The London School of Economics and Political Science

Upcoming movements: young people, multiculture, marginality and politics in Outer East London

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Declaration

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Conventions

The writing conventions used in this thesis are based on the *Ethnic and Racial Studies* template (2012).

Abstract

This thesis is a long-term ethnography produced in and around three Outer East London youth clubs. Addressing the contemporary intersection between urban multiculture, marginalisation and youth politics, it tells the stories of about a hundred young people living in Newham between 2008 and 2012. Drawing on a variety of ethnographic and textual materials, these themes develop through four substantive areas of concern. The first challenges 'Golden Era' accounts of East London by engaging with the memory practices of young people and youth workers in Newham. It argues for a deeper understanding of the 'traced' processes of 'becoming white' and an appreciation of the potential of diaspora mnemonics. In the context of 'the cuts' in public spending, the second explores the politics of territory in and around Leyham Youth Club. Using a multi-scalar analysis, it argues that the criminalisation of young people's public spaces, through neo-liberal and neo-communitarian forms of governance, needs to be understood alongside the micro-politics of territory. The third investigates the claim that young people's public productions are sold-out and nihilistic. Engaging with a range of music, video and dance projects, it argues that while young people made use of commercialised and nihilistic aesthetics, their work was still meaningful and political. Through a discussion of performance, citation and new technologies of dialogue, the chapter further argues for a re-assessment of academic understandings of cultural syncretism. The fourth area addresses young people's futural projections. It explores how 'aspirational' futures depended on the marginalisation of other futures. Through a discussion of hip hop videos, it also shows how, beyond this binary, young people projected alternative futures. The thesis concludes by restating its commitment to ethnography as a method that can address and engage politically with social injustice.

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Introduction

Cycling over the River Lea I left behind Canary Wharf's monuments to capitalist wealth and entered a residential landscape once replete with its own symbols of industrial global power. For over a hundred years, this crossing between Tower Hamlets and Newham, in its various forms (Bloch 1998), had separated the inner city from the fringe. Twice a week, for two years I made this journey. To the immediate north were warehouses and chimneystacks (the remnants of the industrial Dockside) and the start of the Olympic development; to the south, the dockland Excel centre and the reclaimed marshland of Beckton; while the east was dominated by residential properties smattered with high-rise blocks. At this intersection a complex multiculture has grown up through 150 years of constant population, cultural and infrastructural change. This thesis is a story of the hundred or so young people who lived at this crossing-point between 2007 and 2012, and whom I got to know while working at three Newham youth clubs.

Newham occupies a particular place in popular and academic imaginaries. Through the docks and the Blitz, it is often associated as the home of the white working-class; as a font of British pluck, luck and courage (Gilroy 2004). On the basis of its super-diverse demographics (Vertovec 2006) it is also sometimes celebrated as an example of post-racial conviviality. The youthfulness of its population (LBN 2006b, p.3; LBN 2010a) and the long-term deprivation experienced in the area (LBN 2010b, p.45; Noble et al. 2008, p.86) are a never-ending source of attraction for streams of researchers fantasising about the inevitability, or surprising lack, of urban conflict. However, despite this, very little ethnographic work has been published on the lives of young people living there.

My original contact with Newham came as part of this stream of fetishistic enquiry. Working for a quango,[1] I visited Newham as part of a national programme evaluation. Over two weeks I ate into the time and energy of local youth work professionals before finally producing a report. The report was shared with the relevant central government department, and after

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[1] Quangos (quasi-autonomous, non-governmental organisations) are now known as NDPBs (non-departmental public bodies).

influencing policy makers by telling them what they wanted to hear, I left the job frustrated. At this first attempt, I hadn't really heard what life in Newham meant for the people living there. So, having secured ESRC funding for my PhD, I decided to return, for a second listen.

Arriving back in 2007, it was the end of the New Labour era and the beginning of the 'cuts' in local and national expenditure. Sandwiched between the Summer of Knife Crime 2008, which ran into the 2010 General Election campaign (BBC 2008a; BBC 2008b; Watt 2010),[2] and the Riots in 2011, it became the time when the scourge of urban youth featured prominently in the news. This fieldwork period was also coloured for me and others by the TV show Britain's Got Talent and the success of the streetdance groups Diversity and Flawless. Chris Brown's self-titled debut album (2005a) had gone double platinum and grime artist Giggs was about to release his underground hit *Talking the Hardest* (2009). Alongside cutbacks and criminalisation, these moments too played through young people's lives. Through associated styles, dances and music they navigated their lives, communicated publicly and built political critiques of their marginalisation.

However, moments of less widespread acclaim also resonated through Newham. In 2010, Upcoming Movement, a small hip hop/grime group from Leyham,[3] Newham, released a video for a track called *Kill all a Dem*. Its nihilistic proclamations knitted together the gangster style of Giggs with the Summer of Knife Crime and the 2011 Riots. However, while it seemed to confirm the apolitical and anti-social nature of youth culture, it confounded these claims by drawing attention to many contradictions of urban living. Its promotion of territorial warfare was built on an ethics of sharing. Its communication of black nihilism was made through white

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[2] The media output for the Summer of Knife Crime moral panic was: a Channel 4 dispatches documentary 'Why Kids Kill' (Channel 4 2008b), viral ads on Bebo (Bebo 2009b), a 5,000,000 pound increment to the Tackling Gangs Action programme to tackle knife and gun crime, the Street Weapons Commission headed by Cherie Booth linked to a second high-impact Channel 4 documentary called 'Disarming Britain' (Channel 4 2008a), another Bebo launch and computer game (Bebo 2009a), the News of the World's 'Save our Streets' Road Show and numerous attempts by Gordon Brown (then Prime Minister) and David Cameron (then Leader of the Conservative Party and Official Opposition) to outdo each other on who was going to be tougher on knife crime (BBC 2008a; Mail on Sunday 2008).

[3] The names of places and people have been changed (see Chapter One).

bodies. Its supposedly apolitical character was at odds with its reflexive consciousness and its political challenge to social injustice.

In many ways, Upcoming Movement and *Kill all a Dem* became metaphors for this thesis, proving the necessity for a second listening. This thesis, then, is the story of this second listening. Based on a two-year ethnography of three Outer East London youth clubs, it tells the story of the lives of about a hundred young people. It unpicks how Newham's working-class past shaped their day-to-day existence. It investigates how the new landscapes of Westfield Shopping Centre and Stratford Town sat within their horizons. It addresses how they were criminalised, and how they navigated, resisted and subverted these forms of public marginalisation. It explores young people's politics through their reflexive evaluations and visions beyond injustices. It also considers how young people made rules, friends and negotiated postcode boundaries and narratives of white and autochthonous belonging. But while it explores the antagonistic and convivial character of local interactions it does so with consideration for a multiculture that has shaped itself across 150 years of migration and movement. In this way, it acknowledges the presence of surprising and counterintuitive cosmopolitanisms, and diasporic forms of sharing and collaboration that have flourished in spite of exclusive particularities. This thesis, then, is a story about young people, multiculture, marginality and politics in Outer East London.

To introduce these themes this introductory chapter develops in three parts. The first part provides contextual information on the history of the borough, and its social and economic statistics. These are essential for understanding the location at which this ethnography was produced. The second part situates the thesis within a range of academic debates on multiculture, whiteness, marginalisation and politics. With respect to each of these areas, it addresses how the thesis engages with and advances current understandings of young people in urban Britain. The third part presents the chapter outlines, providing an introduction to the main arguments contained in each element of the thesis.

1. History and social statistics

Living on the fringe: from marshland to migrant metropolis

This thesis is set in a particular geographic, demographic and historical context. Described as the 'outer inner city' (Millington 2011) by some and the 'fringe' by others (Dickens 1857), authors 150 years apart have written on the relation between Newham's social life and its location (Dickens 1857; Hall 2007) (see Figures One and Two).

Prior to 1840, much of the south and west of Newham, in which most of the young people I got to know were living, was unpopulated marshland (Powell 1973). From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, good river and rail transport (LBN 2003) and Newham's position on the fringe of the Metropolitan Building Act and the London County Council (Hall 2007 p.83) brought noxious industry, housing and migration to the area. Industry and cheap housing attracted a new population, and from then onwards people came to the borough from all over this country, indeed the world, as they still do today.[4] Parish records show the dramatic increase in the population of the area. In 1851 the local parish contained 18,870 people. By 1881 it had reached 128,953 and by 1912 it was populated by 300,860 people. This level would be sustained until the 1930s (Vision of Britain No date). By the second decade of the twentieth century there were 335 manufacturing, engineering and construction firms connecting the River Lea to the London docks (Powell 1973). The docks themselves, monuments to Victorian imperialism and colonial trade (Hall 2004), employed thousands of people. Newham was one of the industrial centres of the Empire. Through its sugar refineries, groundnut trade and P&O shipping lines (Bloch 1995) it was a nexus in the colonial web which connected the Caribbean, West Africa, Australia, India and the Middle East to the 'Mother Land'.

Through these trades and others, national and international migrant workers came, stayed and went away, providing cheap labour, as they do today, for global, imperial capitalism. In 1911, 40 per cent of the population of the original parish (half the size of today's borough) had come from outside the area (HMSO 1911). While most were from rural counties to the east and

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[4] Newham is still characterised by cheap housing. In the first quarter of 2010 the median cost for housing in Newham was 219,000 pounds nearly 60,000 pounds cheaper than the median for London. This kind of difference has been maintained over the last thirteen years (CLG and Land Registry 2010).

south-east (considerable journeys for their time), there had also been large influxes of Scots and Irish, and smaller though significant influxes of 'foreigners' – a term used in the census to describe a wider population of non-British migrants. In 1911, 1 per cent of the borough was made up of 'foreigners' (HMSO 1911). Immigrant workers were employed in local industries and lived in local housing. "In 1901 the company of Moore and Nettlefolds … alone employed 150 immigrant workers … By the 1920s most of the shops on the Barking Road were owned by Europeans" (LBN) and Crown Street had been nicknamed 'Draughtboard Alley' because of the mix of black and white people living there (Bloch 1998, p.13).

