the…university that I need, and then find a good school and move near to that…I'm not gonna take whatever's coming
>
> *Rachel, Eastland, 25-34, unemployed*

> We've got so many plans…there's kids' future, their education, and we want to give 'em the best…because we don't live in the best area we can't give 'em the best schools
>
> *Sumera, Nearthorpe, 34-44, education employee*

> When we was children…we wasn't encouraged…you're sort o' more wiser nowadays to it, to know that you need it…I don't suppose I encouraged my, my two girls…now they're stuck…if you don't do something with your life, there is nothing here…I just hope [my grandchildren] do well, move out of Grimsby altogether…there's nothing for 'em here…I suppose any, any big city really would be better than here…anywhere where you can better your career
>
> *Carol, Eastland, 55-64, permanently sick/disabled*

Carol reflects on how aspirations have changed over her lifetime. Her own children are seen as "stuck"; immobility is seen as a negative in a modern world which demands you "do something with your life". For Carol, spatial mobility is tied to social mobility, a sense of progress and the need to have a career. As with many households in MacDonald *et al's* (2014:16) study of intergenerational worklessness, parents did not want their own children to end up in the same situation as them. These households are all adapting by focusing on the future and social mobility, possibly necessitating residential mobility, rather than

adjusting expectations downwards. The focus on aspirations for their children could be seen as partly related to participants' assessments of their own (poor) chances for social mobility given the relatively depressed labour market and their lack of qualifications (MacDonald *et al*, 2014:12). Their aspirations were instead focused on the next generation.

9.5 Conclusion

Most analyses of migration flows infer that employment considerations are a strong reason for migration, however there is "inconsistency between the micro motives inferred from net flows and those that the migrants themselves report" (Morrison and Clark, 2011:1948). Understanding labour market behaviour therefore requires a method that can explore individual and household motivations in-depth, something that is difficult to achieve through analysis of aggregate data. The qualitative approach adopted in this research aims to generate understandings that are "rooted in the scale at which markets are lived – the local" (Peck, 1996:112). Morrison and Clark (2011:1962) concluded that perhaps the absence of employment in people's motivations for moving indicated that it was so important that it was resolved before moves took place. However, the research presented here has found that – in these low-income communities – work was far from a central aspect of many people's lives. While households with a more middle-class orientation, pursuing specific career pathways, gave work a more important role in their life, for most people it was not an important part of mobility decisions and was not something around which their life decisions – and identity – were constructed.

Understanding why work may not be an important part of mobility decisions represents one contribution to knowledge arising from this research. People's experiences of working in the low-pay economy, in insecure conditions, structured how labour market opportunities were perceived. Particularly in Eastland, the agency-dominated labour market challenged 'common sense' notions of the value of work. Faced with insecurity, and perceiving that conditions would be the same in other places, participants adjusted to the labour market context, but rarely through being residentially mobile. Experiences of moving between unemployment and underemployment in low-paid jobs suggest that insecure work in the low-pay economy may not provide

the sort of mental wellbeing traditionally associated with employment (Ritchie *et al*, 2005:54). Just as people could adjust during unemployment to seek other roles and goals which would fulfil identities (Nordenmark and Strandh, 1999), so too this can be seen to happen in a labour market in which work was insecure and offered little economic reward.

As Batty *et al* (2011:6) noted, individuals' engagement in unpaid activities delivered benefits that sometimes seemed equal to or outweighed those delivered by paid work. The economic rationality of labour market behaviour must therefore be *situated* (Smith, 2005:193), acknowledging that for many people, in the absence of intrinsic satisfaction derived from the workplace, the material rewards of employment were often eclipsed by concerns about security and family obligations. If other things – place, family, home – rather than work are anchors in the construction of personal identities, then it follows that its role in the organisation of one's life is weakened. Thus, for many participants, work was not an important part of decisions about whether to move from one place to another. Calls from Overman (Lawless *et al*, 2011:35) for policy to focus on "encouraging labour market activity and removing barriers to mobility", expanding housing supply and reducing the cost of living in more successful places, ignores varied experiences of work and emotional connections to places, as well as dismissing some places as failing, a narrative that this and other research (Martin *et al,* 2015) challenges.

Indeed, the very flexibility that is seen as weakening the links between people, place, and employment (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) could actually inhibit residential mobility rather than encourage it, with people seeking to retain some security by remaining in place and utilising local networks. Although changes in the nature of employment relations has perhaps altered the relationship between people and place (Bauman, 2000, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002), it does not automatically follow that greater mobility is a likely outcome. The research presented here suggests that place and social relations with others have become more important in the lives of some participants, giving them new fields in which to anchor their identities; this will be discussed in Chapter Ten.

Greater propensity towards immobility does not indicate a non-response to labour market changes, or a non-flexible attitude to work. In fact, participants

demonstrated many forms of flexibility in their relation to employment, it just did not often manifest in flexibility around location. Instead, people working in and around the low-pay economy were engaged in active processes of adaptation, resistance, and focusing on the future. However, the lives of many people continued to be structured by the enduring role of class position and geographical location (McDowell, 2003). People drew on their own histories and the stories told by others to explain the labour market choices they made. In many cases, people were not engaged in a conscious calculation of all possible options, but were guided by their "embodied history" (Bourdieu, 1990:56), giving people a structured, rather than absolute, freedom to shape their own pathway (Crossley, 2001:134). Using biographical methods has foregrounded the way in which choices are shaped by class and gender (especially the impact of children), and how "current choices are constrained by choices made earlier in their lives" (Walby, 1997:64).

Individualistic narratives were not entirely absent; people reflected on their own perceived personal failures to compete in the labour market, and participants across the occupational spectrum told stories of insecurity, flexibility, and competition for work. However, this 'risk society' (Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 2002) was balanced against the way in which people connected their own stories to the lives of others. Lifeworlds are therefore negotiated, and identities are not just a product of the relationship between habitus and field, but also the relationship between different agents (Bottero, 2010). There was also strong evidence of the important role played by networks of mutual support, suggesting connection to others and some sense of 'common cause'. Behavioural responses were guided by perceptions of the labour market, which in turn were shaped by people's own experiences and those of the people around them in the place in which they lived. The role of these networks, and of place, is the subject of the next chapter.

10. Place, belonging and networks

10.1 Introduction

This research has shown that employment factors played a limited role in explaining residential mobility for many households in Nearthorpe and Eastland. Experiences of insecure, low-paid work challenged the idea that work could provide something around which to organise their life. This chapter suggests that places, a sense of belonging, and social and familial networks are more central to understanding why people move – or, crucially, do not move – than employment factors.

This chapter begins with an in-depth exploration of how people perceive the places in which they live, arguing that they must be understood in spatial and temporal context. People practised geographies of exclusion, differentiating space on a micro-scale in order to construct a place in which they could legitimately belong. Places were also set within individual biographical context, understood in relation to past places of residence. This may help to explain why people do not move from places that are seen – through some official lenses – as 'declining', 'deprived', and without many positive features. The chapter then moves on to consider the different ways in which people express a sense of belonging in place, and the impact this may have on mobility behaviour. In so doing the research seeks to contribute to knowledge by advancing understandings of belonging in working-class communities. A greater sense of belonging and comfort in place may promote immobility, particularly where there is a sense of importance attached to being known and knowing others in the local area. This highlights the importance of social and familial networks in mobility behaviour, not just in inhibiting mobility by tying people into locally based networks, but also in directing mobility pathways to certain locations.

10.2 Perceptions of place

Narratives of decline discussed in Chapter Two, targeted at 'problem' places with high levels of worklessness, create the impression of a trapped population, unable to leave places, rather than choosing to stay. Rarely does the dominant narrative consider the varied way in which residents themselves view the places in which they live. Two important processes were involved in shaping perceptions of place. First, people made sense of geographical space on a

hyper-local level (particularly in Eastland). Many participants engaged in active processes of exclusion, disassociating from seemingly 'rough' areas whilst highlighting the positive aspects of their own street. Second, in addition to spatial distinctions places were situated temporally within biographies.

Geographies of exclusion in 'deprived' neighbourhoods

Although Nearthorpe and Eastland were constructed using administrative boundaries, not surprisingly participants did not perceive places in this way. There was considerable fluidity in the spatial scale used to talk about the 'local area' and 'neighbourhood'. Many participants in Nearthorpe and Eastland were aware of living in a place that was officially seen as 'deprived', however it was more common in Nearthorpe for this to be applied wholesale to the wider neighbourhood, whilst in Eastland specific streets or estates were isolated as 'problem areas'. This may be a result of different spatial dynamics; Nearthorpe and its surrounding streets are generally referred to as a standalone 'neighbourhood' with its own centre, whereas Eastland has a less clearly defined identity. It was perhaps easier for Eastland's residents to isolate themselves from notions of living in a 'deprived' neighbourhood, since the label is applied at a spatial level ('Eastland') that was not relevant to the way they perceived their own neighbourhood. In Nearthorpe, the reputation of the wider neighbourhood was more prominent, making it more difficult for participants to isolate themselves from the negative discourses surrounding place.

For Hasan (Nearthorpe), postcode discrimination made it impossible to escape the association of living in a disadvantaged area; this was seen as having direct, tangible consequences for job searching. He talked at various points about applying for jobs and being asked "'why do you live in Nearthorpe?'". Hasan felt that this meant if he lived "somewhere else, yes, we'll offer the job". Experiences of postcode discrimination have been highlighted by other community studies (McKenzie, 2015). The stigmatising gaze of 'outsiders' featured in other participants' discussion of place.

There were a couple of people who were actually from Sheffield where I worked…on a map they drew out the places to go for and the places to avoid…north, north-east, parts of south-east, avoid, S7, S10, S11, that's like the bee's knees…I mean, when you mention Nearthorpe or something like that, and the perception…I think for some of them it'd be…'oh it's the old industrial area where the Asians live and now the Eastern Europeans live'

Zahir, Nearthorpe

A: Those that are out of towners…they talk about this area they kind of like lock their doors as they kind of drive through this area…where I used to work in Sheffield…they refer to it as the like seedy, criminal, sort of slums, literally, of Sheffield

Y: …I remember at my last workplace…I was kind of being introduced to everybody, where are you from, and it was like Dore, Totley, Fulwood, Nearthorpe, silence (laughs)

Yasmin and Amir, Nearthorpe

Working in more professional occupations, these participants experienced the disjuncture between their more middle-class orientation and the perception of their place of residence. Yasmin's colleagues reacted with silence, as Nearthorpe stood out in the context of the more affluent residential locations of her colleagues.

There was a sense of disjuncture between official statistics and the household's lived experience of place. Zahir, for example, explained that "for an area that's supposedly and probably is in the top 1% of deprived in the country, you can walk round late at night…and still feel safe". It is possible that Zahir and others were making a virtue of necessity (Bourdieu, 1990), setting the area in a more positive light when in reality they had little choice over where to live in Sheffield's divided housing market. One way of coping with such constraints might be to perceive a place differently, rejecting stigmatising discourses of deprivation and instead constructing your own sense of place. Zahir, for example, talked about his own street, which was perceived as "the quiet road…or the white road" because it had long-term, white British residents. He perceived the wider neighbourhood improving, with more educated people choosing to stay in Nearthorpe and other professionals coming into the area. As Kearns and Parkinson (2001:2105) argued, to combat reputational problems it is important for residents to feel that they had some choice in where they lived,

and that others might also choose to live in their neighbourhood. Differentiating the neighbourhood locally facilitated this process.

In Eastland, the differentiation of space was more striking; people talked about streets, part-streets, or estates as having a poorer reputation, rather than about a whole neighbourhood area. Some people talked about no-go estates with "rough people" (Tina, Eastland), while there was reasonable agreement about the worst streets in Eastland. As Rachel noted in comparing two places she had lived in Eastland, just streets apart, "if you was from a more upper class, you'd look at it and go 'they're both dumps'", but she experienced them in very different ways. Watt (2006) noted that this spatial isolation and strategic withdrawal can be understood as an attempt to maintain respectability; in distancing herself from 'rough' elements, Rachel was seeking to protect herself and her family. Participants were not blind to the more negative elements of their communities, and perceived more desirable places to live, but many distinguished their own streets from other 'rough' places and people, echoing Watt's (2006, 2010) "geographies of exclusion".

In contrast to the negative way in which other streets were seen, participants in Eastland were often more positive about where they themselves lived. Matt lived in "one of the best areas"; despite burglaries occurring around them, "we've heard no-one being burgled round here on this street…it just amazes me how different the streets are" (Sarah). Rachel lived at "the posh end" of her road, while Ros made similar distinctions at the street level, with "druggies…and people run riot" just down the road "but you come this area and down, it's quiet, there's no trouble…it's only like…400 yards up the road…it's such a different place". Although such micro-level distinctions were more common in Eastland, in Nearthorpe it was particularly households with a more middle-class orientation who made active differentiations between places. Amir, for example, talked about increased crime on his street, but in arguing that outsiders from a nearby estate were responsible he protected his own view of the street as 'good'.

Watt (2006) linked this micro-differentiation of place to changes in labour markets – as occupation has lost its purchase, place became more significant as a sorter of social distinction. Participants drew on a "geography of

roughness" (Watt, 2006) involving contrasting positive place images of their own immediate area with negative associations with other places. To understand why people may not move from seemingly 'declining' places, therefore, one must consider how people perceive the places in which they live. If participants could insulate themselves from stigmatising discourses around place then residential mobility may be less affected by notions of decline, or could be off-set by small adjustments such as moving to a neighbouring street. In an area like Eastland these small moves were common, facilitated by a housing market context characterised by low-cost private rented housing.

Biography and perceptions of place

In talking about places, participants engaged in active processes of distinction, sorting spaces according to individual geographies. They also engaged in a simultaneous process through which places were related to residential histories. In reflecting on the places they had lived, participants moved back and forth through their mobility histories, setting places in the context of their mobile lives. In seeking to understand why people remain in places that are perceived by various measures to be challenging places to live, one must explore the biographical context in which places are understood. Policy discourses have assumed that people living in low-income communities are either trapped, or lacking in motivation or aspiration to move elsewhere (BBC News, 2010, Duncan Smith, 2011, Lawless *et al*, 2011, Shapps, 2009). However, while many participants acknowledged less desirable aspects of their neighbourhoods, they did not perceive places so negatively when set in the context of their residential histories. Perceptions of place were filtered by experience; rather than objectively judging the pros and cons of living in particular places in the present, participants drew on their own experiences of living in other places and with reference to their imagined future.

Relations to place are historically constituted, placed on a spectrum of 'goodness' that takes into account other places people have lived. A common refrain was that where they lived was "no worse than where I've come from" (Carol, Eastland). Justine recalled living on a "rough estate", dismissing the 'problems' in Eastland: "this, you hear the fighting, the arguing, just take no notice of it". A number of participants moved from one 'bad' area to another.

That made me move because…they terrorised me basically…and then obviously I'd basically moved from one bad area to another…I knew Proctor Street was a bad area anyway, but it couldn't have been any worse than what I was going through at the time

Ros, Eastland

I only took it 'cos I was desperate…I didn't mind it 'cos I was like 'this is loads better than living in the YMCA'…I was like 'thank God for this!'…but…they got us kicked out for being too loud…well I was like 'oh God!...I'm gonna have to move back into YMCA', which is when I got took back in by my mum

James, Eastland

This research has shown that people's relation to place is filtered through the other places they have lived. Ros reflected on one of her moves that could be seen as irrational, moving to a street that she knew was "bad", and moving again soon after primarily because of anti-social behaviour. Knowing before she moved that the area was "bad", her mobility was unlikely to have resulted in stable accommodation. As with Bartlett (1997) and Skelton's (2002) frequent movers, residential mobility represented an attempt to exercise control, giving Ros the feeling that she was doing *something*. Like Ros, James' mobility decisions were influenced by his desperation to find alternative accommodation and escape the YMCA. Again, his move was not a success in terms of providing long-term stability. Moving back in with his mum was a last resort but the alternative – returning to the YMCA – was worse.

Understanding how people perceive places, and their decisions to move or remain in place, involves more than weighing up costs and benefits in the present. Participants also considered how these places related to other places they had lived, and the experiences they had there. Knowing that they had lived through worse gave participants like Justine (Eastland) and Sumera (Nearthorpe) a unique perspective on their current place of residence, which was viewed more positively in light of their own life history. This is not to argue that neighbourhood dissatisfaction is not a factor in residential mobility, since for some people at certain times in their lives it has been; rather, this discussion highlights the need to situate residential mobility decisions within broader life histories.

10.3 Belonging and comfort in place

A sense of belonging, or not belonging, in place is crucial to exploring residential mobility and immobility. May (2011:368) defined belonging as "a sense of ease with oneself and one's surroundings", generated through identifying with social, relational, and material surroundings, and of recognising the self in 'the other', and linking to the habitus because belonging is partly achieved by having a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 2005). A strong sense of belonging may reduce a household's propensity to residential mobility, as they feel comfortable where they are; alternatively, a sense of not belonging may be a factor in deciding to move. This section considers the relative importance of different routes to belonging in Eastland and Nearthorpe. Whilst 'elective belonging' (Savage *et al*, 2005) was less prominent in these low-income communities, a sense of belonging based on nostalgia (Watt, 2006) was slightly more common. Belonging was also achieved in daily movements through places, which became "biographic encounters" (Tilley, 1994:27) recalling past activities and events. These "corporeal memory acts" (Leach, 2005:302) enabled people to develop a sense of belonging and attachment to place, including as a group (Blokland, 2003:159). However, the most common route to belonging drawn on by participants was being known and knowing others. This suggested that people drew comfort from being recognised by others that they saw as 'like them', providing further evidence for an understanding of places as expressions of social distinction (Bourdieu, 1990, Watt, 2006).

Elective belonging

Savage *et al* (2005) used the concept of elective belonging in their exploration of middle-class and gentrifying neighbourhoods in Manchester. This reflected the confidence of those with a more middle-class orientation and greater cultural capital to pick where they wanted to live and symbolically demonstrate their identity. Rather than having strong social ties to place, the ability to claim a place as 'yours', as somewhere to express your identity, became a route to belonging. In low-income communities, this sense of belonging would likely be less prominent, as more people would be expected to have an arrival story based on constraint. For one household, however, the concept seemed particularly relevant. Jo and Steve were a more middle-class couple living in

Nearthorpe, conscious of choosing a location that was "not the normal area…people like us would choose" (Steve). Their choice to live in a more disadvantaged area was "vaguely deliberate" because they wanted to life somewhere "interesting", "lively", with a sense of "vibrancy" (Steve). They constructed a sense of belonging based on their cultural capital and ability to choose Nearthorpe as a place to live. This did not rely on their connections with others in place; Jo and Steve could perceive themselves as different to others and yet still feel that they belonged.

Although this disjuncture was a route to belonging for them – they were pioneers in a vibrant neighbourhood – they were not completely comfortable. Sometimes living outside their "normal social demographic" (Steve) bothered them. Jo told a story about spotting a couple who "looked like us, dressed like us, we liked their car", who they later made friends with because they were "like us" (Steve). Despite consciously choosing to live in a different area, they still sought to forge a social network with people 'like them', using visual cues that signalled their common cultural capital (their clothes, their car). This drew on memories of their previous home that Jo found difficult to leave, where they lived within their "demographic, lifestyle" (Steve). Although their arrival story projected a sense of choice that gave Jo and Steve a claim to place based on their conscious investment in it, there was also a sense that belonging was weakened by the absence of other 'pioneers', 'like them'.

Nostalgia: Loss of jobs and industry

In line with Watt (2006, 2010), a number of narratives of place drew on a range of nostalgic refrains related to economic decline and 'othering' (racialised and classed). Nostalgia offered a way of belonging in the face of significant changes, however it was a particularly precarious foundation for a claim to place as it relied on the collective memories of a dwindling population who were increasingly faced with new claims to belonging.

Nostalgia for once dominant industries was less prominent than expected, particularly considering other studies of similar areas in which this sense of decline was palpable (such as Charlesworth, 2000). Memories of industrial decline were generally limited to the narratives of older participants who had lived in the area most of their lives; for younger participants and newly arrived

residents, what replaced former industrial sites was more relevant to their sense of belonging than what was there before. While all participants were aware of profound economic changes, those who had lived through these changes were more likely to draw on these memories in discussing their sense of place. Chris had seen Eastland "come down quite a lot" compared to his youth in the 1970s when nearby streets were "absolutely thronging with people". Carol also had memories of the busy shopping area and pubs "full of fishermen". The loss of industry and jobs led to the decline of leisure spaces and retail opportunities, changing the relationship people had with place. When moving through their neighbourhood, Chris and Carol saw not just what was there, but also what had been – boarded up shops and pubs represented the loss of community life. In Nearthorpe, Sue remembered a large factory nearby, with men on their lunch hour who would "stand and have their fish and chips…it were busy, lovely community". These narratives evoke "haunted places" (De Certeau, 1988:108), in which people relate to what used to be, but can no longer be seen.

For younger participants, what replaced these old industrial sites was more significant in their sense of belonging. Zahir (Nearthorpe) saw new houses being built on this factory site as a positive step, bringing in "a lot of people from different places". The development was marketed at commuting owner-occupiers, people 'like him', bolstering his sense that Nearthorpe was a destination of choice. Representations of places are therefore complex, as Uprichard and Byrne (2006:672) found in their study of a former mining town. As in Nearthorpe, for older people the physical reminders of industry were a positive symbol of past employment, but for younger people this past was of no relevance to employment opportunities. Aisha (Nearthorpe) admitted that she had "wondered if anybody were gonna buy the houses", but found that they were "all taken", suggesting that the area's reputation was improving. However, for Dave (Nearthorpe) it was another indication of changes that limited the ways in which he could see himself as belonging. Talking to a colleague about the new houses, "I turned round and said 'it's not for me at all, it's for coloureds…I ain't seen one white going in them houses yet'". While for Aisha the increasing diversity of the area was a positive, for Dave it was another indication that his claims to belonging were rooted in the past.

Nostalgia: 'Post-colonial melancholia'

The post-colonial nostalgia identified by Watt (2010) was primarily confined to the narratives of two related households in Nearthorpe. Their claims to belonging were rooted in memories of a time when Nearthorpe 'belonged' to them; it therefore offered a limited way of belonging based on an increasingly distant past. Dave and Sue were not the only households to discuss the increasing ethnic diversity of Nearthorpe, but for other (or 'othered') participants, this diversity offered a possible route to belonging through the presence of more people 'like them'.

Dave and Sue (Dave's sister-in-law) had lived in and around Nearthorpe for their whole lives and had lived through significant changes. Most prominent in their narratives of place were changes in the ethnic make-up of the community; Sue saw that "as these houses come empty, Pakistanis are getting 'em". For Dave and Sue, this demographic change resulted in their loss of control and status in the community. As Dave explained: "to me it ain't Nearthorpe no more…It's not my Nearthorpe no more…I'm sorry about this but Pakis and Bulgarians took it over...this don't belong to me no more". To Dave, everything has "changed over", experienced as a loss of control over community resources and facilities which eroded their ability to belong. Sue highlighted the decline of local amenities: "as soon as one o' our shop shuts…Pakis are coming and takin' over". The closure of the local working men's club, which held important memories for Sue as the "heart o' village", and its apparent purchase by members of the Pakistani community was a symbol of the decline of local amenities oriented towards the white, working-class population and the development of new leisure spaces for 'others'.

