Swept Up Lives?

Re-envisioning the Homeless City

Paul Cloke, Jon May and Sarah Johnsen
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### Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ASBO</td>
<td>Anti-Social Behaviour Order</td>
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<td>B&amp;B</td>
<td>Bed and Breakfast (hotel)</td>
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<td>CLG</td>
<td>(Department of) Communities and Local Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>COS</td>
<td>Charity Organisation Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCLG</td>
<td>Department of Communities and Local Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>DETR</td>
<td>Department of Environment, Transport and Regions</td>
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<td>DOE</td>
<td>Department of Environment</td>
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<td>E&amp;V</td>
<td>Entrenched and Vulnerable</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBO</td>
<td>Faith-Based Organization</td>
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<td>HAP</td>
<td>Homelessness Action Programme</td>
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<td>HMO</td>
<td>House in Multiple Occupation</td>
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<td>LHS</td>
<td>Local Homelessness Strategy</td>
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<td>LSCRCP</td>
<td>London Soup and Clothing Run Co-Ordination Project</td>
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<td>NASS</td>
<td>National Asylum Support Service</td>
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<td>ODPM</td>
<td>Office of the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
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<td>RSI</td>
<td>Rough Sleepers Initiative</td>
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<td>RSU</td>
<td>Rough Sleepers Unit</td>
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Chapter One

Introduction: Re-envisioning the Homeless City

Introduction

The ‘extermination’ scenario is never far from the surface of the homeless experience … Constrained to exist in public spaces, the homeless are constant targets of regulation, criminalization, expulsion, and erasure.

(Randall Amster, Patterns of Exclusion, 2003: 214)

‘Now, do you want your food? ’Cos it’s cooked with love.’ Because it’s cooked with love, that’s what she said. … It’s like – how can I put it … it’s genuine. Do you understand? … They care … I mean, they don’t get paid, they volunteer to do it … [and] they do cook their food with love.

(Andy, 38, homeless service user speaking of the volunteers at St Barnabas Day Centre, Wimpster)

‘Love’ is not a word one comes across very often in writings on homelessness. In academic accounts at least, the talk is more usually of ‘exclusion’, ‘banishment’, ‘annihilation’ (Mitchell, 1997: 311) or ‘extermination’ (Amster, 2003: 214; Mitchell, 2003: 81). Indeed, thanks mainly to the writings of Mike Davis, Neil Smith, Don Mitchell and a handful of other scholars working mostly in a North American context (see, for example, Davis, 1990, 1999; Smith, 1992, 1996a, b, 1998, 2001; Sorkin, 1992; Matieu, 1993; Dangshat, 1997; Mitchell, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2005; Metraux, 1999; Arapoglau, 2004; Coleman, 2004; Herbert & Brown, 2006; Blomley & Klodawsky, 2007a, b, c), critical narratives of homelessness have become increasingly dystopic in recent years, inextricably tangled up in ideas about neoliberal politics and the geographies of social control. In a spectacular triumph of structure over agency, and of the general over the specific, it would appear that homeless people everywhere are being swept up and out of the prime spaces of the city, victims both of a seemingly insatiable appetite
for high-value commodification of urban landscapes and imagery, and of a recidivist re-imagination of the norms of citizenship rights and welfare, criminality and social justice.

Such accounts are framed by a very particular reading of the geographies of homelessness – based around the streets – and a very particular logic, of social control. In this book we pose some significant questions about this characterization of the ‘homeless city’, seeking to extend our readings of both the geographies and politics of urban homelessness. To be clear, we do not deny that the past ten to fifteen years have seen the emergence of an increasingly punitive approach to the ‘management’ of urban homelessness. Evidence of such an approach – including new by-laws that restrict homeless people’s access to prime, public space, business improvement districts, Controlled Drinking Zones, or Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) – is all around us, whether we look in Britain, Germany, Greece, the United States, Canada or New Zealand (Mitchell, 1998a, b; Collins & Blomley, 2003; Laurenson & Collins, 2007; Doherty et al., 2008; Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 2010). But we do want to issue a caution lest this approach becomes the only frame through which discussions of urban homelessness can proceed. As a small number of academics are beginning to recognize (Johnsen et al., 2005a; Laurenson and Collins, 2006; DeVerteuil et al., 2009; Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 2010) and people like Andy (quoted above) have long known, there are other spaces (of the soup kitchen, day centre or hostel) and other logics (of compassion and care) we must take account of when mapping the ‘homeless city’.

Rather than the streets, the current book is therefore mostly focused upon these other spaces. But we identify such spaces as an example of wider currents in the contemporary city, currents that speak less of containment and control than of compassion and care and – more particularly – of a growing rapprochement between secular and religious approaches to urban politics and welfare (see also Beaumont, 2008; Beaumont & Dias, 2008; Wills et al., 2009a). In contrast to the assumed divide between public secularism and private religion, these broadly ‘postsecular’ service spaces – of the night shelter, hostel, day centre and soup run – represent spaces of praxis in which secular and faith motivation collude in new forms of ethical citizenship that run counter to, and sometimes actively resist, more familiar models of social control. In this way, we argue for a more complex understanding of the ways in which homelessness is governed, paving the way for a characterization of homelessness that pays more attention to the agency of homeless people themselves, to the complexity of homeless geographies, and to the construction and peopling of those spaces of homelessness in which homeless people experience a range of relationships that include compassion and care – even love – as well as regulation, containment and control.

In this chapter we set out the wider context of these arguments with a brief summary and critique of recent writings on urban homelessness.
framed by variations of the ‘revanchism’ thesis, before moving on, in chapter 2, to set out an alternative framework through which recent developments in the ‘homeless city’ can be explored. The chapter also introduces the project from which the material we make use of was drawn, and provides a brief overview of the structure of the book.

**Homelessness and Revanchism**

The framing of homelessness within an apparently ‘punitive turn’ in urban policy and politics (DeVerteuil et al., 2009) has been sparked by a series of attempts by scholars in North America to use homelessness as the exemplar of how urban policy from the late twentieth century onwards has willfully marginalized the visible poor. Drawing inspiration from economic and political geographies of global as well as urban change, attention has been directed to the increasingly bipolar nature of the contemporary city, within which islands of extreme wealth, power and influence are interspersed with places characterized by deprivation, exclusion and a lack of self-determination. These landscapes of power (Zukin 1991) are being exacerbated by the uneven distribution of benefits from globalization – with those able to benefit from the new technologies and mobilities of a globalizing age capitalizing on their enhanced power to overcome space to their own advantage; and those who are disempowered by the unevenness of globalized economies tending instead to become socially and spatially incarcerated (Graham & Marvin, 2001). Geopolitical reorganization is giving obvious spatial manifestation to this bipolar distribution of power. As Swyngedouw and Kaika (2003: 6) explain:

> The powerful … are now able to insulate themselves in hermetically sealed enclaves, where gated communities and sophisticated modes of surveillance are the order of the day … in the closely surveilled spaces of leisure and mass consumption malls and in their suburban housing estates. Concurrently, the rich and powerful can decant and steer the poor into clearly demarcated zones in the city, where implicit and explicit forms of social and bodily control keep them in place.

The picture here, then, is of a ‘militarization’ (Davis, 1990) of urban space in which the physical form and shape of the city reflects the uneven and polarizing power relations of the age – space is being reordered to suit the desires of the powerful, who are increasingly able to use politico-legal and cultural means to ‘decant’ the poor out of prime urban zones required for the furtherance of urban redevelopment.

This increasingly orthodox and sweeping picture of urban change does of course beg a number of important questions. Who are the powerful elites
who are doing the ‘steering’, and the marginalized downtrodden who are being ‘steered’? What spaces are being ‘decanted’ from and into, and does this spatiality differ from city to city? What powers are being used to give precise spatial expression to political bipolarity? To what extent are such processes the unthinking outcome of processes of ‘progress’, or the result of the malignant and malevolent purposefulness of actors, organizations and systems geared to achieve power and wealth whatever the cost? Where in this picture is the resistance to such processes, either from the marginalized themselves or from within wider society?

Some of these questions have been taken up in formative accounts of geographical bipolarization and – more specifically – the changing geographies of homelessness, in particular in US cities. Beginning in Los Angeles, for example, in *Cities of Quartz* (1990), Mike Davis painted a picture of ‘Fortress LA’, demonstrating how a fear of crime and disorder became mapped onto the otherness of marginalized people such as the homeless – a process aided and abetted by tightly controlled media representations of social and spatial geographies of fear in the city. As a result, the built environment of Los Angeles became represented as a ‘carceral city’, with a cartography of fortified residential enclaves and marginal no-go spaces, and heavily policed and culturally purified shopping malls and public spaces. According to Davis, homeless people in early 1990s Los Angeles were increasingly disciplined by policies of exclusion and containment, and he charts the measures used to expel and exclude homeless people from areas in and adjacent to Downtown – including more vigorous policing, and the deployment of defensive city architectures (such as sprinkler systems used to repel rough sleepers and panhandlers as well as to nourish vegetation). As a result, Los Angeles’ homeless were apparently either increasingly hemmed into a shrinking skid row, or reduced to an existence of ‘urban Bedouins’ (Davis, 1990: 236) – wandering fugitives fleeing from official policing and culturally sadistic repression.

Not coincidentally, perhaps, the welfare services so vital to homeless and other poor people gained very little attention in these overarching narratives of urban bipolarization. Where they did appear, service-providers tended to be characterized either as the unwitting handmaidens of a punitive state, or as groups of people principally interested in ‘moral selving’ (Allahyari, 2000) – responding to charitable impulses that are self-serving and identity-building rather than constitutive of any progressive response to the plight of homeless people. Thus, groundbreaking studies of the service-dependent ghetto (Dear & Wolch, 1987, 1994; Rowe & Wolch, 1990), for example, many of them also conducted in Los Angeles, demonstrated the regulatory force by which the marginal spaces of the city (the ‘stem’, or ‘skid row’) were brought into being and became filled with homeless people, and how the location of these services tended in turn to shape the wider geographies of the homeless city itself (Wolch et al., 1993; see also Takahashi, 1996),
as homeless people’s day-to-day routines develop around the service nodes that provide a source of the material and, to a lesser extent, emotional sustenance and support necessary to make the adjustment from ‘housed’ to ‘homeless’ (Rowe & Wolch, 1990).

The more general picture provided by such studies, then, was of an era of ‘malign neglect’ (Wolch & Dear, 1993), an era in which homeless people came to be increasingly ghettoized into designated marginal spaces even as their mobility within and through prime city spaces became ever more restricted. Such narratives began to change somewhat with Smith’s tour de force The New Urban Frontier, published in 1996. Based on his reading of developments in New York, Smith sought to connect up evidence of the increasingly punitive interventions taken against homeless people in New York City with gentrification – drawing the two together through the concept of the revanchist city. If the Los Angeles narrative was one of containment, Smith’s emphasis on revanche (revenge) invoked a vengeful reassertion of power over, and overt criminalization of, marginalized groups in the city. Gentrification, he argued, increasingly requires a bold public defence of its progress based on a ‘frontier’ sensibility by which hostile neighbourhoods can be regenerated, cleansed and re-imagined according to middle-class values. Such a defence inherently involves a policy regime that both reclaims and defends prime city spaces from the devaluing presence of marginalized people, especially homeless people. Indeed, as MacLeod (2002) argues, gentrification requires the inculcation of ‘acceptable’ patterns of behaviour commensurate with the requirements of free-flowing commerce and the political and cultural aesthetics of new urban lifestyles, such that ‘the new urban glamour zones conceal a brutalizing demarcation of winners and losers, included and excluded’ (p. 604).

Smith’s vision of a ‘revanchist city’ thus goes somewhat beyond the bipolar differentiation of wealth and poverty outlined above. Instead it insists that the winners are becoming increasingly vicious in the defence of their privilege:

The benign neglect of the ‘other half’ … has been superseded by a more active viciousness that attempts to criminalise a whole range of ‘behaviour’, individually defined, and to blame the failure of post-1968 urban policy on the population it was supposed to assist. (Smith, 1996a: 227)

Smith’s intervention has shaped much of the subsequent interest in urban homelessness. The practices and techniques of regulating homeless people he drew attention to have become objects of fascination, whether the (apparently) overpowering coalitions of local businesses, developers and city governments that have led the fight against homeless people (rather than homelessness); the new technologies of surveillance used to detect, measure, punish and prevent the incursion of ‘unacceptable’ behaviours of homelessness in prime spaces of the city; or the media campaigns that have
sought to manage public opinion and to defend the commercial necessity and ethical legitimacy of attempts to clear homeless people from the streets (see, for example, Matieu, 1993; Dangshat, 1997; Coleman, 2004).

Strangely, with some notable exceptions (Takahashi, 1996; Mitchell, 1997), there has been rather less emphasis on what exactly it is about homeless people that inspires such overt antipathy, especially given that as a social group they exert little social power and pose little direct economic, political or physical threat to the dominant culture. Indeed, as Amster (2003: 196) suggests, ‘The threat is more one of perception than reality, more of a societal pre-emptive strike against an as-yet-unborn threat that originates from within the dominant culture itself, but finds concrete expression in some abject, powerless element of society.’ If Amster is right, then perhaps this unborn threat is in fact lodged in the potential for more politically progressive and ethically motivated responses to the injustices and exclusions faced by homeless people. Yet such responses receive very little airtime in the revanchist thesis, presumably on the grounds that they can (apparently) easily be mapped on to the idea that any kind of charitable response merely reinforces the structural status quo, and are therefore inevitably incorporated into ideologies of revanchism.

This failure to consider other responses to the problems of homelessness notwithstanding, Smith’s portrayal of the ‘revanchist city’ helped to establish a narrative of urban homelessness that quickly assumed the power of conventional wisdom. Within this narrative, homeless people were understood as being caught in a pincer movement that was leading to the effective collapse of spaces of homelessness in the city: subject to both a proliferating range of local state measures and zero-tolerance policing techniques designed to clear them from prime city spaces on the one hand, and pushed back into ‘skid row’ districts that were themselves increasingly falling victim to urban ‘regeneration’ and gentrification on the other hand.

For Don Mitchell (1997, 2001) this dual attack represents nothing less than an attempt to annihilate the spaces of homelessness in the city, and thus in fact to annihilate homeless people themselves – who cannot exist if there is no space for them to exist in. Accordingly, for Mitchell (1997), urban revanchism is understood to have resulted in the emergence of the postjustice city, in which urban poverty has become criminalized, and questions of social justice and redistribution usurped by questions of how best to simply make homeless people disappear from view.

Mitchell’s concept of the postjustice city expands on the logic of revanchism outlined by Smith in a number of ways (see DeVerteuil et al., 2009). First, the earlier emphasis on gentrification is widened to recognize broader attempts by city managers to provide appropriate local conditions for the attraction of international capital. Urban political regimes preoccupied by the need to present an appropriately positive image of the city for global investors and tourists have introduced a raft of anti-homeless ordinances in
order to cleanse prime public spaces by banishing homeless people to the unseen margins of the city. This is not simply a vengeful claiming of the urban prize by successful elites, but part of the creation of ‘sustainable’ conditions for global success. Second, Mitchell provides a much wider portfolio of examples than does Smith, to show how many US cities – even those with previously liberal local administrations – have adopted similar systems of policing and regulating homeless people. As a result, he is able to develop a more generalized and potent critique of the ways in which the annihilation of homeless space is leading to a changing conception of urban citizenship more generally – in ways that see the exclusion of homeless people constructed not only as necessary but as just and good. Put simply, the rights of homeless people, he argues, simply do not register in the same ways as the rights of shoppers or middle-class residents, denying homeless people the citizenship that would give them sovereignty over their own actions. Third, Mitchell (2003) begins to address the role that local service providers play in the logic of the postjustice city – arguing, in a manner reminiscent of earlier work on Los Angeles, that initiatives like the Matrix outreach programme in San Francisco (designed to entice people off the streets and find them places in shelters provided by local voluntary organizations) need be understood as doing little more than legitimating – if not indeed actively complicit in – attempts by city authorities, business and the police to sweep homeless people from the streets.

Questioning the Revanchist Orthodoxy

Recent reviews reveal the influence that Smith’s idea of urban revanchism, and Mitchell’s concept of the postjustice city, have had in shaping understandings of the geographies of urban homelessness (see, for example, DeVerteuil et al., 2009). Like DeVerteuil et al. and others (see, for example, Laurenson & Collins, 2006, 2007; Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 2010), however, we are concerned that the current orthodoxy may lead to what will at best be an incomplete and at worst an inaccurate portrayal of homelessness in the city. There are three main components to this concern.