By 1931, 62 per cent of the population of the borough had been born there, 34 per cent were English but born outside the borough, and the remaining 4 per cent included 2207 Scots, 1327 from the Irish Free State, 450 Indians, 397 Sri Lankans, 1793 Europeans (including 447 Polish and 282 Russians), 168 Canadians, 108 Caribbeans, 200 Australians, 164 Americans and 137 Argentinians (HMSO 1931). Of the 282 Russians, many were Jews fleeing persecution (Bloch 2002, p.13). Three Jewish cemeteries were built in Newham between 1857 and 1919 for the large Jewish population to the west of the borough, in Whitechapel and Spitalfields. By this point, Leyham also hosted the largest black community in London (Bloch 1995, p.40; Bloch 2002, p.13).

From marshland to industrial and colonial hub, World War Two brought further rupture to the borough and the populace. As a result of its central importance to industry and trade, Newham suffered heavy bombing (Aston Mansfield No date, p.11). Many of the foreign seamen who had become part of the life of the area were evacuated and didn't return (Bloch 2002, p.14). A quarter of the houses (over 14,000) were destroyed and through aerial bombardment the landscape was remodelled. Bomb craters (Hobbs 2006, p.121) and temporary Nissen Hut shelters,[5] that became permanent homes, were features of everyday life (Bloch 1998; Harris and Bloch 1995). After the war the landscape underwent another transformation, and 8,000

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[5] The Nissen Hut was generally made of corrugated iron with a metal frame, a wooden door and oiled-cloth widows instead of glass. It was easy to transport and quick to put up. Invented and built as housing for the troops in World War One, its semicircular corrugated-iron shape deflected shrapnel and bomb blasts, making it a perfect wartime shelter (Nissen 2012).

new permanent dwellings were built (Powell 1973. p. 49)[6] to replace the housing stock lost through aerial attack and the continued clearance of the 'slums'. The slums were the 'poor quality' houses of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries built for migrant labourers. To replace the slums, large estates were built first in the low-density 'garden city pattern' before the introduction of high-density blocks (Powell 1973. p.56).

Further change came about through the decline of industry and resulting unemployment. Between the end of World War Two and the early 1960s – the period dubbed the 'Golden Era' (Dench et al. 2006, p.18) – there was nearly full employment. In the following forty years, industrial employment contracted by two-thirds (Hall 2007, p.85). Between 1967 and 1974 employment at the Royal Docks declined from 7,180 to 4,068 positions (Hill 1976, p.2) – the equivalent of 20 per cent of all jobs in the area. The cause was mechanisation, containerisation, changing transit practices and the building of the deep-sea port at Tilbury (Hill 1976, p.3–5; Hobbs 2006, p.122; LBN 1976, p.19). From 1966 to 1976 there were 24,000 job losses in Newham. In 1976, male unemployment stood at 11 per cent and 6,000 people were chasing 300 vacancies (Canning Town Community Development Project 1976). Employment in the borough has never recovered. High levels of unemployment continued through the 1980s and 1990s when the local authority became the largest employer (Hall 2007, p.85). The urban fabric of the borough also continued to be remodelled. Many of the high rise flats built after the Second World War were knocked down and replaced (Canning Town Community Development Project 1976, p.9). New areas of marshland were reclaimed for Beckton's 7,500 new homes (LBN 1980) and the post-industrial dockside heritage converted for private use. This recent phase – connecting the private property of the Excel Centre to the Stratford Eurostar terminal, Westfield Shopping Centre and the Olympic site – has been called the 'Arc of Opportunity' (LBN 2010b, p.16–17) (see Chapter Five of this thesis). The lives of young people in Newham today need to be understood in this context of demographic change, population movement and urban remodelling.

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[6] Slum clearances started in the 1920s and 1930s before being interrupted by the Second World War (Powell 1973, p.5, 49).

Demographics and deprivation

Contemporary statistics on demography and deprivation provide further insight into this fringe condition. However, these statistics need to be treated with care as the picture they provide is as misleading as it is revealing. Just as they can be used to reveal Newham as a place of process, they can be used to de-historicise the borough by fixing it as a snapshot in time. The categories chosen to represent contemporary social life in Outer East London are highly politicised (Hacking 2002). Statistics on immigration are commonly used to enforce ideas of cultural invasion, national debasement and a loss of control; statistics on high proportions of young people are often combined with numbers for deprivation to suggest a society on the edge of a precipice. These interpretive pitfalls were explained to me by Jon Travis in the summer of 2008. Soon to retire, Jon had worked as a youth worker in the borough for most of his professional life, and during the interview, he reflected on what these numbers meant to him. "If you look at the statistics", I said "you can see this is a poor borough with a very high proportion of young people, and a high level of social mobility - in and out of the borough and within the borough." "All the demographics for instability?" he challenged. "Is it true?" I questioned. "I don't think it is", he replied "but if you were to ask me why, I'm not sure I could say." Jon was telling me that despite common misconceptions, Newham was not driven to the edge of a cliff by its demographics; rather these figures served as an entry point to a more nuanced enquiry. It is with these considerations in mind that the following data are presented.

At the time I conducted the research (2007–2012) around 250,000 people were living in Newham (LBN 2010g)[7] and about 80,000 (32 per cent) of them were children and young people aged 0–19 years (LBN 2006b, p.3; LBN 2010a). At 8 per cent higher than the overall figure for London, this factor made Newham the local authority with the highest proportion of young people in the UK, and consequently a borough where understanding the everyday lives of young people matters.

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[7] Depending on the projections used. "The Greater London Authority produces annual population projections for London boroughs, using housing development data to model migration flows" (LBN 2010g). GLA projections put the current population at about 260,000 while Office of National Statistics figures show the population is stable.

The young people I worked with were ethnically diverse, not just in terms of many individual groups, but also in terms of mixed ethnic groups. This diversity and mixedness was evidence of the history of long-term migration to the borough. In 2001, Newham had the largest proportion of non-white ethnic groups in the country (61 per cent) (ONS 2001)[8] and among children and young people (0-19 years old) this ethnic diversity was more pronounced. Seventy-seven per cent of children and young people living in Newham were from 'Black and Minority Ethnic' groups and 23 per cent were 'White British' (LBN 2010a). As testament to the history of migration, the young people that made up this 77 per cent were not recent arrivals. The vast majority had been born in the UK (87 per cent) with only 6 per cent born in Africa and 6 per cent in Asia (LBN 2006b, p.5). The largest minority categories for children and young people in 2001 were 'Black African' (17 per cent) and 'Bangladeshi' (14 per cent) (LBN 2006b, p.4).

This diversity was also not static but was continually reconfigured. Closer inspection of 2001 Census data shows that within the 0–19 age bracket the spread of ethnic diversity by age was uneven. For example, while there was an even spread of 'White' and 'Bangladeshi' young people across the 0–19 age range, the proportion of 'Black African' young people was highest in the 0–4 age bracket (LBN 2006b, p.4). This reflects more recent African migrations to the borough. The 'mixed' ethnic population of the borough was also growing and expected to double in proportion between 2001 and 2016. Again, these changes were registered most strongly among the young. Reflecting recent 'Eastern European' migration,[9] the white population (which already included Irish, Scots, Romany and Greeks) too showed increasing complexity with an increase in the 'Other White' category projected to rise from 4.5 per cent in 2001 to 5.7 per cent in 2007 (LBN 2010g).

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[8] The mixed ethnic population accounted for 3.4 per cent of the population. The 'Asian' population made up 32.5 per cent and the 'Black or Black British' 21.6 per cent. White ethnic groups include 'British' (33.8 per cent), 'Irish' (1.3 per cent) and 'Other White' (4.3 per cent).

[9] In 2004 the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia joined the European Union. Many Eastern European migrants to Newham came from the Republic of Lithuania. Between 2005 and 2006, working-age migrants from this country doubled year on year (LBN 2007) reaching 2,700 in 2006 (LBN 2007). Unofficial estimates were much higher.

The 2009 School Census supports these findings. It shows that 10 per cent of children on the school roll were of 'White British' origin, with 'Asian' (43 per cent) and 'Black' (26 per cent) young people together making up more than two-thirds of the school population. These figures also show 7 per cent of the school population as 'White Other', which included Eastern European young people, again suggesting an increase in line with post-2004 migration. Six per cent of young people in the School Census were 'mixed' (LBN 2010e, p.11). First-language data from the School Census 2007 (LBN 2007b) showed the tenth largest reported first language in Newham's schools was Lithuanian (734 pupils) and Polish was thirteenth (415 pupils). This compares to 13,778 English speakers, 4,244 Bengali, 3,974 Urdu, 1,907 Gujarati, 1,499 Somali, 1,380 Punjabi, 1,300 Tamil, 996 Yoruba, 735 Portuguese and 328 Albanian.

However, demographic changes in Newham were not only on account of young people arriving in the borough and settling down. A number of the young people I worked with moved through circular migration patterns – leaving, coming back and leaving again as family members sought employment in different parts of the world (see Chapter Two). These 'new migrations' did not have the same characteristics as post-war migrations. Whereas Caribbean and Asian immigration of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s was characterised by workers from 'less developed' and post-colonial countries migrating to and settling in the fast-expanding industrial economies of Western Europe, North America and Australia (Castles and Miller 2003, p.68-93 p.68-93), 'new migration'[10] is identified with, among other things, circular migration patterns. Some of the Eastern Europeans who arrived in large numbers[11] post-2004 came, left

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[10] Corresponds with population movements related to events as broad as the collapse of the Berlin Wall (Koser and Lutz 1997), the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the accession of the A8 (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia) and A2 nation-states (Bulgaria and Romania) to the European Union.

[11] In 2007, Poland overtook India as the most common non-British country of citizenship for migrants entering the UK (ONS 2007, cited in CLG 2008, p.12). However, these patterns of settlement and return have undoubtedly been affected by the economic downturn that hit the UK economy in 2008 resulting in job shortages. In 2007, 112,000 people entered the UK from A8 nations and only 25,000 left. In 2008 there were an estimated 89,000 people migrating into the UK from the A8 countries and 68,000 migrating from the UK to the A8 countries (LBN 2010c, p.143).

and returned again (Rutter et al. 2008, p.8).[12] Other young people moved through the migrant labour circuits of the Gulf States before returning to Newham. Consequently, while some children and young people came and settled in Newham, others left and came back again, often more than once.