This nostalgia was also linked to the perception of increased competition for resources such as healthcare and housing. The perception of increasing number of Eastern European residents disrupted existing hierarchies. As Sue noted, "I'm warming more to Pakistanis now because o' this bloody other lot, Eastern Europeans". Although this racialised 'othering' was not a dominant route to belonging in Nearthorpe, it was central to the experiences of a small number of participants.

Nostalgia: Classed 'others'

Nostalgic refrains in Eastland centred around classed 'othering', with decline linked to the arrival of 'problem' families. This was largely seen as a result of changes in social housing allocation and in the wider Grimsby housing market, which had seen the growth of buy-to-let housing, vacant properties, and "slum lords" (Justine, Eastland). Tenure change was linked to decline.

> It's a transient population isn't it, people move into the area…rent…and even if it's not higher turnover people just don't have that kind of vested interest in…maintaining the property or maintaining the gardens…it's all down to the landlord
>
> *Ann, Eastland*

The perceived transience of private renters constrained the possibilities for social interactions, noted in other Grimsby-based research (Crisp, 2013:333), while landlords were seen as causing a decline in the physical infrastructure. For Carol, neighbourhood decline was the outcome of changes in who moved into Eastland, in private and social rented housing:

> Over the years the first house, she died, the next house, him and her died, then…next door to me, she died. So over the years they've had in, out, in, out o' people…and it just went from bad to worse…They're all council…but they just, it just went downhill 'til now…you don't know who lives in them…you could walk down the street say ten years ago and speak, 'oh hello', and, you see that many different faces come and go, the windows get put in, it is terrible…Then you go round the corner…They've had to sell cheap to landlords, right, because they can't sell their houses, 'cos of the area, so they're leaving 'em, selling 'em cheap to landlords…the landlords are putting <u>anybody</u> in them
>
> *Carol, Eastland*

> They're on benefits, he's got a big thick gold bracelet on, and a big thick gold chain. Goes to Pakistan for holiday for six week. <u>All</u> gettin' housing benefit. It's all wrong. Now why are they gettin' away wi' it?
>
> *Sue, Nearthorpe*

Carol and Sue both perceived changes in the socio-demographic make-up of their local areas as leading to decline. Both talked about the impact of changes in who was allocated council housing, with increasingly vulnerable households prioritised for a scarce resource. Council housing no longer delivered the sense of belonging and respectability that it had when there was a stable population of

people that Carol could recognise. Sue drew a distinction on her street between the properties that had been purchased by the original tenants under right-to-buy and those which were still council-owned. Undesirable households were closely monitored for signs of bringing the reputation of the street down. Changes in the allocation of social housing increasingly meant the presence of (racialised and classed) 'others' with whom 'respectable' households felt at risk of being identified; place no longer reliably conferred a respectable identity. As discussed earlier in this chapter, some residents were able to construct geographies of exclusion to create respectable spaces in which they could legitimately belong. However, Sue perceived undesirable 'others' permeating space; separation increasingly involved physically leaving Nearthorpe to escape to her caravan.

These different types of nostalgic refrains suggest a way of belonging that was primarily based on nostalgia for a past 'community' that could not be recaptured. Why, then, did these households not move to seek out a place where they could belong in the present? First, nostalgic refrains were primarily a feature of the narratives of older people, who may be less mobile for a range of reasons (such as attachment to and investment in the home, the upheaval of moving, lack of suitable alternative properties, see Croucher, 2008, Pannell *et al*, 2012). Second, these participants felt that other places would have undergone similar changes. Staying where they were at least provided a route to belonging through shared histories. And third, nostalgia was just one part of the way people expressed a sense of belonging. Many households also developed a sense of comfort in place through knowledge of the local area and connections with others.

'Biographic encounters' and daily movement

A sense of comfort and belonging can arise through different practices, including daily movement through spaces. We can understand comfort as extending beyond the dwelling, as Nadira (Nearthorpe) explained: "you have to feel at home…that doesn't include just your own home…You have to be comfortable within that area and that kind of boundary that you're in". This sense of comfort came through various avenues; many participants linked back to their childhoods spent in the same or nearby places. This suggests the

importance of the enduring impact of childhood experiences in feelings of belonging, something reflected in Bourdieu's (1990) theory of practice as guided by the habitus, which is seen as prioritising past experiences over the immediate present (Bourdieu, 1990:56). Despite changes, places were familiar and this provided a sense of comfort and attachment for many participants.

> We've always been local, stuck to the areas that we knew were ok
>
> *Sarah, Eastland*

> I've lived here all my life, I'm from round the corner really…that's as far as I've got
>
> *Mike, Eastland*

> We wouldn't go up there anyway…in the last, what, 15 years…we've been in this area, and I mean I was only born just down the road here
>
> *Chris, Eastland*

> Here, you know, you're comfortable walking down the street, you know everybody. Whereas if you're in a different area you've gotta rebuild all that
>
> *Amir, Nearthorpe*

As De Certeau (1988:108) argued, places were "haunted" by "pasts that others are not allowed to read"; people had historical connections to places which could not be perceived by others. They drew comfort from their knowledge of place and as Sarah suggested, feeling comfortable may discourage exploration of the unknown. She knew how to live in the places that were known to her, but unknown places represented a risk. Across a number of households there was a sense that it was safer to stick with what you knew rather than risk the unknown, something that featured in Batty *et al's* (2011) research on poverty in similarly disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Moving resulted in the loss of tacit knowledge of place, as Amir highlighted.

Ros (Eastland) talked extensively about comfort and the search for feeling settled. As a frequent mover in adulthood, her moving history reflected a search for the comfort and connection that she had experienced growing up in the family home. Since leaving home, she had "never found anywhere to settle". Ros struggled to provide reasons for a number of moves, making references to not feeling settled, not feeling comfortable, just knowing that a place wasn't right. This links to debates about the dynamic between researchers and the

communities (particularly working-class) that they are researching (see Allen, 2009, Charlesworth, 2000, and Flint, 2011). As Flint (2011) argued, research must be open to multiple ways of being towards housing, between and within classes. For Ros, it might have been difficult to represent the complexity of her relation to place by ticking boxes on a survey. Instead of rational strategies, she gave precedence to her "instincts" and "gut feelings", her practical sense of being.

> If you moved somewhere like Leeds and like you…really didn't know the area, you didn't know anybody…you've probably take an half hour walk to get to the shop, when you realise after six months down t'line there's a five minute cut in just across the road, and you didn't even realise 'til you got to be mates wi' somebody that told you…knowing layout of the land and people and what areas are like basically and whereas, like I say, here I can tell you what's a good area, what's a bad area, you go somewhere else it's like, right, am I in a good area or a bad area or what…I know where I am here sort of thing, it's like routine if you like, it's what I know, whereas if I was to go to somewhere else like Lancashire, when we lived up Lancashire, God, I didn't have a clue, not a clue, and I didn't know anybody up there and I'm trying to, I tried to go out exploring to try and venture a bit further each time, but I'd only go so far because if I'm scared I got lost I couldn't find my way back home, 'cos there was so many twists and turns if you like to get to different places and different bus routes, it's like, oh my God, no, no. I just, no, I can't do this…I only stuck to the areas I knew, but I didn't feel settled there either…And then as soon as I come back here it just felt all comfortable and natural again

> *Ros, Eastland*

For Ros, it was important to know the layout of the physical landscape, to have implicit knowledge of a place to enable her to move through it. For May (2011:371), this movement fosters a sense of belonging through which people come to understand who they are. However, this is place-bound, lost as soon as you move somewhere new. In Ros' narrative, knowing the lay of the land was not just about choosing efficient routes, but also involved reading places to decide whether she was in a 'good' or 'bad' area. Without the practical sense – developed over time spent in a place, moving through it, with access to information networks – Ros could not respond to cues in the environment around her, and so feared straying too far from the places she knew. Being unable to read the environment in Lancashire was unsettling, but habitual processes of movement over time could have enabled Ros to territorialise that space (Leach, 2005:299). The implication from Ros' narrative is that one has to

adapt – physically – to the local environment; how someone moves through a 'good' area is different to how someone moves through a 'bad' area. You have to know "how to get on with the area…if you can adapt to it then you're fine". Adapting requires a 'practical sense' of how to be in a particular place.

Rachel expressed a similar sentiment when talking about her way of being in different places.

> You need to know how to live on an estate, you need to know who to talk to, who not to, who to keep your head down…if you haven't grown up there, then you need to know who's who before you can speak to people…on a street you just live on a street whereas an estate you need to know which areas you don't go into at night…a street's just a street
>
> *Rachel, Eastland*

Streets are seen as more anonymous than estates and the different landscape requires different forms of movement. Building up this knowledge to effectively read the environment is an essential part of being able to live in challenging places, as it facilitates safe movement through places. Someone newly arrived would not have the same 'practical sense' or 'feel for the game' as someone who had grown up there. Lack of comfort could impact on a household's ability to form place-based connections. As Ros reflected, when the household lived in Lancashire they made friends "but not proper, proper friends" because "I knew I wasn't gonna stay up there, I wasn't settled". This creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, where lack of local contacts and sources of knowledge impedes the ability to feel connected to place, to develop the 'insider information' that is important. Lack of comfort may then become a driver of residential mobility.

Being known and knowing others

For many participants, the connection they had to places and their sense of belonging (or not) was tied up with the social contacts they had. Some participants talked about being "surrounded by lots of young families the same as us" (Sarah, Eastland), or emphasised the similar socio-economic make-up of the population, "there's more professionals in Nearthorpe than people might be led to believe" (Zahir). The ability to recognise others 'like them' was an important element of being comfortable for these participants and contributed to

their sense of living in a 'common sense' world that was knowable to them (Bourdieu, 1990).

Being able to recognise others and in turn be recognised by them was important in developing feelings of belonging; spaces were therefore relational, created by the social relations that were enacted within them (Tilley, 1994:17). This emphasises the importance of understanding how a sense of value is constructed within households and communities, operating independently from powerful narratives about place (Flint, 2011:87).

> I know everybody don't I? I'm always out yammering to people, know just about everybody on this block…we're always in the local shops, and the amount of people you speak to just walking up and down to the shop and that
>
> *Mike, Eastland*

Mike talked about the many contacts he had in nearby streets, conferring a sense of belonging and attachment to place. Friendly, informal relationships with neighbours were an important part of belonging to many participants. It was also possible for participants to maintain a sense of belonging in place without necessarily living there; memories of place could foster a strong emotional attachment to an area.

> There was no place like home believe me…it still brings me memories and loads of people, the new generation…they said so and so [Hasan] used to live here…he still comes round
>
> *Hasan, Nearthorpe*

Hasan's case demonstrates the enduring impact of social contacts in maintaining a sense of belonging over time and space. As discussed earlier in Chapter Nine, Hasan actively wanted to move to Bradford, ostensibly for work reasons, to find a job or have a better chance at finding work. Yet his memories of place and the stories that he told were less related to work than to belonging, suggesting a deeper, emotional attachment to place that went beyond its apparent ability to meet functional work-related needs. Hasan primarily talked about social relations and the networks that he was connected to, his role in helping newly arrived immigrants to find work in the factories and the friends he still had there. This was a place in which he was respected and recognised, in contrast to his current home; a return to Bradford meant a return to a place of

comfort. Although Hasan had lived in Nearthorpe for over 25 years, his connection to Bradford supports the idea that places have different "densities of meanings" depending on the events people have experienced there and the significance attached to them (Tilley, 1994:18).

For some participants, notions of dwelling in place, of knowing people, of belonging, came to the forefront when talking about how safe they felt in their place of residence. The perception of a place as safe or unsafe was, in part, contingent on feelings of belonging.

> 'Cos I do know people I feel that bit safer, especially knowing the more dodgy people…you do feel safer knowing 'em and, I dunno, we've got a decent front door, a decent back door, and a dog, so I don't feel too worried
>
> *Rachel, Eastland*

> I think the bedsits, 'cos you are surrounded all over wi' bedsits there, there, there, there, you just don't know who's in 'em, it makes you a bit wary…I feel very vulnerable on a night round here…a lot of 'em's all rented and you don't know who's in them, you know, whereas like you used to know your neighbours and who was at the bottom of your garden, and you don't anymore…I don't know anybody
>
> *Carol, Eastland*

The contrast between Rachel and Carol's experiences demonstrates the impact that feelings of belonging can have on one's relationship with place. Rachel felt safe because of a strong network of friends. Indeed, if these friends moved away "I wouldn't wanna be here…I think I'd have to go with 'em (laughs)". By contrast, Carol was unsettled by the anonymity of her local area and lack of connections with other people. She perceived strangers who she did not recognise, going about their private business, which did not provide Carol with a sense of connection to her neighbourhood. Robertson *et al* (2008) noted the way that older residents saw face-to-face encounters as a basic part of community. However, Carol was not necessarily seeking out more 'meaningful' face-to-face interactions, but simply to recognise those around her. For example, a neighbour had recently asked her in for a cup of tea, which she declined; Carol was wary of engaging in deeper interactions, but just recognising those around her provided a sense of safety and security.

It was not necessarily the case that the absence of strong connections to people led to feelings of vulnerability and insecurity. Some participants talked about keeping themselves to themselves, not getting involved with the lives of those around them; this does not necessarily indicate the weakening of community, but as Crisp (2013) argued can reflect greater selectivity and choice in neighbouring. With less extensive, but stronger, forms of attachment and bonds (for example among immediate family or close friends), it may be that people do not need to know everyone in their community to feel a sense of comfort and ease (Blokland, 2003); this could be derived just from recognising familiar faces. This "face block" community is one in which members are aware of each other but do not necessarily know each other's identity or formally interact with each other (Hunter and Suttles, 1972, in Hickman, 2013).

> I only say hello to the neighbour…I don't stand there…gabbing to 'em
>
> *Tina, Eastland*

> There's a couple of friends across the street…Not that we…associate with 'em like, you know, but 'hiya!'
>
> *Chris, Eastland*

> I mean I talk to those people over the road, when I see 'em, I don't go over and talk to 'em you know knock on the door and say 'let me in for a coffee' or anything
>
> *Justine, Eastland*

The connections that some participants had with others in their place of residence were more circumspect, limited to brief interactions. Many participants made reference to small acts of neighbourliness – moving the bins, getting washing in, picking up items from the shop, cutting grass – these 'transactions' (Blokland, 2003) provided connections between households. As Robertson *et al* (2008:53) argued, mundane and routine interactions – even infrequent or ephemeral – could be of great significance in providing feelings of reassurance and stability. Small interactions and just recognising those around you could provide a sense of belonging, in contrast to Carol's sense of unease at being surrounded by transient strangers.

10.4 Networks and mobility

Family and friendship networks were one of the most common influences on mobility across all participants. Only three households had not been influenced

by these networks in their past mobility behaviour; the remaining 15 all talked about the importance of networks at some point in their mobility histories, and for many these were of ongoing relevance across their biographies. Relationships with other people had a much greater role in decisions to move from or remain in places than employment factors. For many people, networks were enabling factors in their lives. Grandparents provided childcare so that parents could afford to work, family members cared for ill relatives, and friends provided networks through which goods could be informally lent. Especially for those living more precarious lives, networks of mutual support could be the difference between managing and not managing to make ends meet. However, the use of many of these networks of support was gendered, with women drawing on their social capital to perform these caring and family-based roles (Gosling, 2008). The roles played by women are therefore crucial to sustaining notions of community (Robertson *et al*, 2008), as the stability of these networks helped to smooth out the ups and downs of an unstable and low-paid labour market context. Whilst networks could be positive, they could also constrain households like Nadira (Nearthorpe) or Rachel (Eastland), trapping them in place because they needed this informal support, or needed to provide support to others. Remaining in place was therefore not always a wholly positive choice; although it enabled households to 'get by' it did not necessarily help them to 'get on' (Gosling, 2008).

Connections encouraging stability

Although there are many different conceptualisations of networks, for participants in Nearthorpe and Eastland place-based networks had considerable relevance. They could influence residential mobility behaviour by tying people to the places in which their networks operated, providing essential practical support. Proximity to these networks could off-set other less favourable aspects of places.

> It's the people that make a place, you can be…anywhere can't you and it, as long as the people are alright, people can, can kind of tolerate most things…Even when we were at Town Street…I mean the house was an absolute dump…But, that said, we had a lot of friends round that area didn't we, so (laughs), we put up with it

> *Ann, Eastland*

Although Ann was dissatisfied with the state of repair of the house, this was balanced by proximity to their friends, which encouraged them to remain where they were rather than move. For other participants, networks provided a habitual sense of belonging; that place was all they knew.

> My parents live here, my brother lives here, my sister lives here and her husband, my aunties live here, my grandparents live here, entire family basically. We've always lived here
>
> *Amir, Nearthorpe*

The density of Amir's networks provided an important claim to place; he belonged in Nearthorpe, where his family always lived. The density of familial networks could promote immobility by tying people into highly local micro-geographies. However, networks are also malleable and can be stretched, supplemented and re-shaped to meet the needs of the household. Despite his connection to Nearthorpe, the household were likely to move in the future. They had "befriended people across the country…so I think then…you kind of have to fall back on those connections and…make those people, sort of your family (Yasmin). Yasmin and Amir were relatively unusual in having consciously developed strong networks in other geographical locations, constructing possible future residential locations with ready-made support networks. This reflected their more middle-class orientation and expectation that they would move to other areas to pursue career pathways.

Where networks provided emotional or practical support, rather than just sociability, they were perhaps more likely to promote stability. For Aisha (Nearthorpe), the presence of family and community-based friendship networks was critical to her recovery from trauma. Proximity to these networks provided a sense of safety and comfort; her experiences of living through domestic violence heightened her need for a support network: "when you've gone through something like that you do need your family". Although Aisha's experience and subsequent desire to be stable is perhaps an extreme example, many households talked about the emotional and practical support delivered via familial and social networks. Such place-based networks were critical to building up a patchwork of support that meant participants were able to balance precarious lives, as Batty *et al* (2011) demonstrated in relation to life in a broader set of challenging neighbourhoods.

Rachel provided the strongest example of the way in which social networks came to have a practical element.

> We're all skint…I'd love to mark a pound coin one day, right, 'cos I'll borrow a quid off you to go and do whatever with, and then, 'oh, I owe you a quid', 'oh, well I owe that to so and so anyway, so you give that to them for me', and 'you give me that quid change' and, 'oh yeah, I've got that quid from so and so'…I know it sounds like it's just a quid, but by the end of the week that's a loaf of bread, that's a pint of milk
>
> *Rachel, Eastland*

Rachel's description of her social network points to the enduring role of informal, mutual help. The informal lending of money and goods enabled multiple households to survive on limited means, but such forms of interdependence reduced the potential for mobility, since the key to its existence is its local nature. Neighbours could seek out help from those close by or collect debts owed by other friends; moving away would disrupt the network, and people recognised the value of these place-based resources in 'getting by' (Batty *et al*, 2011). Rachel articulated a sense of solidarity with her friends – "we're all skint and, we're all in it together" – that challenged the idea that people were less likely to perceive a 'common cause' (Bauman, 2000). For those without such friendship networks, informal support could be sought from other places. Tina (Eastland), for example, had received help from a local church which "helped us with food this week…'cos I've spent all my money on gas".

Some older participants talked about the support they provided to family members in the form of childcare. Such arrangements enabled their children to work, which would have been unaffordable if using formal childcare options (Gosling, 2008). For some, this role marked a continuation of the role their own parents had played when they had young children. Carol's (Eastland) mother, for example, would look after her children "while I did a few hours' work in the shop", making physical proximity to her mother and workplace important. Now, Carol provided childcare for her grandchildren, without which her daughter "wouldn't be able to manage" and "wouldn't be able to go to work 'cos there'd be nobody to get to look after 'em". This role made residential mobility of any great distance unlikely. Helen (Nearthorpe) also carried out a significant childcare role for her daughter. Although she had moved to the area so that her daughter could provide support for Helen as she got older, Helen provided a reciprocal

form of support through childcare provision, without which her daughter "wouldn't be able to afford to work". The provision of mutual support tied the two households together in their current location, as Helen pointed out: "I'd kill her if she moved!".

In Nearthorpe, Nadira's case also demonstrated the importance of familial networks in encouraging stability, but on a wider scale. Almost all of her extended family lived in the streets surrounding her own, and through various circumstances the households had come to rely on each other for different forms of support through their lives. They now had an intricate pattern of daily visiting behaviour and support, from taking and collecting children from local schools to looking after children during hospital visits. As Nadira noted, this impacted on the potential for any of the households to be residentially mobile: "the extenuating circumstances are all to do with the family as to why we can't really kind of move away, because…I need support". Her younger sister now did not want to move away because she helped to support Nadira in caring for her youngest child, who was ill. Although the support provided changed over time, it had been strongly influenced by the health issues of different family members.

> We've not been able to break away, move away because I've got my older sister's been battling with cancer…you need to give that support to your family and so…I wouldn't have moved away…And then my mum's not been a well person…so in the past I've been like kind of a carer to my mum as well, so that's another reason why…we've kind of stayed within this area
>
> *Nadira, Nearthorpe*

The family network was a vital source of support that enabled multiple households to manage complex, long-term illnesses. Being in one place was a vital component in their ability to get by; without this informal support, Nadira would have to rely more on statutory services to help her care for her child. The importance of place for Nadira, then, is not only based on an emotional connection and sense of belonging, but also on practical considerations about access to additional support.

Connections encouraging and directing mobility

Although support networks may be more commonly seen as fostering stability, tying people to places, it is also the case that households have moved in order to be closer to these networks or to prevent disrupting these networks. Particularly when younger, participants were mobile in order to maintain and access friendship networks. Their mobility was connected with the mobility and locational choices made by other households. Chris (Eastland), for example, talked about following friends to the south coast one summer, while Ros and Rachel both talked about the role of friendship networks in their mobility.

> [Friends] ended up staying down there for a bit, and I went to stay with 'em, and then I got me own place and then they moved up here, so I moved back up here
>
> *Ros, Eastland*

> There was this massive group of us, half from Hull, half from Grimsby, they used to stay with us, we used to stay with them, and it was only natural to go back to where they were
>
> *Rachel, Eastland*

During a period of frequent moving in her life, Rachel in particular was influenced by the location of different friendship networks. Even her most recent move was partly influenced by friendship networks, because "there was nothing up there, all my mates were more this way". Given the sense of belonging and security conferred by being in close proximity to dense friendship networks, as well as practical support, it is perhaps not surprising that much of Rachel's past mobility has been driven in some way by friendship networks.

Family networks could also play an important part in mobility histories. Many households talked about moving to be closer to family, either their own or – particularly following marriage – their spouse's family. The presence of family drew households to particular places, perhaps again reflecting the comfort that may derive from feelings of belonging in a particular place. Chris (Eastland) reflected on moving as a child, going to live near uncles and aunties because his father was "very…family orientated", the family "stayed together". The connection to family and friends provided a safe route into new places, as Matt demonstrated.

> As soon as I find bad news I've got a list in my head of where I can go already, five or six different places…I can go to Middlesbrough where I've got my mum's family, I can go to Bournemouth where I've got my dad's family, I can go out to Swindon, Reading, loads of places
>
> *Matt, Eastland*

> I specifically wanted this street because I've got a lot of friends down here…there's a friend who's [got children]…and I've been like a second parent for 'em, so it's been brilliant to come down here specifically to be round 'em more
>
> *Rachel, Eastland*

For Sarah and Matt, residential mobility has been directed by the location of family members. This was particularly in connection to unplanned mobility, where a move was related to notions of escape. Matt, for example, talked about places he could escape to if he needed to get away, all places where he has family or friendship connections. Rachel was moving in order to be closer to her son's school and to move away from an area she perceived negatively, but her choice of specific street was driven by friendships, especially proximity to a friend for whom she had provided significant familial support.