First, while the revanchist model emphasizes the regulatory control of the spaces in which homeless people dwell and move, it often remains silent about attempts by homeless people to negotiate, or resist, such regulation. As Lees (1998) argues, the street is a complex space that tells a variety of stories, and one crucial narrative must surely be that of how homeless people themselves exercise autonomy within the wider constraints of social and cultural regulation. For example, Ruddick (1990, 1996) has drawn attention to a vision of homeless people as social subjects who both create themselves, and are created, in and through the evolving spaces and politics of the city – and contrasts the apparent victimization and annihilation of
homeless people with their tenacity and ability to cope with the change going on around them. She points, in particular, to the capacity of homeless people to deploy a range of place-making devices that enhance the processes and practices of coping, with these tactics – to use de Certeau’s (1984) terms – enabling them to overrule the predispositions and assigned meanings of space, and to transform the environment for unintended purposes. There are two important logics at work here. Most obviously, for Ruddick homeless people cannot and should not be regarded as political or cultural dupes, understood only as compliant or survivalist within the punitive socio-spatial order. Instead, within limits, they exercise choices and draw on enabling knowledges as well as on individual or collective creativity and capability. They form complex social networks, sometimes involving peer group cooperation, and there is evidence that the potential cohesion of shared territory, identity and defence can be a strongly positive experience (see also Rowe & Wolch, 1990; Wagner, 1993; Winchester & Costello, 1995; Duneier, 1999). Moreover, the continuing presence of homeless people in cities characterized by the regulatory and disciplinary codes of urban revanchism cannot adequately be understood simply in terms of socially constructed stigmata of deviancy and criminality. Instead, there is also a sense that the presence of homeless people among the power, wealth and leisure-orientation of prime urban spaces can undercut the very ideology of the revanchist/post-industrial/postjustice city itself (Mair, 1986).

Understood in these terms, recognizing the tactical agency of homeless people thus transcends the notion of mere survival, in the expression both of alternative social networks and of alternative political ideologies in the city. Indeed, we have argued elsewhere (Cloke et al., 2008) that overemphasis on the punitive geographies of the city cloaks a whole series of alternative cartographies of urban homelessness. Such cartographies need to embrace the ways in which homeless people journey not only to meet basic survival needs but also to earn money or to seek restful pauses in their daily practices, sometimes gathering communally, sometimes seeking solitude (see Cooper, 2001). Furthermore, such routines of movement and pause are intimately associated not only with the wider geographies of service provision and the continuum of prime and marginal space, but also with a practical knowledge of the micro-architectures of the city (Crang, 2000). They allow for the possibility of counter-inscription – of tracing over the formal understandings of city space and registering alternative signs and markers. They also point to the affective worlds of homeless people, as they co-constitute places of care, generosity, hope, charity, fun and anger both in the better-known spaces of homelessness and in those spaces that homeless people bring into being as ‘homeless places’ through practices of reinscription. These human geographies of homelessness need to be put to work alongside more regulationist understandings to offer a more complex understanding of homelessness and the city.
The second area of concern relates to the danger that a revanchist model might somehow be thought of as universally applicable. In fact, the available evidence suggests that both homelessness and recent responses to homelessness, and wider trends in urbanization and urban politics, take different forms in different countries. For example, as May (2009) has shown, both the scale and characteristics of the homeless population differs considerably in different national contexts; Swanson’s (2007) research on the regulation of begging in Quito, Ecuador, argues for a particular ‘twist’ on revanchism characterized by an overt racial element to regulatory practices; MacLeod’s (2002) study of the effects of gentrification in Glasgow notes a selective appropriation of a (US) revanchist political repertoire; and Slater’s (2004) analysis in the Canadian context concludes that gentrification is neither revanchist or emancipatory, but that its outcomes remain highly dependent on contextual factors.

In fact, in the British context there is ample evidence of transatlantic policy transfer in the homelessness field. Thus, just as the nineteenth century saw the export of anti-vagrancy legislation from Britain to the United States (Cresswell, 2001), for example, so the late twentieth/early twenty-first centuries saw the importation into Britain from the USA of a number of technologies and techniques designed to ‘manage’ a problematic ‘street culture’ – the primary subjects of which, even if not always the originally intended targets, have been street homeless people. Such technologies include, but are not restricted to, variations of zero-tolerance policing, making begging a ‘recordable offence’, the ‘designing out’ of certain street activities, the introduction of ‘diverted giving schemes’, and the introduction of Designated Public Places Orders (to restrict the consumption of alcohol in public places) and of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2010).

Yet crucially, even if central and local government approaches to homelessness have undoubtedly become more targeted around issues of enforcement, containment and control in Britain in recent years, as we argue in chapter 2 these measures have been accompanied by programmes that are much less easily characterized as ‘revanchist’ – most notably, perhaps, the British government’s Rough Sleepers Initiative and Homelessness Action Programme, which were designed to provide additional financial support to the voluntary sector agencies offering care and accommodation to street homeless people (May et al., 2005). In other words, and belying any universal approach to the management of homelessness, at the national level there is considerable variation both in problems of homelessness and in the responses those problems engender (see also Marr, 1997; Alcock & Craig, 2001; Huber & Stephens, 2001; von Mahs, 2005; Fitzpatrick & Stephens, 2007).

Similarly, at the local level it has been recognized that the imposition of anti-homeless measures is far more prevalent in some cities (notably, those with a heavy reliance upon the financial and creative industries, tourism and the convention trade) than in others (May, 2009). As we show in chapters 7
and 8, both the form and extent of welfare provision for homeless people also differ from place to place, with widespread variations in the servicing activities of local government, the availability of finance for third sector service activity, the local cultural signification of homelessness and the historic presence of caring institutions as part of the local urban scene.

Indeed, and forming the basis of our third concern about the revanchist framework, such a framework signally fails to capture the obvious importance of welfare services for homeless people. In some ways, of course, an infrastructure of poor-quality and sometimes unprofessional shelters and hostels, usually in the marginal spaces of the city, seems to be entirely compatible with overarching theses of control and containment. These services are the necessary containers into which homeless people can be swept up, thus preventing their unwanted presence in the prime areas of the city. They provide outlets for the expression of liberal or sentimentalist ideology, presenting opportunities for volunteers to feel good about themselves while upholding the underlying political structures of bipolarization. They even open out potential opportunities for the religious to proselytize to a captive audience. In these and other respects, they seem to reflect a close-knitted incorporation of third sector resources into the revanchist logic, thereby becoming objects of critique as part of that logic.

This account sounds like a caricature, and it is. Any reasonable exploration of the motivation, ethical codes and performative traits of the professionals and volunteers involved in providing services to homeless people is likely to uncover alternative ideas to those suggested by vicious revanchism. We do not seek here to present a romanticized version of these service environments, many of which lack adequate standards of security and comfort. Neither do we ignore the possibilities that serving homeless people provides for helping to build self-interested or self-absorbed charitable identities and subjectivities. But we do argue that it is a very considerable, and inaccurate, reductive leap to assume that providing welfare services for homeless people can only be understood in these terms. Instead, we recognize these service spaces as demonstrative of deep-seated and powerful forces of charity and care (Link et al., 1995; May, 2009) in which there is a genuine ethical expression of going-beyond-the-self, of caring about and caring for the victims of neoliberal excess.

In fact, we would argue that rather than within a revanchist framework, any analysis of current responses to homelessness is better conducted within the frame of neoliberalization, and in particular the shift from roll-back to roll-out neoliberalism (Peck & Tickell, 2002) unfolding in recent years (for an elaboration of this argument see chapter 2, and May et al., 2005). At one level such a suggestion is hardly surprising – not least, since Smith (1998: 10) himself has characterized revanchism as the ‘the ugly cultural politics of neoliberal globalisation’. More specifically, however, we would argue that scholars of homelessness need to pay far more attention to the recent
reworking of social welfare (Fyfe, 2005; Milligan & Conradson, 2006), including welfare provision for homeless people (May et al., 2005; Buckingham, 2009), along neoliberal lines and the effects of this reworking on homeless people and services.

In contrast to work proceeding under the revanchist or postjustice banner, the need here is therefore to trace the interconnections between the more punitive technologies of containment and control that are the subject of the more familiar accounts of the homeless city, neoliberal governmentality, and the processes by which welfare organizations and individuals (homeless people, members of the housed public, welfare professionals and service agency volunteers alike) become ‘incorporated’ in changing constructions of citizenship and subjectivity. In the British case, attention needs to be turned to the recent hollowing out of the welfare state, and the subsequent rolling out of neoliberal ideas and practices that contextualize the development of policies, partnerships and practices designed to deal with issues of homelessness.

In tracing changing responses to homelessness in Britain over recent years, however, we also argue that conventional understandings of neoliberal governance need to accommodate two crucial dissonances: first, the good intentions of government, which are not necessarily swallowed up entirely by the demands of neoliberal governing; and, second, the potential for resistance to neoliberal governance by organizations and individuals wishing to serve and care for homeless people. In the latter case, rather than assuming that such organizations and individuals will necessarily be incorporated into quasi-governmental resignation to the ideologies of neoliberalism, we question whether they represent a potential nexus for resistance to such ideologies – either practising alternative values from inside the system of governance, or fashioning spaces of resilient care in opposition to the joined-up orthodoxies of such governance (see also Larner & Craig, 2005; Carey et al., 2009).

Indeed, rather than automatically understanding homeless services as implicated in revanchism, we might begin to understand them as sites of potential resistance to revanchism. Sparke (2008) urges us to explore resistance in terms of the messy middle grounds where there is a mediation of control and opposition, structure and agency, incorporation and alternative-ness. The provision of welfare services for homeless people represents one such messy middle ground: romanticized, yet often in practice deeply unromantic; easily dismissed as merely upholding the status quo, yet powered by an urge to do something about the injustice of that status quo; a cog in the revanchist engine, yet engineered and operated by people for whom revenge is the last thing on their mind. Katz (2004) has usefully differentiated between ideas of resistance, reworking and resilience as different parts of a multifaceted vocabulary of opposition to the impacts of globalization. Here, she incorporates respectively an oppositional consciousness that achieves emancipatory objectives (resistance), an impact on the organization of power
relations if not their polarized distribution (reworking), and an enabling of survival in circumstances that do not allow changes to the causes that dictate survival (resilience). This nuanced exposition of what it is to ‘resist’ helps us to look at participation in providing services for homeless people in a progressive light. Rather than a simple incorporated involvement in neoliberal state practices fuelled by punitive revanchist ideologies, participation may involve a more complex attempt to engage in an oppositional politics of resilience and even reworking in the face of these ideologies.

We seek here to explore the confluence of these various ideas in practice, charting the changing politics of homelessness within a neoliberal phase of governance in Britain. We trace potential interconnections between techniques and governmentalities of neoliberalism and the punitive regulation of homeless people, especially in terms of spatial processes of control, containment and ‘sweeping up’. At the same time, however, we are interested in assessing the ways in which specific geographical or political factors have emerged both nationally and locally in Britain to shape responses to homelessness, and the particular ideological, motivational or contextual factors that have shaped these particularities. As the state has embraced partnership with third sector agencies in the pursuance of its policies, we interrogate the possibilities for these partners to act as more than merely incorporated neogovernmental stooges, engaging in forms of care and charity that could be interpreted in terms of resistance rather than revanchism. It is also important to understand the role played by third sector service providers that – whether by choice or different forms of incompatibility – operate outside the boundaries of partnership with government, and may even be pursing goals that are contrary to the ideology and techniques of the current neoliberal regime. And, in so doing, we also want to leave space in our conceptual framework for questions of agency: the agency of homeless people – charting the way in which their actions shape the contours of the homeless city – but also of the professionals and volunteers who provide accommodation and care to homeless people in a fully peopled (welfare) state.

**The Homeless Places Project**

The material presented in this book is drawn from a research project that ran from June 2001 to March 2004. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Homeless Places Project examined the provision and governance of emergency services (night shelters, ‘direct access’ hostels, day centres and soup runs) for single homeless people in Britain. *Driven by a*
desire to explore the geographical specificity of responses to homelessness, the project first constructed a map of national provision (with postal surveys of some 212 night shelters and hostels, 164 day centres and 63 soup runs across England, Wales and Scotland) before focusing upon the provision and use of such services in seven contrasting towns and cities in England, here referred to as: Benington, a large city in the south-west of England; Castlebridge, a small market town in southern England; Crossfield, an agricultural centre and market town in central England; Sandstown, a declining seaside resort in northern England; Steeltown, a large, manufacturing city in north-east England; Wimpster, a cathedral city in the west of England; and Winton, a small town in the far south-west of England. Precisely because, as outlined above, discussions of homelessness and of the ‘homeless city’ have tended to be shaped by developments in a small number of larger cities (most notably, perhaps, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and, to a lesser extent, London) a decision was made to explore experiences of homelessness beyond the metropolitan core, with research conducted in a number of smaller towns and rural areas. While appearing to stretch the concept of the ‘homeless city’ somewhat, as we demonstrate in chapters 7 and 8, much of what we often consider to be ‘urban homelessness’ has its roots in rural areas – as homeless people travel to the city from places further afield; or indeed, leave the city for the countryside. In this sense, urban and rural homelessness are connected by a range of movements – both geographical (the movements of homeless people themselves) and conceptual (as rural homelessness often only becomes rendered visible, and thus categorized as ‘homelessness’, when homeless people begin to congregate in urban centres) (see Cloke et al., 2002). At the same time, because we were concerned with the governance of homelessness, we also felt it important to explore not only the ‘home spaces’ (Peck & Tickell, 2002) but also the ‘extremities’ of neoliberal welfare restructuring – so as to gain a keener understanding of the ways in which such restructuring unfolds, often very unevenly, across different types of social space. Thus, case study research was conducted in towns and cities of different sizes across England – ranging those to whom the local state has a statutory duty of care, namely the provision of accommodation: people with dependants or those otherwise found in ‘priority need’ (by virtue of age or ill-health, for example), who have not made themselves ‘intentionally’ homeless and who are legally entitled to public welfare provision. In contrast, the non-statutory homeless have no such right to either emergency or more permanent accommodation and are mainly dependent upon non-statutory organizations for emergency shelter. Because historically the majority (though by no means all) of the non-statutory homeless population have been single, it has become commonplace to refer to this group as single homeless people (Pleace et al., 1997). Those sleeping rough on the streets or living in night shelters and ‘direct access’ hostels (i.e. people experiencing some form of ‘street homelessness’ and whose experiences are examined here) are almost always part of the single homeless population. ‘Direct access’ hostels refer to those hostels that accept people directly from the streets without the need for a referral by another agency.
from a city of some 380,000 people to a small, market town of a little over three thousand – chosen so as to capture places of both relatively ‘high’ and relatively ‘low’ service provision (as revealed by the national survey of service providers).

The postal surveys sought to establish a basic picture of the nature and extent of emergency provision for homeless people – providing information on the kinds of organizations engaged in welfare services for homeless people, the nature of the services they provided, funding arrangements, staffing procedures and so on – together with an indication of the ethical motivations, or ‘mission’, of these organizations (see chapter 2). Work in each of the case studies then proceeded through a combination of participant observation (outlined below) and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 131 representatives of these services – including project managers (39), paid staff (29), volunteers (26) and a range of key informants (local authority housing officials, city centre management operatives, street outreach teams, police officers, volunteer bureau workers etc.) (37) – together with some 90 homeless people. Interviews with homeless respondents were supplemented by a further 160 or so less formal conversations with service users emerging out of the period of participant observation, and a further 17 semi-structured interviews conducted in support of the auto-photography work (see below).

Project manager interviews focused primarily on the history, ethos, structure and position of each project within the local service network. Interviews with paid and volunteer staff considered motivations for working in the sector, career paths and histories of volunteering, satisfactions and challenges, and views on the level and form of service provision in their area. Service user interviews were frequently more free-flowing but typically examined individuals’ homeless life histories, mobility paths, experience of services within and outside the local area, and broader experience of an area’s ‘homeless scene’. Finally, interviews with key informants revolved around what we have termed the ‘archaeology’ of service provision in their area (including an account of services that had closed), the composition of the single homeless population, local geographies of rough sleeping, begging and street drinking, and local initiatives aimed at combating homelessness. Interviews were conducted in hostels and day centres and on the streets, as well as in the homes of volunteers and the workplaces of key informants. Most were conducted privately, though group interviews were held when interviewees expressed such a preference, or where private interview facilities were unavailable. Interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to three hours. Where permission was given, interviews were tape recorded, transcribed verbatim and coded according to analytical themes.

One of the authors (Sarah) also engaged in an extensive period of overt participant observation in 18 night shelters, day centres and soup runs throughout the fieldwork period – sometimes working as a volunteer,
sometimes simply ‘hanging out’ with service users. Though time consuming, such work proved vital in establishing relationships of trust with service users, who can otherwise be wary of talking with ‘outsiders’, in facilitating interviews with people with chaotic lifestyles, and in order to observe the dynamics shaping different service environments. Notes relating to the informal discussions with staff and services users, and on the dynamics of these spaces, emerging through the participant observation process were used to triangulate other forms of data.