These demographics were played out in different ways across the three youth clubs. For the most part, the hundred or so young people I worked had been born in East London, though some had their origins in Latin America, Africa, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Asia. Of those born in East London, many were 'mixed' and nearly all had histories of migration that took them, via their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, outside East London to the English regions, to Irish Gipsy and British Romany populations, to Ireland and Scotland, to Greece, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, Kenya, Albania, Romania, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, France, Spain, Portugal, Jamaica, Barbados, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the list went on. Some of these histories were more distant, some more recent, but most within four generations. Some young people passed through Newham from Romania and went 'home' again. Other young people left for Dubai and Saudi Arabia, or to Kenya following their family's labour migrations, but came back 'home' to Newham. Only a small minority were unaware of a family history outside East London.

The fluidity of the borough was also highlighted at regional and local levels, and these local and regional movements contributed to the general 'population churn' (Mayhew 2009 cited in LBN 2010b). Census data from 2001 reveals the extent of movement in and out of Newham. In the twelve months prior to the 2001 Census, 5 per cent of the population had moved within the borough – the highest percentage among all the London boroughs, 6 per cent of the population had arrived from outside Newham, and 6 per cent had left the borough (LBN 2006b, p.5). Again, such movements were increasing and becoming especially prevalent among young people, in particular for the age range 0–15 (LBN 2006b, p.5; Mayhew 2009, cited in LBN 2010b). Many young people I knew had moved house or were planning to move. A 2009 study for Newham Council suggested an increase in these types of mobility. Between 2007 and 2008, "19.5 per cent of the population either migrated into or out of the Borough

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[12] These patterns of migration were made possible by the freedom of movement for A8 nationals in the EU, and desirable because of maximising income through seasonal or temporal work.

compared to a London average of 13.6 per cent" (Mayhew 2009, cited in LBN 2010b, p.13). In 2007, movement to the suburbs (mainly to the east and south-east) had increased by 25 per cent from 2003 (LBN 2007, p.33). These migrations were multi-ethnic rather than 'white flight' (Finney and Simpson 2009, p.92) and were facilitated by augmented spending power, middle-class aspirations and, in Stratford – as a consequence of the Olympic development – rising house prices.

All of this meant that the young people I worked with understood the geography of their lives beyond the local confines that post-war scholars presumed them to keep (Parker 1974, p.28). This was in no sense an isolated working-class community (Nayak 2003, p.82). Moving house, and knowing others who had moved house, meant that at a local level they knew not only the five-minute radius from their homes, but all over the borough, to past houses and to the homes of friends and family. From international migrations and holidays they knew the streets of Kampala and Paris, the Hills of southern Albania and the drive through Germany to get there. However, at the same time their geographies were contained in particular ways. Some did not know how to get to Liverpool Street Station but they knew how to take the same train, in the other direction, to Essex – to the seaside and to family members in the estuary. They knew how to get to Stratford but had no idea how to get to Leyton just a mile further up the road. Most were also aware of local territorial restrictions, postcodes and the potential danger of getting 'caught slipping' (see Chapter Four).

However, this multiculture cannot be understood through demographics alone (Solomos 1986). Deprivation, poverty, low educational attainment and unemployment were also formative conditions of these young people's lives (Runnymede Trust 2002, p.76–89). While I was working at the youth clubs the recession was beginning to bite. Newham was preparing to experience the highest public spending cuts in London (BBC 2010) whilst already enduring the highest increases in unemployment, claimants of Job Seekers Allowance and housing repossessions in the capital (MacInnes et al. 2010). In 2007, the year I started, Newham was the third most deprived London borough and the sixth most deprived in England and Wales. It ranked as having the second highest 'extent of deprivation' of any district in the country (Noble et al. 2008, p.86): 60 per cent of Newham's Super Output Areas were in the top 10 per cent most deprived in England and Wales; 46.9 per cent of children in Newham were living in poverty, notably higher than the London average of 32.5 per cent (LBN 2010b, p.45), and this

poverty was deemed persistent (British Household Panel Survey 2008). Average levels of income were low with 28 per cent of people in the £10,000 –£20,000 income bracket and 16 per cent in the £0–£10,000 bracket (LBN 2010e, p.141). The south and west of the borough, where I worked mostly, was among the most deprived in Newham (see Figure Three). Reflecting these figures the majority of the young people I knew came from low-income families, some had experienced intense poverty, and the majority, though not all, would have experienced deprivation across some or all of the seven domains of deprivation: income; employment; health and disability; education, skills and training deprivation; barriers to housing and services; living environment; and crime (Noble et al. 2008, p.13).

Again, although some young people I knew did achieve highly, overall educational attainment was low. For the academic year 2008–9, Newham was the third-lowest-achieving borough in London at GCSE level: 64.8 per cent of young people achieved five passes at grades A*–C and 47.9 per cent of young people achieved five passes at grades A*–C including English and maths (LBN 2010f). However, as with deprivation, educational achievement was uneven across the borough's schools. The school closest to Leyham Youth Club, attended by some of the young people I worked with, was among the lowest-achieving in the country with 29 per cent of young people achieving five passes at grades A*–C in 2010. However, other young people I knew attended a school that achieved 84 per cent at the same level (BBC 2011).
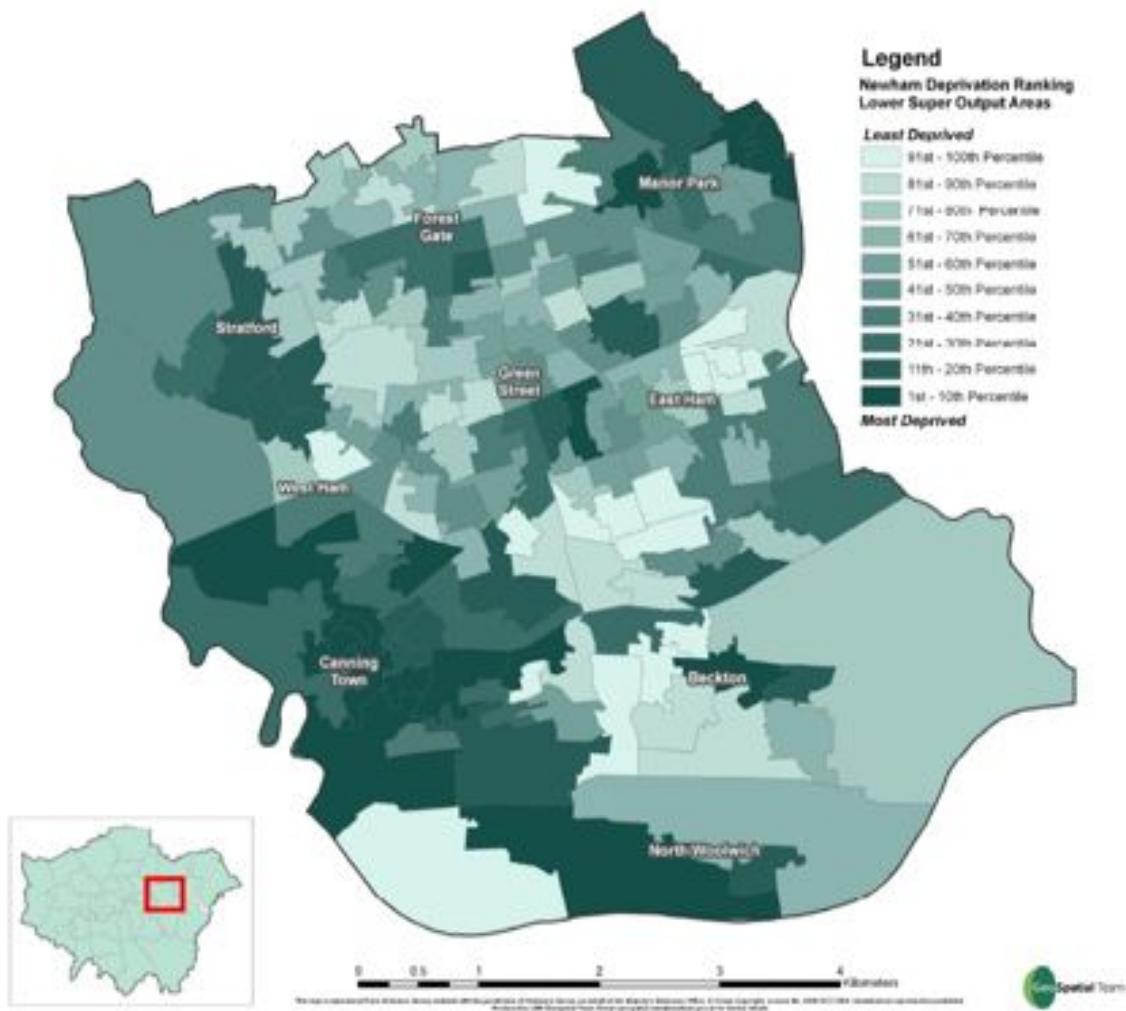
Figure Three: Index of Multiple Deprivation, Newham Ranking 2007 (LBN 2010d, p.11)

On leaving school, many of the young people I knew were looking for work and some were taking college courses. Work was not easy to come by. In September 2009, 53.9 per cent of young people in Newham aged 16-24 were economically inactive. This compared to 44.1 per cent for London (LBN 2010b, p.44). Taking college courses was a popular choice for young people and was encouraged by careers advisers. In 2005, 77 per cent of school leavers stayed on in education or training with only 1.2 per cent going on to employment without training (LBN 2006b, p.27). In between taking courses and finding jobs, young men and women remained unemployed for long periods of time. Some young women worked sporadically as volunteers in the youth clubs, so they could get the skills and accreditation they needed to become youth workers, teaching assistants and nursery nurses. Other young people hung

around in the park or at home. Amid negative media attention, the recession and with poor grades, finding work wasn't at all easy.