The importance of social and familial networks in mobility behaviour could also be seen where participants felt restricted by lack of networks. Hasan, for example, wanted to be residentially mobile in order to find work, but lack of connections in places where he felt there may be opportunities prevented him from moving. When he was younger he had thought about moving to London, where he knew there were job opportunities and had friends, but now that he was older he did not know "anybody at all". Similarly, he was now restricted by lack of connections in other places.

> In Manchester there's loads of jobs…but it's a very, very big place Manchester. I don't know anybody…if I knew anybody I wouldn't mind, if I knew, friends or relatives, I know nobody…you can't go just into a town just like that (laughs)…where am I gonna go?
>
> *Hasan, Nearthorpe*

To Hasan, the idea of moving to a place that he did not know, and where he knew nobody, was unthinkable. Networks provided an important source of information about where to go – and where to avoid – as well as a sense of security. The presence of others provided reassurance and recognition; without

these connections it seemed to Hasan that you become isolated, invisible and vulnerable. Lack of networks therefore limited Hasan's potential future mobility.

However, family networks were not always a positive part of someone's life, and mobility could also be orientated away from them. Justine (Eastland), for example, moved "to get away from [my husband's] family", and to move "closer to where I was from, closer to family". Family was therefore not always experienced as a source of support. Where proximity to family was a source of stress, people may try to be mobile in order to escape that stress. Several participants referred to family as a source of tension and expressed a desire to remove themselves from these networks.

> If I was living with a parent it'd be like a really desperate like temporary situation…I really don't know what age it was, it could've been like two years ago probably, like that's when I got kicked out last, it's, it's happened so many, like three or four times

> James, Eastland

> Here, we're out of the way, we do our own thing, and then there we'll have a lot of family interference, if we were like more close

> Sumera, Nearthorpe

James talked about moving in with family in order to meet housing needs as being "my last resort" because of past negative experiences. Although Sumera acknowledged that there were days when they thought "we need the family", they balanced these difficulties with the knowledge that living in Nearthorpe also protected them from "interference" and allowed them to focus on their own future. Zahir (Nearthorpe) pointed out that their stance "flies in the face of that…popular perception about Asian families being like, really tight knit", but their experience had been that wider family networks were a source of stress.

10.5 Conclusion

There is no single way to understand places; they are contested spaces, constructed, used and viewed from a range of different perspectives. Participants did not perceive the place in which they lived in the same way as 'official', external, discourses. Although they did not necessarily view the places in which they lived positively, acknowledging many negative aspects, they also did not generally perceive a homogenous, 'declining', 'deprived' area. It was

relatively common for people to carve up the spatial landscape in a way which served to insulate them from notions of living in a 'bad' area. Broad policy narratives fail to understand the intricate, hyper-local view which residents themselves constructed. Participants created 'geographies of exclusion' at different spatial scales that insulated them from more negative narratives of place (Watt, 2006). At the same time as drawing important spatial distinctions, people also situated places in their own personal residential mobility biographies. In order to understand how people relate to the places in which they live, we must therefore understand how they have experienced other places, since they habitually make comparisons across their life course. Residential mobility decision are not made solely with reference to the present but rather draw on histories and experiences formed across someone's life, demonstrating the importance of utilising biographical approaches.

Attachment to place need not necessarily be based on a strong positive affiliation to place, but could be a habitual attachment arising out of a sense of comfort, familiarity, routine and habit. Despite the perceived downsides of living in a particular place, residents often expressed a sense of comfort arising from their knowledge of place, and a fear of spaces which were unknown to them. This suggested that people can read the urban environment as a "barometer of risk and protective factors" (Bannister and Fyfe, 2001:809). In the immediate locality of the home, people were faced with more predictable encounters to which they can respond appropriately; they feel 'at home' (Kearns and Parkinson, 2001:2106). However, some participants perceived changes to places that made them increasingly uncomfortable, yet they were still residentially immobile. The concept of nostalgia offers a way of understanding how people can simultaneously belong, yet not belong. Particularly prominent in the narratives of a small number of older, long-term residents, nostalgic refrains – be they economic, racialised or classed – offered a limited way of belonging based on a disappeared but remembered past.

For the majority of participants, a sense of belonging was borne out of connections to other people. It was important to know other people and to be known to them. A sense of belonging based on this mutual recognition could reduce propensity for residential mobility. Networks, therefore, were of crucial importance in understanding how people experienced places. These were often

much more than social groupings. For a number of people dense, place-based networks offered essential, practical support without which it would be difficult to get by, and as Batty *et al* (2011) argued, for many people remaining in place provided a sense of security against a backdrop of economic uncertainty. In their most intense form, such networks exerted a strong disincentive to residential mobility, since people were tied into complex networks of mutual support. However, the presence of pre-existing family and friendship networks elsewhere could also be a driver of mobility, taking people outside the immediate neighbourhood and extending their spatial routines (Robinson, 2011), or driving moves to places that were closer to these networks. The research presented here captures these relationships by using the concept of belonging and has shown that an important route to belonging came through being known and knowing others in a place.

Overman's (Lawless *et al*, 2011:23) economic viewpoint that conceptualised moves as driven by a "trade off" between "wages, cost of living, and amenities" is highly influential in government thinking (Martin *et al*, 2015), but misunderstands the emotional relationship people have with the places in which they live, the way that places have come – for some people – to take an important place in the construction of their identity. As Batty *et al* (2011:20) argued a "sense of self" can be rooted in place, generating strong attachment to places; in the research presented here such attachment largely arose from connections with other people that were rooted in place. Policies focusing on "improving outcomes for individuals including, possibly, removing barriers that prevent people relocating to better areas" (Lawless *et al*, 2011:23) fail to take into account people's complex and emotional connections to place.

11. Biographies as research object

11.1 Introduction

Lives are dynamic and the flow of the narrative can be a powerful object of research (Atkinson, 1998; Brannen and Nilsen, 2011; Kohler Riessman, 1993; Mason, 2004; Rustin, 2000). In analysing qualitative date thematically, there is a danger that something is lost from the narratives that participants have constructed (Merrill and West, 2009:137); the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Thematic analysis is a valuable tool, particularly when trying to present large volumes of qualitative data, yet there were times in this research when the power of someone's life story was diluted. As Kaźmierska (2004:184) cautioned, in researching a particular topic one may lose sight of the uniqueness of each biography, forgetting that each life story is important. This research considers not only the paths taken, but also divergence from anticipated pathways, routes that were blocked, and how pivotal events shaped not only someone's subsequent life but also their interpretation of their history.

This chapter presents three biographies to illustrate the importance of biographical understandings, enabling the reader to connect with these narratives and demonstrating how key themes emerge from an understanding of a whole life, themes which may not have developed through alternative methodologies. The aim is to situate personal narratives within the broader structural context, giving voice to participants whilst gaining insight into social processes (Chamberlayne, 2004, Harding, 2006, Roberts, 2002). As Clark (2003) argued common themes can emerge despite variation in experience, as is the case here. Each person is presented in turn, with key sections of narrative. Although the aim is to facilitate the telling of their own story, for reasons of length it has been necessary to edit these sections.[14]

11.2 Case selection

The three cases presented in this section were chosen to illustrate the relevance of utilising a biographical approach. They demonstrate the complexity of people's lives and the long-term impact that events and decisions can have

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[14] This is clearly indicated in the text, using '…'. An interview reference and line numbers have also been provided for each section of transcript, to provide additional clarity over the editing process. For example Interview 1, lines 14 to 52 is referenced as I1:14-52.

on the direction of someone's life. Looking at the entirety of someone's life history demonstrates just how unimportant – for these people – work has been in directing their life. These narratives are not representative of all the participants or places studied. The cases presented here are all women (although women were over-represented as participants at a ratio of 3:2). Some of the dominant themes featured in their biographies are rooted in gendered experiences: domestic violence, caring roles, and family. However, these three women also provided some of the most detailed biographies. The depth of the narrative was an important consideration in selecting cases to ensure that longer sections of transcripts could be presented. They were also selected for contrast; Nadira had a stable housing history, while Rachel and Aisha had different experiences of frequent mobility. Nevertheless, it is likely that in selecting these biographies narratives of care and support feature more strongly than among the whole sample of participants.

Charlesworth (2000:26) argued that:

> The process of theorising, the generalisations, the concepts, are not driven by the desire to create an objectifying distance, but to honour the suffering of these people in a way that is adequate to its significance: to do justice to them, to honour their lives

This chapter seeks to achieve the same end by different means. In dissecting and mixing narratives, the essence of someone's life story can be lost. For these women in particular, the overriding themes from their lives have not been adequately represented through thematic chapters. This chapter attempts to do justice to the participants in this research, by presenting their lives in a more complex way.

11.3 Aisha

Aisha is in her 30s and has one child. She was born in Nearthorpe and had lived in her current home for three years at the time of the research. She had moved home around 15 times in her life, largely as a result of relationship breakdown (she had been married and divorced twice), homelessness, and domestic abuse. Her housing pathway does not follow a neat, progressive line; Aisha cycled in and out of different housing tenures, moving through council housing, emergency accommodation, private renting, living with family, home

ownership and staying with friends. Her current home is owned by the council but is only a few streets away from family members. This was consistently presented as being of high importance. Aisha has been out of work for some years and receives Income Support as her child is not yet in school. She had previously worked as a support worker and in call centres. Although she was thinking about looking for work again, Aisha was worried about surviving on a low wage and questioned the value of work. At the time of the interview she was recovering from a serious assault which had made her more focused on being part of a community. Participating in the research was a way for Aisha to be able to tell her story. As Atkinson (1998:7) argued, "telling our story enables us to be heard, recognised, and acknowledged by others".

Aisha timeline

1980		2002		Leaves husband	Gets married	2009	2009	2011
Born	Marries Moves to London Presents as homeless 2-3 moves in bedsits	Moves to Sheffield Staying in husband's family's flat, Hillside		Private renting, Goldthorpe Meets 2nd husband	Moves to Goldthorpe New job in insurance/law	Leaves husband Private renting, Goldthorpe	Returns to private rented house Refuses B&B Baby born	Mother dies

	1997		2004		2008	2009	2010
	Leaves family home Living in council flat	Moves in with husband's family in Marylebone Working in retail	Private renting, Goldthorpe Fire at property	Moves to Townend Working several jobs, call centre, Meadowhall, refuge/youth work	Gets pregnant Buys house	Husband finds her Applies as homeless Stays with friend	Moves into current home

Broadening mobility within biographies

Aisha's housing pathway shows that she has been highly mobile and has often been in an insecure housing position. From her first move to escape an abusive home life, to her most recent moves related to domestic violence, many parts of Aisha's narrative outline events which continue to have a significant impact on her life today.

…my brother was abusive, my dad was abusive and I left for that reason…council give me a flat…from there I moved to London, I, I were getting married…I didn't want to marry my cousin, they were telling me to marry…I just wanted to leave, so that was it. That were my first change, my first move…We lived in, I can't even remember…We went to the homeless section there, I think moved to quite a few bedsits, in London it's completely different, it's very hard to even get anything, you have to live in bedsits there…so I was living in with foreign people that you don't even know and you…have one bedroom and you have to share the bathroom and everything. Moved around I think two or three times, I can't even remember the areas, but then his family…they told us to move in with them…and then…it was his family who actually told us to come back to Sheffield…that's when my marriage failed, we were two different people and he wasn't just putting that effort in…he were drinking as well…so, I left him. Still moved in Goldthorpe in a flat, that's when I were working…and then I just saved my money. Didn't like Goldthorpe, didn't like the area, didn't like where I was living, 'cos it was…really isolated, it was a bit dangerous because there was that tunnel…So it were just, basically, money, I didn't have the money to pay, afford a better area, and I met thingy. So then I was working two jobs just to get myself out of there, and then I moved on top of Townend, I were private renting…lived there, were working just to pay the bills and whatnot, doing three jobs and basically got married and life went downhill. And he made me move back to Goldthorpe (laughs) and that's where my…worst nightmare happened. And then we bought a house...and obviously he kept it...that's when I moved back to Nearthorpe

I2:71-120

…unfortunately I got married to someone out of my choice, and my marriage kind of went downhill straight away…I moved twice…because it's with a different Asian culture, a woman… she don't have no rights until the guy gives you a divorce…so basically I used to, I used to take him back...and then, basically got separated several times in my marriage, got pregnant…then stupidly I bought a house which he put in his name…basically went through like a nightmare with him…I had to leave, he wasn't leaving me, so it was me moving <u>again</u>. So, my mum wasn't well…so, then decided because she was living with my brother, that I was gonna take care of her…I finally went to the Council, went through homeless

I1:28-62

Many of Aisha's moves are described as controlled by someone else or forced by the need to escape a negative situation. The volume of moves and the way in which they are described demonstrates the irrelevance of a strategic housing pathway to her life. As she reflected at the end of the interviews, "my moves have always been because of bad things that have happened to me in life. And

that's it". Although Aisha was making choices (in highly constrained circumstances), there was often little room for strategic calculation. From Aisha's perspective of the present day, the choices she had were between different bad situations, either going into a refuge or staying where she was, which in the retelling is no choice at all.

> I tried leaving. Because I've worked in a refuge myself…I knew it wasn't right for me to take my daughter into…they were basically telling me to move out of Sheffield, which you can't do...it is awful to be in that position because it's _you_ who's having to do everything, _you_ who has to…make that move, _you_ who has to change everything, your life and whatnot, cut everybody off…I tried to do that but I didn't go in a refuge, I went to one of my friend's houses, and I was heavily pregnant. So basically I went back to that house…obviously he knew where I lived…so went back to the Council again, because they sent me to go in a B&B…a bedsit where it is full of drunks…I thought it's worse than my husband, I might as well stay where I am. So basically, when I really did have enough, and he hit me again, is that I went to the homeless section, I had to fight like a dog for where I was [her current home]
>
> _I1:73-90_

Aisha's refusal to go into a refuge or B&B accommodation must be understood in the context of her experience of having lived in emergency bedsits when she was first married, and her subsequent role as a support worker in a refuge. Her circumstances had also changed – she had a baby – demonstrating the importance of life course events in mobility decisions. The place context was also different; while Aisha felt that in London you had to live in bedsits, in Sheffield she was more confident in fighting for her right to more suitable accommodation. Her agency in making housing choices must therefore be seen in the wider institutional context (as argued by Brannen and Nilsen, 2011:615), whereby Aisha had different opportunities to exercise control over her housing pathway partially as a result of different housing market contexts.

Aisha's resistance to moving from her current home has multiple components, related not only to her move there, but also her wider biography.

I can't move, my family's across the road, I'm not moving anywhere...
they were telling me to leave from hospital, if I wanted to go into
another property…I wasn't gonna get a choice…I'm not moving, and
it's to do with money as well, I've put blood and spit into this house, it
took me two years to decorate it…I left with nothing, with nothing, I
left that home, everything were in that home…when I came here and
I had to start all over again, so I'm not moving…I'm not gonna have a
choice now, or, the worst thing is, is that they put you in those flats…
So I am gonna thingy my foot down, and I am sick of being just
passed from pillar to post…you turn hard and you're bitter, I'm angry
and…you know God forbid it did turn me into a cow, an' I'm not. Not
bitter and angry, and that's what I am, I'm on a rollercoaster trying to
find myself again

I2:38-59

Her history of forced mobility, being seemingly unable to exercise choice,
provides the backdrop to Aisha's experience of 'choice-based lettings'. Her
history and deep-seated need to be near to family would not be taken into
account. Aisha's home also held important memories of her mother, who died
there. Although Aisha had decorated the house, her narrative reveals more than
a concern about monetary investment; it was also emotional and psychological.
She did not want to experience losing everything again, having to start all over,
having to fight for somewhere to live. Given her history of frequent moving,
Aisha was also "sick of moving, I've been moving all my life".

Immobility was not a passive occurrence, an absence of action, but an active
choice stemming from Aisha's life experiences. It was a way to control her
housing pathway and create a safe space in which she could find herself. Aisha
had invested in her home as a space in which to reconstruct her identity. She
had rejected her previous identity of a working person, but at the time of the
interviews she was still recovering, physically and emotionally, from recent
traumas. The events she had experienced put her in conflict with her own sense
of self, who she felt she was, or wanted to be. She was trying to find an identity
for herself, and having a stable home was crucial to this.

Fluidity in belonging and the role of networks

For many of Aisha's moves, where she was moving to was perhaps less
important than where she was leaving; there is little sense of belonging to
places in her early moves. Places were often described through a concern for
safety and connection. It is possible that Aisha was framing places she had

previously lived in this way as a result of her recent experiences, seeing places through the prism of her need for community support. Her previous house at Townend was "perfect"; in her description of belonging there Aisha highlighted the facilities, particularly Asian shops. By contrast a different place, which had not had these facilities, was described as "isolated", with a high risk to her own safety. For Aisha, close proximity to these specialist shops was about more than convenience or unwillingness to travel outside her immediate neighbourhood; they signalled that there was a community in which she could belong, something that provided safety and comfort. Although to the Local Authority such facilities were just a bus ride away, for Aisha these facilities had a disproportionate impact because of what they represented to her.

The importance of the Asian community was emphasised as a result of Aisha's experience of traumatic events. Although her strong sense of belonging was forged in a particular place, it was largely a network-based rather than spatially-based community. Hence, Aisha could both belong and not belong in Nearthorpe.

> I went through hell in this house…your first thing when you move is you wanna be made, feel secure, you wanna feel safe, you wanna know in your bad times something happened that your neighbours are there, you know it's everything, that you don't feel isolated from the world…you're all human beings, if something really bad happened you'd be there for each other….he came here…when I was screaming and yelling nobody came out, they were all watching. They had their lights on and they're watching…and they're all English. And then I saw this Asian and I recognised, and I was screaming, for him to help, and then he came, and the minute he came he let go of me
>
> *I1:151-179*

> …while all that was happening to me she was screaming outside, begging for help, and nobody, nobody answered the door and they're all English…and some I know…and for me, you know, lived, I've born and bred here, and worked, you know, around people…I've kind of completely broke, and I thought I can't go around making points it does matter that I am, I'm a Pakistani living on the road that they don't like. And I get that look
>
> *I1:289-300*

Aisha's story reveals the fluid and changing nature of belonging in place. As a divorced woman, she was to some extent an outsider in the Asian community. She talked earlier about tensions with this community as people gossiped and wondered "why she's divorced". A serious assault represented a break in Aisha's biography and in her feelings of belonging. This event showed her that she did not belong; despite being born in Nearthorpe, she was still Pakistani and faced hostility from some (though not all) neighbours. However, the response of her cultural community in the aftermath of her assault seemed to turn it into an event from which she could recover, something that might even be seen as having some positive outcomes. Aisha found a community that would support her and to which she could belong. This seems to be central to Aisha's sense of place and marked a shift in her relationship to where she lives. Her experiences have shown the importance of knowing that "in your bad times…your neighbours are there", precisely because she has experienced the opposite.

Work and mobility biographies

In Aisha's retelling of her life story, there are definitive turning points which are presented as crucial junctures in her life. Hankiss (1981:203) refers to this process as building ontologies of the self, endowing certain episodes with symbolic meaning by locating them at a focal point of "the explanatory system of the self". In Aisha's biography, work has a meaning which stems from her biography.

> You can't spend a life being isolated or being ignorant from the world…And I've lived a life in the past like I said, and I used to work for a law firm, was all, you know work, home, work, home and just seeing your friends and you and your selfish life…What happened to me, in the end it was the Asian community, everybody coming down, my friends, everybody being concerned, everybody wanting to help
>
> *I1:382-390*

I've always had to do two jobs…it is a selfish life, you're working, working, working, what else are you doing? Going home and going to sleep and that's it….everything about it is unhealthy and unwanted…wherever you go people are nosey, and people do want to know about your life, I think it's just with Asians it just goes a bit too far…Islamically you should be doing this, and Islamically you should be doing that. But it is important to be part of communities…'cos that's what my life was like before, I wasn't mixing with people, I haven't got the time…working…just to earn money, you don't have the time to talk to people, meet people, I never used to get to do that, I've just got to do it now…this is how you're recognised, you know, as a person, that respect, all that should count in a person and in a person's life, but what you see with…working people, they think their respect comes from where they're working and their job, no, not really, it should be, like, where you're from as well, because that's where all that does come in, in your bad times, it is the community that are there for you…No, your work don't (laughs), apart from sending you out a sick card…and I think this is what's different with our culture…when I, I was ill, I had people coming and helping me out…I think that's what opened my eyes…you need to be recognised, you need to be seen

I2:330-371

Aisha divides her biography into her life before and after a serious assault. Before, she talks about her selfish life, characterised as her working life. Work has negative connotations, cutting her off from something that is now seen as central to her life and sense of self – her community. Aisha learned from experience that recognition and respect came not from colleagues or neighbours, but from her Asian community. The process of reconstructing her biography opened Aisha's eyes to the importance of the wider community in her life, demonstrating how the process of giving a narrative account can result in discovering "a deeper meaning in our lives" (Atkinson, 1998:1). Her past was re-interpreted to give meaning to the present (Bertaux-Wiame, 1981). Being recognised "as a person" is of profound importance to Aisha.

I've worked all my life like shit, and I've worked for…the government, when I needed help…nobody were there. I went to see an MP…basically, you're still a nothing, and I were bidding and I were bidding, and I wasn't being given a house, I wanted to be in Nearthorpe

I1:103-108

Aisha's experience of interacting with official authorities was that she was "a nothing". When she was attacked, she was again invisible to her neighbours, none of whom helped her. By contrast, it was an Asian man that she recognised who came to her aid. Being recognised and having a connection to her community is now a necessity in her life because it is seen as having saved her life. By contrast, she had gained little from her working life – even though she had seemingly done 'the right thing' by working hard, she was still invisible when she needed help, and she still lost everything when she had to flee. Aisha saw support services being closed down around her due to funding cuts, "for what? It [domestic violence] does exist. I exist. Who supported me? Nobody". She talked of being completely failed by official channels and support services.

Although there is a sense of conflict in Aisha's narrative, between working and being part of community life, this does not mean work will not have an important part in her future. Aisha saw work as a way to fulfil other aspirations, such as homeownership, which would provide a secure and stable home. However, the type of work on offer seemingly does not provide sufficient remuneration to enable Aisha to get by, and she has not seen anything that would allow her to work around school hours. She was looking at call centre work or support services, of which she had experience, but salaries were not seen as any better than when she was in employment, making it difficult to see how she could manage her bills. Aisha is, however, focused on her daughter's achievements and encouraging her development through school and extra-curricular activities, something that is a high priority to "keep her normal…she's seen this…what kind of effect is that gonna have on her?".