Finally, 17 of our homeless respondents in two different case study areas (urban and rural) agreed to participate in an auto-photography exercise using disposable cameras to produce a record of their experiences of homelessness. Participants were given a set of prints to keep, and interviewed about their choice of images. Though also time-consuming, and difficult to arrange, the photo diaries provided very significant insight into homeless people’s negotiation of spaces that would have been inappropriate or unsafe for members of the research team to access – for example, squats – and new understandings of apparently already ‘known’ spaces of homelessness such as day centres and hostels (for further discussion of this part of the project see Johnsen et al., 2008).

A selection of these images is included in chapters 3, 5 and 6. Their inclusion has less to do with simply ‘illustrating’ the various spaces of homelessness explored herein, than with providing a further mode of expression through which the people we talked with might ‘witness’ their experiences of homelessness in ways that are less constrained by the presuppositions and prejudices that to some extent always shape the conduct of research interviews and the selection and presentation of material from such interviews. Indeed, and as we hope will become clear, while some of the images selected for inclusion obviously reinforce the arguments being made at different points of the book, elsewhere they provide what might be termed a ‘counter-narrative’: providing readers with quite different ‘views’ of the spaces of homelessness described by other respondents and thus – we hope – drawing attention to the always multiple and contested nature of those spaces and of our, and our respondents’, understandings of them.

Working from the information provided by service agencies in the national survey of provision, the characteristics of service users broadly matched the wider demographics of street homeless people in Britain (outside of the main metropolitan areas) (see Briheim-Crockall et al., 2008). That is, while the age of respondents varied from people as young as 19 to people in their late fifties, the majority of respondents were aged between 25 and 45 years of age, and all but one identified themselves as White British. Within this apparently otherwise relatively homogeneous group, however, people recounted widely varying histories of homelessness, ranging from those who had only recently gone on to the streets to those with a long history of rough sleeping and hostel use, and those whose homeless histories are better
described as ‘episodic’ (May, 2000a). Not surprisingly, perhaps, these different groups tended to describe quite different experiences of life on the streets and of homeless service spaces, with these differences cross cut in complex ways by other positionalities; for example, a person’s position in each of the main subgroups (variously labelled ‘pissheads’, ‘smackheads’ and ‘straightheads’ in street nomenclature) within the homeless population identified by our respondents, each of which tend to make use of different parts of the city, and – where possible – different service spaces (see chapters 3 to 6).

More obviously, perhaps, in line with the wider demographics of Britain’s street homeless population, male respondents outnumbered female respondents by almost four to one (with 71 male respondents and 19 women). The homeless men and women we talked with also tended to articulate quite different cartographies of homelessness: in their movements around the city and the geographies of rough sleeping, for example (see chapter 3); in the likelihood of either group turning to key homeless services such as soup runs, day centres, and hostels; and in their experience of these service spaces (chapters 4 to 6).

While sensitive to such differences, we are also wary of overdetermining them. Though homelessness is quite clearly a gendered experience (Smith, 1999), there is a need to avoid an essentialist reading of the difference that gender makes. For example, it has been suggested that street homelessness is largely a male preserve (Higate, 2000a, b), with homeless women tending either to avoid the streets altogether (by remaining in (abusive) domestic relationships, for example) or to retreat into the shadows of the street homeless ‘scene’ (Wardhaugh, 1999). As we have argued elsewhere (May et al., 2007), it is in fact possible to trace a wide variety of experiences of homelessness among street homeless women: ranging from those who attempt to distance themselves from the broader street homeless population and ‘street scene’ for fear of the violence that often permeates that scene (sleeping rough in suburban rather than central city locations, or in hard to find spaces within the central city, for example, and rarely making use of emergency services); to those who are highly visible and obviously ‘marked’ as ‘homeless’ (sleeping rough in mixed sex groups in the central city, or assuming a key role in local street drinking ‘schools’, for example). Rather than essentialize, or treat the gendering of homelessness as a separate phenomenon, we have instead attempted to weave a sensitivity to the difference that gender makes to people’s experiences of homelessness (and the experiences of the volunteers and paid staff who work in homeless services) throughout the main substantive chapters of the book. In so doing, we recount the sometimes quite different experiences of the streets and of homeless services articulated by homeless men and women, drawing attention to the difference that a person’s gender seems to make to those experiences, without overdetermining them.
Of course, a project that puts homeless people – and the paid staff and volunteers providing homeless services – firmly at its centre raises a number of complex ethical issues. Again, we have already discussed these at some length elsewhere (Cloke et al., 2000a, 2003a; Johnsen et al., 2008; Johnsen, 2010) and do not have the space here to revisit these arguments in any great detail. But three such issues are worth reiterating. First, we would argue that the need to more fully (and critically) engage with the details of homelessness policy and provision is as much an ethical as a conceptual imperative. This was no more evident than when one of our homeless interviewees responded to our rather abstract explanation of the purposes of our research (couched in terms of its contribution to academic debates around urban homelessness) with: ‘What the fuck’s the point of that?!’ (Cloke et al., 2003a). The desire to critically engage with, and contribute to, questions of social policy as well as academic debate, and to produce research that might have some real and positive value to the subjects of that research, is hardly unique. While there is a long history of ‘action research’ in the social sciences, the past few years have also seen a growing (if more narrowly focused) debate concerning geography’s ‘relevance’ (Johnsen, 2010). It is, however, both surprising and – for us – a cause of real concern that these debates would seem to have had little impact on the nature of the research into the geographies of homelessness. As we have already suggested, too much of this research continues to proceed at a relatively high level of abstraction, with only a narrow engagement with the concrete changes shaping homeless people’s lives (notably, those concerning changes to the regulation of public space, rather than welfare service provision) and with little or no discussion, via a field-based methodology, with the subjects of that research – namely, homeless people themselves.

Second, the kinds of ethnographic methods deployed here raise a number of issues around research design and supervision. Most obviously, perhaps, working in homeless service spaces faces the researcher with (some of) the dangers and distress that permeate such environments (see, for example, the account of St James’ night shelter in chapter 6). That is, it confronts the researcher with issues with which homeless people, and homeless service providers, must deal on a day-to-day basis. Some such dangers can be avoided through careful research design, and the use of particular methodological techniques. As we noted above, one reason to turn to auto-photography was that is granted the research team access to spaces – such as squats – that we felt it would have been unsafe (and, with respect of people’s privacy, inappropriate) to enter. When working in day centres and night shelters, we adopted the strategies employed by the volunteers and paid staff in those services to minimize the threats they sometimes face: going to and from a night shelter in the company of others, sitting near the door in interview rooms or undertaking interviews with service users within plain sight of (other) staff wherever possible, for example. The emotional strain that working
with vulnerable people can produce – when one can find oneself listening to tales of great suffering – is hardly restricted to those working with street homeless people. But it is certainly difficult to ‘design out’ – indeed it would in many ways be counterproductive to do so, if only because such stories are sometimes a vital part of the issues under examination. For our own part, the emotional work involved in such research necessitated a careful and consistent process of research supervision, in which the main field researcher (Sarah) had the opportunity to regularly ‘debrief’ with another member of the research team. When working as a volunteer in such services, Sarah also participated in staff handover and incident debriefing meetings.

Third, and again we would argue that this is (or should be) an aim of any ethnographic work, it is vital that the subjects of such research are presented ‘in the round’; as fully fleshed subjects in their own right, with all the messy and (sometimes) uncomfortable understandings, attitudes and practices that real people often articulate. Here, for example, we hope we have presented the volunteers who staff Britain’s homeless services as neither paragons of virtue nor patronizing do-gooders, but ‘ordinary’ people engaged in transforming an ordinary ethics of care into an ‘extraordinary’ sense of ethical commitment to the other; and people who, even in the midst of such acts of kindness, sometimes articulate views of those they are serving which are anything but progressive. Likewise, we hope we have avoided the all too common tendency in some recent writings on homelessness to present homeless people as passive victims of forces beyond their control and/or as the standard bearers of resistance to a revanchist politics; that is, as convenient ciphers around which to build a wider critique of gentrification, public space law and so on (DeVerteuil et al., 2009). Such moves, it seems to us, strip homeless people not only of their agency, but also of their humanity. The hope, then, is that we have neither romanticized nor stigmatized homeless people, but given proper voice to the complex and often contradictory emotions, experiences, understandings and actions that homeless people too, and homeless people’s lives, articulate.

At a more mundane level, it is also important to give some indication of the basic ethical protocols followed in this research. For example, information sheets were sent to all organizations involved in the research. While the principles behind interview protocol were consistent, the actual procedure for conducting interviews with homeless service users were adapted to accord with the wishes of individual respondents and project managers. Permission to publish photographs and (anonymized) information derived from interview transcripts was obtained from all participants, and all names (of individuals, service organizations and places) have been changed.

Finally, it is important to recognize the timing of the research reported here. Given the long lead times of academic publishing, it is of course always difficult for academic research to be as timely as its authors might like – especially in a field such as this, which is prone to what Peck (2001a) has
referred to as a ‘speeding up’ of policy development and transfer. Nonetheless, and as we acknowledged earlier, this book has had an unusually long gestation period. Much of the primary research on which the book draws was conducted in 2001–2, a period in which the government’s Homelessness Action Programme (HAP) was drawing to a close and local authorities and voluntary sector service providers alike were gearing up for the introduction of a new system of funding for supported accommodation services (Supporting People) and beginning to formulate the then soon to be introduced Local Homelessness Strategies (LHSs) – in which local authorities in England were, for the first time, required to set out their plans to meet the needs of single homeless people within their jurisdiction. With the phasing out of the central government funded HAP, and the introduction of LHSs, the governance of homelessness in Britain thus underwent (yet) further reorganization – as local authorities began to play a more direct role in determining the nature of any response to homelessness in their local areas; albeit within the limits set out by central government guidelines and funding streams (on the rescaling of homeless governance see May et al. 2005). Further reorganization has happened since, with the emergence, from 2005, of regional homelessness and supporting people strategies and with the launch, in 2008, of the Communities and Local Government’s No One Left Out initiative (CLG, 2008a). Pledging to provide £200 million to its partners in the voluntary sector and local government, the initiative seeks to pick up where the Homelessness Action Programme left off – reducing levels of rough sleeping in England (to zero in some cases) by 2012, through a familiar toolkit of voluntary sector/local and central government ‘partnerships’ working according to a set of action plans and targets set by the centre.

However, in the current context at least, perhaps the most important aspect of the No One Left Out initiative is that it demonstrates how little has actually changed with regard to the core characteristics of British single homelessness policy over the past decade or so (though see chapter 2). Or, to put it more accurately, the key elements of the system of governance put in place by New Labour in an attempt to ‘manage’ the problem of single homelessness a little over a decade ago – deploying the resources of (selected) voluntary sector organizations to meet centrally determined targets on the reduction of rough sleeping, with central government funding streamed via local authorities who are themselves tightly constrained by central government ‘codes of guidance’ – have remained remarkably consistent since they were first introduced by the then Rough Sleepers Unit and rolled out in the government’s Homelessness Action Programme (1999–2002). In this sense, while the names of some of the programmes and relevant government departments may have changed since we embarked upon this research, we believe that the arguments made here remain a pertinent reading of British single homelessness policy – because we have focused upon the deeper lying (slower moving and still persistent) logic of those policies rather than only
their surface manifestation. Indeed, the research may provide a particularly valuable reading of this broader system of governance precisely because of the time at which it was conducted – a time when this system was new, and thus those responsible for enacting it (local and central government officials, voluntary sector organizations and homeless people) were highly reflective about its roots, current characteristics and likely future.

**The Structure of the Book**

In the remainder of this book we present detailed accounts of the conceptual and material spaces of homelessness that form the basis of our re-envisioning of the homeless city. Chapter 2 charts two conceptual landscapes from which this re-envisioning emerges. First, we take an interest in different facets of *neoliberalism* that are important to a fuller understanding of recent responses to homelessness: the mundane and everyday *techniques* by which neoliberalism constitutes itself in different spaces and social networks; the creation of different kinds of acting subjects, and in particular *homeless subjectivities*, regulated and enabled under neoliberalism; and the changing *processes* and *practices* of actually existing neoliberalism that serve to reconstruct the technologies and subjectivities of welfare provision and social exclusion. Second, we explore the possibilities inherent in the concept of *postsecularism* – exploring the idea that recent years have seen a reshaping of the supposedly binary relationships between secular publics and private religions and suggesting that the provision of services for homeless people represents one such arena in which a rapprochement of secular and faith-based ethical motivations is forging new forms of collaborative ethical praxis, and new geographies of compassion and care, in the city.

In chapter 3, we focus on homeless people’s own accounts of the homeless city to demonstrate the importance of emotion and affect in the lives of homeless people and to trace the deposits of such emotions and affects on and in the homeless city. By drawing attention to the creative deployment of managing impressions, the performance of particular discursive roles and the pre-discursive and emotional aspects of homeless people’s lives, we aim to restore to homeless people not only a stronger sense of agency but also a crucial sense of humanity so often missing in accounts of urban homelessness.

In chapters 4, 5 and 6 we turn our attention to the various service spaces in which homeless people spend so much of their time, presenting a detailed reading of Britain’s soup runs (chapter 4), day centres (chapter 5) and night shelters and hostels (chapter 6). Methodologically the chapters are structured around the accounts of both service users and providers – giving voice to the homeless people that make use of such services but also to the staff and volunteers providing them. Conceptually, we trace the complex dynamics
of these spaces, the ethical frames that underpin and are brought into being therein, and homeless people’s experiences of them.

In chapters 7 and 8 the focus shifts from an examination of these homeless spaces to an examination of contrasting ‘homeless places’, charting the geographical unevenness of contemporary homeless service provision. Drawing on our research in Benington and Steeltown, chapter 7 suggests a raft of historical, political and organizational reasons why different patterns of service provision emerge in different cities and the interconnections between service provision and service consumption. We argue that such unevenness leads to culturally significant and locally specific homeless ‘scenes’ – scenes that are both acknowledged and experienced by homeless people, and are performed in material and affective ways in the complex cartographies they generate in the urban spaces concerned. Though rural areas are popularly disconnected from the politics and representations of homelessness, by way of contrast chapter 8 explores the production and consumption of very different homeless services and scenes in four very different rural areas. Here, we chart some of the connections between urban and rural homelessness, but also offer a more nuanced account of the multiple geographies of homelessness in a varied rural space. Drawing these issues together, chapter 9 offers some broader thoughts on the role of the voluntary sector and of volunteers in providing for homeless people, and on revanchism, neoliberalism and postsecuralism in the homeless city.
Chapter Two

From Neoliberalization to Postsecularism

Introduction

It is inevitable that our account of responses to homelessness in Britain over the past 15 years or so will be deeply coloured by ideas about neoliberalism, which has been recognized as ‘the dominant political and ideological form of capitalist globalisation’ (Brenner & Theodore, 2002: 350) and ‘the most successful ideology in world history’ (Anderson, 2000: 17). Broadly, as an ideology neoliberalism entails a belief in the market as the most desirable mechanism for regulating the economy. As a raft of policies, neoliberal governments across the globe have promoted supply-side innovation and competitiveness, privatization and deregulation in order to transform not only the economy but also the provision of public services, including welfare. However, to apply neoliberalism as some kind of unified set of top-down explanations for all kinds of social, political and economic change without exploring its day-to-day constitution is to generalize too far. We are therefore interested here in three particular facets of neoliberalism.

First, it is important to recognize the techniques of neoliberalism (Larner, 2003) – the seemingly mundane practices and processes through which neoliberalism constitutes itself in different spaces and social networks. Indeed, Brenner and Theodore (2002) refer to ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ in order to move away from sweeping generalizations and to identify the partial and sometimes tangential nature of any neoliberal transformation. We are therefore fascinated by the techniques of actually existing neoliberalism that lead to the emergence of responsible and irresponsible spaces and subjects in the contemporary city in connection with homelessness, and following Brenner and Theodore (2002) we recognize that these techniques will often be clouded by ‘multifarious institutional forms … diverse socio-political effects and their multiple contradictions’.
Second, following Larner (2003: 511) we are interested not just in the creation of particular ‘subject positions’, but in the ‘acting subjects’ brought into being under neoliberalism. Accordingly we need to take seriously the claim that governmentality takes a particular form under neoliberalism (Rose, 1996; Dean, 1999), conjuring up a different form of politics in which governmental technologies are used to construct not only different subject positions, but also different subjectivities. Rather than placing constraints upon the freedoms of citizens per se, power can be seen as that which ‘makes up’ citizens who are capable of coping with particular forms of regulated freedom (Rose & Miller, 1992). We therefore need to know both about how different neoliberal citizens are made up, and about the kinds of regulated freedoms they bear. Thus homeless subjectivities will encounter particular techniques that regulate individual and collective freedoms, and bestow political and cultural doxa about how these regulated freedoms should be distributed and endured. Such a making up of homeless citizens (and we note here Mitchell’s powerful insistence that homeless people have had their citizenship removed by these techniques) bestows an equally powerful imperative on wider citizenship in its response to the presence of homeless subjectivities in the spatial and social networks they inhabit. As such, the shift to neoliberalism involves the recasting of individual and collective subjectivities as the government seeks to define and shape what is appropriate conduct at these individual and collective levels. Raco (2005: 76) terms this the ‘conduct of conduct’ – a phrase that neatly summarizes how neoliberal governments seek to establish and build subjectivities in and through which their programmes and strategies can be put into operation. We want to assess how the subject position of ‘homeless’ is made up and acted out – by both homeless people and others – in an era of neoliberal governance in Britain.