Aside from the recent arrival in Stratford of the "cleansing class" (Amin Unpublished, p.21) – a coalition of the middle-class, cosmopolitans, consumers, businesses and global investors brought to the area because of the Olympics, Westfield and Eurostar – the borough remained largely working-class. Except for one Starbucks in Stratford, the rest of the borough's high streets were populated by fast-food outlets, independent cafes, independent stores and the more mainstream high-street chains like Boots and JD Sports. Most people were employed in low-skilled occupations. In 2010–11, 18 per cent of the population was working in 'elementary occupations' (simple and routine tasks which mainly require the use of hand-held tools and often some physical effort [ONS 2010]), compared to the 9 per cent London average. Reflecting jobs in the local authority, schools and hospitals, 'professional occupations' made up the second-largest category of employment at 16 per cent. The London average over the same period was 25 per cent (LBN 2011).

In summary, Newham was a youthful borough with high ethnic diversity. This diversity, most evident among young people, was increasing in complexity – as a consequence of migration to the borough but also because of home-grown mixedness. The churn and population movement to which these demographics attested played out in movements both within the borough and with neighbouring regions. These movements gave young people access to local, national and international geographies, well beyond the confines of the youth clubs. However, multiculture and the lives of young people in Newham could not be understood solely through population statistics. The population of Newham was also deprived and largely working-class. While some found work and others would go on to do so, low educational attainment, poverty and high unemployment were realities for many young people I worked with.

2. Literature

As noted, these demographics have attracted the interest of many researchers. However, despite tales of hungry social scientists roaming Newham's super-diverse lowlands, there is actually very little ethnographic material on young people in the borough. The tradition of industrial sociology and criminology that brought illuminating, if overly white, accounts of

everyday life has withered away (Downes 1966; Hill 1976; Hobbs 1988). And while other recent studies (Butler and Hamnett 2011; Mumford and Power 2003) have provided qualitative analyses of the area, they have done so with the kind of pre-formulated listening employed by policy and community cohesion researchers, and as such have silenced more than they have heard. Therefore, rather than locate this thesis in a body of research specific to Newham, it is situated within wider debates on multiculture, marginalisation and politics which address, albeit in other times and places, the themes pertinent to this study.

Multiculture and whiteness

As regards urban multiculture, accounts from the Marxian and cultural studies traditions of British Sociology offer a strong foundation to this research. Marked by their analytic clarity, sensitivity, openness and attention to the changing racial and cultural dimensions of the day (Back 1994; Hewitt 1986; Jones 1988), they provide a language through which racist essentialisms have been debunked and anti-racism advanced. However, while these texts provide a benchmark for the sociology of multiculture in urban Britain, the absence of similarly prominent texts[13] over the last twenty years has led to a void in ethnographic understanding. This void has been filled by nostalgic (Dench et al. 2006) and white supremacist accounts of contemporary urban life (Starkey 2011). By returning to and developing the political and substantive commitments of these Marxian and cultural studies works, this thesis attempts to fill some of this void, and in the process challenge the accounts that have arisen in their place.

To do so, it retains the use of the term 'multiculture' (Alexander 2000; Amin 2002; Back 1994; Amin 2002; Gilroy 2000; Hall 2000; Hesse 2000). For the sake of clarification, 'multiculture' should not be confused with 'multiculturalism'. Building on a notion of anthropologised 'culture' conflated with ethnicity,[14] 'multiculturalism' refers to a largely non-existent UK policy of citizenship based on ethnic difference (Gilroy 2012; Lentin and Titley 2011; Younge 2011). 'Multiculture', as applied in this thesis, is not only concerned with citizenship and ethnicity but also with culture (and multiculture) as everyday creativity and art (Williams 2002 [1958]). Unlike its cousin, this notion of multiculture is not fixed to national boundaries and racialised

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[13] Harris' work on *New Ethnicities and Language Use* is one exception to this (Harris 2006).

[14] See, for discussion, Alexander 2003; Barker 1981; Gans 2012); Solomos 2003); Solomos and Back 1996); Willis and Trondman 2002).

kinship groups but attends also to the global flows of creativity that have connected the social life of Newham to the rest of the world. This is multiculture in the context of diaspora (Gilroy 1993, 2010a; Moten 2003), and in the context of migration and movement (Brah 1996; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Vertovec 2003, 2004, 2007). Understood as a creative process, this version of multiculture attends to performance and citation of diasporic flows in specific locations. It is concerned with how young people's production of culture today is different, but related to what came before (Amin 2010; Butler 1993, 1997; Gilroy 1993).

In an attempt to address the ethnographic void mentioned above, this thesis develops previous considerations for cultural syncretism (Back 1994; Bennett 1999; Jones 1988). However, it also notes how the framings of black and white syncretic culture have changed. The last two decades has seen hip hop become a global industry (Gilroy 2000; Kitwana 2002; Patton 2009) while at the same time associated music, fashion and forms of resistance have continued to detach themselves from prior racial moorings. The shifts between black resistance against racism and white resistance against class oppression (Bennett 1999; Jones 1988; Nayak 2003) – reliant on Marxian paradigms of resistance and oppression, and relatively stable ethnic located versions of culture – no longer hold as they once did. Through an exploration of changing demographic and cultural parameters, this thesis does not argue that 'black' and 'white' are no longer powerful biopolitical signifiers or that class has ceased to matter; rather that multicultural vernaculars have slipped their old racial anchors.

The thesis, then, explores the ways that cultural and racial signifiers have continued to open up and how they continue to be re-used in ways that break down previous essentialisms. To engage with these shifts, it develops analyses of performance and citation (Butler 1993; Gilroy 1993) noting how the cultural translations, adoptions and re-applications observed in studies two decades previous (Back 1994; Bennett 1999; Jones 1988) have not stood still. Focusing on young people in Newham, it explores how communications of territory, race and sexuality were elaborated in relation to global vernaculars of hip hop but also in relation to local pasts and presents. It addresses how white young people performed black formations of nihilism at the same time as black and Asian young people performed autochthony and whitened notions of belonging (Geschiere 2009; Moore 2008; Yuval-Davis 2012). It notes how the cries of freedom contained in black diasporic culture (Du Bois 2007; Ellison 1995, 2001; Eshun 1998, 2003; Fanon 1991; Gilroy 1993, 2000; Mayer 2000; Moten 2003; Wright 1964; Yaszek 2006)

were made immanent and available as a vehicle for questioning local marginalisation and injustice.

However, while moving away from old antagonisms and authenticities, the thesis does not anticipate the arrival of happy conviviality, irreducible hybridity and post-racial everydayness. It maintains the importance of post-structural critiques of essentialised identities, core to politically engaged sociology (see Alexander 2000) but does not use these powerful tools to flatten the social. Following the work of Bhabha (1994) and the more recent misapplications of Gilroy's work on convivial culture (2004), themes of hybridity and conviviality, central to dismantling dominant notions of sameness and difference, have been misused in ways that have detracted from the contested and sometimes violent politics of everyday life. Through narratives of irreducible difference and fashionable cosmopolitanism these once radical tools have (sometimes) become hegemonic. Through developing the 'urban paradox' (Back 1994) – the qualification of the "cultural dynamics of the sound system by the proximity to the practices of racial terror" (Banerjea and Barn 1996, p.198) – this thesis explores the various ways in which young people's performances deconstructed essentialism at the same time as they re-enacted racialised exclusivities, marginalisation and oppression.

The urban paradox is the acknowledgment of the existence of intense conviviality living alongside conflict. And while the thesis embraces this framework for exploring contemporary urban life in Newham, it is also careful to highlight how the forms of urban paradox today may differ from previous manifestations. For example, it addresses how contemporary urban paradoxes manifest themselves through new sites of dialogue and technologies of communication. Negotiations and communications that could previously be understood through the LP and the sound system can now be addressed through YouTube and mobile technologies of communication. In contemporary Newham, mobile phone speakers, cameras and Bluetooth capacity, in addition to the Internet, power and provide alternative sites of multicultural dialogue.

As part of this investigation the thesis explores formations of whiteness in Outer East London. Discussions of whiteness in East London are often accompanied by liberal condemnations of working-class racism (Ware 2008), exhortations of white working-class people to desist from racism (Dench et al. 2006; Beider 2011), and resurrections of a communal white past (Dench et

al. 2006). This thesis moves away from these various discourses that connect indigenous ownership to white bodies by exploring how discourses on whiteness are part of a more open system of belonging (autochthony) (Geschiere 2009; Yuval-Davis 2012). Through exploring the stories of young people and youth workers, it investigates how white, black and brown bodies defined their claim to the soil against the illegitimacy of the immigrant. As part of this analysis it also addresses the attainment of whiteness through processes of 'becoming white' (Dunbar 1997; Newitz 1997; Roediger 2007; Wray 2006). In US literature, processes of 'becoming white' are comprehensively addressed through discussions of post-slavery society and racial uplift. In British literature 'becoming white' is explored in the contexts of Newcastle (Nayak 2003), East Anglia (Rogaly 2011; Rogaly and Taylor 2009), Plymouth and Bristol (Garner 2010). Developing these analyses, the thesis argues that processes of 'becoming white' in Outer East London have historical and contemporary conditions that merit attention. The juxtaposition and overlaying of post-war nationalism, white working-class loss and multicultural failure (Bonnett 2000; Bottero 2009; Gillborn 2010; Sveinsson 2009), and the tracing of xenophobia and autochthony, provide insights into the allure of whiteness in contemporary urban Britain not addressed in current UK or US accounts.

Marginalisation

In addition to multiculture and whiteness, the thesis addresses debates on marginalisation. In Outer East London, the marginalisation of working-class young people has been routine and historically substantiated. Through concerns for the effects of consumer society, dislocation from parent culture, anti-sociability, lawlessness, immorality and the collapse of "bourgeois values" (Valentine 2004; Willmott 1969), working-class young people have long been labelled as chaotic and out of order. This history is also racialised. Pre-welfare state this occurred through notions of 'dirty whiteness' relating to colonial systems of population control (Bonnett 2000; Booth 1890; Mayhew 1861; Sims 1883). In post-colonial times, it has been applied through forms of alien criminality associated with black and brown bodies (Alexander 1996, 2000; Alexander 2005; Hall et al. 1978).