11.4 Rachel

Rachel is in her early 30s and has lived with her school-age son in a privately rented house in Eastland for two years. She has moved about 12 times in her life, but a large number of moves happened in a three year period in her early 20s. Many other instances of sleeping on sofas also occurred in this period. Many of the moves were between Hull and Grimsby and were bound up with friendship networks. In contrast to Aisha's narrative of frequent mobility, by and large Rachel recounted these moves as a series of adventures, telling stories of her life lived with others. Rachel was largely in control of these moves in the

sense that residential mobility was not necessarily her only option. As with Aisha, Rachel's narrative – particularly her early life – questions the notion of the 'rational actor' planning a housing pathway, instead presenting a story of seemingly spontaneous, unencumbered mobility. Rachel's early work history was in low-paid roles, working in bars, sales, as a carer, and later in nightclub security. She stopped working when she was pregnant and claimed Income Support. Now that her son was at school she received Job Seekers' Allowance, but rather than looking for work Rachel was undertaking a part-time degree and hoping to avoid scrutiny from the Job Centre.

Rachel timeline

1982	1999			2001	2002	2005	2009
Born	Leaves home Moves to flat, Grimsby	Moves to house, Grimsby	Moves to Leeds Working in bar	Social housing in Hull Abandons flat after a few days	Stays with friend with kids, stays on sofa until mid-2004	Pregnant Stops working	Moves to house on Trilling Street

	1998	2000		2001	2001-2004	2004	2006		2011
	Working in nursing home after school	Moves to flat on seafront	Moves to hostel, Hull Moves between Hull and Grimsby a few times Gets job at call centre, Grimsby	Loses job Moves to Grimsby Stays with friend with kids for 6 months, helps look after them	Gets security job in Leeds Living & working between Hull, Grimsby & Leeds	Moves into housing association house, Ramsey Court, Grimsby	Son born		Moves to current home

Broadening mobility within biographies

Rachel's mobility biography shows a history of frequent moving when she was younger. Moving happened seemingly on the spur of the moment, a routine event without lots of planning and preparation. Since she had a child, however, Rachel was more settled, living at three properties, including a relatively settled five-year period at one house. Her history demonstrates the importance of life course changes, such as having a child, in promoting a stable living environment, and probably also changes in the mobility of her wider friendship network. These networks are crucial to understanding Rachel's mobility behaviour.

At 17, I moved to…a house down [in Grimsby] with a friend of mine from work, which is a similar sort of area to this really, but I didn't really know anyone. Then I moved to a place on t'seafront…I was young, and I was drinking the rent…the rent, just backed up and backed up, so then I moved from there to, somewhere over that way…with a friend of mine, that didn't work out 'cos he was going to pay the rent and not actually paying it (laughs)…and then I moved to Hull…we used to go over there every single weekend to go to this nightclub…there was a hostel over there that two of me friends were living in, like, four or five flats in this like shared kitchen type thing, and I went over there and told 'em that my parents kicked me out for being gay (laughs), so they gave me a room at the hostel (laughs) that's not the last time I used that story (laughs)…this is where it gets a bit foggy…

…I think I came back to Grimsby at one point, and then I went back to Hull…I came back to Grimsby at some point, and then I ended up moving over, I think the flat above a friend of mine's flat came available, through a housing association, so I told them I got kicked out for being gay (laughs) and they gave me the flat (laughs). It's terrible but you've gotta do what you've gotta do, and then that was ace, 'cos my other mate got the other flat, and there was three of us, and that was just a party house…but we lived there for ages and then…I think I came back to Grimsby again, and then I ended up going back over to there, and then I come back to Grimsby, decided to crack on and got a job [at a call centre]…I went for a night out in Leeds, where a couple of my mates had moved to, and they said 'you should move here'…I went 'I can't just move here, I've got a job in Grimsby', they said 'well get a job here', I went 'you get me a job and I will move here', so they got me a job that day (laughs)...bar work…I came back and got my stuff and then went over there, stayed in a little place with my mate, we had a massive argument that night…I went to work not knowing where I was gonna sleep, and I ended up sleeping on…like staff bathroom, in their houses and that for a couple of weeks, and then they got me a place with somebody who was after a lodger, so I stayed there for a while until I lost my job…So I had to come back to Grimsby, stayed on a mate's couch, then I ended up back at [my friend with the kids'] house, for about six months, and then I moved, she was doing my head in…so I moved back to Hull, I think that's when I was staying with a friend, and then we tried to get the flat on [a council estate] and that's when I got the job and I was working, living between Leeds, Grimsby and Hull. And then…a friend of mine who worked at the housing association over here said that he had, there was a house on Ramsey Court [Grimsby], I took the house, and within a week I got knocked up, and it couldn't have been more perfect timing really…sorted my life out…I was there five years…and then we got the house on Trilling Street, and then here. But in between all that there's about, about 40, 50 occasions of different couches…

> …It was <u>awful</u>. It was (sigh) there was only me, so, and we were <u>all</u> doing the same things, and even though I didn't know where I was gonna be sleeping this time tomorrow, I never went a night without having somewhere to stay, I never went a day without eating anything, and I think, as much as it wasn't particularly glamorous, it wasn't all that bad really...I had no stuff, all my stuff got left behind at wherever…everything I had fit into my mate's boiler cupboard…then I got the house in Ramsey Court…you're starting with concrete floors, no furniture…cardboard box with a telly on it (laughs)…by the time we moved out of there, five years later…three loads it took to get us into the next house (laughs). I was hoarding!

I1:955-1058

Rachel first left home following a family argument. This event was of crucial importance, because without this relationship breakdown there is a sense that her life could have taken a quite different path, for example going to university; indeed, this alternative pathway is one which Rachel is now seeking to pursue. She described her background as relatively middle-class, with "the two cars…quite well-to-do", and attended what she perceived as a good school, however family tensions led to a different pathway, one in which she was guided by a highly mobile friendship network.

There are two particularly interesting things about the way in which Rachel describes her frequent moving. The first are her references to remembering, or misremembering. Rachel moved so frequently that it was difficult for her to accurately recall where she was living, when, and for how long; as the Personal Narratives Group (1989:261) noted, people forget a lot, but give "the truths of our experiences". This misremembering could also be symptomatic of the way in which these moves were undertaken quickly, with others. This links to the second point of importance; in this period, Rachel was guided by the outlook of her peer group, a group habitus in which frequent, seemingly spontaneous mobility was the norm.

Rachel presented her past mobility behaviour as the "madcap adventures" of a large group of friends, moving between different places. However, at the same time she reassessed it from the point of the present day, questioning how she could have coped with this lifestyle. In fact, Rachel's frequent moving behaviour occurred largely in a three year period, followed by a two year period of informal living arrangements when she was living and working between three different

towns. In retelling her life story, this period occupies a larger slice of her "temporal identity" than could be indicated by calendar measures of time (Temple, 1996:90). The events of these few years have taken on a greater significance in Rachel's retelling of her biography, drawn on to explain her life to others.

This reassessment is perhaps related to the different way in which Rachel is approaching her future mobility. In contrast to her past moves, Rachel talks about her future mobility in a planned way.

> I've got no intentions of leaving at the moment. But then I, I've got two years of Open University…[My son's] got three more years to do at this school…but I don't want him going to school round here. The secondary schools are <u>appalling</u>…So I'm gonna choose where we move to based on finding an area that does the, the university that I need, and then find a good school and move near to that, and that is the criteria, I'm not gonna take whatever's coming, I will find good school, and the university thing, and then we'll move there

I1:1135-1145

Rachel's concern with schooling for her son reflects her own childhood, when her parents moved the family to be nearer to a good school. However, there are tensions between Rachel's long-term plan and her short-term reality in which she is heavily tied to place-based networks of support, largely as a provider of support to others.

> I specifically wanted this street because I've got a lot of friends down here, and…there's a friend who's got [kids], and when [the kids] were born she was on her own with 'em…so I moved in for a year and a half, and I've been like a second parent for 'em
>
> *I1:11-15*

> I sort of lost touch with…her oldest, and he went off the rails, and he was into drugs…and in street robberies…and it was <u>awful</u>, and I felt like if I'd been around I could've had some influence over him, 'cos she [his mother] didn't care!…So I'm determined to be there for [the others], to make sure that doesn't happen
>
> *I1:725-731*

Rachel's role in providing support for the children of a friend ties her to the area. She was determined to be close, having previously lost touch with the older child and seen him have difficulties with drugs and alcohol. As in her earlier life, Rachel's network played an important role in her mobility behaviour, however

now this fostered stability. Being stable and settling down was almost a rite of passage, a fundamental shift in how she saw her life.

Fluidity in belonging and the role of networks

Like Aisha, belonging in place seems to be based more on social networks that are rooted in geographical space, rather than particular attributes of the place itself. Although in her youth these networks facilitated mobility between different places, the type of support provided by these networks in her current life stage necessitates greater stability.

> We all get paid on the same day so we're all skint at the same time…because they all drink and I don't, I've normally got money by the end of the week, so they're normally (laughs) knock on the door…'have you got anything we can have for tea?'…I actually stock up on cheaper food to make sure that…I don't have to give 'em my best (laughs)
>
> *I1:510-516*

> …we've got our self-made community, but other than that there's nothing, no schemes or anything to keep us as a community…it's quite sad really, but, but I don't suppose they can put a drop-in centre in the middle of every little street and little neighbourhood can they…But then if you go to [my friend's] house, you can guarantee she's gonna have a drink, so if you don't wanna have a drink with her then you might as well move on. [My other friend's] the same, do know quite a few of 'em are, are like that, and I try and stay away from all that kind of thing…every so often I'll go down there, but…it's not my type o' thing they're all in the stages of one's in the middle of losing 'em [their children], one's gone, and one of 'em's gonna lose 'em any day now, and yet they don't look at each other and go 'put the bottle down', and it amazes me, and you can be there and support 'em as much as you can, but if you're gonna go round there tomorrow and they're all drunk again, then what is the point?
>
> *I1:622-651*

Although she has a sense of belonging in their "self-made community", her position within her network is also one of responsibility, stocking up on cheaper food so that she can provide for her friends, and looking after a friend's children. Over time, Rachel has experienced friends struggling with alcohol addiction, and this has made her wary of becoming too involved in this aspect of community life, which structures a lot of sociability and informal visiting. A sense of separation is facilitated by differentiating two different parts of the street, her quieter end, and the "party end" a few blocks away where her friends live. This

demarcation, imperceptible to the outsider, enables Rachel to visit, engage in different behaviours, whilst being able to safely retreat when necessary. In her wider retelling of her life story, Rachel talked about her own experiences with drugs and alcohol, not in a negative way but as part of enjoying life as a young person. However, she perceives her life differently now that she has a child, and talks at various points about being a good example for her son.

Work and mobility biographies

Rachel's biography is not centred around the work that she did (or didn't) do, but around the relationships that she forged with others. It was these relationships which ensured that she had somewhere to sleep during periods of frequent mobility, and now it is these relationships that Rachel places at the heart of her narrative of belonging. When she was younger, Rachel worked in low-paid, low-skill jobs, but she wanted to find a job she could enjoy.

> I had a, the best job <u>ever</u>, backstage security at pop concerts and festivals…It was just <u>amazing</u>…I got promoted to supervisor, and I actually ran the dance tent at [a festival]. I were well proud of myself (laughs)…I <u>absolutely</u> loved it. The pay was <u>appalling</u>, I had to pay to get over to work half the time, but I'd have done it for free. I mean we used to do three or four days at a place so we'd be camping out or in hotels and B&Bs and that. It was <u>brilliant</u>...all my stuff was in Hull, but because I was working from Leeds a lot, I stayed with a friend in Leeds, right, but [my friend and her kids] were back in Grimsby, and she was not doing her job right…And what I used to do is, get my stuff from Hull, go over on the bus to Leeds, go and work for a couple of days, go back to Hull, get changed and then go to Grimsby, sort out their washing…make sure the pots were all sorted out and sort them out, and then go back to Hull…maybe sleep there, get my…stuff from Hull in the morning, and then go to work in Leeds again, and I actually lived in all three for a while
>
> *I1:813-840*

Talking about this job, Rachel was animated and excited. However, she could not continue when she was pregnant. The jobs on offer today do not match up to Rachel's memories of work. They do not provide the sort of progression that would meet her ambitions and expectations.

I've got A levels and stuff like that anyway, so now I can work towards getting a decent job. There's no way of getting a proper job round here now….so I'm focusing on that rather than working now…you can't even get the factory jobs…If I wasn't doing the Open University, I would move to get a career-based job. I don't wanna work in MacDonalds or anything like that…I don't mind going somewhere I can start at the bottom and work my way up, 'cos I'm quite ambitious…if I'm gonna do a job I'll do it the best I can, I, I wanna be top, I, I was looking at management for the security job that I did, they were looking at opening up an office in Coventry and sending me and another lad down there to open it all up, which would've been <u>dead exciting</u> if I wasn't knocked up…And I couldn't move away from my family at that point, pregnant…But if summit like that came up now, I'd definitely, if it wasn't for the Open University, but then I can go and do that somewhere else anyway…if it was something with a career prospect, even though it was maybe not financially that much better off to begin with, if you know you're going somewhere, then I'd do it, 'cos I wanna be an example for [my son]. And, like I was trying to say earlier, with the Open University and going to college, it's all to show [my son] that you can do it, and even though I didn't do it back then, because my parents kicked me out at 17 and I was…actually working and going to sixth form…my mum always says 'oh you could've made summit of yourself', well you shouldn't have kicked me out the house then should you? (Laughs)…my Dad had issues…he wasn't violent, but he was emotionally abusive…I had enough, I just went. And I do regret not going to university and stuff back then, but it's not too late, and I'm proving that now

I1:1246-1308

Rachel is looking for a job that can provide her with a sense of identity and security, something to build her self-image on and to give her "self-respect". The roles that might be available to her are not sufficient to enable her to build the identity that she wants, so she is increasing her own cultural capital by undertaking a degree. Rachel's difficult relationship with her parents interrupted her education; when the relationship broke down she left home at 17, and today she thinks "they don't even know who I am". For Rachel, gaining more qualifications and getting a "proper job" is a way of showing that she has made something of herself. Rachel talked about instilling high aspirations in her son and her friend's children. Rachel does not want them to settle for low-level jobs, but to believe that if they work hard enough they can make it to the top of their profession: "I try and…inspire them a bit and, 'well what do you wanna do?', 'oh I wanna be a shop keeper', 'no you don't!…you <u>do not</u> want to work in a shop, you want to <u>own</u> a shop. And you want to own lots of shops". These aspirations suggest that hard work on an individual level can pay off, something Rachel is

seeking to demonstrate herself by pursuing her chosen career. She has individualised success, in spite of her own life experiences in which broader circumstances (breakdown in the family relationship, pregnancy, unreliable childcare arrangements), not lack of individual hard work, have disrupted her possible career pathways. However, her narrative is not the one dimensional account of an individualised actor – it is full of relational content, of a life lived with others (Atkinson, 2010, Mason, 2004). Whilst she expresses some individualised narratives, she is also embedded in the lives of those around her.

11.5 Nadira

Nadira is in her 40s and lives in Nearthorpe with her husband and children. Her two oldest children attend school, but her baby has serious health issues and Nadira is her full-time carer. She has lived on the same street virtually all of her life, having grown up in the house next door. Not surprisingly, her biography is more about stability than mobility, but this does not mean that mobility decisions have been absent from her life story. Nadira talked about a number of alternative mobility pathways, avenues considered but not taken. This was most prominent in relation to her attempts to pursue formal educational qualifications to start a career, something she had not been able to do until recently because of her family and the constraints of the era and culture in which she grew up. Nadira's stability was often a result of active choices – albeit within constraints – but not of inaction. Support networks are a critical part of Nadira's life, her past, present and future, and her biography reveals the fluid nature of these networks as she has moved in and out of periods of intensive support. The household may have been largely static, but its relation to others has been dynamic.

Nadira timeline

1970		1989	1991		1997	2004	2007	2010	2012
Born		Goes to college	Moves in with sister Separates from husband		Helps sister look after niece	Pregnant Sister ill, looks after niece until 2007	Niece goes back to sister	Starts uni Taken ill, defers course	Daughter born

	1986	1991	1991	1999	2005	2009	2011
	Leaves school Youth training scheme, youth work	Gets married	Moves into current home	Son born	Daughter born	Daughter starts school Starts access course	Pregnant Drops uni course

Broadening mobility within biographies

Nadira's mobility biography could be described as an immobility biography, a narrative of remaining in place. If she had been interviewed or surveyed at any point in her life, the household may have appeared static, but in taking a biographical approach the many events and decisions that they faced are uncovered. Repeatedly, at different points in her biography, Nadira's plans and aspirations were confounded by complex events, particularly ill health. Looking across her whole life the cumulative impact of these events comes to the forefront.

This house went up into auction, I'd been married for a year and my dad and my brother actually bought this house, because initially when we got married…we were having problems…so I kind of like went on a break with my husband, we split up for a while so I was living with my mum and dad prior to when we got married, I moved in with my sister when we first got married…there was lots of family politics going off…And so, you know, obviously they felt the need that, you know, if we're gonna try and make a go of the marriage we need to be in our own place…bought this with the intention for me to move back in with my husband, which we did and, kind of, it was a good move, and I think we just needed our own space…I'd like kind of, you know, stomped my feet and said 'that's it', you know, 'I don't want anything to do with him' kind of thing (laughs), and they said…just give it one last try, and if it still doesn't work…you go your different ways…if we'd have been ok from the start we probably would've, you know, gone a bit further afar, but I think it's just circumstances because, you know, this was the right option at that time…But then maybe I would've like kind of, you know, like you do, you, you look for a property together don't you…you go about and looking…we weren't able to do any of that. But it worked out ok for us…and it was good because…I was still near my family so if I needed their support and stuff…I did still need all of that, and that was there for me…we're a very close knit family and then we've had circumstances, you know, that…we've not been able to break away, move away

I1:123-178

Although she initially presented her mobility history quite simply, talking about moving into her home revealed greater complexity. Nadira alluded to missing out on an important normative experience, looking for a property together. Instead, the property was chosen for her. However, today, Nadira sees the move as the right decision because she relies on family support that requires geographical proximity. Nadira's reconstruction of her mobility decisions reveals the way in which interpretations of past decisions are temporally bounded, and often reflect one's current life context (Bruner, 1987). Looking back from a position where she now needs close family support, Nadira perceives their decision to stay close to family as the right one.

Nadira's life is told through the story of her changing relationship with family members, as their lives have moved in and out of different phases of caring and support. Her biography demonstrates the potential value of researching case histories of families, putting familial bonds at the centre of analysis and tracing changes over time (Bertaux and Delcroix, 2000:73). Nadira's mobility biography was intertwined with her relationships with family, and the various pathways not

taken at different points in her life. These alternative pathways began in childhood, where Nadira talks about a period in which a number of families were moving away from the case study area following job losses.

> …if you're in a city where there isn't all that much work…you do move to where the work…I mean you can't afford not to then can you?…but we didn't move because my mum and dad were in quite a dark place…we lost my oldest brother in a car accident, which was really, really tragic and devastating for the whole family…I was just 11 years old…so my dad kind of got made redundant just a few years later, but I don't think he had the will to kind of be, you know…he didn't probably look for another job or whatever because I think they were still kind of grieving for the loss…so I think it probably came as a blessing that he…became redundant, because…it must be hard, you know, having to carry on with normality and go to work and stuff…he was there one day and gone the next…So maybe like, like you said it's life isn't it, it is, you know, whatever cards you're dealt with so, I don't know, maybe like then my dad could've possibly moved, 'cos his brother had moved…we might've ended up somewhere else…But then you haven't got that same kind of get up and go have you, you know, I mean when you're dealing with something like that…you haven't got those kind of ambitions…nothing else kind of really matters as much does it…a lot of people were saying to, to kind of move because they felt that, you know, maybe they needed a fresh start, but they wouldn't because of all the memories…that's what keeps you back
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> *I2:752-796*

> We were gonna move at one point because my husband works at…the other end of Sheffield…we would've liked to have moved, had we been able to afford a property nearer to that end of Sheffield, but the properties we looked at were just so expensive…before I had my kids, I would've liked to have moved to that end because…I did my research and there's better schools at that end and stuff, but it were just, we couldn't afford to, so we, we had to remain in Nearthorpe. And now, with [my youngest child]…I don't think this property is adaptable to her needs, so at some point, you know, we're gonna have to consider moving
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> *I1:26-43*

There were various points in her biography where Nadira could have moved, but her choices were constrained by events. For example, her family could have moved when jobs started to be lost in Nearthorpe, but the death of her brother prevented her family from following the pathway that had been carved out by her uncle. Later, Nadira considered moving to be closer to her husband's work and good schools, and then to be nearer friends. Property prices were too high, and then later when the household were looking for a bigger house to

accommodate their growing family Nadira's sister became ill. Later still, they were thinking again about moving to a bigger property, but Nadira became ill and then pregnant. Events, often related to health and caring, can be seen as repeatedly intervening in the household's plans; these caring roles are at the heart of Nadira's pathway, to the extent that we can question how well her life can be understood through the concept of a housing pathway. Her life has been influenced to a much greater extent by changing caring relationships within her networks.

Fluidity in belonging and the role of networks

Nadira's sense of belonging in place draws on familial networks. She sees Nearthorpe through the history of having lived there, with her family, all of her life. The interconnected nature of their lives, and experiences of moving in and out of periods of intensive support provision, means that Nadira views places through their ability to facilitate these support networks. Her life experiences have shown the importance of being located close to family, both as a recipient and provider of support.

> …roundabout the same time my sister got diagnosed with her cancer…she had a little baby…and I was pregnant…my way of kind of helping her was to like I, I took [her baby] in…she was supposed to stay with me for a few months while her mum had all the initial treatment and stuff, and she stayed with me for like two and a half years…we felt that, if she didn't go back home then, she probably wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't be able to, you know, let her go…so, like, I agreed to (laughs), reluctantly agreed for her to take her back home….I'm really close to her and then I'm really close to her oldest sister. Because that's another reason…her first born was a stillborn baby…so…the following year when she had her oldest daughter…she was obviously still grieving…so in, in the meantime like, you know, I kind of bonded with her daughter and like I was like kind of step in mum for her
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> *I1:222-259*

When talking about the caring roles she had undertaken to support her sister, Nadira's emotion was clear, particularly in recalling returning her niece to her sister. The dominance of issues of care in Nadia's biography are poorly represented by focusing solely on her mobility behaviour. To present a nuanced understanding of her life and the choices she has made requires a different paradigm, in which other things are able to come to the fore. Mutual networks of

support extend across several households, demonstrating the value of approaches which look beyond the immediate head of household.

For Nadira, with her experiences of using familial networks for support, being comfortable in a place and feeling that you belong is based on knowing that there are people you can rely on for help.

> …if you've got good neighbours they're just as good as having…your family nearby…you have to feel at home and that, that doesn't include just your own home…You have to be comfortable within that area and that kind of boundary that you're in and that, you have to be comfortable in that…if you've got an ill child like…I have, you do…need that support network don't you, you need that additional support…if it meant…asking a neighbour to just sit with your other kids while you had to rush off to hospital or something that you've not got no family on hand, you rely on stuff like that don't you…I'm always there to help others and you feel as though you need people around you that are willing to do the same
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> *I1:742-759*

Nadira can feel at home in Nearthorpe because she has support if it is needed, and her experience has been that you can require support, or be needed to provide support, at any time. Her lived experience has been that "extenuating circumstances" can disrupt your life to an enormous degree. Her life and the lives of close family have been punctuated by tragedies – the death of a sibling, a child, recurrent cancer, ageing parents, hospitalisation, a seriously ill baby – which have made support essential to the fabric of their lives. All these events – not to mention the daily routines of school and work – give weight to the importance of family support in Nadira's life.