Third, we are interested in neoliberalism as a process rather than as an end state. Temporality is crucial to the idea of actually existing neoliberalism and we want to suggest both that there has been a significant change in the nature and form of welfare policies and practices in Britain since the election of New Labour in 1997, and that this change is evident in the basic rationale of state welfare provision, the practices and technologies of the state through which change has been enabled, and in the attempts by the state to change the subjectivities of welfare providers, welfare recipients and a broader public.

Rephasing Neoliberalism: From Governance to ‘Governmentality’

In their analysis of neoliberalization, Peck and Tickell (2002) trace a series of fundamental shifts in the basic structure of neoliberalism as it has unfolded in the advanced economies of the North Atlantic: the first the
move from the abstract philosophical project, or ‘proto-neoliberalism’, of the 1970s to the ‘roll-back’ neoliberalism of the 1980s (with its focus upon a restructuring of the economy and a rolling-back of the Keynesian welfare state apparatus); the second, beginning in the early 1990s, a shift towards a more socially interventionist agenda (or ‘roll-out’ neoliberalism) designed to manage and contain the increasingly obvious social costs associated with this earlier restructuring.

In practice, of course, Peck and Tickell’s framework is better treated as a useful heuristic rather than a strict chronology, with some of the key elements of neoliberal restructuring they identify evident in more than one of these phases, and suggesting a certain bleeding of categories and phases one into another. Hence, it is indeed clearly possible to read roll-back neoliberalism as mainly characterized by a relatively active role for the state in the economic sphere (most obviously, in the careful management of a ‘free market’) and a progressive withdrawal of the state from the active delivery of welfare. But it is equally clear that in Britain as elsewhere successive Conservative administrations throughout the 1980s actually worked quite hard at transforming both public perceptions of welfare and welfare recipients, and the structures of welfare delivery, in ways that did more than simply lay the groundwork for a more active intervention in the social field in the 1990s (Malpass, 1985). Most obviously, a convincing case can be made that a number of the central tenets of the ‘welfare settlement’ of the 1990s (based around the centrality of paid employment and of the need for systems of income support to help not hinder the development of a more flexible labour market, of individual responsibility for one’s own welfare needs within a ‘mixed economy’ of welfare, and the drive towards ‘value for money’) were in fact first ushered in as part of a broader transformation of British welfare under the third Thatcher administration of 1986–90 (Cochrane, 1994). As such, though we remain convinced by the general thrust of Peck and Tickell’s argument – and in particular, their conceptualization of roll-out neoliberalism as, in essence, a form of crisis management – the chronology they develop cannot easily accommodate a more detailed reading of British welfare policy and practice. Nor does it allow for any change in welfare policies and practices within the rather broad periods they identify.

An alternative to Peck and Tickell’s chronology is provided by Ling (2000). Focusing more narrowly than Peck and Tickell (2002), Ling has examined changes to British welfare policy and practice over the past 60 years. Like Peck and Tickell (2002), Ling (2000) identifies three ideal typical periods of state welfare provision. In contrast to Peck and Tickell, however, for Ling the most important change relates not to any apparent shift from a period of roll-back to roll-out neoliberalism in the early 1990s, but to the move from what he terms a system of ‘governance’ to a system of ‘governmentality’ in the mid-to-late 1990s, broadly concomitant with the election
of the New Labour government. We should say at the outset that we find Ling’s terminology somewhat confusing. While he is not alone in identifying a shift from a system of ‘government’ to one of ‘governance’, his use of the term ‘governmentality’ to describe a particular mode of governing is more problematic (Richards & Smith, 2002). From a Foucauldian perspective, governmentality more properly refers to the process of governing itself (Foucault, 1979, 1991; Rose & Miller, 1992; Raco & Imrie, 2000). Such a process takes different forms at different times, as the rationalities and practices of governing (themselves giving rise to particular subjectivities) coalesce to form particular modes of governmentality: ‘government’, ‘governance’ and so on (Larner & Walters, 2000; Morrison, 2000). Hence, while it is possible to identify different modes of governmentality, it is not strictly speaking possible to talk of ‘governmentality’ as itself a mode of governing and attribute it to a particular period of time. It is partly because of this that where others too have identified recent changes in neoliberal welfare state regimes that take these regimes somewhere beyond a system of ‘governance’, other terms have been used to describe this new phase: ranging from the ‘Third Way’ to a period of ‘de-governmentalization’ (see Morrison, 2000; Loughlin, 2004). We remain wedded to Ling’s framework (if not his terminology), however, because we are more convinced by his account of the substance of recent changes than we are by the more limited changes described in these other accounts. At the risk of generating confusion, we have therefore retained Ling’s terminology, while analysing the changes he describes through a governmentality perspective: that is, noting the key differences in the basic rationale and practices of state welfare provision, and in the subjectivities such changes give rise to, in the different periods he identifies.

To elaborate, Ling suggests that from 1947 to around the mid-1970s British welfare was characterized by a system of government: ‘an epoch when, in Kooiman’s terms, “Governing was basically regarded as one-way traffic from those governing to those governed”’, with the majority of welfare services provided directly by the state (Richards & Smith, 2002: 15). From about the mid-1970s, however, a shift towards a system of governance became apparent, as ‘the number of actors in the policy … arena multiplied, the boundaries between the public and private sector … blurred and central government’s command over a more complex policy process … receded’ (Richards & Smith, 2002: 15). Developing this basic framework, then, the shift to a system of governance was associated with changes across three broad domains.

First, with regard to the rationale of state welfare provision, responsibility for the delivery of an increasing array of welfare services passed from central and local government to other agencies in the profit but also and especially the not-for-profit, non-statutory sector. While the multiplication of welfare agencies can be understood in part as a response to a recognition of the
inability of the state to meet the needs of all, with the election of a Conservative government in 1979 it became tied into a more basic reconceptualization of the state’s role in welfare provision. As they sought to free the state from its responsibilities for the delivery of welfare, successive Conservative administrations not only encouraged the expansion of the non-statutory sector but attempted to shift the burden of welfare provision away from the state and on to both non-statutory agencies and the shoulders of private citizens themselves.

Second, even while introducing a fundamental split between purchaser and provider, from the early 1980s especially British welfare policy underwent a complex process of spatial reorganization. Part and parcel of a broader attack on the power of the local state, as responsibility for the delivery of welfare was devolved to (non-elected) local bodies in the private and not-for-profit sector, responsibility for the regulation of those bodies passed from local to central government. Throughout this period, however, the technologies of state regulation remained relatively underdeveloped, or better still ‘thin’. Hence, while central government showed increasing concern for value for money (ensured through new systems of Compulsory Competitive Tendering and the widespread dissemination of the principles of the New Public Management), such systems had little power to determine how services were delivered.

Third, partly as a result of this limited regulatory framework, both individual agencies and the non-statutory sector as a whole retained a significant degree of independence throughout this period, providing an important space for the voicing of dissent when government policy clashed with agency practice or with the ideals of the sector more broadly. With regard to any attempt to reshape the subjectivities of welfare recipients and of a broader public, Conservative rhetoric concerned itself mainly with an attack on the idea of state-sponsored welfare per se (frequently casting welfare recipients as a drain on collective wealth) and pushed instead a creed of individualism, within which any responsibility the private citizen might have for the welfare of others was cast as a choice rather than an obligation.

The move from a system of government to governance therefore had a significant impact on both the logic and form of British welfare (see also Rhodes, 1997; Bevir & Rhodes, 2003). For Ling, however, the more recent shift away from a system of governance towards what he terms a system of ‘governmentality’, around the mid-to-late 1990s, has been equally if not more significant. Though such a shift cannot be directly aligned with the change of government at that time (with a number of the features he identifies as articulating a period of governmentality evident in different areas of British welfare policy prior to May 1997), there is little doubt that the changes he describes accelerated with the election of New Labour.

In particular, the new government’s much vaunted Compacts with the voluntary sector, announced in 1998 (described by Kendall as ‘an unparalleled
step in the positioning of the third sector in [British] public policy’), signalled a sea change in British welfare policy and practice (Kendall, 2000: 542). Not least, the Compact articulated a fundamental change in the rationale of state welfare provision. Where previous Conservative administrations had turned to the non-statutory sector mainly as a way of off-loading the state’s responsibilities for welfare delivery, New Labour described a new vision of British welfare policy: with the state working in partnership with an expanded non-statutory sector (Giddens, 1998; Home Office, 1998). Such a vision speaks of the strengths most usually associated with the non-statutory sector (its ‘expertise’, ‘creativity’ and ‘flexibility’) but also of a renewed faith in the state – whose role, far from receding, is seen as overseeing the work of the sector (so as to ensure issues of quality control, for example) and setting the broader direction of welfare policy. This widening of the idea of partnership opened up the potential for new spaces of welfare and care. While still open to a critique of incorporation – the continuing acquiescence of third sector organizations to the ideologies and techniques of neoliberal workfare and potentially of punitive revanchist urbanisms – the enhanced role of partnership also established the conditions of possibility for new ‘third spaces’ – or ‘border zones’ (Vasquez & Marquardt, 2003) – in the city in which messy and contested conditions for the mediation of incorporation in, and resistance to, waves of neoliberalism may have been established.

At the same time, however, it is also clear that to facilitate this new vision, New Labour set about transforming the technologies of welfare and embarked upon a complex reorganization of local–central state responsibilities and of state personnel. Most importantly, perhaps, with the introduction of Best Value in place of the previous mechanism of Compulsory Competitive Tendering, New Labour sought to exert much greater control over how non-statutory ‘partner’ agencies deliver welfare services, with a new tendering process effectively dictating the policies and procedures an agency must follow in order to enter into a service contract. Backed up by the introduction of strict performance targets, the effect has been to channel funding to what Ling calls ‘fit partners’: those agencies whose ethos and approach is in broad alignment with the aims and objectives of central government policy (Ling, 2000). At the same time, and in contrast to the previous era, under New Labour day-to-day responsibility for the management and regulation of non-statutory agencies has passed (back) to the local state. Given the degree to which Best Value determines the regulatory framework, however, it is difficult to read such a move as evidence of genuine decentralization. Instead, we appear to be witnessing a recentralization and formalization of state power within which, as Maile and Hoggett (2001: 512) argue: ‘Local government is increasingly becoming a “policy free zone” … [its role] to deliver centrally determined policies in a strategic way.’ Such a process has been facilitated by a complex restructuring of state personnel. Thus, the late 1990s and early 2000s
especially saw a rapid proliferation of central government appointed ‘special advisors’, acting at both the centre (in the form of various ‘tsars’) and the periphery: chairing the ‘local services consortia’ that have become a key part of the welfare landscape under New Labour. Seconded from the local state, but funded directly from the centre, the latter in particular represented a significant, if subtle, extension of central government’s regulatory reach: disseminating government directives and shaping discussions as to appropriate responses to (centrally defined) local service needs so as to ensure that local authorities and non-statutory agencies alike remain ‘on message’.

In stark contrast to the relative independence enjoyed by non-statutory agencies under previous Conservative administrations, then, under New Labour the non-statutory sector has found itself subject to increased central government control. At the national level, in particular, New Labour has been especially adept at setting the limits to debate. By holding out the promise of a greater say in the shaping of government policy, New Labour has increasingly been able to contain the voice of critics fearful of losing their place at the table of government (Newman, 2000). At the local level, hemmed in by new contracts and performance targets but fearful of stepping outside these predetermined limits lest it result in a loss of funding, agencies appear to have embarked upon a process of ‘self-regulation’: shaping their services and procedures in line with the definitions of need provided by central government (Anonymous, 2001).

Finally, while the shift from a system of governance to ‘governmentality’ appears to have constructed new subjectivities among welfare providers, so too it has seen a transformation of the relationships between the state and the private citizen: both direct welfare recipients and a broader public. Here, New Labour has sought to clarify the rights but also the responsibilities of those in receipt of welfare services. But a broader attempt to ‘govern by culture’ is also apparent: as central government has sought to delineate the most effective, if not also the ‘right and proper’, ways for private citizens to provide both for themselves and, in a significant departure from the creed of individualism expoused by previous Conservative governments, for others (Ling, 2000).

At first sight at least, Ling’s reading of recent changes in British welfare policy and practice does not sit easily with the chronology of neoliberalization proposed by Peck and Tickell (2002). Given the rather different focus of the two accounts, however, we believe it is possible to accommodate Ling’s more specific analysis within Peck and Tickell’s broader framework. Here we therefore read the shift from a system of governance to ‘governmentality’ that Ling proposes as a second, more powerful articulation of the broader programme of roll-out neoliberalization that Peck and Tickell identify. We proceed by carrying this argument over into a reading of central government responses to the crisis of street homelessness in 1990s Britain. We identify the roots of that crisis, the moment at which central government
first responded to it (broadly coincident with Peck and Tickell’s timing of the shift from roll-back to roll-out neoliberalism) and the point at which the New Labour government initiated a *new* response, formulated around a system of ‘govermentality’.

**Neoliberalism and Britain’s Crisis of Street Homelessness**

The crisis of rough sleeping that unfolded in Britain in the late 1980s remains one of the most potent symbols of the social costs of the Thatcher revolution (Carlen, 1996). When examined through the twin lens of roll-back neoliberalism, with its emphasis upon a ‘free market’ economy and a minimalist state, the roots of that crisis are not difficult to trace. As the Conservative government of 1979–83 embarked upon a radical restructuring of the British space-economy, decimating Britain’s traditional manufacturing base and speeding the move towards a high skill/low skill service economy, the British labour market showed the first signs of growing income and occupational polarization (Mohen, 1999). With levels of unemployment reaching record highs, the number of long-term unemployed in particular rose dramatically, especially among the young (Robinson, 1989; Heddy, 1990). At the same time, in line with their desire to ‘roll back the state’ (and reduce a growing benefits bill), successive Conservative administrations embarked upon a simultaneous and systematic dismantling of the welfare safety net (Cloke, 1995), leading to three especially significant impacts on the emergent crisis of street homelessness (Anderson, 1993). First, with the passage of the 1980 Housing Act and the introduction of Right-to-Buy, local authority housing stocks were significantly reduced at a time when the supply of new social housing was in decline following dramatic reductions in central government’s Housing Investment Programme (Forrest & Murie, 1988; Brownhill & Sharp, 1992). Second, faced with the need to accommodate those who a decade earlier would have turned to the local state, Britain’s housing associations found themselves increasingly unable to offer accommodation to their traditional client groups. As a result, and at the very moment that the removal of Fair Rents had significantly increased the cost (though not the supply) of private rented accommodation, poorer single people in particular found their access to affordable rental housing severely curtailed (Warrington, 1996). Third, reflecting a disastrous combination of financial pragmatism and neoconservative doctrine, under the 1986 Social Security Act 16- and 17-year-olds became ineligible for Income Support, as the government looked to the family to pick up the mantel of welfare provision for Britain’s young people (Hutson & Liddiard, 1994).

Not surprisingly, the changes brought about by Conservative free-marketeering produced an almost immediate and dramatic rise in levels of homelessness of all kinds, and heralded important changes in the
characteristics of Britain’s single homeless population. Most importantly, perhaps, a traditional population of older, single homeless men was supplemented and eventually surpassed by growing numbers of younger men and women seeking refuge in Britain’s shelter system. The visible presence of young people in night shelters and hostels, day centres and soup kitchens challenged popular stereotypes of the ‘vagrants’ and ‘tramps’ traditionally understood as making up Britain’s single homeless population and considerably raised public sympathy for homeless people (Hutson & Liddiard, 1994).