While working-class inner-city young people have long been seen as the embodiment of immorality and chaos, the thesis argues that the terms on which forms of racial exclusion are applied are not the same as before. It explores how longstanding concerns over black young men have fed into worries over Asians, Albanians, Eastern Europeans and the white working-

class. It addresses how discourses associated with a white underclass have melded with fears over nihilistic black and Asian young people. That is, while racism is differentially applied to different bodies, there are also significant overlaps and distortions in racial discourse and practice that have confused the colour-coding of public panic.

Furthermore, the thesis addresses how these forms of marginalisation need to be understood in relation to specific forms of neo-liberal governance. Wacquant has discussed the current penalties paid by the detritus of society so that those at the top of the ladder are able to sustain their power, privilege and wealth (regardless of how much they steal) (Wacquant 2008). Brenner, Peck and Jessop have complemented this work, noting how changes to local political geographies and the co-option of the third sector in local governance have affected the ways in which chaos and order are regulated (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002). However, beyond these texts there has been very little work that has considered how neo-liberal governance and criminalisation affects young people in Outer East London. To address this, the thesis investigates the ways in which territorial politics occur on national, local, institutional and micro scales, and how these different scales interpenetrate in local applications of territorial governance. As part of this, it explores how classed and racial codings of young people are policed through ever more elaborate technologies of social control. As identified in older literature on youth criminality and delinquency (Downes 1966; Humphries 1981), the police still patrol the streets, but today these traditional forms of surveillance and social control are accompanied by networks of CCTV cameras (Graham 2010; Minton 2009) and the ever more sophisticated accounting procedures of local partnerships (see Chapter Three). Motivated originally by concerns that vulnerable young people might slip through the social services net, this 'joined-up thinking' has led to apparatus where information on the potential criminality of young people is shared between service providers.

Lastly, it addresses how the public spending cuts that started in Newham in 2008 have affected these forms of governance and criminalisation. It explores how the cuts led to an increasing reliance on the police and to a defensive neo-communitarian politics (Peck 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002; Purcell 2003; Swyngedouw 2000), by means of which the youth club increasingly defined its sense of territorial order through the fear of what existed outside its fence (Anzaldúa 2007; Blakely and Snyder 1999; Brown 2010; Low 2003; Rose and Miller 2008; Sennett 1993).

Politics

This thesis also engages with young people's political actions. From the 1960s onwards, a consistent feature of ethnographic work on young people has been an engagement with the politics of everyday life. Drawing on Marxian and Gramscian framings, these works sought to highlight the forms of resistance that young people offered to bourgeois systems of social and economic control (Hall et al. 1976). Larking about (Willis 1977), defying the police (Humphries 1981) and displaying subcultural disorders of style and language (Hebdige 1979; Jones 1988) were all part of this analysis. The politics of young people has also been viewed at the level of the everyday – the everyday challenges to ontological order sustained through the complicated, ambiguous and fluid acts of living (Alexander 2000). However, while both forms of politics are important for an analysis of young people, the inflexibility of Marxian and Gramscian theory when applied to Newham's multiculture, combined with the aforementioned difficulty of listening to everyday politics beyond deconstruction, has made it hard to hear how young people's practices and productions challenge forms of social and economic injustice. In its place a narrative of condemnation has taken root. Following the 2011 Riots, the left and the right, rather than examining the political content of young people's actions, preferred to patronise the protagonists by nailing their actions to masts of over-commodification and nihilism (Bauman 2011; Starkey 2011).

Responding to this bottleneck, the thesis explores the political action of young people through their acts of resistance and everyday subversions, but also through their reflective consciousness and political challenges to injustice. Acts of resistance do of course still exist; they are neither trite nor outmoded but important aspects of young people's daily protests against social control. Just as resistance continues to flourish so too do everyday acts of subversion that mock the orders being imposed on young people's lives. Solidarity, friendship and collectivity work against the codes of criminalisation employed around youth clubs. Daily movements in, out and between social categories, and micro-sociological acts that confuse readings of the dominant order, show how social control is contested, and often the lengths to which authorities will go to maintain order in the face of chaos. While the thesis explores these political ambits, it also extends these analyses to an area that has received less attention (see Chapters Four and Five). Against the discourses that silence young people's actions as sold-out and nihilistic, the thesis explores the political and meaningful use of sold-out culture and nihilist aesthetics. It notes that while young people perform the aesthetics of anti-sociability,

these codes also provide vehicles through which forms of urban marginality are reflected upon, understood, acted against, and through which new horizons are imagined.

3. Chapter outlines

To respond to these debates and others, the thesis comprises five chapters and a conclusion. Following the methodology, these are divided into thematic areas that consider different aspects of young people's lives in Outer East London.

Chapter One provides a discussion of the research methodology. Located in a tradition of political British ethnography that extends from Marxian and Gramscian works through cultural studies, it details how the research was carried out and who participated in its production. This chapter does not follow the template of 'sampling', 'site selection', 'gatekeepers' and 'establishing rapport' encouraged by methods manuals, rather it offers a detailed discussion of fieldwork practices and the co-production of meaning-making. It argues that fieldwork practices reflect the messy and uncertain process of ethnography and that they should be attentive to the operation of power in the research process and authoring of the final account. The chapter argues that in order to listen to contemporary life, epistemological flexibility is required. To this end, within a dialogic framing, the chapter advocates moves between the micro and the macro; between the singular and the multi; for an appreciation of historicity over the dominance of the present; and a move away from the subject-centred body to the analysis of cultural objects and productions. This is grounded in a commitment to listening (Back 2007) and to methodological malleability. Listening to the (hidden) stories of young people's lives also entails the willingness to follow these voices through methods and fieldwork approaches. Tied to consideration for the co-production of meaning making, the chapter also provides a discussion of ethics, not as a gesture towards statements of ethical practice but as an acknowledgment of the research's location in a field of co-constituted personal histories and fluctuating moral orientations. Overall, the chapter demonstrates the need for, and application of, a methodology that moves beyond standardisation and towards reflexivity, malleability and listening to the often hidden tones of everyday life.

Following the literature review and methodology chapter, the thesis develops through four substantive chapters – starting with the past and ending with the future.

Chapter Two, the first substantive chapter, engages with the memory practices of young people and youth workers. The chapter complicates memory practices which fix Newham as the home of the white working-class. Through addressing Newham's 'great time' (Bakhtin 1986b) of diaspora, migration and movement it challenges nostalgias for traditional East End life and explores how its loss – associated with post-industrial decline and continued deprivation – came to be understood simultaneously through whiteness and the presence of immigrants. Through an exploration of how whiteness is invested in and traced over time, the chapter further addresses the mutability of ideas of belonging in Newham. In particular, it shows how these forms of belonging were mobilised by white, black and Asian migrants of different generations. Recalling the formation of Newham through 150 years of migration, the chapter ends by exploring the contemporary existence of diaspora mnemonics and considers how these forms of memory practices, hidden by discourses on whiteness, challenged and broke down autochthonous ideas of belonging and legitimacy. The overall argument of Chapter Two is for a refutation of 'Golden Era' accounts of East London, a deeper understanding of the processes of 'becoming white', and an appreciation for the existence, and potential of, diaspora mnemonics.

Chapter Three explores the politics of territory in and around Leyham Youth Club. Through attention to the street and the youth club it explores how young people's public spaces were policed and how they were criminalised through the cuts in public spending, partnership working and the co-option of the third sector in local governance. The chapter unpicks these processes through a discussion of how insiders and outsiders, chaos and order, and safety and danger were used to construct and negotiate local territories on different scales. It investigates the positioning of the youth club as a safe space for young people and the increasing involvement of the police in the youth club through local partnership initiatives. Building on this analysis of policing and safety, it addresses the development of the youth club as a neo-communitarian institution associated with ideals of a white working-class past and the parallel formation of racialised notions of chaos and threat beyond the youth club's fence. However, the chapter also demonstrates how these politics need to be understood at the level of the micro, in addition to the local, national and institutional. To this end, it engages with the ways that these territorial politics were co-constituted through forms of dialogue, in and around the youth club. Overall the chapter argues that through the cuts and increased criminalisation

young people are living new forms of territorial unfreedoms, that territorial politics requires a multi-scale analysis, and that the politics of territory needs to focus on the micro in addition to the meso and macro, and on race and gender in addition to class.

Chapter Four explores the claim that young people's public productions are sold-out and nihilistic. Reflecting on the discussion of marginalisation and criminalisation begun in Chapter Three, it argues that while to some extent this is true – in that young people make use of commercialised genres of hip hop and nihilistic aesthetics – the art they produce is still meaningful and political. Relating back to Chapter Three, it also shows how these productions were used both as a strategy for navigating forms of marginality and for providing a political vehicle through which the protagonists could question their marginalisation. Drawing on material from a series of collaborative music video and dance projects, it further considers how young people's practices involved intense forms of local and diasporic collaboration across the boundaries of anti-sociability they communicated. It explores how the claims to racial authenticity and inauthenticity characteristic of the sold-out and nihilistic condemnations of youth culture were broken down performances and citations (Butler 1993; Gilroy 1993). To this end, the chapter explores the appropriation and citation of gendered, classed and racialised signifiers between the US and the UK, and how these were used to make sense of Outer East London. However, through showing the reformation of these codes and the breakdown of prior racial orders, it does not argue for simple conviviality, rather it discusses how old codes were reconfigured to make sense of local racialised territories and sexual moralities. Overall, the chapter argues that instead of condemning young people's public productions as nihilistic and sold-out, it is more important to understand how in a time of commercialised youth culture the aesthetics of nihilism provided a vernacular for communication and politics that are meaningful and political.