Work and mobility biographies

For Nadira, work has never been a central part of her life; when she got married she did not work straight away and later was focused on looking after her children. This is common to the other women's accounts presented here, and demonstrates the gendered nature of interactions with the formal labour market. Nadira also faced a complicated educational and employment pathway as a result of her ethnicity, with her primary role oriented towards motherhood (as discussed by Bhopal, 1998, Dale *et al*, 2002a, 2002b, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2009). Once her children were both at school, Nadira started think about developing her own career. Her desire to gain more qualifications and

pursue a specific career in the health services was deeply rooted in Nadira's narrative. She reflected on the importance of education and her own struggle to go to college, in contrast to the stories she told about her younger sister. The stories Nadira tells highlight a "latent thread" (Ochberg, 1996:107) in her biography, of her struggle to construct her own identity and pathway.

> …my youngest sister…was the first one that went to uni…within our extended family. Because, well as us for teenagers like, going to college was a push and a shove…you had to fight and struggle if you wanted to go to college, 'cos culturally it wasn't accepted…there's a big age gap between us and my youngest sister, so we supported her all the way and like, times have changed…we said 'look, she's definitely gonna go to uni and achieve whatever she wants to do', because we didn't have the opportunity to, we got married when we were in us, like, early 20s, I was 21 when I got married…my sister…she went [away] for her placement year…to…a big drugs company…my brother…was the one that had the issue with her moving out for a year...And we said, 'no, it's part of, you know, her studies and, you know she needs to go on placement'…Having done her placement, they wanted to keep her on…but she wasn't a driver at that time, so it would mean either she'd have to move and rent or she'd have to commute, which…she didn't want to do. So, but we said if you wanted…we'd support her in that…if you want to remain there and if you want to work there. Mum and dad weren't so happy about it because like she's baby of the family…So she made her own decision not to kind of go back, even though they…really wanted her to…so she ended up working here, she works for NHS
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> *I2:331-408*

While Nadira's educational pathway was cut short, her younger sister faced a different cultural context. Her narrative demonstrates the importance of negotiation within families (Brah, 1994), with Nadira pushing to go to college, and then negotiating for her sister's right to pursue her educational pathway. Dale *et al* (2002a) noted the importance of older women who had missed out on employment opportunities trying to help their own children gain the qualifications they had not, and there is a sense of this in Nadira's narrative. There is a sense that her own pathway could have been different if she had grown up in different circumstances. Although her sister completed the placement that Nadira had fought for, she decided not to take the "golden handshake" as it would have meant staying in a different town. Later on, talking about the job her sister does now, there was a sense of opportunities lost; although her sister has "been lucky" because she works in the NHS and is happy there, Nadira sometimes says to her "you're probably over qualified for

that post", but "she'll not move away from that now 'cos…she's got her own little family there…you get into that comfort thing".

Recently, Nadira felt she had the chance to recapture her educational pathway and develop her own career, but again events took over when she became ill and then pregnant.

> I were gonna start at uni a few years ago, because I went back and did an access course, and I was gonna start uni…got my place and everything…but then I had to drop out because I got taken with ill health…So I kind of deferred for a year…I'm not boasting but…I were a brilliant student and candidate to have on board (laughs)….they wanted me to defer for a second year as well…but…I became pregnant…I thought there's no point, you know, I can't hold onto a place…I mean I didn't know I was gonna have an ill baby…but even so, with a newborn baby, I wouldn't…consider going, studying and having a newborn baby, it's like, 'cos I thought I'd done all that and got it over and done with, my family…I thought I've got my kids, they're growing up and, you know, I got time on my hands, I wasn't working and stuff, so I thought, you know, go back to, you know, 'cos I always wanted to…I was always good at school as well, and I wanted it and stuff, yeah, I knew where I was sort of heading…but, it wasn't meant to be (strained)…
>
> …It's weird how things work but it's, that's life…I don't know I went on a bit of a downer because…I think it was 'cos I was ill and stuff, I think that was a downer, but, but at the back of my mind I was upset that oh, you know, I'd got my mind set and I was gonna go to uni and I'd start uni and, and then I thought well if it's not meant to be it's not meant to be. But, but then I thought, well, you know, I probably would've been able to do it and I probably would've got my degree and stuff. Because…I know my own achievements and I would've been able to achieve it had it not been for health issues…it's just somewhere along the lines I just thought…I had potential but I never tapped into it and…I just wanted to go to uni and…just prove to myself that I'm capable of, you know, doing that
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> *I2:480-543*

Her children were at school and she had more time, so she did an access course to go on to university and pursue a specific career in the health service. When she was prevented from continuing on this path it was a difficult period, perhaps precisely because pursuing this career and succeeding academically was so important to Nadira's sense of identity. Retelling the story of her journey back into education demonstrates how "the very act of telling one's story is an act of meaning making" (Atkinson, 1998:62). Nadira links her emotional response to her chosen path being cut short to her illness, but then goes on to

link it to the deeper role that this pathway played in her sense of self. For Nadira, going to university and pursuing her own path was something that she had not been able to do when she was younger. Having thought that she had finished her family, Nadira was again faced with her educational pathway being cut short. Talking about the plans she had made that she was unable to realise, Nadira was emotional; her life had gone in a different direction to that she had expected. Under different circumstances, work could have been an important part of her identity, but events conspired to block different paths. The sequencing of events in her life course is significant; there is a sense that her chance to set her own pathway has passed, as her daily life is now dominated by caring for an ill child.

11.6 Conclusions

All the individuals highlighted in this chapter have certain similarities. They are all parents of young children. Two are lone parents. None of them are working. They all live in the place where they were born and lived for at least part of their lives. Two have family that live on nearby streets; one has family in a neighbouring village. First and foremost, they are all female narratives, and inevitably some of the dominant themes may have been less prominent if male biographies had been featured in-depth. Narratives of family, caring roles, and the weaker role of employment in the formal labour market were all important in these women's narratives. Broader notions of work (Craig and Powell, 2011, Lutz, 2007, Speakman and Marchington, 1999) include the sort of care responsibilities that Aisha, Rachel and Nadira carried out, however these roles are gendered and may have been less dominant in the biographies of male participants. In a context in which the formal labour market may offer few rewards (Shildrick *et al*, 2012, Smith, 2005), the role of mother and carer may not only be morally guided (Duncan and Irwin, 2004), but also a positive choice to construct a fulfilling role and identity (Nordenmark and Strandh, 1999). Rachel and Nadira were both attempting to pursue 'career' identities and a mothering role, however as Nadira's experience showed such plans were precarious and vulnerable to changed circumstances. Her attempts to construct a new identity were closed off by illness, pregnancy, and caring for an ill child. The power of events to change planned directions was a feature of all the

biographies presented here, the sense that life paths could be fundamentally altered by unforeseen circumstances.

All the participants featured here have strong support networks, whether of family, friends, or a combination of both. In some instances they have acted to help stabilise people's lives during intense shocks. In other cases they have provided more consistent, low-level reassurance and support. There is perhaps a temptation, in cutting down these life narratives, to focus most attention on the shocks, the jarring events which have had a profound impact on someone's life. Indeed, taking a biographical view perhaps highlights these points in people's lives, drawing out just how many events someone has faced over their lives, any one of which could have a long-term impact. Although these events and their aftermath may be important, the examination of these periods should not be at the expense of the seemingly more mundane ways in which people use a range of informal support strategies – the shared school run, informal babysitting, lifts to work, borrowed money, gifted goods, socialising in the home. This support provides the backdrop to the daily lives of these participants and highlights the relational, embedded and connected nature of people's lives (Atkinson, 2010, Mason, 2004, May, 2011). Although some events are given great significant by participants, for example Aisha's rediscovery of her community following a serious assault, there are also longer running themes that can be drawn out across a life.

Biographical methods enable the dynamic nature of these lives and relationships to be explored in a way that is sometimes lost when focusing on more thematic analysis. There is a greater sense of the arc of a life, the twists and turns in someone's path, and the avenues explored but not taken, blocked, or not seen. The sequencing of events is also significant, something that is difficult to see when you only focus on a fixed point in someone's life. As Walby (1997:64) noted, "current choices are constrained by choices made earlier". In Nadira's case this comes through particularly strongly, with attempts to move in particular directions repeatedly thwarted by events that set her life on a different course to that she had planned. Across her life, choices are made and agency is exercised under constrained circumstances; her immobility, then, is not the result of inaction or passivity but arises from many decisions, large and small, paths considered and paths part-travelled. Indeed, when compared to Rachel

and Aisha – who both experienced periods of frequent mobility – there is little sense that the act of being mobile is something which confers particular advantages. The problematising of immobility should be challenged. Although she has remained in the same place, Nadira's life has been far from static; her life lived with others reveals considerable fluidity and flexibility, moving through different levels of intensity in these relationships.

It is also important to reflect on what is not present in these narratives; in line with Mason (2004), people's narratives generally lacked abstract migratory or residential strategies, instead placing greater significance on context, contingency, constraint and opportunity. Where residential strategies were present in narratives, this was more in relation to desired future moves, imagined pathways which have considerable potential to be disrupted by life context. The biographical analysis presented here demonstrates that people do not move unimpeded along a linear housing pathway; Aisha's case particularly demonstrates the irrelevance of notions of a housing strategy to her life. Housing is perceived through the prism of safety and security, somewhere that she can be close to support networks and rebuild her identity. There is little notion of pursuing monetary gains or aspirational orientation towards home ownership. Having had little control over her own mobility across her history, being immobile was the ultimate expression of choice – the ability to choose not to move.

12. Discussion

12.1 Introduction

The research presented in the preceding chapters empirically explores the range of responses people make to living in places that are seen – through official measures – as 'declining'. Nearthorpe and Eastland are both former industrial areas that have seen the decline of dominant industries, dramatic job losses, and high levels of unemployment, economic inactivity, sickness and disability. Policymakers may question why people would choose to remain in such places, which are problematised within wider narratives as containers for a passive, dependent population that harbours perverse attitudes to work and out-dated responses to the demands of flexible labour markets.

The research presented here – comprising in-depth, repeat interviews with 18 households – challenges this view of these places and the people who live there. In seeking to understand household motivations for residential mobility decisions in-depth, and to specifically draw out the relative role of work-related factors, the findings presented here begin to fill a gap in the research literature. The mainly quantitative literature assessing mobility and labour markets has struggled to reconcile the disjuncture between an apparently symbiotic relationship between changes in labour demand and residential mobility, and the motivations the households themselves report (Morrison and Clark, 2011). This research explains why – for many people – work-related residential mobility was uncommon, and remains a highly differentiated experience that draws on complex reasoning. Decisions about whether to move from one place to another do not draw on a simple cost-benefit calculation about the economic benefits. Rather, participants foregrounded emotional connections to people and places, sedimented experiences of work and place that guided their response to opportunities in the present, and considered multiple factors that could be perceived differently by household members.

Work-related residential mobility in Nearthorpe and Eastland was largely relevant for those with professional careers. Those working, or likely to find work, in lower-paid, less secure roles, were more likely to adjust to labour market changes in-situ. Immobility was a positive choice for many households, enabling them to draw on their networks for support and information. Many of the resources that featured most prominently in people's lives were place-based,

and had value only in a specific location. This helps to explain why – even when perceiving a difficult employment context – many people would rather remain where they were. For many people, local networks were used to find employment, so moving away from these in order to find work seems irrational. By remaining in place and making different adjustments, households could 'get by', rather than adding to the challenges they faced.

For many of the female participants, there was a sense that other roles came to the fore, providing more stable identities through which they could achieve value and recognition. Many mothers of young children, for example, saw this as a positive role through which they could achieve success, in supporting their children. Other participants were engaged in complex caring arrangements across networks. As women were over-represented in the sample, it is perhaps not surprising that different roles, outside the formal labour market, should be prominent. However, for some of the men there was also evidence of seeking fulfilment and an expression of self-identity through other roles, rather than organising their life around a work identity.

This final chapter sets out key contributions to knowledge and insights for policy makers. It also makes suggestions for research to build on the findings presented here, addressing some of the limitations of the research outlined in Chapter Six.

12.2 Research questions

The research questions were developed in response to gaps in existing research knowledge, as highlighted in the introduction and discussion of existing literature. The key research questions are:

1. What factors do people draw on to explain residential mobility and immobility?
2. In what ways do experiences and perceptions of labour markets influence households' residential mobility behaviour and intentions?
3. How might changes in the nature of work have shaped the relationship between people and place?
4. How can biographical approaches add to our understanding of residential mobility and immobility across people's lives?

These seek to elucidate the overarching aim of the research to understand how people respond to post-industrial change in places that are represented through a range of narratives as 'declining'.

12.3 Key findings and contribution to knowledge

This section presents an extended discussion of key findings and outlines the original contribution to knowledge made by this research. This contribution is made around four areas, summarised below.

The research makes an empirical contribution in explicitly examining the role of work-related factors in residential mobility behaviour. This begins to fill a gap at the intersection of two sub-disciplines. While labour market factors in mobility have been less of a feature in housing studies, in quantitative labour market research the relationship between employment change and mobility is often symbiotic. The research presented here works across these sub-disciplines to provide an integrated approach, giving a more nuanced account of behaviour and providing qualitative support for quantitative studies that have emphasised the differential and uneven role that work plays in mobility decisions (Champion, 1999, Champion and Coombes, 2007, McCormick, 1997, Turok, 1999).

Building on this, a second contribution to knowledge is made in being able to go further in exploring *why* work was not an important part of mobility decisions for many people living in the case study communities. It seeks to address a gap in the existing literature identified by Coulter and van Ham (2013) who called for empirical studies to explore why people do not move, especially when relocating could provide new opportunities (for example around employment). This research provides new insights into these experiences of immobility, arguing that people are adapting to labour market changes in-situ rather than through the rootless mobility conceptualised by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002). Many existing studies of labour markets and residential mobility have not been able to consider the full range and complexity of immobility responses, something that the research presented here seeks to elucidate.

A contribution is also made by combining biographical interviews with a household approach to exploring residential mobility and labour market change, broadening understandings of mobility experiences. This has added to the small

number of studies that have used either household approaches (Winstanley *et al*, 2002) or biographical interviews (Bertaux-Wiame, 1981) when exploring residential mobility. Only one known study (Clark, 2009) utilised both, but in the context of a Scottish council housing estate. The research presented here brings this approach to the English housing context and a wider housing field incorporating owner-occupying and privately renting households.

The final substantive contribution to knowledge is made in seeking to advance understandings of belonging in low-income communities, empirically investigating residents' relationships to place. This research utilises theories of belonging to add to the literature on mobility and place, as called for by Gustafson (2009). The focus on low-income communities begins to address calls by Paton (2013) for further research to fill the gaps in understanding contemporary working-class place attachment. Cole (2013) also argued for more attention to the historical formation and development of neighbourhood attachment in working-class areas, something enabled by the biographical approach.

In addition to these contributions to knowledge, the following sections also highlight a number of associated key findings around the role of networks in structuring people's labour market experiences and the importance of understanding places as sites of meaning making. These are more well-established in the existing literature, yet have featured strongly in many of the narratives discussed here.

Unevenness of work-related mobility

The research that has been presented in this thesis seeks to address an important gap in the literatures around residential mobility and labour markets. This gap exists at the intersection of two bodies of literature, coming from two different ontological positions. From housing studies, qualitative research in recent years (Allen, 2008, Clark, 2009, Hickman, 2010, Livingston *et al*, 2010, Winstanley *et al*, 2002), has sought to build on a range of quantitative approaches to understanding residential mobility behaviour (Clark and Onaka, 1983, Feijten and van Ham, 2010, Kendig, 1984, McLeod and Ellis, 1982, Morris *et al*, 1976, Quigley and Weinberg, 1977, Speare, 1974). However, because of the relatively narrow focus of this sub-discipline, among the many

factors that have been thought to influence residential mobility, employment has received relatively little attention. This suggests that there is a presumption that work is a less important factor in understanding mobility behaviour, or it is less important for the particular people and places that these studies have researched (such as low-income areas; see Cole *et al,* 2007, Kearns and Parks, 2003).

If the housing studies literature has largely been quiet on the role of work in residential mobility, the opposite could be said for the labour markets field. In many of these studies – often quantitative analyses of secondary data – the relationship between labour market change and residential mobility is symbiotic and people move in response to changes in the availability of work (Blanchard and Katz, 1992). A number of studies have noted that this effect does not apply evenly to all people (Champion, 1999, Champion and Coombes, 2007, McCormick, 1997, Meen *et al*, 2005, Turok, 1999), but the assumption remains that this correlative relationship is one of causation. Because of the data upon which many of these studies are based, research from the labour markets field lacks an understanding of household motivations and meanings. They cannot say, therefore, whether residential mobility resulted from work-related considerations, something else, or a combination of factors. Although some studies have attempted to overcome this by using individual-level data (Barnes *et al*, 2011), there are still significant methodological challenges when attempting to assign motivations using data that has not been collected for that use.

This research seeks to begin to bridge the gap at the intersection of these literatures to investigate work and residential mobility behaviour. Although a small-scale study, the findings presented here contribute to knowledge by offering new and detailed insights into why people remain in places that have undergone significant post-industrial changes, when moving somewhere else may provide them with better employment opportunities. Although the two areas and towns on which this research is based (Sheffield and Grimsby) are not representative of all places, they share much in common with deindustrialised towns in the UK, as highlighted in Chapter Seven. It is hoped that the conclusions of this research will therefore be of salience beyond the boundaries of the specific places in which it was conducted.

One of the key findings is that work does not generally play an important role in the residential mobility behaviour of households in low-income communities. Although not entirely absent from mobility histories – seven out of 25 participants had moved as a (partial) result of work considerations – for most households work lacked prominence in comparison to other considerations. This supports implicit assumptions made in much of the literature from the housing studies field around the relative lack of importance of work factors in residential mobility. However, this finding does not apply equally to all households. From the small sample that these conclusions are drawn from, work-related residential mobility was most common in the life stories of the better skilled and the better off, emphasising the importance of class.

In contrast to Böheim and Taylor (2000) – who found that unemployed people were more likely to move than the employed, in order to escape unemployment – participants who were out of work in these communities were more likely to be stable in their residence. Some were trapped because they lacked the resources to move (Hasan, Nearthorpe), but more commonly participants remained in place and used different strategies to get by (Dave, Nearthorpe; Sarah and Matt, Ros, Rachel, and Chris, Eastland). Residential mobility did not seem to be a strategy used to improve employment prospects for these participants.

The uneven experience of mobility is particularly relevant in relation to the scale of a move, since people are unlikely to move large distances for low-paid, insecure work. It was not just that professional households in these places were aware of the spatial distribution of jobs in their career areas, but that having such a career provided a sense of security and advantage to being residentially mobile, particularly to different cities or regions, which was not apparent when talking to those working or looking for work in the low-pay economy today. For Yasmin and Amir (Nearthorpe), for example, potentially moving to a new area with no connections was seen as worth the temporary difficulty for the longer-term benefit of advancing along a career pathway. Such long-term strategies were irrelevant when faced with insecure work with little guarantee of advancement. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) have suggested that broad changes in labour markets have advanced insecurity across occupational divides, lessening the salience of class-based experiences. There is some

support for this idea; a number of professional households talked about restructuring, insecurity of employment, temporary and fixed-term contracts. However, people do not experience insecurity and flexibility in even ways, as Atkinson (2008:13) noted, and there is arguably a deeper level of insecurity among people working in the low-pay economy. Ultimately, the research presented here suggests that whilst there have been significant changes in the labour market, including in the nature of work, this has not lessened the importance of class-based experiences.

This research has found that for many of those working in lower paid roles, work did not take a prominent position in mobility decisions. By empirically investigating the relative salience of work-related factors using an integrated approach that draws from both housing studies and labour market research, seeking to understand behaviour using a sociological frame of reference, a contribution to knowledge is made

Immobility and the role of work

Although this research supports the idea that work-related residential mobility is a classed experience, it goes further in being able to explore *why* work is not a driver of residential mobility for many people. It therefore contributes to filling a gap in research knowledge, responding to calls from Coulter and van Ham (2013:1053) to provide "greater analysis of why people do not move, especially when relocating may provide them with new opportunities". This is precisely the question posed by some policymakers in relation to workless individuals living in seemingly job-poor places. It is not simply that other factors are *more* important, but that there is something about the nature of much paid employment that makes people *actively less likely* to be residentially mobile. The very changes that supposedly freed people from the geographic constraints of homes tied to sites of employment (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) have actually inhibited mobility for many. As experiences of employment have become more precarious, stability of residence and supportive networks have become more important. A sense of belonging to place and the relationships with others in that place become the dominant factors around which lives are organised and identities are forged. Although networks may have shifted to more intimate contacts such as family and friends (Blokland, 2003), they remain largely drawn

along class lines and are not the temporary or short-lived alliances theorised by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002).

A number of participants told stories (their own, or those for friends) of insecure, flexible working. For participants like Matt in Eastland, experiences of flexible agency work and the difficulties of benefit reassessments meant that he was less likely to be mobile in relation to work. It did not provide a stable foundation around which to organise his life. Remaining in place, with support networks, was a necessary counterbalance to these sorts of labour market opportunities, since it was possible to adapt and adjust to get by whilst moving in and out of low-paid work. In this sense, people were adapting to labour market changes, as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002:4) argued, however there was less evidence for the individualism and rootless mobility that is seen as occurring alongside these changes; importantly, they were adapting in-situ. There was value in remaining in a place that was knowable to these participants, somewhere that they 'just know' how to carry on in life (Burkitt, 2004:221), where they had a 'practical sense' (Bourdieu, 2005) of how to get by in difficult times, drawing on knowledge that was place-bound in its value.

Although many participants talked about insecurity and working life as "saturated with uncertainty" (Bauman 2000:147), this did not mean that there was also little 'common cause' or loyalty, as Bauman theorised. In an insecure work-context, places can become more important, mutual loyalties can be reinforced, and the relationships with people in these places can become the dominant frames around which lives are organised. Attachments to place can therefore be actively reinforced, not weakened, by people's labour market experiences. For many participants in this research, as in Blokland (2003), being embedded in a place performed an important function in their life, whether that enabled accessing familial and social networks, a sense of comfort and belonging, or practical support. Many participants challenged the notion that work could play a central role in their self-identity, suggesting it held a less privileged position in their life, and that its relative importance could change over time in response to other events (as noted by Nordenmark and Strandh, 1999).

However, remaining in place – being immobile – was not the same as passivity in the face of labour market changes. This research has been able to explore how people respond in ways other than being mobile, responding to Coulter and van Ham (2013). If immobility is seen as an active choice research can start to explore the range of responses that people demonstrate to economic changes, while remaining in-situ. Wright (2012) called for greater attention to the multiple forms of agency people exhibit, providing a more nuanced interpretation that captures enduring processes of advantage and disadvantage. Perhaps because of the nature of the data available, many studies of labour markets and residential mobility have not been able to consider the full range and complexity of immobility responses. Participants demonstrated considerable flexibility to changing labour markets, just not flexibility in place of residence, nuance that is lost in the mobile/immobile binary.