At the same time, as the providers of night shelter and hostel accommodation sought to respond to the needs of new client groups, the shift towards smaller units offering single rooms and increased levels of support rather than basic dormitory style arrangements resulted in a steady decline in the total number of emergency beds available to homeless people across Britain and a dramatic rise in levels of street homelessness (see chapter 6; see also Harrison, 1996). Indeed, by the summer of 1990 the sight of some 3000 people sleeping rough in central London provided the British public with a potent symbol of the costs of Thatcherism and, in combination with that summer’s poll tax riots, a serious legitimation crisis for the government (Goodwin & Painter, 1996).

The Rough Sleepers Initiative

According to the revanchist city thesis it might be expected that at this point any response to such a crisis would echo developments in the USA – with campaigns by city managers to clear homeless people from the streets, excising both the subject positions and acting subjects of homelessness from the sites and sights of Britain’s cities. In reality the response to this crisis in Britain was far more complex, the result of a complex fusion of ideology, reactionism and politicized ‘responsibility’ on the part of government that together ushered in new forms of homeless governance at this time.

Most importantly, perhaps, spurred on by calls from an increasingly hostile media and pressure groups such as Shelter, CHAR and Crisis not only to respond but to respond *humanely* to a crisis of street homelessness seen by many as of the government’s own making, the British government spearheaded a two-part response to this crisis – with the introduction of new programmes designed to further the supply of emergency services for single homeless people, and more sustained attempts to ‘reclaim the streets’ (*Daily Telegraph*, 1990a, b; *Guardian*, 1990).

At the heart of the government’s strategy lay the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* (RSI), launched in June 1990 and managed by the then Department of Environment (DoE) with an initial budget of £15 million rising to £179 million through phases two and three (1993–9) (Randall & Brown, 1993, 1996). For the Conservatives, the main appeal of the RSI was that it enabled central government to point to a visible response to the problems of street
homelessness (namely, the increased provision of emergency accommodation),
without challenging the position of single homeless people more generally as
a residual group within the British welfare system – denied the same rights
to social housing afforded homeless families (Fitzpatrick et al., 2000).
In the first instance at least, the RSI also applied only to central London:
where the problems of street homelessness were both most visible and most
politically damaging. Importantly, responsibility for delivering the emergency
shelters and smaller number of ‘move-on’ units made available through the
RSI fell not to the local state (as was the case for homeless families) but to
non-statutory organizations. Indeed, while local authorities played a limited
role in coordinating bids for RSI funding on behalf of the non-statutory
agencies operating in their areas, they were otherwise little involved in the
programme – with the regulation of these organizations passing directly to
central government via the DoE. At the same time, though operating under
a system of Compulsory Competitive Tendering meant that the DoE showed
a basic concern with value-for-money, it otherwise imposed only very ‘thin’
forms of regulatory control upon organizations bidding for RSI money,
with agencies required to provide evidence as to the existence of suitable
outreach or resettlement programmes, or of their attempts to engage in joint
working with other agencies in their local area, for example, only in the later
phases of the initiative.

While the launch of the RSI might well be read as signalling a move
beyond an earlier position of ‘malign neglect’, then, in the light of their fail-
ure to reverse the cuts in the supply of social housing initiated in the 1980s,
or even to provide for a significant supply of ‘move-on’ rather than only
emergency accommodation, it is clear that the initiative was hardly repre-
sentative of a genuine attempt by the British government to solve the prob-
lems of single homelessness. Instead, it is perhaps most usefully seen as an
exercise in containment, designed to render the crisis of street homelessness
less visible even as it did little to address the root causes of that crisis.
Significantly, exactly this charge was levelled at the government by Britain’s
homeless pressure groups, as indeed by a number of the organizations con-
tracted to supply accommodation under the RSI, a number of whom
accused the DoE of overseeing a warehousing exercise (Guardian, 1990).

Furthermore, from the outset, organizations such as Centrepoint, Shelter,
CHAR and Crisis also voiced concerns over what appeared to be a second
arm of government policy. Following the failure of Phase 1 of the RSI to
significantly reduce levels of rough sleeping in key areas of central London,
for example, in August 1991 the DoE called upon Britain’s homeless chari-
ties to work with the Metropolitan Police to clear what they termed a ‘hard
core’ of rough sleepers from a number of the capital’s ‘black spots’. When
these requests were turned down, the police embarked upon clearance
campaigns of their own, increasing the number of people arrested under the
power of Britain’s Vagrancy Acts from 192 in 1991 to 1445 in 1992 in
Swept Up Lives?

As one of the most obvious symbols of social exclusion, street homelessness was always going to be afforded a high priority by a government pledging a return to a more cohesive society (Fitzpatrick et al., 2000; Jones & Johnsen, 2009). In this sense, it was hardly surprising when almost immediately on gaining office in 1997 the New Labour government announced a series of measures designed to tackle a continuing crisis of rough sleeping, with an extension of the previous administration’s RSI (1997–9) and the launch of its own Homelessness Action Programme (HAP) (1999–2002). Where the former had (finally) provided funding to just seven towns and cities outside of London identified as having especially high levels of street homelessness, the latter extended central government funding to no fewer than 113 towns and cities across the UK – at a total cost of some £134 million. At the same time, working through the auspices of the newly created Rough Sleepers Unit...
(RSU), New Labour also promised to transform the apparatus by which problems of rough sleeping might be managed. Most importantly, from the outset New Labour looked towards the creation of closer relations between central government and the non-statutory organizations responsible for the delivery of care and accommodation to single homeless people: part and parcel of the move towards ‘active partnership’ formalized in the government’s Compacts with the voluntary sector (Home Office, 1998). Eased by the appointment of the ex Deputy Director of Shelter, Louise Casey, as the head of the government’s RSU and first homelessness ‘tsar’, Britain’s major pressure groups thus began to play a far more active role in the shaping of government policy, feeding into discussions around the new Homelessness Bill as well as the design of the HAP itself.

Under the HAP, new contracts drawn up under a system of Best Value (the successor to the Conservative’s Compulsory Competitive Tendering) sought to correct the shortcomings of the RSI by imposing far stricter conditions upon agencies bidding for government money: shifting the focus from simple value-for-money to a much closer concern with modes of service delivery. In particular, agencies bidding for HAP monies were now required to demonstrate their active engagement with other organizations working with single homeless people in their local area (through membership of local street service consortia, for example); the existence of suitable outreach and resettlement programmes; and, crucially, their focus upon the specific problems of rough sleeping rather than problems of single homelessness more generally (DETR, 2000).

Underpinning these new contractual arrangements were new technologies of monitoring and control, designed to ensure that agencies fulfilled their contractual obligations. Most importantly, perhaps, participating agencies found themselves facing new performance targets that required them to demonstrate a reduction in levels of rough sleeping (assessed via repeated street counts) and a measurable throughput of clients into move-on accommodation. Undermining the notion of an equal partnership with central government, then, voluntary organizations in receipt of HAP funding soon found themselves increasingly subject to what Hoggett (1994) has called control by ‘remote control’: as new contractual arrangements and performance indicators tied participating agencies ever closer to the approach demanded of them by the RSU. At the same time, and moving somewhat beyond this notion of ‘control at a distance’, the RSU sought to extend its physical presence, seconding local authority officers in those cities in receipt of a significant proportion of HAP monies to chair the various consortia established to facilitate local joint working. Bringing together both those currently in receipt of central government funding and, crucially, those who might wish to apply for funding in the future, such consortia represented a significant extension of central government power. Not least, while always able to threaten a withdrawal of funding, the real success of the
RSU in this regard was to alter the terms of debate at the local level. With agencies that rejected the approaches of the RSU quickly finding themselves labelled unhelpful or ‘unprofessional’, and cast outside the loop of future funding opportunities, alternative approaches to the management of rough sleeping became if not unthinkable then certainly difficult to articulate (Anonymous, 2001).

At the same time, the new regulatory regimes introduced under the auspices of the RSU were further complicated by a complex rescaling of responsibilities for the purchase and control of services for single homeless people from central to local government. Though through the course of the HAP service delivery agencies remained subject to regulation by central government (in the form of the RSU), with the passage of the Homelessness Act 2002 responsibility for these services passed to local authorities charged with the task of implementing a Local Homelessness Strategy (ODPM, 2003).

With the implementation of the Supporting People Programme the service charge element of the Housing Benefits system (which had been paid direct to service agencies) was replaced by funding from the Supporting People Programme. Under the latter programme agencies providing care and accommodation to vulnerable groups (including but not limited to single homeless people) bid for core funding from the local state, which in turn must present a case to central government for the amount of funding to be made available each period. Crucially, though subject to a general needs assessment (the number of people found sleeping rough in their local area, for example) the allocation of Supporting People funds also depends upon the past performance of each authority (including any reduction in levels of rough sleeping through the period of the HAP) and plans for future spending, as laid out in its Local Homelessness Strategy. Hence, through the course of the HAP both service agencies and local authorities found themselves playing a complicated game. For the former, while it was important to stay on side with the RSU (to safeguard current funding arrangements) it was also necessary to maintain strong relations with the local state (lest they jeopardize future income opportunities under Supporting People). For the latter, while seeking to ensure the compliance of local agencies with performance targets set by the RSU (so as not to jeopardize future funding allocations under Supporting People) local authorities also found themselves having to tread a careful path with key non-statutory agencies upon whose advice and expertise they often had to rely in preparing their Local Homelessness Strategies.

* Importantly, Supporting People funding was ringfenced until 2009, but will be subsumed within local authorities’ general-use Area Based Grant from 20 October 2011. While this could potentially lend greater flexibility to the way housing-related support services are provided, there are some concerns in the sector that it could potentially divert funding away from homelessness to other uses (Communities and Local Government, 2008b).
Finally, complementing this reworking of the relationships between central and local government and their voluntary sector ‘partners’, New Labour also worked hard at transforming public understandings of street homelessness and of street homeless people. Most significantly, in place of the crude attacks on homeless people perpetuated by the Major government, New Labour sought to reconstruct understandings of street homelessness within the broader context of their approach to problems of social exclusion – focusing upon the rights but also (and increasingly) the responsibilities of homeless people to confront the causes of their own exclusion. Hence, in his forward to the initial report on rough sleeping by the Social Exclusion Unit, for example, Prime Minister Tony Blair outlined the government’s compact with those still on the streets. Setting their right to access a more extensive shelter system against their responsibility (to both welfare providers and a wider public alike) to take up the offer of accommodation, he noted that: ‘[while] the Government believes the public will expect hostel places to be taken up as more become available … the police have [also] often said they would be willing to take a more directive approach with rough sleepers if there was somewhere to take them and a more co-ordinated approach’ (quoted in Fitzpatrick et al., 2000).

In contrast to other areas of welfare, however, New Labour also sought to outline the counter side of this compact: setting out the responsibilities of a wider public in tackling the problems of street homelessness. In a powerful example of ‘governing by culture’, New Labour thus sought to remind the public of their duty to care for street homeless people (see, for example, ‘Be a buddy to the homeless, says Blair’, (Daily Mail, 1998); ‘Blair urges public to be “buddies” to homeless’ (Daily Telegraph, 1998)). Going further, in its Change a Life (2000) campaign the RSU sought to define the ‘right and proper’ mode of caring: urging those who wished to ease the plight of homeless people to give to a number of nominated charities rather than direct to people on the streets. Importantly, even while it conflated the problems of rough sleeping with the problem of begging, one of the most notable aspects of the Change a Life campaign was the limited criticism it attracted from those working in the field (Fitzpatrick & Kennedy, 2001). Certainly, where similar such moves by the previous Conservative government had quickly attracted the wrath of Britain’s main homelessness pressure groups, Change a Life generated little overt criticism from organizations that seemed loath to publicly criticize the RSU lest they jeopardize their ability to influence government thinking on forthcoming legislation: notably, the then forthcoming Homelessness Act (Shelter, 2002).

Tracing the development of the RSI and HAP, then, it is not difficult to read key differences between the two programmes as articulating a number of the features that Ling identifies in his reading of a shift from a system of ‘governance’ to ‘governmentality’ (Ling, 2000). Rather than understanding such a shift as counter to the chronology proposed by Peck and Tickell
(2002), however, it may be more instructive to read it as indicating a second, more powerful articulation of the move to a programme of roll-out neoliberalism. While such a programme was initiated by the RSI and associated street clearance campaigns under the Thatcher and Major governments, it clearly accelerated under New Labour, as the government attempted to find new ways to confront and contain a still visible crisis of street homelessness that has its roots in an earlier period of economic restructuring and welfare ‘reform’.

**Revanchist Neoliberalisms?**

But, to what extent can these periods of governance really be understood in terms of the conceptual frameworks presented by revanchism and neoliberalization? A definitive answer to this question is extremely difficult on a number of counts, but principally because of the problems endemic in untangling theory-led neo-Marxist critiques from the possibility of well intentioned (and context-specific) progressive government policy-making. From the former perspective, any attempt to provide welfare relief to homeless people within contemporary systems of governance is easily dismissed as irrelevant tinkering within a flawed and inevitably regressive collusion between capital and the state. By this token it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recognize anything other than punitive techniques of control and containment of homeless people in Britain over the past 15 years. All else may easily be dismissed as mere legitimation. In terms of the potential for more progressive political intentions, how do we begin to recognize an empowering politics of social welfare in these circumstances, when possibly laudable objectives of eradicating homelessness by providing appropriate care, welfare and rehabilitation in specialized facilities (night shelters, hostels and ‘move-on’ housing) are in practice extremely difficult to disentangle from more sinister ideologies involving the clearance of homeless people from public spaces and thereby the annihilation of the active homeless subject?

We want to argue that such complexities are part and parcel of the multifaceted layers of governance in operation in the welfare sector, and that narratives of responses to homelessness must always be kept open to these multiple and overlapping interpretations. It is clear to us, for example, that the rationale for neoliberal governance was significantly different in the New Labour era – in the early years of the administration at least (see below) – than in the era preceding it. This difference is manifest in the rhetoric associated with ‘dealing with’ homeless subjectivities:

> I think we’ve been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it’s the government’s job to cope with it. ‘I have a problem, I’ll get a grant.’ ‘I’m homeless, the government must
They’re casting their problem on society. And you know, there is no such thing as society. (Margaret Thatcher, *Women’s Own Magazine*, 3 October 1987)

The sight of a rough sleeper bedding down for the night in a shop doorway or on a park bench is one of the most potent symbols of social exclusion in Britain today. (Tony Blair, Social Exclusion Unit, 1998: foreword)

Social exclusion is an extreme consequence of what happens when people don’t get a fair deal throughout their lives. (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007: http://www.cse.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/getDynamicContentAreaSection.do?id=15, accessed 9 June 2009)

The deep-seated hostility of the Conservative government to the collectivist nature of the welfare state is evident in the highly politicized framing of deviant homeless people as a problem of welfare dependency (Carlen, 1996). The rationale deployed by New Labour is quite different. For New Labour homelessness is understood as part of broader processes of social exclusion; hence the government’s determination to provide support that enables homeless people to reach a ‘level playing field’ with the rest of society (Pleace, 1998; Deacon, 2000). While cognizant of critiques of the construction of ‘social exclusion’ drawn upon by New Labour (with its focus on opportunity rather than redistribution, and the reduction of ‘inclusion’ to inclusion in a (highly polarized) labour market; Levitas, 2007), we would nonetheless argue that the concept of social exclusion underpinning New Labour’s rationale for welfare provision more broadly is also evident in its approach to the governance of homelessness; and that this drive to combat social exclusion is difficult to square with a characterization of New Labour’s response to homelessness as being only (or even mainly) revanchist. Instead, this rationale has embraced (or at least provided space for) an ethics of welfare and care, sponsored new subjectivities of third sector involvement and volunteering, and provided a new emphasis on the prevention of homelessness. Moreover, on the face of it at least, these policies have been remarkably successful in reducing levels of rough sleeping (though see Pawson, 2007).

However, there are three immediate and important caveats to this evaluation. First, as we explore in chapters 5 and 6, the apparatus put in place by New Labour in an effort to tackle problems of homelessness and social exclusion has in some instances been damaging to the voluntary sector ‘partners’ New Labour has turned to in an attempt to prosecute its policies and, ultimately, to the welfare of homeless people themselves. Most obviously, New Labour’s insistence on the introduction of the market, and the disciplining technologies of performance targets, into the homelessness sector has in some regards undermined the work of service agencies. Such agencies must now compete one with another to secure funding, with the terms of competition set around a number of targets (the speed with which
a person is taken from the streets, through a day centre and hostel into ‘supported accommodation’ of their own, for example) that might in fact hamper the chances of a person making a successful exit from homelessness. In short, while in a broader sense the ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ articulated by New Labour homelessness policy may have opened up a space for an alternative ethics of care, the insistence of New Labour in running homeless welfare provision along neoliberal lines has simultaneously undermined such an ethic.