Chapter Five, the final substantive chapter, asks how young people project their futures. Addressing the absence of ethnographic studies of the future, this chapter is based on material from participant observation, video projects and interviews in which young people of different migratory trajectories, ethnicities and class backgrounds projected their personal and collective horizons. The chapter begins by addressing how some young people self-policed in accordance with New Labour's whitened , middle-class 'politics of aspiration' (Raco 2009) and how they consequently projected their lives through the education–professional–consumer

trajectory. Focusing on a group of British-Albanian young women, it explores how they navigated this trajectory at the same time as they negotiated forms of British-Albanian womanhood. It explores their approach to education, occupation, consumption and the aspirational built environment of new Stratford Town. Situating aspiration as a white middle-class discourse, it also uncovers the kinds of dis-identifications (Skeggs 1997) these young women made, both racialised and classed, in order to navigate this projection. The second part of the chapter looks at the flip side of aspirational discourse addressing how white middle-class notions of aspiration are maintained through the foreclosure of other young people's futures. It also explores how working-class and not white enough young people self-policed their horizons along the education–professional–consumer trajectory and how they practised their own forms of dis-identification to explain their social position. The final part of the chapter explores the possibility of horizons that look beyond the dominant binary of aspiration and marginalisation. Building on the discussion at the end of Chapter Four, it shows how, contrary to theses on the death of utopias contained in discussions of sold-out and nihilistic youth culture, young people projected alternative futures through their cultural productions. While the productions were often negative in tone and sold-out in genre they also offered a vehicle for reflexive consciousness that challenged social injustices and imagined alternative 'to-comes'. The overall argument of Chapter Five is that aspirational futures depend on the foreclosure of other futures, but beyond this it is possible to discern, through an analysis of cultural production, how young people projected alternatives beyond this fatalistic binary.

The thesis concludes by returning to the key debates discussed in the individual chapters and by resituating these debates within the research context. Responding to enquiries on the wider political merit of the thesis, it ends by making some wider political points with regard to: the imperative of addressing Britain's changing urban multiculture; the continued allure of whiteness; the marginalisation and criminalisation of young people; and the requirement to open our ears to the political content of young people's artistic works.

Through an engagement with about a hundred young people, this thesis tells a story of marginality, multiculture and politics in Outer East London at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century. This story begins, in the next chapter, with a methodological discussion of ethnographic productions of the everyday.

Chapter One – Ethnographic productions of the everyday

Methodology chapters are designed to cement an illusion of truth. They are designed to authorise, through formulaic procedure, the process by which an understanding of reality is ethically attained. Sites, gatekeepers, access, rapport, reflexivity and ethics are beautifully laid out as testament to authority on a subject of choice. In this chapter, the field notes, interviews, participant techniques and field encounters do not conform to such de-humanising neatness.

Respecting the unique context of the research outlined in the Introduction, this chapter describes a methodological approach that sought to listen, and respond to, the irreducibility of the field. In so doing, it complicates the realism, standardisation, positivism and duplicity that is prevalent in *thinking* and *doing* ethnography (Alexander 2003). Through a detailed discussion of fieldwork and meaning-making practices it argues that ethnography is a messy and uncertain process that attains a problematic fixedness through the ethnographer's pen. Drawing on two years' ethnographic enquiry in three East London youth clubs, it discusses changes in the research focus and the problems of conceiving everyday life through pre-conceived frames. It shows how the everyday life of young people in Newham, though structured by monologic discourses, was plural and irreducible; how young people's lives were sometimes best understood outside of the phenomenologist's subject centred body; and, how this ethnography necessitated an appreciation of multi-sited social phenomena.

To tell this story, the chapter is divided into five sections. The first section on 'thinking ethnographically' addresses the move from realist accounts of meaning to post-structural stories, dialogic imaginations and the analysis of cultural productions. This section critiques how representations of meaning and techniques of authority are sustained, and advocates an approach to 'thinking ethnography' that is responsive to the plurality of everyday life. The second, third and fourth sections build on these arguments to address three key methodological problems encountered in this thesis: the representation of 'real' meaning in the ethnographic text; the belief in embodied truths located in fixed spaces (anthropological truths); and, techniques of authority used to sustain a belief in what is 'real'.

Specifically, the second section builds on the first through a discussion of everyday life (de Certeau 1984) and the ambiguities of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1984). Introducing the ethnography's encounter with research questions, it shows how the requirement to pin the project down to pre-formulated lines of enquiry did not correspond to the plurality of the ethnographic encounter. Leaving the research questions behind, it stresses the dialogical nature of research and argues for the deconstruction of monologic understandings of the everyday, which are so prevalent in accounts on young people. The third section discusses site selection and questions how 'reality' relates to bounded time and space. Through introducing the fieldwork sites and then discussing the necessity for a multi-sited epistemology, the section engages with debates on spatial and temporal demarcations of ethnographic truth. With recourse to field journals, it argues that rather than view the youth club only in restricted spatio-temporal terms, the youth club should also be seen as a vehicle of travel and displacement to wider constellations of time and space. The fourth section on 'doing ethnography' discusses fieldwork practices by moving away from the formulaic tautologies of the methods books (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Patton 2002). Rather than authorise a factual account of the 'real world', this section draws from the field journals to show the many ways that tales from the field can be told and read; to show how events are co-produced within certain receptive spaces; how field sites and spaces interpenetrate; and how fieldwork practices were formed through "complex judgements with myriad contingencies" (Rosaldo 1993, p.117). The final section is a discussion of the ethical spaces in which the research was produced and productive. It argues for a dialogical and micro-sociological (Bakhtin 1993; Bender 1998) appreciation of ethics rather than a routine account of normative professional procedure; and for a recognition of complex variations of complicity and (dis)comfort in the ethnographic encounter.

The chapter concludes by arguing that ethnographic methods chapters should critically reflect the fieldwork and authorial process through which they are produced. Standardisation encouraged by methods books does disservice to the plural processes of social production. This chapter engages with the need to address the plurality of everyday life. Rather than advocate a one size fits all model of social inquiry, it argues for a dialogical approach to methods malleable to the social and cultural context in which the ethnography is embedded and alive to the negotiation of power inherent in its production.

1. *Thinking* ethnographically: from realism to dialogue

This first section discusses the development of ethnographic thinking. To do so it moves from colonial truths to the principles of dialogue supported by this thesis in which ethnography is considered as a co-produced fiction and a reflexive tool of social inquiry. Along this trajectory it addresses various debates on ethnography in sociology and anthropology including critiques of naturalism and realism and ethnography's contribution to social justice. It ends by arguing for an ethnographic approach that not only takes on board concerns for the co-production of meaning and the importance of social justice, but also for dialogue between textual and phenomenological approaches.

Since Victorian colonial times, East London populations have been the sites of anthropological enquiry. Urban anthropologists such as Booth (1890), Sims (1883) and Mayhew (1861) employed the racialised and classed codes of colonial rule to document the dirty-white populations of the East End (Bonnett 2000). Residing to the east of the Metropolitan District of London, the populations of these 'unknown' and 'unexplored' (Williams 1973, p.221) terrains were equated with menace, filth and excrement (Humphries 1981, p.11; Nayak 2003, pp.76–77); termed 'slum monkeys', 'brutal savages' and 'apes'; and compared with "primitive sexuality, tribal savagery, bestiality and plain bovine stupidity" (Humphries 1981, p.11). As with their colonial analogues (Malinowski 2002) these accounts were presented as natural truths detached from the productive power of the white bourgeois researcher.

In the 1920s and 1930s these pseudo-ethnographic approaches to urban London were infused with scientific doctrine through Robert Park's Chicago School. The Chicago school sociologists were not seeking to discover discrete anthropological cultures; rather, as 'natives' of the city (Davies 1999, p.70) and positivist realists, they sought to scientifically observe and document their subjects' life-worlds. The City of Chicago was their 'laboratory' and the structures they found there were read as social facts. In the UK, these ethnographies found their East London analogues in the post-war social surveys of Willmott and Young (Willmott 1963, 1969; Young and Willmott 1957).

During the 1960s, these forms of sociological and anthropological ethnography came under interpretivist attack brought about by the application of phenomenology and hermeneutics to ethnography (Blumer 1969; Geertz 1973; Rock 1979). These branches of philosophy challenged

the naturalist and realist assumptions of the earlier work – that the social world of anthropologically 'primitive' and sociologically 'subaltern' people could be understood as facts or through rules. These works contended that social worlds were lived and known as subjective experiences and interpretations of reality. They argued that the subjective incorporated the objective and became a person's reality and this implied there was no separate reality as in earlier accounts. In particular, the application of philosophical hermeneutics drew attention to the inter-dependent relationships between the interpretation of the social world and the experience of it. It made visible "the creative processes … by which 'cultural objects [were] invented and treated as meaningful" (Clifford 1988, p.38). This was culture as text (Dilthey 1996; Geertz 1973): "the interpretation of the written documents of our culture" (Ricœur 1973, p.91).

Through the 1970s and 1980s, sociology and anthropology continued to react against the naturalism of earlier accounts. In Britain, urban ethnography was being advanced under the influence of structural Marxism, and Gramscian theories of hegemony and consent. These studies exploded the realist ethnographic site by bringing it into contact with the macro structures of global capitalism (Cohen 1972; Corrigan 1979; Willis 1977). They also developed concerns for social justice as the implications of bourgeois power and hegemony, at local and global levels, were addressed.[15] Further challenges to realism and naturalism in ethnography came through the civil rights victories in the US and the dissolution of empires (Clifford 1988, p.22). Theorists (Bakhtin, Barthes, de Certeau, Derrida, Foucault, Said) deconstructed and re-structured dominant forms of knowledge, meaning and power. Knowledge was understood to exist in specific historical relations of dominance and dialogue (Clifford 1988, p.23). What was 'real' in social research was a ruse of power to overcome and control hybridity (Bhabha 1994). Culture and identity were formed in multiple locations, and cross-cut by power relations. In this way, anthropologists and sociologists alike were forced to evaluate the essentialising dispositions of their predecessors and consider how their work also upheld hegemonic power

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[15] Whereas social justice has also been a concern of US sociology, recent works have been characterised by liberal moralism (Anderson 1999; Duneier and Carter 2001; Duneier and Back 2006; see for a critique Wacquant 2002) and romantic local analyses (Venkatesh 2000, 2008). Both traditions are part of wider liberal, moralist and romanticist trends in US urban sociology (Liebow 1967; Sampson et al. 1997; St. Jean 2007; Whyte 1943) largely detached from a British Marxian perspective that challenges structural oppression.

(Asad 1986; Clifford 1988; de Certeau 1984; Marcus 1986; Rosaldo 1993; Said 1978). They were asked to question not just the interpretation of meaning but also the way they wrote about it (Marcus and Cushman 1982, p.57).