Immobility can involve multiple forms of agency. For some people, adaptation to labour markets took the form of adjusting their expectations downwards. James (Eastland), for example, was looking for a job through which he could legitimately perform a masculine identity (Butler, 1999). However, his aspirations for a 'good job' were eroded by his contact with the Work Programme; working in food processing became a route to at least getting some money and he eventually took what was offered through Jobcentre Plus. For Peck and Theodore (2000:124), James' experience highlights the way in which active labour market policies re-socialise people for contingent work, by compelling people to take any job. James' shifting expectations, from resistance to acquiescence, from finding something with meaning in his life to the pragmatics of making some money, supports Bauman's (2005:66) assertion that the "workplace is still a source of living, but not of life-meaning".

Those in employment also demonstrated adjustment to changes in the labour market, remaining in jobs they did not enjoy for fear of being unable to find security in employment elsewhere. Others shifted down to a less skilled role in order to price themselves into the local labour market (Gordon, 2003:60). Sarah (Eastland) had simply dropped out of the labour market; seemingly invisible to Jobcentre Plus, she was trying to keep under the radar, hoping that they did not notice that she was not actively looking for work and instead thinking about the sort of career she wanted to pursue. Others resisted the expectation to take

'any job', instead working informally whilst receiving out-of-work benefits, or not looking for work.

Resistance to adjusting their expectations downwards often went hand-in-hand with heightened aspirations for the type of work that could be available if they had the right skills. Some participants were seeking to increase their qualifications and pursue a career with more security and benefits. This focus on improving employability is suggestive of an individualised approach to work, in the sense that hard work and the right qualifications are seen as opening up access to meaningful and secure employment. Few people in this position questioned whether the labour market would deliver such jobs once qualifications had been achieved. For some, like Hasan in Nearthorpe, training was enforced with the threat of benefit sanctions, but it had not delivered any labour market advantage. It was not tailored to his own employment aspirations and there was no 'good job' at the end of it. There is perhaps support, then, for Lupton's (2003:8) argument that poorer areas provide low-paid, low-skill workers who are available when the labour market expands, but expendable when it contracts. Responses to such flexibilities may not commonly include residential mobility, but encompass a variety of different actions.

Understanding through qualitative enquiry *why* work is not a driver of mobility for many people in post-industrial labour markets represents a contribution to research knowledge. In many cases, the nature of paid employment was not secure enough to facilitate residential mobility. Many studies of labour markets and residential mobility have not been able to consider the full range and complexity of immobility responses, something that the research presented here begins to address.

Household approach uncovering multiple motivations

Using a qualitative household approach to exploring residential mobility sought to address gaps in the research literature that were created by methodological restrictions. These restrictions often served to constrain and rationalise explanations for mobility behaviour. Commonly used survey methods, in which people have been asked to provide one main reason for a move (for examples, see a systematic review by Clark & Onaka, 1983), have provided overly narrow explanations for mobility. The research presented here addresses this

methodological weakness by developing an approach that sought to broaden the picture of mobility behaviour.

Part of the initial screening for participation in the research included a short survey to gather information about household mobility behaviour. Having subsequently carried out interviews, this provided an interesting comparison, since often the initial response to the question "why did you move to your current home?" was more clear-cut than subsequent conversations revealed. Initially Carol (Eastland), for example, presented the move to her current home as a response to the 'Bedroom Tax'. However, this simple reason quickly became more complicated during the subsequent interviews. Carol's motivations for moving expanded, encompassing her strained relationship with her daughter, moving to escape this tense living environment, and her longstanding desire to move out of the neighbourhood. The longer-running motivation for the move was to escape an area in which Carol no longer felt safe or like she belonged, and to move from a home in which relationships were breaking down. The 'Bedroom Tax' introduced a timeframe for the move. A seemingly simple explanation can therefore quickly become more complex, encompassing different motivations as well as a trigger for mobility. Asking households to provide one main reason, or allowing them to tick only one box on a survey, oversimplifies a process that may have many different elements. Although Coulter and Scott (2015) found in recent analysis of the British Household Panel Survey that multiple reasons for moving were only reported in 13% of cases, couples were much more likely than singles to report multiple reasons. This highlights the importance of undertaking household-based research. There may also be something about the semi-structured interview method that encourages participants to report many – even seemingly minor – considerations for moving behaviour.

This research has also sought to add to the research literature by applying a household approach where possible, something which has only been a feature of a relatively small sub-set of studies into residential mobility in different contexts (Clark, 2009, Winstanley *et al*, 2002). Taking a household approach to exploring residential mobility behaviour adds further layers of complexity, since there may be different motivations within a household for moving or remaining in place. Including only the head of a household ignores the negotiations and

conflicts that occur within a household in relation to being residentially mobile. The idea of there being different 'layers' to decision-making (Ní Laoire, 2000), must therefore be applied beyond individual motivations to also include the different layers of the household. When Sarah (Eastland) talked about moving back to Grimsby, proximity to friendship and family networks were of great importance because she was feeling lonely. Matt, however, talked about the location providing cheaper transportation networks for seeing his children. They each had their own priorities and motivations for moving. Similarly, when buying a house in Eastland, Ann felt that the move was made because they needed more space, but Mike remembered the move as tied-up with moving their relationship forward and making a long-term commitment through owner-occupation.

Even when interviewing only one person, it is possible to see the potentially different motivations for mobility among household members. Helen (Nearthorpe) felt that she had never moved for work, yet in her biography there were a number of moves that seemed to be work-related, from moving between military bases, to moving to live above shops that she and her husband were running. These moves seemed clearly tied to work, but Helen did not present them in this way. Perhaps this is because for her these moves were made to keep the family together and to support her husband in running these businesses; the main motivation for Helen was about family, not about work. Gendered experiences are therefore an important part of understanding moving decisions, as in this case moves were rationalised around work versus caring roles. In interviewing both members of a couple, where possible, a more nuanced interpretation of mobility behaviour can be drawn. Applying a method that enables the many factors involved in residential mobility decisions between *and within* households to be understood represents a contribution to knowledge. This has generated new empirical insights, particularly around role of work-related factors in people's residential mobility decisions, which have rarely featured in qualitative mobility research.

A biographical approach to residential mobility

Incorporating a temporal understanding of residential mobility by utilising a biographical methodology has been a feature of a small number of studies. This

approach has been scarcely utilised and limited to specific case contexts: inter-war migrants in France (Bertaux-Wiame, 1981), residents in Christchurch, New Zealand (Winstanley *et al*, 2002), and a Scottish council estate (Clark, 2009). A gap therefore exists for biographical research into residential mobility and immobility in the English housing context. Using a different approach can enable new insights to come to the fore which may not otherwise have been drawn out, for example the relative lack of housing strategies across biographies.

The qualitative biographical approach stems from the ontological position that people often make sense of the present by connecting it to what they already know and have experienced (Burkitt, 2004). This is particularly relevant when utilising Bourdieusian theories such as the habitus, because it foregrounds the enduring role of past experiences. The biographical approach suggests that the ways in which we act and remember are shaped by past, present, and anticipated futures. For example, for some participants with histories of frequent moving, mobility was presented as a normal, everyday occurrence. In these cases, mobility was habitual (Bourdieu, 1990), something enacted over time that became almost automatic, a familiar encounter. The preparations may become instinctive (for Jo, Nearthorpe, wrapping things in newspaper was a strong childhood memory). By contrast, for Roy (Nearthorpe) being mobile represented upheaval in a life lived largely in one place. Moving was something exceptional, something that did not form part of the choices he saw in his life; he pre-adapted to the conditions of his life and the circumstances around him. However, the concept of habitus is most useful when understood as adaptive, rather than something that is fixed and deterministic. As Webb *et al* (2006:38) argued, a disposition towards certain ways of behaving does not exclude the possibility of being open to modification. Burkitt (2004:223) suggested that a more adaptive understanding of the habitus acknowledges the role that reflexive consciousness plays as people negotiate an increasing array of fields in their everyday life.

In stepping back and seeing the entirety of someone's life path, instead of one point in time, it can be seen just how little participants spoke of housing strategies. For most participants, the notion of a housing strategy or career was entirely absent from their discussion of residential mobility across their lives.

One of the weaknesses of much existing research lies in its conceptualisation of residential mobility behaviour as essentially rational, responding to disequilibrium in housing situations and neighbourhood stressors in a linear way to maximise housing gains and neighbourhood satisfaction (Brown and Moore, 1970, Clark and Onaka, 1983, Coulter and van Ham, 2013, Kendig, 1984, McLeod and Ellis, 1982). This has been reflected in policy assumptions, which are present-centred in anticipating that individuals respond to immediate stimuli. Powell (2015:1) challenged this view, arguing that individuals are embedded in complex webs of social interdependencies. A qualitative, biographical approach foregrounds the importance of understanding the many influences on behaviour, including enduring past experiences of mobility and anticipated futures.

Conceptualising this research from a housing studies perspective, it seems natural to construct someone's life around their housing pathway. However, the research presented here demonstrates the dangers of working exclusively within sub-disciplines and the need for inter-disciplinary approaches that are open to other ways of representing lives. While it can be useful to represent lives along housing – or employment – pathways, these tools should not restrict ways of understanding household experiences. For many participants in this research, housing was not the central focus of their life, and the goal of mobility (to better and better housing) was of little relevance. Immobility and stability may be a more important way of being for many people. Whilst housing strategies were not entirely absent, they were most apparent in relation to facilitating career development or accessing good schools, rather than a strategy of housing consumption.

Although for some households there seem to be strong alternative pathways, for many others what comes across most strongly is lack of coherence and the relative importance of "context, contingency, constraint and opportunity" (Mason, 2004). This research suggests that context should include an understanding of biographical context, recognising the role of sedimented experiences in influencing the ways in which potential pathways are seen. For many people, residential mobility is not about linear, planned decision-making. It can be an emotional and experientially driven act, such as Aisha's (Nearthorpe) attempts to assert control over her housing situation by refusing to move from her home. Her experience of frequent moving made her determined to be stable. Ros

(Eastland) also talked about her search for somewhere she belonged. Her embodied 'sense' of how to behave was crucial in promoting feelings of comfort and ease in her surroundings, contrasting with the image of the conscious calculations of the reflexive, disembedded, individualistic actor (Bottero, 2010:4).

Using a biographical approach to understanding residential mobility in the English housing context has generated new insights that stem from the application of this method, thereby making an empirical contribution to knowledge. Rather than abstract housing strategies, this research has emphasised the importance of embedded experiences, emotions, and context in household mobility decisions.

Networks and labour market experiences

Deindustrialisation has been seen as leaving concentrations of unemployment and economic inactivity in particular geographical areas (Beatty *et* al, 2012). Understanding why people remain in weaker labour market areas was a key area for this research. A key empirical finding is the importance of local networks, which helped people to access employment (particularly in the low-pay economy), and therefore may encourage immobility. This finding supports research by White and Green (2011) – who explored the networks of young people – and builds on it by arguing that networks continue to be important into adulthood. People's experiences of using these networks to access work influences the way in which potential opportunities are perceived. It is not that they are disengaged from labour markets and passively remaining in places where there are fewer job opportunities. Rather, immobility may be seen as presenting the best labour market opportunities because people have used local networks to successfully find work in the past. People's labour market responses are therefore influenced by the informational and experiential context in which they make decisions.

Although labour markets can be constructed according to abstract boundaries – Travel-To-Work-Areas and City Regions – they are also socially constructed by the people who operate within them (Peck, 1996, White and Green, 2011). The research presented here supports the idea that labour markets for different types of work operate at different spatial scales, and this affects how people act. Participants working in professional roles had a geographically wider labour

market and some knowledge about the spatial distribution of jobs for people in their careers. Their search behaviour, and expectations and willingness to move for work, differed when compared to participants who would be working in the low-pay economy. When discussing their experiences of work, many people talked about finding work through local networks and connections. This builds on work by White and Green (2011), which explored the role of networks in young people's attitudes to training and employment. Networks were a key resource in finding opportunities, but delivered imperfect information; when combined with strong attachment to place, younger people questioned the need to move when their networks suggested jobs could be found locally (White and Green, 2011:55). The research presented here provides additional evidence of the enduring role of such familial and social networks in people's employment histories.

Experiences of obtaining work through family and friendship networks make immobility an important mechanism for finding work. The social capital derived from being embedded in local networks can therefore be seen as guiding dispositions to act in certain ways (Atkinson, 2010), to move or not move. Kan (2007) argued that social ties limited residential mobility in relation to long-distance moves and noted the emerging thread of research considering the labour-market implications of this tendency – that people's local social connections may prevent them from moving to seek employment opportunities. Jobs are often not seen as situated within an abstract labour market area, but accessed through tangible, local networks. If this has been a key way in which work has been found in someone's life, moving away from these networks could be seen as negatively affecting employment prospects. Research from the field of econometrics has noted the importance of networks in labour market outcomes such as finding and keeping work (Blau and Robins, 1990, Simon and Warner, 1992). The value of these networks is based on being rooted in a specific *place* and moving elsewhere diminishes the value of information. The social capital derived from these networks is not easily transferred to other settings.

Although this was perhaps seen most clearly for those working in lower paid roles, such networks were not entirely absent from the labour market experiences of those working in more professional occupations. Amir

(Nearthorpe), for example, talked about cultivating networks in other places where he knew that there were more opportunities for his career. In the future, he would be able to use these networks to find work in those specific locations. While Amir was deliberately cultivating specifically job-based networks, for many others the networks they used to find work already existed as familial or social networks. However, these place-networks should not be seen as uniformly immobilising forces, as many people have multiple networks in different locations. Networks can, therefore, offer a range of potential mobility pathways.

Living in a relatively well-connected Travel-To-Work-Area seemed to have little impact on those people living in Nearthorpe and looking for work in the low-pay economy. Living somewhere relatively affordable (in the city context), and in relative proximity to sites of employment and a range of travel options was not important in participants' discussion of work. Commuting behaviour was constrained by the type of work available to those entering into low-paid work. Participants worried about how to find work that would still enable them to look after children, and the potential cost and time of travelling to multiple part-time jobs was also an important barrier to working. These households may as well have been living in a more isolated town like Grimsby, since they derived little advantage from being in greater proximity to a range of sites of employment. The struggles for these households were similar to those in Eastland, where participants also talked about the costs of travelling for low-paid work that was not guaranteed. Where these households lived was therefore less important than who they lived with, since it was people and their local knowledge of labour markets that provided the most promising avenue into work for many households. The difference seemed to be for professional households in Nearthorpe, which were able to take advantage of relatively cheaper housing and access to transport infrastructure that enabled them to search for work on a broader geographical scale.

Understanding places like Nearthorpe and Eastland in terms of their location in abstract Travel-To-Work-Areas is not an effective way of representing the labour market experiences of many of the people who live there, as the geographical scale of these areas bears little relation to how work features in their life. As Green *et al* (2005:302) noted, measures such as travel-to-work

distances fail to take into account the different perceptions of individual actors and their job search behaviour. This research adds to the empirical literature in this area, noting that a large part of how people view labour markets comes from their own experiences of work across their lives, as well as the stories told about work by friends and family. A key finding is that for many people in the low-pay economy, work is not found by searching in large labour market areas, but by talking to friends and family who live in the same place. Local networks therefore join a range of factors in holding people in place through their potential to deliver valuable information, but also by providing the very support that enables people to survive in challenging times.

Theories of belonging, social relationships and the differentiation of place

There have been calls for more studies – qualitative and quantitative – of mobility and belonging in places (Gustafson, 2009). Paton (2013) specifically called for further research to focus on meaningfully filling the gaps in understanding contemporary working-class place attachment, whilst Cole (2013) also called for more attention to the historical formation and development of neighbourhood attachment in working-class areas. The research presented here seeks to make a contribution to knowledge by addressing these gaps using theories of belonging to understand the different ways in which people belong in low-income communities. This section focuses particularly on the key findings that participants belong through differentiating spaces at the micro-level, and through the social relationships they forged with others.

Belonging is a useful concept to understand how people relate to the place in which they live; for May (2011:368), belonging is "a sense of ease with oneself and one's surroundings". This is an active production, not something automatically given. In middle-class neighbourhoods, Savage *et al* (2005) developed the concept of elective belonging, a sense of attachment to place that was achieved through cultural practices and a sense of agency in being able to choose a place in which to belong. In this view, belonging was not something fixed to a community but a more fluid concept that incorporated seeing places as sites for the performance of identities. However, elective belonging was less useful in understanding low-income communities such as Nearthorpe and Eastland; belonging was based less around having the cultural

capital to claim a place as 'yours', and more around historical attachments and long-standing connections to an area.

Of much more relevance was the broader point that place has become a signifier of classed identities (Savage *et al*, 2005), affecting how people belong in places, who belongs, and how people relate to place. As discussed earlier, if work has a less prominent role in the organisation of one's life and identity, other things – like place – may become more important as a signifier of who you are. Although for many participants work did not occupy a prominent place in the construction of their identity, signifying little about 'who they were', their identities did not take on a displaced and fluid form, as some theorists (Bauman, 2005) would suggest. Rather, other features took a more central place, anchoring people's identities to places where they could belong with others 'like them'. While Paton's (2013:97) conclusion that the key differential between working-class and middle-class belonging revolves around choice and control is valid, working-class residents in the research presented here sought to actively control the ways in which they could generate a sense of belonging while remaining in places that were difficult (for practical and emotional reasons) to leave, by actively differentiating spaces and people. In so doing, places – often highly local – took on a significant role in the construction of identity and acting as spaces in which relations with others could be played out.

In understanding places as sites of social distinction, this research has highlighted the way in which people use processes of exclusion at a very local level, carving up neighbourhoods and creating geographies of belonging (Watt, 2006). Particular places therefore come to represent something about the people who live there, providing cues to others around them. This micro-differentiation of place serves to sort people, replacing a function that was once performed by the type of work that someone did (Watt 2006). We cannot understand places without also understanding how these places are perceived in multiple ways by the people who live there. As Permentier *et al* (2007:203) argued, residents may apply this micro-differentiation at a street, block or building level, so there may be multiple reputational perceptions at different spatial scales.

This micro-differentiation performs an important function. Through the exclusion of apparently 'bad' spaces, people are able to construct somewhere that they can belong whilst retaining their respectability. People are able to insulate themselves from wider discourses of decline applied at the level of some externally defined neighbourhood space. If households are able to feel that where they live is not that bad (in comparison to *this* place or *that* place), then the imperative to be residentially mobile as a result of neighbourhood dissatisfaction and poor reputation is reduced. These processes of micro-differentiation were more common in Eastland than in Nearthorpe. One possible explanation for this difference is the greater sense that Nearthorpe sits within a very clearly defined neighbourhood, which functions as its own place, with its own centre, services and shops. The streets that make up Eastland are not so clearly placed within a neighbourhood. While in Nearthorpe people described themselves as living in this 'named neighbourhood', residents in Eastland did not attach a specific name to their area. This perhaps makes it easier to cast a specific street – or even part of a street – as somewhere different, since there is no perceived wider neighbourhood for it to be subsumed within. However, even where there were negative perceptions of the neighbourhood this did not necessarily result in residential mobility, or the desire for residential mobility. As Cole (2013) argued, mobility must be understood in the context of the need to remain in an area, strong attachment to place, and constraints to movement.

Belonging was also achieved through social relationships, promoting stability in place. For Bourdieu (1990), people seek a spatial expression of the habitus, to see the world in the same way as others, and therefore to live in a 'common sense' world which is knowable to them. Familiar places and faces, seeing people who are 'like us', and having a 'practical sense' of how to behave and move through these spaces promotes feelings of belonging and comfort. Cues – clothing, movement – enable people to recognise others 'like them'. Robertson *et al* (2008:53) argued that mundane and routine interactions, even infrequent or ephemeral, could be of great significance in providing feelings of reassurance and stability, while Hunter and Suttles (1972, cf:Hickman, 2013) argued that in a 'face block community', simply recognising others is enough to generate positive attachments.

Although it may not be necessary to know these people 'like them', many participants did in fact have active relationships with others living nearby. This ranged from low-level interactions such as saying 'hello' to neighbours, to much more involved friendships. Recognising others and in turn being recognised by them – whether this involved a long conversation or a smile of acknowledgement – affected how people felt about the place in which they lived. Through receiving this recognition people were able to feel that they belonged and this facilitated a sense of comfort in place. This supports findings by Livingston *et al* (2010:417), who found that the most common reason for positive attachment to a deprived community was social networks. This was not necessarily related to length of residence, suggesting that simply perceiving people 'like them' and being able to develop new social networks could lead to strong feelings of attachment. In contrast, for someone like Carol in Eastland who perceived only strangers and people who were not 'like her' there was a sense of isolation and discomfort in place; she did not belong. We must seek to understand places as relational, "a production, an achievement, rather than an autonomous reality in which things or people are located" (Tilley, 1994:17). This production of places is achieved through the performance of different practices with others, and through these performances people achieve a certain attachment to place (Leach, 2005:301). A sense of belonging in place can therefore be said to be relational, a negotiated accomplishment (May, 2011).

There is an element of self-reinforcement in this route to belonging. Where people have more social contacts (of whatever intensity) and feel comfortable being on certain streets, they will perhaps spend more time in their 'neighbourhood'. Physically moving through places, developing a habitual knowledge of the physical landscape, the shortcuts, and the places to avoid, adds to feelings of belonging; for Tilley (1994:14), places become an "'intelligible landscape', a spatialisation of Being". For Bourdieu, this is articulated in terms of the development of a 'practical sense' of how to be in places. Places have the power to provide an "architecture of reassurance" such that people feel naturally at home in a particular setting (Fortier, 2000:112), or equally alienated in another. This sort of belonging is rooted in a specific place and lost when someone moves away. May (2011) argued that in order to understand how people relate to places we must seek to understand these

emotional landscapes through empirical research. The research presented here aims to address this challenge, empirically investigating the ways in which households belonged in Nearthorpe and Eastland; this has drawn out the ways that people differentiated the spaces in which they lived at the very local level. In focusing on low-income communities, the research has made a contribution to knowledge in addressing calls for a greater focus on working-class place attachment (Cole, 2013, Paton, 2013).

Place as a biographic encounter

The research presented in the preceding chapters provides empirical grounding for Tilley's (1994:27) assertion that "personal biographies, social identities and a biography of place are intimately connected". A key finding of the research is that many participants related to the places in which they lived in terms of their own biographies; places were situated in the context of their lives and the other places they had lived. As Tilley (1994:31) argued:

> The importance and significance of place can only be appreciated as part of movement from and to it in relation to others…an understanding of place, movement and landscape must fundamentally be a narrative understanding involving the presencing of previous life experiences in current contexts

Some participants were able to construct a sense of belonging in place based on comparing how they felt in Eastland and Nearthorpe with how they felt living in different places at different times in their life. It was very common for participants to express a feeling that where they were living was not that bad compared to some of the other places they had lived in their life. For Bashir and Flint (2010), the potential futures of households were also important in understanding the salience of place, since for those on lower-incomes who viewed their future as connected to their existing neighbourhood regardless of how it may change, the impact of place was greater. How people relate to places is therefore temporally contingent and must include an understanding of past and future. This builds on findings from Clark (2009) who argued that people construct a sense of belonging or not belonging in relation to other places, as understood through their past experiences and future aspirations.