Second, as we explore in chapter 6 and as other reports on the challenges still facing British homelessness policy confirm (see, for example, the Salvation Army, 2008), it is clear that this apparatus may in any case not be as coherent, or effective, as has been claimed. There is now considerable evidence, for example, that the target-driven culture introduced by New Labour encouraged the engineering of artificially low counts of the rough sleeping population (Cloke et al., 2001a; Shapps, 2007). Furthermore, continuing shortages of rehabilitation facilities for homeless people with alcohol and drug dependencies, and of affordable and supported move-on housing, mean that the ‘helping hand’ put in place by New Labour often leads only to the ‘warehousing’ of homeless people in hostels – a phenomenon that invites critique as part of a punitive politics of containment.

Third, and relatedly, it is clear that the rationale underpinning New Labour’s homeless policy has changed in recent years. As Johnsen and Fitzpatrick (2007, 2010) have documented, with the winding down of the HAP in 2002–3, the focus of government began to change from a concern with the provision of services for homeless people to the control of the ‘conduct of conduct’ of homeless people. In a telling shift in departmental responsibilities, for example, in 2003 the Home Office’s Anti-Social Behaviour Unit took up the issue of ‘problem street culture’ – advocating the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) against those who ‘persistently’ beg. The same year also saw begging made a recordable offence in Britain for the first time. To some extent, a certain intolerance of those who ‘chose’ to remain on the streets (rather than take advantage of the services on offer to them through the auspices of the HAP) was always evident in the approach of the RSU, as Blair’s foreword to the unit’s inaugural report into the problems of street homelessness in 1998 made clear, and as we document in relation to the criticisms directed towards Britain’s soup runs in chapter 4. But it is also clear that the past few years have seen a strengthening of the government’s resolve to take ‘control of the streets’. Moreover, it would appear that the harder line taken by central government against members of a ‘problematic’ street population has often found support at the local level and chimes with broader changes in the policing of public space in Britain’s city centres over the past few years, when the growth in, for example, Business Improvement Districts has seen the reshaping of Britain’s town
centres around the logic of ‘apodictic’ spaces (Ruddick, 1996: 198) – spaces in which forms of privileged inclusion (built around retail and consumption) effectively dictate the exclusion of any attempts by homeless people to appropriate those spaces for their own use (see also Doherty et al., 2008).

If the rationale of New Labour’s neoliberal governance suggests complexity in the understanding of responses to homelessness, then so too does the making up of homeless subjectivities under this regime. To some extent, the neoliberal homeless subject varies according to its status as ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ vis-à-vis the systems of response provided. That is, homeless people who are brought inside these systems, either at preventative stages or as part of the newly joined-up governance of rough sleeping, can become part of the supposed success-narrative of rehabilitation. This subject position is easily represented in terms of prevailing cultures of targets achieved and cleaned up streets, even if the acting subjects involved may lead more messy lives – sometimes articulating something more akin to a revolving door existence than any genuine ‘rehabilitation’ or ‘reintegration’ into ‘mainstream’ society. However, many homeless people fall outside of these response systems, and are thereby attributed made-up subjectivities that reflect their outsider status. Alongside the criminalization and victimization of (some) homeless people discussed here, there are also a range of ‘invisible’ homeless subjectivities in play in the contemporary city: those who do not meet statutory criteria for acceptance as homeless, those who choose not to declare themselves as homeless, those – such as asylum seekers – who by definition are prevented from being regarded as homeless, and so on.

There is an interesting parallel here, of course, with the subject-status given to non-statutory organizations providing welfare services for homeless people. As we detail in chapters 4, 5 and 6, organizations working in partnership with government (and thereby viewed as ‘fit’ for inclusion in governance at a distance) are granted at least a temporary legitimacy in terms of their apparent professionalism and suitability to engage in the wider responsibilities of citizenship. These insider organizations can be contrasted with those working outside of partnerships with government, who often rely on charitable giving and volunteer labour and are thus often less well placed to provide a high standard of specialist service. Some such outsider organizations are often subjectified as deviant and unprofessional because their activities involve serving homeless people on the streets, and therefore effectively oppose government-led orthodoxies geared towards removing homeless people from sight. Actually existing neoliberalism, then, works in parallel to enact ethical codes and subjectivities of welfare for compliant insiders while imposing more punitive codes of deviancy on uncompliant outsiders.

Finally, any reading of British homelessness policy as revanchist neoliberalism also needs to take account of the uneven geographies that form around the reach and capacity of government to affect the conduct of conduct, and
around the construction of these parallel insider/outsider subjectivities. Thus, rather than asserting some kind of ‘total capture’ of the homeless welfare apparatus by central government, we show in chapters 7 and 8 how actually existing neoliberalism leads to the unfolding of different responses to homelessness in different places. For example, there are many smaller towns where there has been a growing crisis of street homelessness, but where voluntary sector organizations have been unable to draw upon the central government funds made available to (some) providers in larger towns and cities in an effort to meet that crisis. At the same time, local homeless service networks in many larger towns and cities are characterized by a range of both ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ organizations – those who have taken the money and, by and large, signed up to the service contracts dictated by the HAP or Supporting People, and those who have either been excluded from or excluded themselves from both this money and these contracts. And there are individual paid staff and volunteers inside these ‘insider’ organizations who continue to frustrate the efforts of network managers – by refusing to ration hostel beds in accordance with the demands of local homelessness strategies, for example. The neoliberalization of British homelessness policy therefore needs to be understood with full reference to the complexities of ‘hollowing out’ and the continuing and significant limits to state power even in an era of roll-out neoliberalism, and to the ways in which state power itself becomes transformed in practice by both insider and outsider organizations, paid staff, volunteers and homeless people.

An Emerging Context of Postsecularism

Thus far, our exploration of responses to homelessness in Britain has been restricted to ideas that prioritize and valorize the ability of the state either to engineer punitive mechanisms of containment and control in order to protect the interests of capital and powerful social elites, or to use political and cultural regulation to influence the ‘conduct of conduct’ of homeless people, homeless service providers and wider publics in an effort to tackle (particular constructions of) homelessness. In both cases we have expressed the need for caution in accepting wholesale any notion that the actions of the state are without limits, and to take full account of the geographical unevenness and/or susceptibility of state policy to transformation and resistance from the individuals and organizations that populate its insider and outsider subject positions. We now want to expand these conceptual horizons in such a way as to take more significant account of the importance of emergent geographies of care in the landscapes of homeless service provision. In particular we want to explore the place that the motivational forces of ethical citizenship that often underpin such services might play in our understandings of recent responses to homelessness.
The growing role of government/third sector ‘partnerships’ in the delivery of welfare has tended to be interpreted either in terms of the emergence of some kind of ‘shadow state’ apparatus (Wolch, 1990) or, more recently, as evidence of the incorporation of third sector organizations into programmes of governance that further state ideology and neoliberal techniques of subject formation (Beckford, 2003; Davie, 2007). There are, however, other interpretative possibilities to add into this mix. Most obviously, recent years have seen increasing interest in the idea that previous stereotypical binaries of public secularism and private religion are being reshaped, particularly in the field of urban welfare. For some, this ‘postsecular rapprochement’ represents a moving away from the fundamentalisms of secularism and religion and a moving into new forms of collaborative ethical praxis capable of fashioning new geographies of welfare and care in the urban environment (Farnell et al., 2003; Baker, 2007; Taylor, 2007; Beaumont, 2008; Berger et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2009). If so, there is an intriguing possibility that these postsecular movements may be co-constituting different spaces and forms of resistance to the rolling out of neoliberalism, both from within and without formal positions of government/third sector partnership.

**Beyond Secularism**

Put crudely, our suggestion is that there may be connections between this broader postsecular rapprochement and the crucial role that faith-based organizations (FBOs) and faith-motivated people in particular continue to play in the provision of welfare services, and associated logics of care and compassion, for homeless people in Britain. There are a number of ways in which this postsecular reapproachment might be traced, of course. One way would simply be to note the increasingly prominent role that FBOs are now playing in urban social welfare provision more generally (Beaumont, 2008; Dinham et al., 2009). In fact, in the homelessness sector this role is hardly new, with organizations like the Salvation Army testament to the work of FBOs in this field for more than a century. Indeed, it might even be the case that through the 1970s and early 1980s at least the relative importance of FBOs in this field declined, as the emergence of a number of new secular organizations such as Shelter and the Simon Community was inspired in part by a desire to challenge the approach to the accommodation and care of homeless people then articulated by more traditional, faith-based, organizations (Foord et al., 1998). Yet it is also clear that the very rapid growth in the number of non-statutory organizations engaged in such work in the 1980s and 1990s also included many new FBOs; that FBOs are currently strongly represented in the provision of services for homeless people and are in fact the dominant group in some sectors, such as soup runs (see chapters 4, 5 and 6; Johnsen with Fitzpatrick, 2009).
Another way would be to point to other new and rather different kinds of interconnection between faith and secular interests. For example, faith groups have been shown to act as umbrella organizations for different kinds of collaborative activity, motivated by secular social justice ideals as well as by faith. This umbrella function certainly occurs (as we shall see) in the provision of services for homeless people, but other examples include the promotion of fair trade and other aspects of ethical consumption (Cloke et al., 2009). Sometimes such partnerships form around ethical positionings in which secular and faith-motivated ideologies converge, as in the holistic approach to serving homeless people, and in responding to the needs of distant others through consumption of fairly traded goods. Elsewhere, for example in the work of organizations like London Citizens, faith-based and secular organizations that bring very different ethical and moral positionings to the table are coming together under the auspices of secular umbrella organizations and agreeing to put such differences ‘on hold’ in order to make common cause on specific demands – for a living wage, or the regularization of migrants, for example (Wills et al., 2009a).

Finally, we might point to more complex changes in the ethos of different welfare organizations. Thus, in chapters 4 and 5, for example, we demonstrate how some secular organizations involved in running day centres and soup runs have begun to embrace an ethos of holistic care that might previously have been considered as rooted in the principles of Christian faith. In contrast, throughout this book we offer examples of how many Christian organizations in the homelessness sector have moved away from any attempt to use service provision as an opportunity for evangelistic conversion and to offer instead a ‘service without strings’; an approach that can perhaps be equally convincingly read as articulating a particular form of caring for others rooted in Christian belief (and in particular, the concept of agape) or as rooted in approaches to the care of others more commonly associated with secular ways of serving.

In the remainder of this chapter we explore this emerging context of postsecularism in two main ways. First, in conceptual terms we trace shifts in reflexivity and praxis that underpin these new postsecular spaces. Critiques of secularism have led thinkers and actors into new engagements with, and explorations of, ethical frameworks and actions that are more tolerant – even welcoming of – aspects of religion and faith in circumstances previously assumed to be secular. Here, homelessness has served as a highly visible example of the inability of secularist ethics alone to prevent or deal with social exclusion in contemporary society, and the serving and caring for homeless people has emerged as a key arena in which postsecular praxis has developed. Second, we investigate the ethos of organizations providing services for homeless people, tracing signs of the emergence of a postsecular ethics in these service spaces.
The ebb and flow of secularism

Many of the key aspects that underpin the contemporary movement beyond secularism are charted in Blond’s (1998) disquieting critique of the principally secular basis of public society and space. First, he claims that secularism has permitted religion to be sequestrated by fundamentalist elements, who – in what Hedges (2006) regards as a form of fascism – have demonstrated a dangerous capacity to ostracize and condemn ‘others’ who are variously deemed unworthy of moral consideration. A move towards postsecularism therefore represents an exploration of the possibilities of mutual acceptance of social difference, and mutual acceptance of and respect across the secular/religious divide, thus undermining religious fundamentalists, but also requiring recognition from secular groups of the potential value of non-fascist spirituality. Second, secular narratives have often assumed that the kinds of advances achieved by science can be reproduced in ethical and political fields, especially those related to welfare. Blond asserts that a secularism based upon the individualist and market-orientated politics of contemporary political economy can, unless referenced against other codes of morality and ethics (relating, say, to justice, community and mutual responsibility), simply valorize selfishness, individual acquisitiveness and a more general punitive blaming of social victims such as homeless people for their own plight. A more postsecular approach, therefore, is likely to espouse a going-beyond-the-self, and to find more communitarian routes to tackling ethical issues. Third, secularism has been at least partly responsible for producing a vacuum of hopelessness in a society that is becoming characterized by myriad self-serving acts of denial and negation that have served as the weak mysticism of the age. The ideological narratives of neoliberalized governmentalities of state and market have spawned a society that often seems shot through with cynicism and lack of hope – resulting in pessimistic doubts about whether people can change things or make a difference, and a loss of capacity to participate, be inspired or enchanted (Bennett, 2001). As Blond points out, secularism has implied a broad disavowal of any possibility that social melancholia and desperation can be dealt with in any way that could transfigure individuals and their world. Postsecularism by contrast invites a going beyond what is rational and immediately visible in order to explore the possibilities of the invisible in whatever form.

This reflexive territory of postsecularism is evident in how some of the key thinkers of materialist socialism have been drawn to ideas from the contexts of religion and faith in their search for a renewed sense of justice and hope in contemporary society. This is not to suggest that Marxist atheists are suddenly converting to religion, but rather that the philosophical search for answers to the questions posed by secularized individualism has been attracted towards implicit horizons of faith and belief, albeit in a rather
fragmented and partial manner. Thus, Habermas (2002) and Matustik (2008) have emphasized the emergence of a postsecular society in which secular institutions have been infused with varying forms of spiritual prompts to politics and ethics, and other leading socialist philosophers have begun to invoke theological precepts in order to visualize appropriate philosophies of hope. As Milbank (2005: 398) has put it:

Derrida sustains the openness of signs and the absoluteness of the ethical command by recourse to ... negative theology; Deleuze sustains the possibility of a detrerritorialisation of matter and meaning in terms of a Spinozistic virtual absolute; Badiou sustains the possibility of a revolutionary event in terms of the one historical event of the arrival of the very logic of the event as such, which is none other than that of Pauline grace; Žižek sustains the possibility of a revolutionary love beyond desire by reference to the historical emergence of the ultimate sublime object, which reconciles us to the void constituted only through a rift in the void. This sublime object is Christ.

These kinds of philosophical attempts to re-form the foundations on which future socialism might be built are drawing on idealist visions but also on a range of what might be regarded as ‘theo-ethics’ (Cloke, 2009) of otherness, grace, love and hope that constitute an excess beyond material logic and rationale. Thus, both Žižek (2001) and Badiou (2001), for example, express anxiety that contemporary concerns for ‘otherness’ often result in other social groups (such as homeless people) being kept at a geographical and representational distance, attributed the role at best of victim and at worst of criminal, and observed too often through a societal lens of moral detachment and ethical indifference. In contrast, theo-ethical collaborations between philosophy and theology invoke a call to love that involves ‘the mutual recognition of our positive realizations and capacities’ (Milbank, 2005: 399), and have begun to offer prospects for envisaging equality with difference through an ontological lens of faith, hope and charity. Moreover, these ideas are not confined to any particular organizational form or expectation of specific belief. For Derrida (1996) the appeal is to a postmodern, nomadic form of theology that involves a deconstructive grasp of religiosity that represents a radical departure from traditional religious movements. Alternatively, for Žižek (2001) Christianity presents the framework for an idealist materialism.

We want to suggest that both of these philosophical traces are becoming evident in emergent postsecular spaces associated with homelessness in the city. Indeed, we want to suggest that neoliberalism itself has opened up spaces and opportunities for an enactment of this movement beyond secularism in the political arena, and that in particular the deployment of neoliberalizing technologies and the potential for a recasting of appropriate subjectivities have enabled the establishment of postsecular footholds in the city. Most obviously, the age of neoliberal governance has released a resurgence of
faith-based activity into the public sphere (see Beaumont, 2008; Beaumont & Dias, 2008; Cloke et al., 2008) as the disappearance or contracting out of services previously provided by the state has created opportunities for faith-groups to fill the gap, with the result that FBOs have become increasingly influential as part of the wider incorporation of third sector organizations into the arenas of welfare policy and practice, including (and especially perhaps) homelessness.

While we recognize that for some the concept of ‘incorporation’ is suggestive of a tendency for FBOs to forsake their theo-ethics and independence in order to take on their role in the (neoliberal) state apparatus, we want to explore the possibility that such incorporation also allows an infiltration of these very theo-ethics and postsecular possibilities into the public arena. Thus, our analysis of New Labour’s Compacts with the third sector, for example, suggests that these Compacts went beyond a desire simply to offload the responsibilities (and resources) for welfare provision from the state to third sector providers, and involved instead a recognition of and genuine commitment to the apparent strengths of these groups, including FBOs, in terms of local awareness, expertise, creativity and capacity to care. Furthermore, by establishing (some) third sector agencies as appropriate and ‘fit’ partners in governmentality, such Compacts opened up the possibility that the theoethical perspectives held by some of these organizations might be introduced into government and a wider public; promoting practices of charity and care and a renewed culture of active community.