> How, precisely, is a garrulous, over determined, cross cultural encounter shot through with power relations and personal cross-purposes circumscribed as an adequate version of a more-or-less discrete 'other world,' composed by an individual author? (Clifford 1983, p.120)

These concerns were further reflected in British cultural studies as the complicity of the ethnographer's pen with racism and empire was scrutinised (Back 2003b; Gilroy 1987, 1993; Lawrence 1982a).

Developing former Maxian and Gramscian paradigms, Hall's work on 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1992) challenged 'old' ethnicities and essentialised versions of political identity communities (Alexander 2003, p.137); themes that were later explored in Back's comparative ethnographic account of two London youth clubs (Back 1994). These British works recognised the "extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities" (Hall 1992, p.254), and the overlapping territories of ethnicity, inclusion and exclusion (Back 1994). In addition to reworking articulations of race and class, this work was a direct challenge to forms of sociology that continued to be concerned with anthropological accounts of British urban life (Cashmore 1979; Modood 1992; Pryce 1986; Troyna 1979).

Philosophical hermeneutics had already shifted the ethnographic emphasis from experience and interpretation of meaning by others to interdependent interpretations between ethnographers and others. However, whereas Geertz's interpretivist anthropology had addressed the interpretation of the 'text' of cultures, and in this way critiqued the realism of earlier accounts, his representative text still banished the dialogical and situational aspects of ethnographic interpretation (Bakhtin 1981; Clifford 1988, p.40). Drawing on Bakhtin, Clifford shifted the emphasis from interpretation to production (Clifford 1986a, p.13), and in particular to the authority of the ethnographer's pen in the final account. Clifford's work drew on literary theory (Bakhtin 1984) and historiography (de Certeau 1988; White 1973) to reposition the ethnographer's story as an interdependent interpretation, a work of fiction, cultural invention or partial truth (Clifford 1986a, 1988). If meaning was allegorical – representations meant one thing and another – in the processes in which they are interpreted and the contexts in which

they are told – how was a non-allegorical realist claim possible (Clifford 1986b, p.100)? Together, these important contributions moved ethnography from a colonial tool of oppression, to a political and self-aware text; and from viewing the ethnography as an accurate representation of reality, to the outcome of co-production. However, in all these cases ethnography remained a subject-centred encounter.

The subject-centred condition of ethnography has been challenged by textual traditions on account of its complicity with colonialism and liberal tyranny (Sharma et al. 1996). However, while ethnographers have countered these claims by accusing textual traditions of navel gazing and self-absorption (McRobbie 1992), the ethnographic and epistemological benefits of dialogue between textual and phenomenological traditions has been limited. The principle of dialogue at the core of this thesis extends to an engagement between the textual and phenomenological as a means of more closely understanding young people's lives. To support this approach it draws on Du Bois' seminal text *The Souls of Black Folk* (2007)*.* In this text, Du Bois uses the 'sorrow songs' alongside an ethnographic analysis of black America at the end of the nineteenth century to provide independent, as well as interdependent, vehicles through which the changing stakes of life and freedom can be imagined and comprehended. In this way, the ethnographic and textual become complementary, enabling a closer listening to the immanent and transcendent voices that comprise his analysis.

> Through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope – a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear: that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins. Is such a hope justified? Do the Sorrow Songs sing true? (Du Bois 2007, p.175)

Despite these important developments in understanding the production of knowledge, under-complicated realisms still persist in the wider ethnographic imagination. Political proponents of parallel lives and community cohesion (Cantle 2001; Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007); new nostalgists for the white working-class (BBC 2008c; Denham 2009); and

those concerned with the moral corruption by 'cultures of …'[16] still profit from the realist ruse. Combined with a lack of dialogically invested ethnographies (Alexander 2000; Back 1994; Scheper-Hughes 1992; are exceptions), this has led to a dehydration of the everyday, and to the nostalgic re-emphasis of post-war accounts (Cohen 1972; Willis 1977). The *New East End* (Dench et al. 2006)*,* the recent high-profile sequel to Peter Willmott and Michael Young's *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957), is evidence of precisely this problem (see Introduction).

While accounts of this kind may be welcomed as a riposte to self-absorbed post-structuralist ethnographies (Hobbs 2006), they also represent the inability to listen to contemporary urban life and the desire to replace important debate on multiculture, marginalisation and politics with nostalgic accounts from the post-war era (see Chapter Two). This is a failure to recognise that the world of class and loss (Hobbs 2006, pp.120–126; Parker 1974), gender and parent–child relationships (Cohen 1972; Willis 1977), the bounded community (Parker 1974), and the fear and desire of the multicultural encounter (Bennett 1999; Jones 1988) has moved on. Global connections, diaspora space, new migrations, new forms of racism overlaid on old, the blurring of middle-class and working-class values, neo-liberal governance, the influence of global consumer culture, the new mediated participation in public space, and contemporary politics cannot be understood on these terms.

This ethnography, then, does not privilege the 'native's view' as defined by the urban explorer, nor does it rely on permanent and fixed structures to sustain familiar hierarchies of knowledge and power. It does not seek to open up a romantic, hidden and parochial other world or to reify ethnic, spatial and social forms. Building on the dialogue between post-structural considerations (Alexander 1996, 2000; Clifford et al. 1986; Clifford 1988; Marcus 1998; Rosaldo 1993), Marxian and Gramscian analysis (Robins and Cohen 1978; Hall et al. 1976; Willis 1977) and phenomenological and cultural studies traditions (Back 1994; Du Bois 2007), this thesis argues for a form of ethnographic thinking capable of sustaining dialogue with the contours of contemporary life and bringing to light the stories that matter in the context of those they

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[16] … violence (Telegraph 2008), intolerance (The Times 2009), gang, gun and knife crime (Bebo 2009b; Channel 4 2008b; Office 2008; Telegraph 2008; Times 2008) joblessness (Guardian 2008) and alienness (Daily Mail 2006a, b, 2010).

matter to (Back 2007; Willis 2001), while still acknowledging that it is a monologic production of all of these. With this in mind, the next section discusses the problem of research questions.

2. Research inquiries and inappropriate answers

April 2009, a year after the fieldwork began, I was still struggling with my research question "How do 'Eastern European' young people make their lives in 'super-diverse' places?" (my research was originally about the effects of post-2004 Eastern European migration on young people in East London). The question invited a monologic statement about a predetermined and fetishised alien world, authorised through my position as an expert. The real answer was far more ambiguous. It was 'this and that'; it was 'one thing and the other'. This second section presents how, over time, being inappropriate allowed me to come to terms with the plurality of the field and the problematic allure of the single figure I was trying to account for (Sharma et al. 1996). It also discusses how, over a much longer period, I managed to leave my initial research questions behind.

> It is the nature of an intellectual quest to be undefined. To name it and to define it is to wrap it up and tie the knot. (Sartre 1968, p.xxxiii)

Entering the youth clubs in 2007, my intention was to learn about 'Eastern European' young people in Newham. However, it was soon evident that if I was to practise what I preached, I needed to allow the research to be open to the different voices that were also making up the ethnography. On reflection, this realisation occurred very early in the research process. However, it took me much longer, and a failed upgrade, to formally acknowledge it in writing. I can only put this down to my lack of confidence in moving outside the categories I expected myself to use. Many of the young people I worked with were not in fact Eastern European. And for those that were, being 'Eastern European' in a diaspora space like Newham was only one aspect of their lives. On these two simple terms, I was forced to address the basis on which I was over-privileging Eastern European identity. The young people were providing me with a unique opportunity not to close down their lives as so many other pieces of research have done, but to engage with the plurality, historical complexity and allegory that I was now a part of.

However, these realisations entailed not only looking beyond the figure of the Eastern European but also opening up to a range of ambiguous and counterintuitive practices. As I started to listen, I became aware of complex formations of whiteness overlaid with different histories of migration, belonging, territory and loss. I became conscious of highly creative and versatile forms of taunts, enacted on bodies in spaces that operated with a skewed logic to the 'real' world, yet were effortlessly followed and created by the young people who delivered, received, listened and determined. I started to notice how the practices of young people parodied official truths and inverted social hierarchies (Bakhtin 1984) through laughter, through jokes and through violence. The bells of the Rabelaisian church (Bakhtin 1984, pp.213–214) were heard in the Teen Buzz.[17] None of this was amenable to my original research questions. I noted how the individual was transformed through the collective, in response to official order, and how violence and play were both sacred and profane. This was not simply the story of a previously undiscovered utopian subversiveness but an intertwining of practices that undid and displaced, but were nonetheless assaulted by, monologic order (de Certeau 1984, p.91–110). I heard taunts that contested a simple realist reading of their scripts but that were also determined by the scriptural economy of racial discourse (de Certeau 1984). The taunts had histories and contexts that were remixed from dominant xenophobia. I was confronted by the politics of young people's cultural productions and the ways that ideas of racialised fixity were displaced, and renewed; how forms of hostility and separateness could exist alongside intense conviviality (Back 1994; Gilroy 2004); and, how seemingly nihilist repertoires of black cultural production could be reflexive political statements against injustice performed by white bodies. Again, the realist framing of my original research question didn't hold.

These everyday practices forced me to think about the plurality of the ethnographic encounter and the ground on which I was planning to silence its many voices. Returning to the

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[17] The Teen Buzz was a downloadable, and consequently Bluetooth-able sound file that produced a continuous high-pitched (15 KHz) sound that imitated the Mosquito device (Compound Security Systems 2010) promoted to clear young people away from public spaces. Like the church bell (Bakhtin 1984), the real Mosquito device told young people where (not) to be at certain times. The Teen Buzz was a parody of this device. Played from mobile phones hidden under chairs, the high-pitched sound was difficult to locate and uncomfortable to hear. Whereas the Mosquito ordered space through sound, the Teen Buzz disordered it, creating new regimes of sonic and territorial control (see Chapter Three).

epistemological problems laid out in the introduction (How was it now possible to represent 'real' meaning in the ethnographic text? How was it now possible to uphold the common-sense idea that reality is lived in certain bounded ways in fixed places? How was it now possible to trot out a formulaic methodology chapter that authorised as 'real' or 'authentic' subjective interpretation?), my conclusion was that this ethnography could not be another enactment of double duplicity – practising realism while paying lip-service to polyvocality, post-structuralism and the everyday. The final text needed wherever possible to be faithful to the ethnographic process. Rather than sustaining the belief in embodied truths located in fixed spaces, the ethnography needed to address the intertwining of different practices, histories, productions and politics that undid and displaced but also scripted. This awareness increasingly became a commitment to listen (Back 2007, p.1); to understand the lives of the young people I worked with; and to leave my research questions behind.