Just as people invoke their own histories in making meanings of places, so too places have their own histories; Nearthorpe and Eastland are not a "blank

environmental slate" but are understood by people "in terms of the historicity of lived experiences in that world" (Tilley, 1994:23). Understanding places as historical entities links to narratives of decline and nostalgic forms of belonging, which draw on a sense of loss and change in the economic foundations of places (Cole, 2013, Watt, 2006). The history of people and places should not be viewed independently, for "daily passages through the landscape become biographic encounters for individuals recalling traces of past activities" (Tilley, 1994:27), as when Chris walks past the boarded up pubs in Eastland and remembers the music he would hear as a child and the glimpses of people inside. The "living memory of places" challenges assumptions about the "stillness of space and the fluidity of time" (Fortier, 2000:174). Using a biographical approach has challenged the assumption that residential mobility erodes a sense of local belonging (Gustafson, 2009), since people's relation to place is partly biographical and draws on the memories, emotions and historical relations that are re-territorialised as people move through and return to different places across their lives.

12.4 Insights for policy

A positive conceptualisation of immobility

This research responds to calls for a greater focus on the importance of stability in people's lives (Coulter and van Ham, 2013). From the perspective of certain strands of policy, people living in more disadvantaged places are either characterised as trapped, unable to escape the neighbourhood declining around them, or as passively living from state benefits, lacking the aspiration to find work or better themselves (BBC News, 2010, Cameron, 2011b, CLG, 2012, Duncan Smith, 2011, Duncan Smith, 2012, DWP, 2007, DWP, 2010a, DWP, 2010b, Grayling, 2011, Jones and Syal, 2012, Leunig and Swaffield, 2007, Social Exclusion Unit, 2004). This research challenges these caricatures, providing empirical support for the positive benefits of immobility, which enabled many participants to manage complex circumstances. Few people felt trapped in the places in which they lived, and in many cases mobility could have added to the challenging circumstances that they faced. Whilst many had ideas of more desirable places that they would perhaps prefer to live, this does not

mean that people were particularly dissatisfied with the places in which they lived.

Being immobile has been problematised by certain strands of policy, but this research suggests that immobility performs an important function for many households at different points in their biographies. Far from being a passive response based on lack of alternative options, it can be seen as an active choice by many households that enabled them to get by in difficult circumstances (Bashir *et al*, 2011). By looking across people's lives, we can see the important role that immobility can play. In looking at Nadira's (Nearthorpe) biography, for example, we can see how immobility has been a necessary feature of her life; when faced by particular circumstances she decided to remain in place in order to deliver and receive support within the familial network. These types of intensive care relationships can only be formed from being stable in a place. More mundane, day-to-day support functions are also facilitated by being immobile, for example shared childcare arrangements. Immobility should not be conceptualised as a by-product of the failure to be mobile; there are many instances where it is a positive choice in someone's life.

There are also considerable practical barriers to greater residential mobility to areas of greater employment opportunity, as these are often places of greater housing market strength, resulting in higher costs. As Cole and Powell (2015:44) noted, it is difficult to expect people receiving benefits to move to areas 'where there are jobs' when LHA reforms mean that there is a shortfall between the benefit they would receive and the rent charged in buoyant labour markets. In addition, for people living in comparatively low-market housing in Nearthorpe and Eastland, the cost of affording deposits to rent in the private sector and issues of low demand for owner occupiers in Eastland represent significant practical barriers to mobility, regardless of the many other factors involved in residential mobility decisions. Greater residential mobility may have additional effects, such as pressure on services in 'recipient' areas, and a weakening tax-base in places that would be left behind.

There is perhaps already a basis for a more positive conceptualisation of immobility to be found within contemporary policies. This highlights a contradiction inherent in policy narratives around places. While one tranche of

policies problematise stability as immobility (Grayling, 2011, Shapps, 2009), another set emphasise the positive benefits of a stable community. The Big Society agenda emphasised people in communities having more power over services and "taking more control" (Cameron, 2011), while local planning policies emphasised the ability of communities to set the priorities for development through neighbourhood planning (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015). However, at a basic level this sort of localism relies on a stable population; as Flint (2012:205) argued, the Coalition localism agenda "is somewhat contradictory in its spatial imaginings, on the one hand promoting residential mobility as a key mechanism for linking individuals to sustainable employment and on the other continuing to locate citizenship within local communities". The Big Society and localism agenda require a sense of belonging and commitment to place, but this is undermined by processes of displacement fostered by other policies (Flint, 2015:48). It is already recognised that stable populations can perform important functions, and this is perhaps even more so in an era of state retrenchment.

The quality of work

For work to play a more important role in household mobility decisions, it needs to be stable and secure enough to move for. This and other research (Champion and Coombes, 2007) has shown that it is typically the better qualified and better off who move for work-related reasons, and the idea of developing a career is important, not only for professional households but also for those who would otherwise be working in lower-paid roles. The type of work on offer to these households with fewer qualifications is not seen as being able to support a geographical move, since many roles at this level do not offer stability or a sense of workplace identity, things which have been shown to be of considerable value. People's experiences of working in relatively insecure roles, where work may be available one day but not necessarily the next, under threat of redundancy, or for a low wage, influence how they see the opportunities that might be available elsewhere. For many, residential mobility for this sort of work is simply not seen as a viable or desirable option.

Some policy discourses have focused on more disadvantaged places as fostering cultures at odds with the 'work ethic'. People living in these places are

problematised as lacking in aspiration and transmitting these values to the next generation (Crisp *et al*, 2009:10; for policy examples see: Duncan Smith, 2011). This has been used to legitimise a focus on supply-side issues aimed at developing skills and changing attitudes to work, while deflecting attention away from structural causes (Fletcher, 2007:81). However, this research has found that people living in Nearthorpe and Eastland are not lacking in aspiration; if anything, people are nurturing aspirations that are too high for the type of work that is available. Recognising that they did not want to work in flexible, insecure and poorly paying roles, a number of participants were focused on improving their own qualifications so that they could get a job that they *wanted*, not just *any* job. The biggest question was whether there would be jobs available to meet these heightened aspirations. As Beatty and Fothergill (2011) argued, shortage of jobs in Britain's weaker local economies remains a major problem. It is this heightened sense of aspiration that participants were seeking to cultivate in the next generation, as shown by the many times that different parents and grandparents talked about the importance of living near to good schools.

Calls for demand-side action would see jobs created in areas with concentrations of worklessness. However, the evidence from this research suggests that increasing the quantity of jobs is not necessarily sufficient. A number of unemployed participants felt that they could get work immediately if they were willing to take any job. These people were resistant to taking highly flexible, low-paid jobs, even if they were located relatively close-by. There is a need to address not just the quantity, but also the quality, of jobs (Crisp, 2008). The creation of low-paid jobs with little security or opportunity for progression conflicts with what people want work to be – something that it relatively secure, that will provide sufficient remuneration to build a life around (for example facilitating childcare, sustaining suitable living accommodation). There is a need for more opportunities to progress within stable employment paths and for the creation of jobs with better conditions of employment.

The new Conservative government has already announced an increase in the National Minimum Wage (Prime Minister's Office, 2015). This will boost household incomes for those in lower paid work. However, as Ray *et al* (2014) noted, the implementation of a minimum wage has not had significant ripple effects, with an increasing proportion of workers paid at or around the minimum

wage over time. Although some (for example the Living Wage Foundation and UNISON) have campaigned for a Living Wage and argued that it can lead to improved staff retention and security, some economic assessments suggest that in some industries it may reduce demand for low-skilled, younger workers, leading to job losses (Ray *et al*, 2014). In addition, it may be difficult for government to encourage businesses to pay a wage that reflects rising living costs, when most benefits and tax credits for working-age people were being increased by 1%, i.e. below inflation, in 2015-16, the third consecutive financial year in which a range of key working-age benefits were being limited to a 1% increase (McInnes, 2015). Hirsch and Valadez (2014) argued that one of the main reasons for the declining adequacy of in-work incomes is that tax credits and Universal Credit are not rising as fast as inflation. In 2011, the inflation measure used for the purpose of uprating was also changed to the Consumer Price Index; previously, the defaults were the Retail Prices Index and the 'Rossi' index (McInnes, 2015). Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies noted that the CPI tends to give a lower measure of inflation than both alternatives, and this change was forecast to save the government £5.8 billion in 2014-15 (Crossley *et al*, 2010).

In order to help people sustain employment one policy reform could be to reorientate the focus of Jobcentre Plus support not just on moving people into work, but helping them remain in employment in the long-term. As Shildrick *et al* (2012) argued, in the 'low-pay, no-pay' cycle people move in and out of insecure employment. While the Work Programme did focus on job retention as well as entry into employment (Ray *et al,* 2014), Sissons (2011) argued that providers could engage more effectively to ensure that the jobs in which people were placed offered an element of progression. At present, the Performance Management Framework for Jobcentre Plus and DWP emphasises two key objectives: moving people off benefits and into employment as quickly as possible, and reducing the monetary value of fraud and error (Nunn and Devins, 2012). Creating a new performance measure around the length of time spent in employment after leaving out-of-work-benefits – as suggested by Wilson *et al* (2013) – would encourage the targeting of resources towards longer-term

outcomes as opposed to moving people into any available job.[15] As already noted, many participants had high aspirations for the kinds of careers they wanted to go into, and enabling progression within low-paid work is an important area for policy development. As Ray *et al* (2014) suggested, this includes job mobility but also progression within employers' internal labour markets. This would require the identification of industries within which career ladders would offer the best change of progression for low-wage workers (Sissons, 2011). Wilson *et al* (2013:78) advocated a "stick, stay and progress" model, emphasising tailored support.

Travel was also a frequently mentioned barrier to taking up work. The cost of travelling to sites of employment was significant to those who would be receiving the minimum wage, or who only found out if they were working once they arrived at the site of employment. Practical support could be provided in the form of subsidised or free public transport passes to people who had recently taken up employment, for a time-limited period. This has recently started in Grimsby, but support is only provided for four-weeks. However, participants also noted the difficulty of getting to some sites of employment, requiring long journeys on multiple or infrequent buses. Many participants were acutely aware of time that seemed to be wasted. Subsidised public transport would not address this barrier.

Schemes through which people could access subsidised car-hire could help to connect people to more distant sites of employment that were poorly served by public transport. However, facilitating car-use may have a negative impact on other city and regional priorities, for example the promotion of low-carbon economies and clean air initiatives. Scooter schemes are one alternative that are being developed in a number of areas, including South Yorkshire and North East Lincolnshire. However, eligibility is often conditional on there being no alternative public transport options (North East Lincolnshire Council, 2015); widening schemes to consider the time and complexity of public transport options, as well as the interaction with working hours, may be of some benefit to the participants involved in this research. As Ray *et al* (2014) noted, the current

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[15] This has been a feature of a small number of trials by the Department for Work and Pensions (2013) in relation to the Work Programme.

climate of fiscal constraint places restrictions on certain policy approaches, particularly public-sector initiatives. Many of the suggestions detailed have cost implications, however the gains – the immediate tax gains, reduced expenditure on welfare benefits, and potential longer-term impacts on health and economic growth – would provide some counterbalance.

12.5 Future research agenda

Future research in this area should attempt to address some of the limitations of the research as outlined in Chapter Six, for example through expanding the research to other places or groups. A larger scale research project could examine work-related residential mobility in other types of places, providing comparators to the former industrial areas that are the basis of the research presented here. A clear comparator would be to examine work-related mobility in a very strong economy, such as London, or a new town such as Milton Keynes. It would be interesting to see whether work-related mobility in these places continued to conform to the pattern of being more common among those who are better qualified and better off, or whether the economic strength of these places draws in more people from across the socio-economic spectrum. Researching these areas would also provide insights into how people negotiate stronger housing markets, something that was less apparent in Nearthorpe and Eastland. One particular challenge would be to locate people who had moved to stronger economies in order to access employment opportunities, although it is not clear how such individuals could be identified within the general population.

Mason (2004:167) has also argued that we cannot fully understand residential mobility when using the individual or household as the unit of analysis, since personal narratives reveal agency to be more relational than individualistic. Given the strong role of social and familial networks in people's employment and residential mobility biographies, an approach that incorporated a whole network approach would have much to add to our existing research knowledge. This would go beyond the household, seeking to understand the way in which people live relationally in places. This approach would have the potential to go further than it has been possible to do in this research project, embedding identities and practices in wider sets of relationships (Mason, 2004:177) and illuminating the dynamic nature of relationships. This is an important avenue for

future research. Researching these networks has the potential to draw a more complicated picture of the role that they play in how people belong in particular places. This could explore the tensions between the idea of free-flowing, rootless networks of the liquid modern world, and the way in which this research has seen such networks as firmly anchored in particular places.

In order to expand to a network approach it may be necessary to confine the research to focus in on the experiences of one group, for example people who are out of work, or women with caring responsibilities. These groups have come out strongly in this research, and restricting participants to a particular group would have the advantage of being able to draw out comparisons between different members of that group. Even outside the network approach discussed above, there could be some advantages in focusing in on specific groups, rather than the heterogeneous approach that was taken in the research presented here. In focusing solely on women, for example, research could attempt to identify participants at different points in the lifecycle, acknowledging the important role that life events such as marriage and childbirth can have in women's lives. This would enable the exploration of the changing role of work in people's lives, and could seek to develop alternative pathways around which lives could be understood.

Finally, within the confines of a PhD programme it was not possible to undertake a longitudinal project, however this could provide valuable insights into residential mobility behaviour and intentions and how these change over time. Research over several years would build on some of the advantages of the biographical method by focusing on the dynamic nature of relationships and change over time. Although there would be practical difficulties, for example in keeping households in the research for this time period, by over-sampling at the start it would be possible to retain sufficient households to obtain useful results. In continuing in-depth research into how people respond to living in places that are presented through official narratives as 'declining', perhaps some of the discourses of "territorial stigmatisation" (Wacquant, 2008) can be effectively challenged. It is hoped that a greater weight of evidence about how people respond to living in low-income communities and the challenges of an insecure labour market context will have practical benefits in the design of policies that

are of benefit to households as they try to manage challenging circumstances with dignity and resourcefulness.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview topic guides

Interview Schedule – First Interview

Research questions
1. Do experiences and perceptions of labour markets influence households' residential mobility behaviour and intentions? 2. How are other influences represented, understood and negotiated through household narratives of mobility and immobility? 3. Have labour market changes over people's biographies challenged and re-shaped the relationship between people and place?

Interview 1 – for multi-adult households this is a joint interview where possible
Aims: • Explaining the research, consent • Getting to know the household • Understand current place of residence – including house, neighbourhood, social contacts • Find out about employment • Understand perceptions of labour market strength and perceived changes over time • Understand future mobility intentions • Consider whether household would move in hypothetical situations

Household composition and length of household history
 	
• Run through contact form with people
    o Household composition, children (& where they live if grown up)
    o How long household has lived together, how long in this neighbourhood
    o Tenure
    o Past number of moves
    o Plans to move
    o Employment status

Reason for moving to current home and neighbourhood • When did you move to this house? • Why did you decide to move? [Prompts: family, work, neighbourhood] • Were there any other reasons? • How long did it take between deciding to move and coming here? • Why did the decision to move happen when it did (i.e. why not sooner or later – probe for trigger)? • Did you feel like you had a lot of choice in where to move? Did you consider anywhere else? What would have been your ideal location? • Who was involved in making the decision to move? • [Draw out reasons for leaving; reasons for coming to this place specifically; any constraints on choice; how the household negotiated the

decision]

Current neighbourhood

- What do you consider to be your 'neighbourhood' – how would you describe that place to me? [Provide map?]
- How does your neighbourhood compare to other places nearby? [Or to Sheffield / Grimsby as a whole]
- How does it compare to where you moved from?
- What are the best and worst things about the neighbourhood?
- Do you feel like you fit in well here? Are there like-minded people?
- Has it changed since you've been living here? How?

Networks

- Did you know anyone here before you moved?
- Who do you know that lives around here at the moment, e.g. family, friends.
- How often do you see your family / friends / neighbours?
- What sort of contact do you have with them? [Prompts: say hello, social contact, services/gifts, significant support, etc.]

Employment

- Do you have any paid work? Do you have any unpaid or informal work [Prompts: childcare, caring for adults]
- What sort of work do you do [/did you do]?
- [Draw out nature of work, length of time, hours/contract arrangements, commuting distance]
- If not, what's your current situation, e.g. looking for work, looking after children, in education?
- Do you receive any benefits at the moment?

Perception of labour market opportunities

- How easy did you find it to get work?
- Is there a lot of that sort of work available around here?
- Thinking about the last time you got work or changed jobs, what sort of work did you consider? How far were you prepared to travel?
- Do you have any sense of the kind of work that other people who live around here do? What? Where do they work?
- More generally, would you say there's lots of work for people who live in Sheffield / Grimsby?
- How do you think this area compares to others in terms of the jobs on offer? [Neighbourhoods, Sheffield / Grimsby, regions]
- Are there other areas where you think there might be more jobs?
- Have you seen the sort of work available in this area changing over time? How? [What area are they talking about?]
- Do you know anything about the sort of work that people used to do in this area?

Relationship between people and place in relation to labour market

- Have you or your family ever moved for work? Have you ever considered moving for work or to take up a new job?
- When? Why/why not?
- How likely do you think it would be for you to move for work reasons in the future, e.g. to get a job or a better job?
- Do you know anyone else that has moved for work?

Future mobility intentions

- Have you got any plans to move?
- Why/why not? What things keep you here?
- Do you think people should move to find a job if they can't find one where they live, or to get a better job? Why / why not?
- Some Councils give a priority for social housing to people who are looking to move to the area for a job – what do you think about that?
- How do you think people find out about work opportunities?
- What about your children – do you think that they will stay living around here, or move away? Why?

Flexibility / mobility / liquidity in relation to place of residence

- If you needed to move from here for some reason, how easy would you find that?
- Would you find anything difficult about moving?
- [Draw out practicality and psychosocial elements]

Timeline of past residential mobility

Interview Schedule – Second Interview

Research questions

1. Do experiences and perceptions of labour markets influence households' residential mobility behaviour and intentions?
2. How are other influences represented, understood and negotiated through household narratives of mobility and immobility?
3. Have labour market changes over people's biographies challenged and re-shaped the relationship between people and place?

Interview 2 – for multi-adult households this is a separate interview, unless household has a long history or they prefer joint interview

Aims:

- Residential history
- Exploring links between moves and labour market changes
- Situating residential history in wider context

Narrative of past residential mobility behaviour

- Where did you grow up?
- Do you have any memories or stories about living there?
- Do you know why your family moved / ended up living there?
- What did your parents do for work when you were growing up?
- How often did you move when you were a child? How often have you moved as an adult (since you left family home)?
- Can you tell me about your first move leaving home?
- Can you tell me about the next few moves? [Draw timeline of residential mobility history if haven't already]

Reasons for moving

- Why did you move? (Or why did you stay in one place for a while?)
- Why did you move to that place, to that particular house?
- Did you feel like you had lots of choice in where you moved to?
- Who was involved in deciding to move / not?
- Why do you think the decision was made when it was (i.e. why not sooner or later, was there a trigger)?
- What tenure was that house?

Constraints on mobility

- Were there any things that made it harder to move?
- Have there been any times in your life when you thought about moving but didn't?
- [Draw out issues around budget, childcare/schooling, family ties, area, work]

Connections to destination areas

- What did you know about the place before you moved?
- Did you know anyone there?
- Had you ever been there before you moved?

Context

- What were the best and worst things about living in that area?
- Did you know many people there? (Family, friends)
- Do you have any strong memories of living there? What was it like?
- Do you remember anything else about that time in your life?

Employment at the time of moves

- Can you tell me about your work when you moved?
- Did this have any impact on your decision to move/not? If not, why not?
- Did it impact on where you moved to?

Labour market / job opportunities in those places at the time of moves

- How easy was it to find work there (for yourself / for other people)?
- What kind of work did friends / family / neighbours living there tend to do?
- Would you say it's become easier or harder to find work over your working life? Why? [Draw out how they may have adapted over time, e.g. around flexibility, type of work, type of employment, adjusting expectations]
- From your experience, does living in certain places make it easier / harder to get work?

Appendix 2: Case study selection process

For practical fieldwork reasons, one case study area was going to be close to or within the city of Sheffield. *Area One* would be located close to employment opportunities and be well connected to major labour market areas. The housing market may also be stronger, due to its proximity to areas of opportunity and surrounding 'rising markets'.

Although both case study areas were to be relatively disadvantaged according to a range of official statistics, *Area Two* would provide contrast on the key points of employment opportunities and geographic location, being situated in a more geographically isolated position, with fewer transport links to other labour market areas, and in a comparatively labour market area.

By utilising the Indices of Multiple Deprivation mapped to local administrative boundaries (lower super output area (LSOA) level), high areas of deprivation could be seen, along with geographic details such as proximity to or isolation from other major cities.

Using this map, two places were considered for further investigation: for *Area One*, the east of Sheffield, and for *Area Two*, the central and coastal areas of Grimsby.

Administrative data was considered for 25 areas in these locations, focusing initially on the level of deprivation and the tenure profile of these areas.

All but two of the communities were in the top 15% most deprived in England; 16 of 25 areas were in the top 10% most deprived. However, in a number of areas this may be explained in part by very high proportions of social housing. Generally, social housing residents have particularly low residential mobility, because of the way in which housing is allocated and the often high levels of demand for a limited resource. Occupants of private rented housing would be likely to have higher residential mobility. It was important for potential case study areas to have sufficient private rented housing to enable movement into and out of the area. In seven of 12 LSOAs in Sheffield, social housing comprised over 50% of housing stock. This generally meant a correspondingly low proportion of private rented housing. Five of these areas were removed from further consideration; two others remained for consideration because of their proximity to areas of employment. In three of 13 LSOAs in Grimsby, social housing comprised over 50% of housing stock. These areas were removed from further consideration.

In total, 12 areas were taken forward for further consideration, six in Sheffield and six in Grimsby. More detailed information was considered for these areas. This was based on 2001 Census data, which at the time was the most up-to-date Census data available at the LSOA level, however since the selection was made 2011 Census data has been released. Administrative data considered included:

- Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranking
- Tenure profile
- Travel-to-work patterns
- Job Seeker's allowance and Incapacity Benefit claimant data (from DWP Working Age Client Group data, to provide a more up-to-date picture)

Profiles were completed for each area before two were selected as the case study areas.

Appendix 3: Stakeholder information sheets

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

1. What is the purpose of the study?

My name is Jenny Preece and I am a PhD researcher based at Sheffield Hallam University. This research is looking at the reasons people choose to move or stay in particular neighbourhoods and how people's relationship with where they live may change over time. The main aims of the research are to:

- Understand why households move, or don't move, from areas
- Understand people's experience of living in different areas across their life history
- Explore whether people think about labour market opportunities and employment factors when they decide whether to move or not

2. Why have you asked me to take part?

The main sources of data are interviews with residents living in case study areas, however in order to understand these places interviews with stakeholders are also being carried out. This involves people working in housing, regeneration and employment in the local authority and voluntary and community sectors. You have been identified as someone who may be able to assist with the research.

3. What is involved?

Being involved will mean taking part in a relatively informal interview about your role in the local area, the work you do and your perception of the local labour and housing markets. The interview may cover a range of other topics, depending on your experience. Each interview would last about an hour, depending on how much time you had available and how much information you wanted to share. It is important for you to know that you can stop the interview at any time or choose not to answer a question if you feel uncomfortable, or for any other reason.

4. Where will the interview take place?

You can be interviewed at your place of work or at a public place (e.g. a cafe or community centre).

5. How will you use the information you have collected through the interview?

Your interview will be one of several stakeholder interviews which make up the research project. I will spend time analysing these – this involves thinking about what you and other people have said and how that relates to research done by others. Quotes will be used to illustrate points, and these will be published in a thesis which will be held in Sheffield Hallam University library. The work will also be published in papers in academic journals and at professional conferences so that other researchers can find out about the project.