Of course, we would also note that any such formal introduction of a theo-ethics very often leads to conflict in a context where the tendering process at both national and local levels remains suffused with secularist attitudes. Thus, as we show in chapter 5, for example, many local authorities clearly remain suspicious of, if not openly hostile towards, FBOs operating in the homelessness sector – mainly because of a fear that such organizations have not yet renounced the desire to proselytize. Questions also remain over whether the willingness of other local authorities to work with FBOs is representative of a new recognition of the additional and intrinsic values that a faith-based approach brings to the work that such organizations do, and the care they offer to homeless people, or a more cynical requisition of the resources (infrastructure, expertise and – volunteer as well as paid – labour) FBOs can offer the local state.

These questions notwithstanding, it is clear that within a new neoliberal framework of governance, FBOs now play a prominent role in different areas of welfare provision, especially for homeless people. Moreover, despite the very real risk that the incorporation of FBOs into such a system will reduce their ability to protest against that system, there is also evidence (see Cloke et al., 2008) that in some sectors at least FBOs have developed significant roles in related capacity building, lobbying and political protest. Thus Lowndes and Chapman (2005), for example, suggest that such groups
have significant motivational linkages to their communities, and are more generally seeking to translate normative religious values into ethical impulses of love, joy, peace, charity, equality and so on, which can then be harnessed in areas of welfare, community cohesion and ethical citizenship. FBOs can also be recognized as some of the last remaining islands of social capital in some urban communities (Baker & Skinner, 2006) and bring potential resources (buildings, volunteers, social leadership and so on) to bear in local welfare activity.

Our argument here, then, is not that FBOs have suddenly introduced wholesale new values and ways of working into the welfare system. Clearly, involvement in partnerships of governance may well dilute or force into the background the very theo-ethical faith motivations that formed the basis of their existence. FBOs can find themselves locked into centrally controlled ways of operating, becoming ‘insider’ organizations by accepting government funding, along with the strings attached to that funding, and in so doing they can find that their ethos and their character can change. Alternatively, FBOs can operate as outsider organizations, working on shoe-string budgets and relying heavily on volunteers, and thus finding themselves dismissed as amateur players in the new professionalized world of service provision. We do argue, however, that the foothold established by FBOs in the field of urban welfare, and homelessness in particular, offers two kinds of postsecular possibility.

First, although organizations can be incorporated into neoliberal governmentality, individuals within those organizations are often less bound into the technologies and ideologies of these governmentality, while the very presence of FBOs permits new ways of performatively bringing care and welfare into being at ground level (see also Conradson, 2003). Thus new spaces of care can emerge out of seemingly incorporated partnership. Second, as well as at the level of state and society, FBOs open out the possibility for local-level rapprochement between the secular and the religious. Here, we refer to the ways in which faith-motivated organizations will often come to form a nexus of participation that embraces a range of different people with different motivations across the faith/non-faith divide. Spaces of care can represent literal spaces of rapprochement, as people of many faiths or none work alongside each other in particular projects of ethical citizenship. These comings together may be pragmatic or deliberately collaborative, but they nevertheless open out possibilities of performatively bringing the postsecular into being as previously divisive barriers between secular and faith approaches are broken down. Such rapprochement demands not only new respect for faith motivation among secular society, but also a willingness among faith communities to embrace new forms of postsecular faith-ethics, reflecting an ‘overt metaphysical/religious pluralism’ in public life so as to forge a ‘positive engagement out of the multicultural plurality of contemporary life’ (Connolly, 1999: 185). At the local
level, then, and perhaps in more aggregate form, this collaborative activity can lead to a shift in the state’s ‘secularist self-understanding’ (de Vries, 2006: 3). Much, however, depends both on the willingness of secular groups to accept faith-based responses, and on the willingness of religious groups to embrace new forms of faith-motivated praxis, which can equally reach out across the divide between faith and the secular.

The ebb and flow of faith praxis

The idea of postsecular rapprochement suggests that there are new opportunities for faith groups to bring their own brands of salt, light, fragrance and flavour back into the heart of the polity provided that they too are willing to embrace the demands of postsecular faith-ethics in which virtue is placed in a new and positive relation to difference, such that faith-motivated service is characterized by the performance of caritas without strings (Coles, 1997) rather than by conversion-oriented evangelism. Here we illustrate the religious side of the postsecular rapprochement with reference to Christianity – currently the most prevalent religious influence in providing services for homeless people in Britain (Johnsen with Fitzpatrick, 2009). But we freely acknowledge that the multicultural nature of the contemporary city requires that discussion of the public positioning of faith needs to take account of a range of different religions, and of the various ways in which the fundamentalisms induced during the secular era have been transformed into wider, more plural, theo-ethics through which the punitive handling of social ‘others’ can be transformed into a more humane recognition of the needs of different groups of people. Christian adaptations to and for the postsecular are themselves also manifold, but we focus here on two particular attributes that help to define the Christian response to practising faith in post-Christendom in such a way as to contribute to the postsecular rapprochement and its critique of fundamentalism: the search for the hyperreal; and theology through praxis.

First, the search for the possibilities of what is invisible rather than visible has in part entailed a seeking out of aspects of faith, religion and spirituality that offer what Caputo (2001: 91) has termed the ‘hyperreal’ – a reality beyond the visible, extending out from the restricted range of possibilities recognized within modernity. Caputo has argued that the search for the hyperreal will be frustrated among what he describes as the all-knowing, God-substituting certainties of fundamentalist religion, and suggests that instead some faith-motivated people are embracing a more ‘not-knowing’ outlook to faith, involving endless translatability between God and love, beauty, justice and truth, in which worship is integrally interconnected with transformation – both of the individual worshipper, and of the society in which they are placed. In Caputo’s terms, then, faith is an enactment – a
leap of love into this hyperreality – and finds its shape in the contradiction and reversing of human and cultural drives, in drawing on invisible powers and being ‘left hanging on a prayer for the impossible’ (Caputo, 2001: 136). It is interesting how the critique of secularism in terms of an inability to grasp the invisible can be connected with a renewed interest in ‘spiritual landscapes’ (Dewsbury & Cloke, 2009) and the emergence of a new sense of sacred within the postsecular, to be found in

anarchic effects produced by re-sacralizing the settled secular order, disturbing and disordering the disenchanted world, producing an anarchic chaomos of odd brilliant disturbances, of gifts that spring up like magic in the midst of scrambled economies. (Caputo, 2006: 291; see also Bartley, 2006)

Moreover, when Caputo illustrates the enactment of these uncertain leaps of love into the hyperreal, he is drawn to the ways in which faith-motivated people serve the excluded and the marginalized:

Religious people, the ‘people of God’, the people of the impossible, impassioned by a love that leaves them restless and unhinged … are impossible people. In every sense of the word. If, on any given day, you go into the worst neighbourhoods of the inner cities of most large urban centres, the people you will find there serving the poor and needy, expending their lives and considerable talents attending to the least amongst us, will almost certainly be religious people – evangelicals and Pentecostalists, social workers with deeply held religious convictions, Christian, Jewish and Islamic, men and women, priests and nuns, black and white. They are the better angels of our nature. They are down in the trenches, out on the streets, serving the widow, the orphan, and the stranger, while the critics of religion are sleeping in on Sunday mornings. (Caputo, 2001: 92)

Of course, this picture needs to be made realistic. Caputo also shows us how faith motivates people who are lovers of the impossible, and who will often be led to practise their passion in situations of social, economic or political need, but who in the process can become impossible people capable of imposing their knowledge of God on others, and in so doing potentially compromising the freedoms of people who disagree with them. However, his identification of an active search for the hyperreal seems to us to conjure up one of the forces that underlies the attractiveness of spirituality in key postsecular spaces, especially those spaces of service to disadvantaged people of whom those suffering homelessness have become iconic.

We need to emphasize here that there is much more to contemporary religion than a search for the hyperreal. Indeed, it would be foolish to minimize the huge diversity of theology, ritual and culture at work here. However, there is a second trend of some current religious practice that we believe is helping to contribute both to faith-motivated service in society and to the emergent conditions for postsecular spaces in cities. This is the
growing importance of *praxis* as a central facet of the expression of faith. Oakley (2005) argues that an intrigue with the possibilities of the invisible will often be interconnected with an intrigue with the possibilities of ethical practice – many faith communities are realizing more than ever that theology per se is inaccessible without attention to the key practices that constitute and realize that theology (Hutter, 1997). As a result, some sections of the Christian church, for example, are becoming more radicalized by intentional forms of discipleship based on the theo-ethics of praxis. Dissatisfaction with how the church can be drawn into the worldliness of individual self-centredness, excess and unthinking consumerism, and uncaring globalization, has led some faith communities to live out a rediscovery of Jesus-values as self-imposed ‘exiles’ within the ‘empire’ of secularized political economy and culture. As Frost (2006) has argued, old-fashioned church cultures of respectability and conservatism remain, but some Christian communities – across the spectrum of denominations and settings – have become uncomfortable with these cultures and have embraced more radical forms of discipleship and pursued new agendas for ‘exile’ faith-praxis.

As we have discussed at length elsewhere (see Cloke, 2009), there is no clear pathway from these biblical foundations and understandings of Jesus-values to a particular ethics of contemporary praxis. Overrigid foundationalism can lead to tyrannical and dangerous fundamentalism, while extreme postmodernism can lead to uncompromising relativism. However, there is evidence that the formulation of contemporary faith practice is increasingly leaning on a mix of tradition and immanence in the form of virtue ethics. In philosophical terms, the contribution of faith-ethics to the postsecular compact is at least in part that ‘the Christian mythos is able to rescue virtue from deconstruction into violent agnostic difference’ (Milbank, 2006: 380).

In practical terms, virtue has been placed in a new and positive relation to difference in order to validate liberty and equality. Christian charity is being reproduced as relational love and friendship, a gratuitous and creative practice of service without strings, rather than with proselytizing as the core purpose. This focus on the counter-ethics of duty, virtue and service means that faith-motivated practice – for example, in the provision of services for homeless people – becomes less exclusive and exclusionary, and opens up possibilities of joining with other ethically motivated groups of people in a common cause of service, once again enhancing the possibilities of emergent spaces of postsecular rapprochement.

We need to express two brief caveats here. First, we do not suggest that faith-motivation is somehow dumbed down by engagement in postsecular partnership. On the contrary, Christian theo-ethics of hope present particular imaginative manoeuvres – including the possibility of the prophetic, the possibility of engaging spiritual interiority and the possibility of alternative discernment (see Cloke, 2009) – that prompt particular illumination of current landscapes, practices and circumstances, and release particular poetics of resistance into postsecular rapprochements. These specificities can in some
circumstances also continue to present an air of exclusivity that can hamper alliances with potential partners. Second, it would be erroneous to suggest that there is any homogeneous positioning of faith and faith groups in urban landscapes of postsecularism. Within the wide variety of faith-practice in the city, there will be many religious manifestations that have little to do with the possibilities of hyperreality, or of ethical and prophetic praxis, let alone the resacralizing of the settled order via anarchic disturbance. Indeed, outworkings of traditional fundamentalist faith within an emerging postsecular environment will quite correctly be subject to continuing wider critiques of fundamentalism in religion (see Herriot, 2008). Some faith groups, then, will not display the kind of ‘no-strings’ generosity and service that might otherwise mark them out as formative to a new and more postsecular way of working. So what we are pointing to here is a partial, uneven and variable possibility that faith-motivated groups will join with others in third spaces in the city where a common ground can be established in the pursuit of ethical ideals and practical service. While such rapprochements have existed in the past, they may now be more widespread and centrally positioned in the formal and informal landscapes of welfare provision in the city.

**Postsecular Caritas and Serving Homeless People**

We have explored the possibilities of emergent postsecular spaces in the city at some length because we believe that they point to a missing link in the conceptualization of contemporary homelessness in Britain. Any picture of vicious or uncaring control and containment of homeless people by political and social elites must be tempered by recognition of an opposing social and political urge to care for and serve homeless people in recognition of their plight as ‘the least of these’, as the most clearly indicative victims of the current societal malaise. Postsecularism begins to identify the reasons why individuals and organizations become involved in the task of caring for, or serving, homeless people, but further substantiation is required of the degree to which the motivations of ground-level service providers match with this postsecularization thesis. As an aid to this process of substantiation, we sought information from managers involved in running day centres and hostels for homeless people about the mission statements and motivational frameworks that applied to their organizations. A full account of this part of our project is provided elsewhere (Cloke et al., 2005), but here we summarize the findings in terms of how they reflect the components of a potential emergence of postsecular spaces.

It seems to us incontrovertible that non-statutory organizations are of crucial importance in the landscape of services for homeless people. It is equally clear from the materials sent to us that the involvement of these organizations, and of the professionals and volunteers associated with them,
is undergirded by strong and deliberate statements of ‘mission’ or ‘values’. Thus this crucial segment of welfare services can be seen as being upheld by organizations and individuals who, at least on the surface, are working with clear, but interestingly divergent, discourses of ethos, which present ethical bases for involvement and action.

In focusing on the ethos of organizations serving homeless people we are immediately aware of the potential pitfalls inherent in any universalist assumptions about accepting expressions of ethos at face value. Statements of ethos from organizations will be designed for external consumption, will attract widely varying levels of allegiance from staff and volunteers, and therefore will not necessarily be carried through into the spaces of care that are formed by the activities of the organizations and those who are served by them. Indeed, and as we show in chapter 4, there is considerable evidence of significant diversity between organizational mission statements, the reasons why individuals participate and the characteristics that shape an individual’s day-to-day involvement. As Scott et al. (2000: 18) argue in the case of voluntary participation more generally:

> volunteering is a complex matter … it may not even be very voluntary in many situations. The contingencies of how people become involved in voluntary groups, and stay involved or leave, are likely to be different in different circumstances and for different people. Volunteers are not all the same, and the immediate social context or milieu will also be different.

We are equally aware that statements of corporate positionality can only ever be a partial recognition or knowing of subjectivity (Rose, 1996), and may even represent a deliberate attempt to fashion an artificial and often flattering image of the self (Pile & Thrift, 1995), thus conjuring up moral rhetorics where in reality actions and affects may be more knowingly self-serving or instinctive. Nevertheless, we believe that the discourses of ethos presented by organizations providing services for homeless people both present important insights into contemporary charitable assemblages of ethics-at-work and more specifically present important articulations of how the ‘self’ of the service-provider relates to the ‘other’ of homeless people.

Recent ethical cartographies (for example, Sack, 1997; Proctor & Smith, 1999; Smith, 2000) have mapped out a range of moral terrains in which the self is related to the other in contexts such as providing services for homeless people. Such landscapes are waymarked by key differentials; for example, between caring ‘about’ and ‘caring for’, and between ‘caring for locally’ and ‘caring at a distance’. To some extent, in what appears to some as a world of increasing self-preoccupation, issues of justice and ethical responsibility are brightly illuminated both by the suffering of the marginalized and oppressed and by evidence of responses to such suffering that demonstrate a ‘going-beyond-the-self’ (Cloke, 2002). Thus in the homelessness
sector, it would seem that new forms of selfless responsibility, freedom and resistance are being expressed for the benefit and inclusion of homeless people in the form of recognizable collective action, fuelled by ideological, charitable, spiritual and volunteering motives.

However, such exhibitions of going-beyond-the-self can be subjected to a range of analytical interpretation. At one extreme the self–other relations involved can be viewed through the lens of what Allahyari (2000: 4) has termed ‘moral selving’; that is, the work of ‘creating oneself as a more virtuous, and often spiritual person’. In this way, what seems to be a going-beyond-the-self is more properly explained as a reinventing of the self, with resulting charitable effects. An alternative interpretative perspective is to regard charitable or caring involvements as a reasoned or instinctive reaching out beyond self-interest – what Augé (1998) terms a ‘sense for the other’ via an appreciation of otherness that is emotional, connected and committed. Any such sense for the other may involve attempts to achieve partnerships of solidarity via participation and involvement in the world of the other, as well as the establishment of spaces of care in which the other is expected to come into the world of the self. Gutierrez (1988: 73) has even suggested that this kind of going-beyond-the-self should be interpreted in terms of whether the self is attempting to convert the other into the world of the self, or whether the self is willing to be converted by the other, through a commitment ‘to enter and in some cases remain in the universe of the poor with a much clearer awareness, making it a place of residence and not simply of work’. In other words, solidarity with the other may require a deprivation of some of the normal comforts of the self.

Drawing on Coles’s (1997) rethinking of the politics of generosity, we conducted discourse analysis to examine organizational statements of ethos in terms of three ideal types – Christian caritas, secular humanism and postsecular charity – in an attempt to examine evidence of emergent postsecular spaces in the city. We looked at ethical discourses found in information provided by the surveyed organizations running 101 hostels and 48 day centres in England, Scotland and Wales, recognizing these not as a statistical sample (as there is considerable variation in the likelihood of different kinds of organization producing literature and publishing their ethos or mission statement), but as an indicative grouping demonstrating qualitative insight into the discourses concerned.

**Christian caritas**

In his exploration of the possibilities for an ethics and politics of what he calls ‘receptive generosity’, Coles argues that there have been two principal pathways to the ethical prompting of charity. The first stems from movements rooted in various forms of Christian religion that have acted out love (agape)
and charity (caritas) as God-ordained principles and God-given gifts that provide a key ethical framework for living in the world of the self and the world of the other. Coles (1997: 2) characterizes these Christian roots thus:

God is the very movement of *caritas* and *agape*, and these qualities infuse the being of his gift: namely, all of creation as the temporal elaboration of his word. We, of his loving gift, have been given his Son, who through the Gospels exemplifies the incarnation of *caritas* and teaches us how to receive God’s love and in turn proliferate giving. To receive and follow this path, to faithfully interpret God’s signs and love one’s neighbour, is to ‘be fruitful and multiply’. ... It is thus through receiving and giving that we participate in the unfolding of his gift and being, whereas to reject the flow of *caritas* is to tend towards nothingness.

The outworking of this theology of caritas can take many forms, and here we wish to highlight some frequent misunderstandings of terms such as proselytism and evangelism (see also chapter 4). FBOs are often accused of proselytising, which we would define in terms of a strategic and tactical intention to convert the other into a new set of religious beliefs, rituals and practices. In fact, they might more accurately be analysed in terms of varying approaches to evangelism; that is, the sharing of the Christian faith. Evangelism can involve varying forms of relationships with service users, ranging from an overt emphasis on soul/spirit as essential facets in the practice of a regime of care, through an open sharing of a faith-motivation that explains involvement in service provision, to an outpouring of unconditional love and care – a living out of faith that produces ‘service without strings’. Different strategies of evangelism and service are further complicated by cross-cutting variations in attitudes towards the causes of social problems, ranging from an emphasis on the individual’s responsibility for their own situation to a focus on the structures that entrap the individual. To some extent the jumbling of the three categories of ethical impulse discussed by Coles means that using these categories as analytical frames is somewhat artificial. However, as Coles (1997: 5) himself recognizes, the contemporary charitable terrain is ‘deeply permeated’ by Christianity and modern autonomous subjectivity, and our surveys do demonstrate clear evidence of organizational mission statements that declare elements of Christian ethos. For example, 40 of the 101 hostels and 20 of the 48 day centres for which detailed information was available presented an unambiguous Christian basis for the service being provided.

In summary, we found that these discourses of Christian faith-in-action point to a significant and characteristic involvement in contemporary charity. It is clear that a considerable segment of the landscape of emergency services for homeless people is motivated by Christian caritas, and that charity is predominantly associated with different forms of evangelism in terms of the connections made between biblical precepts of love and care, and the practical need to serve homeless people. However, the terms charity
and caritas are themselves unpopular in these discourses, with expression of agape/love being far more appealing to the organizations concerned. This distinction of appeal is not explained by the organizations concerned but on this evidence it would appear that so far as contemporary Christianity is concerned, generosity is constructed as far more love-orientated than charitable, perhaps indicating either some acquiescence to the secularization of ‘charity’ and the recasting of generosity around the more exclusive Christian prompting of agape-love, and/or an unease with the ways in which Christian caritas may be perceived by others as necessarily associated with ‘strings’.

It also seems inevitable that people concerned with establishing, managing and volunteering in these organizations will to some extent be involved in moral selving, but the scale and intensity of involvement required to run these services suggests a very significant going-beyond-the-self, with the giving of finance and time representing responses that are not without cost to the giver. This going-beyond-the-self in order to prioritize the needs of homeless people suggests a strong sense of homeless people as other, and the ways in which those involved are prompted to act – often in a sustained fashion – suggests at least a partial sense for the other that is committed, connected and emotional as described by Gutierrez (1988) (and see chapter 4). The involvements of service providers will range from short-term low-cost, to life-changing self-commitment, and where the latter occurs there may well be indications of some conversion for the other. However, any such self-conversion on the part of service providers does not seem to involve a downplay of their underlying faith-based ethos.

For some, but by no means all, FBOs the moral impulse of Christian caritas can be to elevate spiritual needs alongside more commonly recognized physical and emotional needs. In one sense this represents a non-recognition of alterity – a potential imposition of the Christian worldview onto homeless people – although most organizations emphasize the non-discriminatory and individual sensitivity of their work. To some extent Christians reflect a sense of receptive generosity, in their claim to enhance homeless people’s capacity to receptively and generously engage the world, although their faith-based action inevitably treads a fine line between caring enhancement and oppression – as the faith ethic leads to a being commanded by a receptivity to the spiritual as well as the physical needs of the other, and thereby risks the enforcement of the spiritual onto the other.

Secular humanism

Coles’s (1997) second pathway to the ethical prompting of charity arises from the replacement of God-centred philosophies with those which centre on human beings and their political and economic institutions. This excision of biblical influence has not been as easy as it might seem, as ‘secular
efforts adopt many of the contours of the very religion that provokes the crisis to which they are a response’ (Coles, 1997: 8), and we can assume that many organizations and individuals prompted by humanist motives and ethos will be influenced by, and sympathetic to, Christian principles of giving, justice and mercy, even if refusing to accept the ‘God-trick’ that sources these principles. The core of a secular humanist approach is reasoned altruism that conjures up justice-based understandings of charity and philanthropy. In different ways, secular humanists display a reasoned acceptance of beneficence and benevolence both as a disposition or virtue and as a principle, rule or ideal. As Frankena (1987) suggests, this essential difference allows charity to be underpinned by moral value judgements, or by character and instinct, according to the preference for principles, and dispositions.

Again it should be emphasized in this context that the separation of the Christian and the secular is often indistinct in organizations offering emergency services to homeless people. Several of the statements of ethos received in our surveys indicated a deliberate partnership of church, state and voluntary organizations coming together with a more general ethos of service for homeless people (see also chapters 4, 5 and 6). This may partly be due to a gathering of interested groups and individuals in a particular locale, and partly because individuals often look to an existing project as a vehicle for their involvement even if the specific ethos of that project does not provide an exact match for their personal motivation. As a result, it is often difficult to disentangle Christian and secular ethos in the organizational statements surveyed. The overtly Christian philosophy discussed above is clearly non-secular, but many of the strands of seemingly secular ethos in these statements apply to a range of organizations – non-Christian, Christian and partnerships between these categories. Indeed, we suggest that Christian and secular ethos will often invite similar views about the rights of the individual and the provision of services to the needy (see also Johnsen with Fitzpatrick, 2009).

Discourses of secular charity-in-action suggest that much of the underlying ethos of services for homeless people relies on ‘given’ notions of basic human rights and rules of social justice that are fashioned into the provision of safe shelter for individuals who are to be accepted as themselves, non-judgementally. Within these services there is a range of approaches to realizing the potential of the individual for self-sufficiency, with some sense that individuals need to be helped or empowered to solve their own problems, but a wider rationale of easing the marginalized back into the system which has previously failed them. These approaches appear similar to those adopted in avowedly Christian organizations, save for the absence of a spiritual dimension in holistic recovery. Indeed, it is clear that there is substantial overlap between humanistic and Christian ethos here, with the different philosophical roots often producing similar values. These statements of
ethos convey a strong sense of the other, and equally a substantial suggestion of being for the other to a degree that cannot simply be explained by moral or social selving. There is clear scope here for the kinds of postsecular rapprochements discussed above, perhaps revolving around particular understandings of, and strategies for, empowerment and acceptance of homeless people.

Postsecular charity

Coles’s critique of both Christian caritas and secular charity centres on their roots of self-identification of what is true, just, valuable and right. Whether inspired by God, or encased in modern rational subjectivity, the ‘giving’ of charity originates from the self and thereby often discriminates against the recipient. Coles (1997: 2) puts it like this:

Perhaps this self-origination is sometimes understood better as an internally differentiated dynamic flow, a giving always moving beyond itself, and in this sense less stable than a self-identity. Yet even as in some sense dynamic, even in its movement, the fount of giving is self-identical insofar as this flow does not receive – and even precludes reception of – alterity. The archetypes of giving have been profoundly divorced from receiving. Many understandings do not admit the possibility that God or the transcendental subject can receive anything radically other.

Thus, for Coles, Christian caritas is in fact regarded as inextricably bound into an imaginary frame that is unable to recognize the radical alterity in those who live beyond, or reject, the Christian metanarrative. Conversion of, rather than conversion for, is the apparent motif of caritas. Recent reworkings of the ideas of caritas and agape (see Vattimo, 1999; Žižek, 2000) try to answer exactly this charge, by insisting that charity and love should be seen as self-suppressing duties, which represent hard work rather than soft romantic notions (see Cloke, 2002). At a more practical level, a common critique of charitable Christian organizations such as the Salvation Army is that they represent institutions of oppressive social control (see, for example, Anderson, 1923; Wallace, 1965; Spradley, 1970; Wiseman, 1979; Snow & Anderson, 1993). Staffed by supposedly zealous proselytizers, and used only as a place of last resort by homeless people themselves, the Salvation Army’s caritas can be presented as a giving that is totally self-identical, and blind to the alterity of its receivers. Such stereotyping often reflects the historical circumstances of the Salvation Army, which has in many ways reinvented itself in response to such critiques. As a result these lingering stereotypes have been strongly challenged; for example, in Himmelfarb’s (1991) account, which articulates the Salvation Army as a site of radical
inspiration as well as social regulation, though the emphasis remains on what can be given rather than on receptivity to otherness.

Equally, secular humanism is regarded by Coles as providing the moral foundational narratives that underpin the failures of modern liberal societies to deal adequately with otherness. Charitable giving centred on the identity of the rational subject can be linked to the civilizing of the uncivilized, the making respectable of the irresponsible, and the fetishization of moral righteousness and autonomy, and as such can be oblivious to the need for receptivity of alterity. The very reasonableness of justice and charity can obscure the fact that underlying judgements are allied to the reason of the time and place concerned, which may well neglect those – such as homeless people – who somehow fall outside that reason. In Connolly’s (1999) critique of Rawls, for example, he asks the question: how is reasonableness attained, and on what logic is it grounded? His answer in reading Rawls is that ‘Rawls says the disposition comes from a fortunate cultural tradition that already embodies it’ (Connolly, 1999: 144). That is, what is reasonable is grounded in itself, when that sense of reason is widely shared in a culture. In such circumstances, access to the other of the other (Doel, 1994) is blocked by the targeting of reason to the other of the same. These issues of justice and reasonableness are key factors in charitable responses to homelessness. Recent debates over whether it is reasonable and just to get homeless people ‘off the street’ (Fitzpatrick & Jones, 2005), for example, identify potential discrimination against the other of the ‘on-street’ other (often excluded both regulationally and representationally in terms of begging and criminality) as opposed to the other of the ‘off-street’ same (the compliant homeless person engaging with the services provided to keep them off the street).

Given these presumed failures of Christian caritas and secular charity to deal with alterity, Coles proposes a postsecular charity that encompasses a receptive generosity, whereby giving involves the ability to receive the specificity of the other and to be generous in the context of that specificity rather than in the context of the self. This he explains as follows:

Giving must navigate the tensions between receptively addressing the other’s extant perspectives, desires, and joys, on the one hand, and responding to them in ways that might enhance the other’s capacity to receptively and generously engage the world, on the other. Ignoring the former imperative leads to blind imperialism; ignoring the latter leads to a slackening of the will to resist and move beyond the life-stunting limits of present beings. (Coles 1997: 105)

Postsecular charity is thus distinguished by its rejection of universalist reason, and its espousal of more phenomenological appreciations of what is ethically right, good or sound in particular circumstances. In the terms argued by Levinas (1994, 1998), the ethics of these rights, wrongs and
soundnesses arise from the interconnectedness of responsibility between self and other. Lives lived in social interaction with the other will produce intersubjective ethics prior to any mediated rules of social justice (Popke, 2003). Bauman (1993) draws on Levinas in his account of the postmodern moral crisis and emphasizes both a loss of faith in traditional ethical networks and the importance of the ability to choose between differing ethical systems. In understanding choice as an innate human capacity, Bauman also urges the deployment of asymmetrical moral stances involving an active being for the other regardless of whether the other is for us. As such there is no expectation of reciprocity. In one sense, the unconditional responsibility seems to free the moral self from heterogeneous laws and reciprocal expectations, but in another sense the moral self is commanded by the other.

Bauman exposes here the intricate balancing act inherent in Cole’s proposal for receptive generosity. Being for the other, if advanced with undue vigour, can become tyrannical and oppressive; non-discrimination can be seen in some senses as a neutralizing of the other, involving failure to take full account of the otherness of the other to influence pre-existing categories of deservedness. Thus, being commanded by the other demands an interpretation or translation of the needs of the other, which can lead to personal moral impulses being enforced on the other. Generosity in the context of being for the other means treading a fine line between care and oppressing, especially when practical enactments of being for the other are rationalized from the perspective of the self.

Conclusions

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the ethos statements of organizations providing emergency services for homeless people show little sign of the depth of postsecularism for which Coles (1997) argues. In one sense, it is to be expected that organizational statements will tend to universalize their attitudes towards avoiding discrimination and recognizing the importance of alterity, but these certainly do not reflect empirical evidence of the relational and reciprocal form taken by alterity. Of course, any move towards postsecular charity is anyway most likely to be witnessed and analysed at the level of day-to-day performances and interactions between staff, volunteers and homeless people. Although there are reasons to suggest that the sacrificial giving of self and time by paid and voluntary workers in hostels and day centres is likely to represent something more than moral selving, at least in some cases, it is only in these human interactions, and the spaces of care they produce, that any assessment can be made of the degree to which workers are attempting to convert the other (to their sense of rationality, respectability, responsibility and so on), or conversely are converting themselves to other ways of seeing the world. The fine line between care and
oppression cannot be judged by organizational ethos; instead it will only be
evident in the smaller-scale ethical practices brought into being in the vari-
ous spaces of care that populate the homeless service landscape – hence our
exploration of exactly these spaces in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Furthermore, the discursive accounts of organizational ethos outlined
here and in subsequent chapters anyway call into question whether Coles’s
(1997) three categories of generosity accurately reflect the principal fault
lines that differentiate between the approaches to providing services for
homeless people in contemporary Britain. In our work we have discovered
Christian organizations functioning in a secular humanist world, sometimes
appearing to reflect varying degrees of alterity, working alongside partner-
ship projects involving both Christian and non-Christian organizations and
individuals, working alongside secular organizations that often draw (impi-
citly at least) on principles comparable to those expressed by Christians, and
displaying wide variations in terms of professionalism, expectations of social
responsibility on behalf of clients and rules-based regimes. Viewed in this
way, the historically ordered categories advanced by Coles seem to have
become rather jumbled in the postsecular arena. So while, for example,
there appear to be obvious distinctions between organizations that are avow-
edly Christian and those that are not, the significant diversity within the
‘avowedly Christian’ grouping may in some cases be of greater significance
than differences between Christian and non-Christian organizations.

As we show, rather than Coles’s ideal typical formations, the principal
fault line evident in this book appears to reflect the divisive moralities that
desire or expect particular behaviour on the part of the homeless recipients
of service. We recognize two main types of service that encapsulate an expec-
tation that homeless people will change their way of living. The first (and in
our experience rare) type, associated with an ethos that involves overt faith-
sharing, unashamedly signals the purposeful conversion of the other, as
spiritual needs are elevated alongside more commonly recognized physical
and emotional needs. Here Coles’s (1997) critique of potential oppression
and tyranny is inherently challenged because this holistic response is
believed by its advocates to be the most suitable way of enhancing the
capacity of the other to engage receptively with the world. The second,
which is evident in both secular and Christian organizations, reflects an
expectation that homeless people will raise their levels of self-endeavour
and self-responsibility, and represents an ethos where care is only given in
return for deliverable changes in attitude and lifestyle.

Both of these forms of expectation levied on homeless people contrast
markedly with an alternative form of service, drawing on secular and
Christian participation, which lays no moral expectation on service clients.
Here, care is provided regardless of individual response – there is no under-
lying motive of conversion to Christianity or of enforced abandonment of
particular aspects of a homeless lifestyle – and it may well be that such services
are better equipped to recognize, rather than subdue, the alterity of the homeless people concerned. It is this last category that particularly reflects emergent spaces of *postsecular care* in the city. Nonetheless, in all cases we can begin to discern a praxis of care that counterposes any conceptual assumptions about punitive urbanisms and vicious geographies of control and containment, and repudiates the universality of conceptual frameworks of revanchist and postjustice urbanisms.