As part of standard University procedures, anonymised transcripts of interviews, consent forms and analysis will be held in the University data archive for a period of 7 years.

6. Will what I say be confidential?

Your name and other things that may identify you (e.g. your job title) will be changed when the interview is typed up. Your name or contact details will not appear anywhere on the interview transcript and I will be the only person who has access to your contact details.

My academic supervisors will have access to the anonymous transcripts of interviews, but I am the only person who will have access to the original recordings of the interview (these will be held on a password protected computer and the original recording will be destroyed once the research has been approved).

In some other research projects, people have been able to guess the identity of anonymous contributors. I cannot rule out this possibility, as your role in your organisation and in-depth knowledge of particular areas may be unique. Although I will be the only person to know your identity, it is always possible that someone else who reads the research (especially someone who knows you) could recognise you.

7. Can I change my mind about participating, or change what I have said at a later stage?

Yes, you can opt out or contact me to amend or clarify any elements of the interview, but please do this within 2 weeks of the interview taking place.

8. Will I be able to talk to someone about my participation?

At the end of the interview there will be an opportunity to talk about the research and what happens next. If you would like to receive a copy of the transcript as a record of the interview, this can also be arranged at this time.

9. How can I contact you if I have questions?

My contact details are:

Jenny Preece
CRESR, Unit 10 Science Park, Sheffield Hallam University, S1 1WB

Email: Jennifer.Preece@student.shu.ac.uk

Phone: 0114 225 3073 or 07931 716 276

10. How can I make a complaint?

If you would like to make a complaint please contact my supervisor:

Paul Hickman
CRESR, Unit 10 Science Park, Sheffield Hallam University, S1 1WB
Email: P.G.Hickman@shu.ac.uk
Phone: 0114 225 3073

Letter to estate agents

Address

Date

Dear Name

I am based at Sheffield Hallam University and am carrying out some research into people's experiences of the housing market in Location. I am interested in Case Study Area.

I have already spoken with a number of residents and other stakeholders and would very much like to speak to you or someone in your office about your knowledge of the local housing market in this area and how it compares to other places in Location.

I appreciate that you will be busy and would only take around 10-15 minutes of your time, or whatever you could spare. The key issues that I would like to understand are your experiences of:

- this local neighbourhood and how it compares to other places in Location
- the nature of the housing market in this local area
- how it compares to the broader housing market in Location
- levels of housing demand

All conversations would be made anonymous, and your name or company name would not be used. I enclose a more detailed information sheet about the research project for your information.

I will call your office in the next few days to see whether you, or someone else in your team, would be able to spare some time to speak with me. If you would like to contact me before then, or to arrange a convenient time for me to get in touch, my contact details are at the bottom of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Preece

0114 225 3562
Jennifer.Preece@student.shu.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet

1. What is the purpose of the study?

My name is Jenny Preece and I am a PhD researcher based at Sheffield Hallam University. This research is looking at the reasons people choose to move or stay in particular neighbourhoods and how people's relationship with where they live may change over time. The main aims of the research are to:

- Understand why households move, or don't move, from areas
- Understand people's experience of living in different areas across their life history
- Explore whether people think about labour market opportunities and employment factors when they decide whether to move or not

2. Why have you asked me to take part?

The main sources of data are interviews with residents living in case study areas, however in order to understand these places interviews with stakeholders are also being carried out. This involves people who have experience of involvement in the housing sector and you have been identified as someone who plays an important role in the local housing market.

3. What is involved?

Being involved will mean talking to me on the phone for around 10-15 minutes, or whatever you could spare. This would be an informal discussion about your perceptions and experiences of the local housing market and any knowledge you have of the local area. You can end the phone call at any time, ask questions, or choose not to answer a question for any reason.

4. When will the interview take place?

I will call your office in order to see whether anyone would be able to talk to me. If you would like to arrange a time that would be convenient, please contact me.

5. How will you use the information you have collected through the interview?

The discussion is one of several conversations with different stakeholders in your area. I will spend time analysing these – this involves thinking about what you and other people have said and how that relates to research done by others. Quotes will be used to illustrate points, and these will be published in a thesis which will be held in the Sheffield Hallam University library. The work will also be published in papers in academic journals and at professional conferences so that other researchers can find out about the project.

As part of standard University procedures the analysis will be held in the University data archive for a period of 7 years.

6. Will what I say be confidential?

I will take notes during the conversation, but your name, company name, or any other identifying features would be changed when the notes are typed up. I will be the only person who has access to your contact details.

In some other research projects, people have been able to guess the identity of anonymous contributors. I cannot rule out this possibility, as your in-depth knowledge of particular areas may be unique. Although I will be the only person to know your identity, it is always possible that someone else who reads the research (especially someone who knows you) could recognise you.

7. Can I change my mind about participating, or change what I have said at a later stage?

Yes, you can opt out or contact me to amend or clarify any elements of the interview, but please do this within 2 weeks of the interview taking place.

8. Will I be able to talk to someone about my participation?

You can find my contact details below if you have any more questions before or after the discussion.

9. How can I contact you if I have questions?

My contact details are:

Jenny Preece
CRESR, Unit 10 Science Park, Sheffield Hallam University, S1 1WB
Email: Jennifer.Preece@student.shu.ac.uk
Phone: 0114 225 3562

10. How can I make a complaint?

If you would like to make a complaint please contact my supervisor:

Paul Hickman
CRESR, Unit 10 Science Park, Sheffield Hallam University, S1 1WB
Email: P.G.Hickman@shu.ac.uk
Phone: 0114 225 3073

Appendix 4: Stakeholder topic guides

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

Stakeholder Interview Topic Guide

1. Research context

- Background to research, information sheet & consent
- Your roles
- Local authority plans around housing and local community – aims and future vision
- Status of regeneration plans

2. Housing and neighbourhoods

- Housing market context in Grimsby
- Changes in the housing market over time
- Housing and neighbourhood challenges
- Level and type of housing demand
- Understanding and planning for housing demand

3. Residential mobility

- Levels of residential mobility (and interaction with tenure)
- Understanding who moves in and out of the area
- New Arrivals
- Possible barriers to residential mobility
- Retaining population

4. Labour markets and employment

- Changes in the labour market context
- Housing market and wider economic performance
- Interactions between investment in housing and wider economic regeneration

Estate Agent Phone Interview Topic Guide

Neighbourhood

- Do you know much about the case study area?
- How would you describe the case study area neighbourhood to someone moving to city location?
- How does it compare to other neighbourhoods?
- Can you think of any particularly good / bad things about that local area?
- Do you have a sense of who lives there, and who moves into / out of the local area? Why are people moving in / out?

Housing market

- How would you characterise the local housing market in that area?
- What type of housing stock does it have?
- How does it compare to the wider housing marker in city location?
- What sort of changes have you seen in the housing market in the time you've been working in this area?
- What would you say are the most and least desirable areas to live in city location?
- Why those areas?

Appendix 5: Stakeholder consent form

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research sent Form

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Please read the points below, and sign at the bottom of the page to indicate your consent.

- I have received a participant information sheet which I have read and understood, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions;

- I have been informed of issues around confidentiality and give permission for the research team to read anonymised interview transcripts;

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research (without giving a reason) within two weeks of the interview taking place, and for any data to be destroyed;

- I understand that I can stop the interview, or ask questions, at any time.

- I agree to the audio recording of the interview;

- I voluntarily agree to take part in the research project, as it has been described to me.

Name (block letters): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Signed (researcher): _____

Date: _____

Appendix 6: Flyer designs

Flyer One (front)

Flyer One (back)

£15/cash
for households
taking part

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

What's involved?

- 2 interviews of around an hour each
- Involves you and other adult household members
- Talking about experiences of moving home
- Talking about reasons for staying in a place
- Focuses on your life story
- What you say will be confidential

To find out more & to see if you can take part:
Call/text Jenny: 07583 745 756 (we can call you back)
Email: residential.mobility@gmail.com

Flyer Two

£15 cash for households taking part

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research
Unit 10, Science Park, Howard Street, Sheffield, S1 1WB

Interested in taking part in research about your home and area?

Can you spare some time to talk?

Have you ever moved home, or always lived here?

Want to move in the future, or happy where you are?

Ever moved for work, or want to?

What's involved?

- Talking to you & household
- Convenient location, e.g. at home
- £15 for households taking part
- Confidential

What do I do next?

Call/text Jenny: 07583 745 756 / 0114 225 3562
(we can call you back)
Email: residential.mobility@gmail.com

Poster

Appendix 7: Participant screening survey

1   Name _____   2.   Contact number _____

3   Address _____

4   Number of adult members of household

5   Relationship to caller _____

     Relationship to caller _____

     Relationship to caller _____

	Y	N	DK
6 Are other household members happy to participate in the research?			

(If don't know, inform them all household members are needed to participate)

7   Age of adult household members

8   How long have you lived at your current address?

9   Why did you move there?

     _____

10   What is your tenure?

Owner occupier	Private rented	Social rented (LA/HA)

11   How many times have you moved in the last 10 years?

	Y	N	DK
12 Have you ever moved for work reasons?			
13 Have you ever lived outside the town you live in now?			
14 Have you got any plans to move from your current home?			

     If yes, why?

     _____

15.   Employment status

	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3
• Employed full-time			
• Employed part-time			
• Unemployed (seeking work)			
• Permanently sick or disabled			
• Economically inactive			

Appendix 8: Participant information sheet

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

1. What is the purpose of the study?

My name is Jenny Preece and I am a PhD researcher based at Sheffield Hallam University. This research is looking at the reasons people choose to move or stay in particular neighbourhoods and how people's relationship with where they live may change over time. The main aims of the research are to:

- Understand why households move, or don't move, from areas
- Understand people's experience of living in different areas across their life history
- Explore whether people think about labour market opportunities and employment factors when they decide whether to move or not

2. Why have you asked me to take part?

I would like to speak to a range of people from the area where you live. I am aiming to speak to 10 households with different characteristics (e.g. age, employment history) – this will make sure that I hear from a range of people. I am also conducting research in a different neighbourhood so that results can be compared.

3. What is involved?

Being involved will mean speaking to me about your residential history and the reasons you have moved to and from different places across your life. We will also talk about employment and any economic changes you may have experienced. The interview may cover a range of other topics that are relevant to your housing history. It is important for you to know that you can stop the interview at any time or choose not to answer a question if you feel uncomfortable, or for any other reason.

I would like to speak to all adult members of the household together (e.g. both members of a couple). If you would prefer not to be interviewed together, or an appropriate time cannot be found, alternative arrangements can be made. The household would take part in two interviews, about a month apart. These would be very informal – the first would be to get to know you and where you live now; the second would be to talk about where you have lived in the past and your reasons for moving. Each interview would last about an hour, depending on how much time you had available and how much information you wanted to share.

4. Where will the interviews take place?

You can be interviewed in your home or at a public place (e.g. a cafe or community centre) nearby.

5. How will you use the information you have collected through the interview?

Your interview will be one of several which make up the research project. I will spend time analysing these – this involves thinking about what you and other people have said and how that relates to research done by others. Quotes will be used to illustrate points, and these will be published in a thesis which will be held in Sheffield Hallam University library. The work will also be published in papers in academic journals and at professional conferences so that other researchers can find out about the project.

As part of standard University procedures, anonymised transcripts of interviews, consent forms and analysis will be held in the University data archive for a period of at least 7 years.

6. Will what I say be confidential?

Your name and other things that may identify you (e.g. your workplace, or names of friends) will be changed when the interview is typed up. The places you have lived will also be given different names. Your name or contact details will not appear anywhere on the interview transcript and I will be the only person who has access to your contact details.

My academic supervisors will have access to the anonymous transcripts of interviews, but I am the only person who will have access to the original recordings of the interview (these will be held on a password protected computer and the original recording will be destroyed once the research has been approved).

In some other research projects, people have been able to guess where the research took place. I cannot rule out this possibility because your area may have particular characteristics that make it unusual or easy to identify even without the name being used. Although I will be the only person to know your identity, it is always possible that someone else who reads the research (especially someone who knows you) could recognise you. This is because your life history and the places you have lived are unique.

7. Can I change my mind about participating, or change what I have said at a later stage?

Yes, you can opt out or contact me to amend or clarify any elements of the interview, but please do this within 2 weeks of the interview taking place.

8. Will I be able to talk to someone about my participation?

At the end of the second interview there will be an opportunity to talk about the research and what it has meant for you. If you would like to receive a copy of the transcript as a record of the interview, this can also be arranged at this time.

9. How can I contact you if I have questions?

Yes – my contact details are:

Jenny Preece
CRESR, Unit 10 Science Park, Sheffield Hallam University, S1 1WB
Email: b1048421@my.shu.ac.uk
Phone: 0114 225 3073

10. How can I make a complaint?

If you would like to make a complaint please contact my supervisor:

Paul Hickman
CRESR, Unit 10 Science Park, Sheffield Hallam University, S1 1WB
Email: P.G.Hickman@shu.ac.uk
Phone: 0114 225 3073

Appendix 9: Participant consent form

Sheffield Hallam University | **Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research**

Consent Form

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Please read the points below, and sign at the bottom of the page to indicate your consent.

- I have received a participant information sheet which I have read and understood, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions;

- I have been informed of issues around confidentiality and give permission for the research team to read anonymised interview transcripts;

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research (without giving a reason) within two weeks of the interview taking place, and for any data to be destroyed;

- I understand that I can stop the interview, or ask questions, at any time.

- I agree to the audio recording of the interview;

- I voluntarily agree to take part in the research project, as it has been described to me.

Name (block letters): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Signed (researcher): _____

Date: _____

Appendix 10: Initial household themes

Initial themes

Sarah & Matt – age ###, child ###. unemployed, PRS	
Residential mobility	**Employment**
• Family connections directing (both restricting and expanding) mobility pathways	• Knowledge of labour markets differs from 'official' view
• Cost of travel influences residential mobility decisions	• Mobility for future opportunities, as distinct from mobility for work
• Housing market prices prompting, directing & constraining moves	• Aspiration for education / careers – getting ahead
• Social connections	• Flexibility in job roles, not in hours worked
• Support networks	• Preference for traditional, masculine jobs (M)
• Size of property	• Fear of leaving security of benefits
• Cost of mobility	• Employability
• Relationship breakdown (friend, partner, family, landlord)	• Deferring work now for perceived better opportunities later – cost benefit calculation
• Relationship breakdown leading to downward housing career move	• Insecurity of agency work
• Mobility as escape (geographical and emotional)	• Lack of worker control over flexibility
• Mobility as habitual, able to manage moves	• Resisting adaptation to needs of labour market
• Ties to where you grew up	• De-industrialisation – employment change over time
• Prioritisation	• Competition for jobs, immigration
• Restricted choices	• Benefit sanctions; benefit fraud
• Schools directing mobility pathways	• Deserving / undeserving poor
• Informal accommodation	• Connections into labour markets, word of mouth
• Housing market supply vs demand – mismatch	• Cyclical labour market change – immobility in expectation of future opportunities
• New household formation	• Seasonal work
• Frequent mobility as child (M)	• Followed dad's career (M)
• Parent's career driving mobility (M)	• Work is less important in moments of family crisis
• Life stage promoting stability (children, age)	• Informal economy
• Relationship and family ties limiting mobility	• Cost-benefit decision – is it worth working

Place	Other themes
• Ease and comfort in place	• Different motivations for moving
• Experience of other places informs how you see places you live	• One person drives move, the other more passive
• Expectations of place informed by biography	• Multiple reasons for a move
• Knowledge of place, habit provides comfort, convenience	• Individualised outlook (M)
• Preference to live in another area	• Daily mobility as escape
• Invisible boundaries divide places	• Adaptation in response to benefit changes / restrictions
• Housing market	• Availability of transport limits mobility (daily and residential)
• Fear of unknown / local knowledge provides comfort	• Fuel poverty
• Reputation of place – from information networks, experience	• Proximity to necessity
• Weighing different place-based criteria – area vs price	• In-kind exchanges with PRS landlords
• Hyper-local differentiation of place	• Child protection issues limits daily mobility of mother
• Proximity to amenities – functional relationship to place	• Top-up for rent
• Lack of community	• Tenant investment in PRS property
• Comfort in fitting in, being known in a place (S)	
• Community as oppressive	
• Biography informs current relation to community	
• Crime / fear of crime / safety	

The rows above the Place/Other themes header:

• Cost of travel restricting employment

• Psychological benefits of work

• Respectability around family

Appendix 11: Initial Nearthorpe themes

Key themes across all participants	
Residential mobility	**Employment**
• Mobility patterns differ across life course • Work driving mobility for professionals / those with 'career' • Mobility as normal, expected, e.g. those with professional careers, with experience of mobility • Housing market variation / house prices limiting choices and constraining mobility • Social contacts facilitate mobility to new places • Choice / lack of choice – people constrained to different degrees • Lack of control over mobility • Family support networks promoting, inhibiting and directing mobility pathways • Reciprocal support networks extend chains of immobility to multiple households • Proximity to good schools driver of future mobility – aspiration for children • Tenure influences mobility	• Crises challenge the role of work in life • Changing aspirations and expectations associated with changing cultural norms • Individualist attitudes to work – hard work leading to success • Professional roles require more mobility • Role of work in your life determines extend of influence • Welfare discourses • Cost-benefit decisions in relation to work • Flexibility in work barrier to mobility for those lower down employment ladder • Insecurity in professional roles balanced by other benefits • Work ethic, paying into system, rights / entitlement • Caring responsibilities • Isolation from labour market • Decline of industry • Reserve pool of labour • Employment / income diversity • Employment change over time
Place	**Other themes**
• Freedom to choose neighbourhood promotes positive view of place • Mobility (past and future) related to more positive relations to place • Belonging / not belonging • Non-spatial communities, e.g. faith, culture • Being known and knowing others promotes feelings of community	• Different motivations for moving within household • Multiple reasons for moves • Memories of place have an impact in present • On-going impact of biography

• Experience of other places informs how you see where you live • Community support networks • Community as surveillance • Roots in an area promoting attachment to place • Demographic change – ethnic change • Decline of traditional working class leisure spaces • Loss of place • Third spaces as sites of social interaction, community • Competition for scarce resources • Lived experience of place challenging / reinforcing reputation • Narrative of decline associated with longer term residents, particularly white working class	

Appendix 12: Thematic feedback to participants

«Title» «Last_name»
«Address_1»
«Address_2_»
«Postcode»

29 November 2013

Dear «First_name» «AutoMergeField» «First_name1»

You may remember taking part in some research being carried out in your local area earlier in the year – I came to visit you in your home to talk about where you live now and the other places you have lived in your life. The focus of my research is to understand why people move across their lives and whether there is any role for work-related factors in driving people's decisions to move or not. I am also interested in places, and how people talk about the areas in which they live. At the end of the interview you said you would like to know what I found during the research, so I am just writing with a brief update.

It is not possible to include all of the findings here, but I have summarised some of the main points that came out of talking to people in your local area and the other case study area. I often find it helpful to use diagrams to represent particular themes and ideas, and I hope that you find the enclosed leaflet a good way of presenting the research findings. These are based on thinking about all of the things that different people said during the interviews, so they may not reflect your own personal experiences.

This is just a summary of my findings so far, and I will be writing about these themes in more detail in the future. I would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in the research and giving up your time to speak to me. I will be spending some time away from the university as I am having a baby, but I will be returning in September 2014. If you would like any more information about the research, more detail, or have any questions, please get in touch. I will do my best to respond as soon as possible (although for the next few months I will likely be fairly busy!). I will ask my colleagues to pass on any messages whilst I am away.
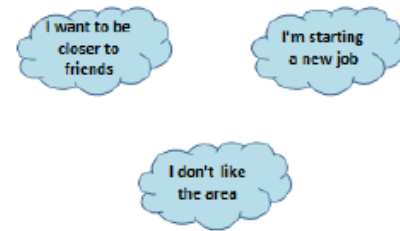

Jenny Preece

PhD researcher, Sheffield Hallam University
0114 225 3562
jennifer.preece@student.shu.ac.uk

There are often multiple reasons for a move

Bigger house

Closer to family

Better area
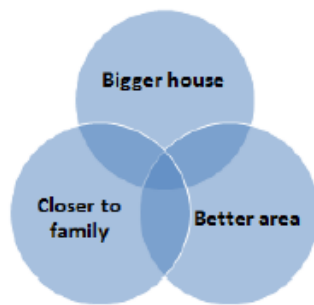
Different people in the household may have different reasons for moving

I want to be closer to friends

I'm starting a new job

I don't like the area

Life stage can influence how much you move

I don't have any ties

We need to stay here for school

I need to be near my grandchildren
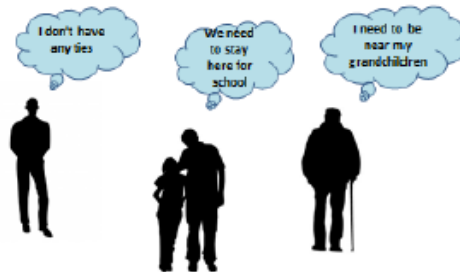
Some people expected to move a few times, but for others moving was unusual and exceptional

I've moved 6 times in the last 5 years

I've lived here all my life
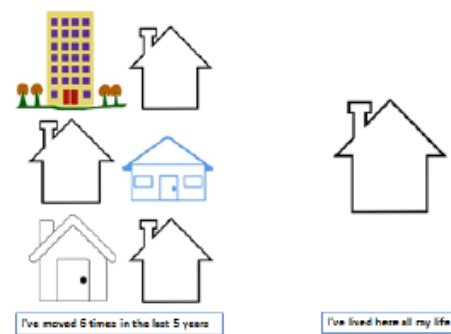
Work was not a major reason for moving, but it was more important for people working in professional roles

JOBS

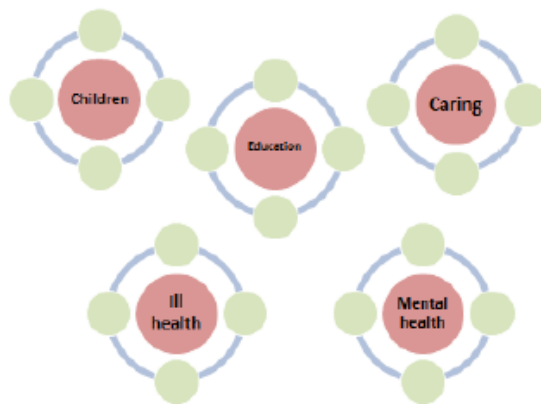## People knew less about jobs in other places. Word of mouth contacts were important in finding jobs

Flexibility in jobs often made people feel insecure and made moving for work less likely

Temp role

Part-time role Mon-Wed

Help wanted (no guaranteed hours)

Job available 8am-10am

People had different ways of adapting to the local labour market

Working

Receiving benefits

Volunteering

Education

Work wasn't always the main focus in life

Children

Education

Caring

Ill health

Mental health

People talked about where they lived on a very local level

Good area

Bad area

Bad area

Bad area

Bad area

Good area

Good area

Good area

Bad area

Bad area

Good area

Feeling comfortable in a place was important. Feeling like you belonged was often based on knowing other people and being known to others

Support networks were important in holding people in place, but also directing moves to particular places

Mum

Best friend

Me

Sister

Partner

Dad

Mum

Friends

Me