3. Sites and multi-sites

My approach to site selection was similarly convoluted, beginning the research in 2007, I started by following the methods manuals (Patton 2002) and sampled youth clubs based on the number of 'Eastern Europeans' attending schools in the local area. From here, I imagined I would 'select sites', 'gain access', 'build rapport' and 'leave the field' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). However, this linear narrative also didn't transpire and the orderly procession of events I had imagined broke down.

Following my sampling frame, I interviewed service providers, key workers and centre managers, hoping to learn whether the youth clubs met the criteria of the research questions – but always leaving uncertain of this. I was, however, given a firmer indication of whether they wanted me there. Some didn't but importantly some did. And with formal assurances ticked, whether youth workers wanted me there, rather than the sample I had selected, became the deciding factor of where I worked.

Over that initial period, I met Neil and Gavin at the Leyham Youth Club, Sabiha at the After School Club and Mirva at the Albanian Youth Project. [18] We talked about what they did and

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[18] The names of the people, places and institutions have all been changed.

what I wanted to do. Neurotically conditioned by ethics manuals, I wanted to allay their fears that I was coming to steal souls, but they were more interested in what practical support I could provide. Most needed voluntary youth workers to help run their programmes and I had a few years' experience of youth and community work in Latin America. Sabiha needed someone to help run the After School Club, Neil and Gavin said they could use someone with a bit of common sense, and Mirva was open to new ways we might be able to engage the growing numbers of young people in her organisation. This is not to say that the process was entirely rational. They were generous and open, and we seemed to get along. After a few months I committed to volunteer at three youth projects:[19]

1. The Albanian Youth Project
2. The After School Club at Docksise
3. The Leyham Youth Club

I worked at these sites between April 2008 and June 2010. During that period, Leyham and the After School Club occupied roughly fourteen hours every week, split between two days. The sessions at the After School Club were between one and a half to two hours long. The Leyham sessions were always longer than three hours. As a result of the time I spent at Leyham and the slower turnover of young people and staff there, I got to know this site far better than the others. This is reflected in the thesis. The Albanian Youth Project occupied weekends and occasional evenings after school, and was more project-focused.

The sites

Before exploring how the youth clubs provide vehicles to different times and spaces, it is first helpful to present them as discrete sites with particular characteristics.

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[19] Although the orientation of the research was set to change, the youth centres at first complemented different aspects of the initial research project. All worked with 'Eastern European' young people and importantly these young people complicated the notion of the 'Eastern European'. The Albanian Youth Project worked primarily with 'Albanian speaking' young people – often categorised by service delivery bodies in the area as 'Eastern European', but with distinct histories of migration. The After School Club was an open-access youth club which included Romanian, Polish and Lithuanian young people – some born in the UK and some not. Leyham Youth Club worked with smaller numbers of Polish young people.

In terms of location and layout, Leyham Youth Club was located on the edge of a large park. Fenced off from the rest of the park, it consisted of a high-ceilinged building to the north end of the site and a large outdoor area to the south. The building was divided in two: the larger 'front room' and the smaller 'back lobby'. Both had entrances to the outdoor area. Running through the middle of the building, and connecting the front to the back area, was a small kitchen and a corridor. The front room was used for a variety of activities, including: indoor football, dodgeball,[20] table tennis and pool. It was equipped with a loud stereo system donated by one of the youth worker's brothers. The back lobby was half the height of the front room on account of the mezzanine level above. It contained a TV, an intermittently functional PlayStation and three virus-ridden computers with functioning internet connections. At the far end of the building, the back lobby opened onto a washroom containing three separate rooms each with a toilet – one for staff and two for young people. The mezzanine itself was available only for staff use, and accessed by two stairways: one in the front room and one in the back lobby. The mezzanine contained the partitioned manager's office and desks for the staff. From the desk area it was possible to look down into the front room, the back lobby and corridor. The outdoor area was mainly grass, and in 2008 when I arrived it was adorned with colourfully painted wooden swing-frames, the remnants of the old adventure playground. To the south-east of the outdoor area was a seating area, again painted in bright colours. Beyond these were a few bushes and a hedgerow that ran along the eastern perimeter, adjoining a low metal barred fence, and returned to the youth club building. During my time there, the original swing-frames were removed, and flowerbeds, a couple of small open-sided shelters, an eight-foot fence and a large wooden adventure playground were installed.

The After School Club was housed on the second floor of a Council 'Hub'[21] and accessed by dedicated stairs at the front of the building. Entering the front door, young people passed the sports hall to the left, climbed stairs, passing the toilets and the landing, and went into the main area. In the middle of the main area were two pool tables and two table-tennis tables. Around the perimeter, soft seating was used restlessly by young men and women who chatted, sat, flirted and fought. To the right was a small portable stereo, and across from the

[20] Dodgeball is a game in which players try to hit members of the opposing team by throwing balls at them whilst trying to avoid being hit by balls themselves. Players are 'out' when they are hit by the ball. The game was popularised through the film *Dodgeball* (Thurber 2004).

[21] Hubs housing various community services.

entrance were three rooms. The two rooms to the right were offices – one for the general manager and one for the youth club manager. The room to the left was called the Craft Room and contained board-games, plus arts and crafts materials. To the left of the entrance, was the Planet Room. At the entrance to the Planet Room was a wall-mounted flat screen TV connected to a Wii and a PlayStation 2. The Planet Room had originally contained an analogue music studio, latterly transformed into an IT suite which consisted of ten networked computers and sat behind two one-and-a-half metre high office partitions. At the far end of the main area were the kitchen and the Star Room. The kitchen looked out onto the main area via a tuckshop counter. The Star Room – a kind of wide corridor – contained soft seating and poster displays. The layout of the room meant that young people could sit out of the direct view of other young people and staff. The young women in particular often held court there. Beyond the Star Room were the back door, the rest of the Hub and the back stairs.

The Albanian Youth Group used a number of sites. These are discussed where and when they appear in the thesis.

In respect of the demographics of the young people that attended the youth clubs, Leyham had a largely white and mixed-race population, with a few Asian and Eastern European young people. The young people who attended the After School Club were mainly black African and mixed race. Many were first- or second-generation migrants from refugee backgrounds. There were also a smaller number of black Caribbean, Asian (central, south and south-east), Eastern European and white British young people. The Albanian Youth Project was based around an Albanian-speaking community group. The young people who attended the activities had been born in Kosovo, Albania and the UK. Unlike the other two centres, the Albanian Youth Group was run by the parents of the participants. At all the sites, I worked mainly with young people of secondary school age and above, the oldest being nineteen years old and the youngest ten. Most of the young people were between thirteen and sixteen. At the Albanian Youth Project the gender split was roughly equal. When I started at Leyham, most of the participants were young women but towards the end of my time the youth club had become more male. The After School Club had more young men than young women, though occasionally large groups of young women would attend.

Youth clubs were chosen because they offered an accessible institutional setting in which young people could be engaged. Research with young people outside of an institution, and with my lacking any prior working relationship with those young people, would have added too much uncertainty to the project. It also would have left me open to charges of paedophilia, or at least abnormal adult male behaviour. Such are the panics surrounding work with children and young people. Youth clubs also had the advantage, over schools, of informality. Young people were free to come and go, but at the same time were sufficiently contained that I could build interpersonal relationships with them.

Multisites

Having described their layout, it is important to note that these institutions were far from integral, and meaning making did not end at their walls. Rather, the youth clubs provided a vehicle for exploring wider times and spaces. Although everyday lives are often portrayed as having certain social characteristics fixed in bounded geographies, these spaces were multisited – spatially and temporally (Bakhtin 1981, p.84-258; Holquist 1981; Marcus 1998).

Meaning was given to experiences in the youth clubs through the narration of journeys between the here-and-there of realist sites – schools, neighbourhoods and (transnational) 'homes' (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Knowles 2009; see Chapter Two). Diasporic culture connected the youth clubs to the global fringes and popular mainstreams (see Chapter Three). Virtual worlds and their complex interpenetration with the physical world offered further refutation of the bounded youth club. Facebook expanded the space and attendance of the youth club into portals around the borough, around London, around the UK and around the world. However, virtual enmities and friendships often depended on face-to-face contact. Through Facebook, vendettas and parties were initiated and perused, online and on the street. Images of 'happy slapping' or reunion were shared by text and Bluetooth, and uploaded to shame others and reminisce over, in the youth club.

The multi-sited dimensions of the youth club also need to be considered temporally. Time was not monologic either. Fights, relationships and emotions distorted neo-liberal futures. The official times of daylight, work life, success, choice and aspiration were subverted and interrupted. The comfort and lawlessness of the night was symbolically introduced through turning the lights off. Time was compressed and expanded through the use of Facebook to

communicate and respond in the physical world, and through taunts, momentarily timeless bodies were created. Likewise, memories of 'home' were told as tales abstracted and embellished from the linear time in which they occurred. Moments evoked memories of places that were wilfully imagined, as much as having actually occurred. I was presented with white working-class romances of yesteryear, loss and migration. These were selective pasts and presents responding to certain receptive environments. These accounts ignored colonialism, long histories of familial and local migration, unemployment and post-industrial decline at the same time as they were made by them. Despite being subverted, monologic time still scripted. Some young people worked studiously towards dominant notions of middle-class success. They aspired to be doctors, go to college and university. Others were structured in the inverse. Also the products of monologic time, they had been expelled from schools that needed to maintain order and league-table scores. Ironically for these young people, being out drinking in the park on a Tuesday night served only to increase the demand for aspiration and confirm the need to get the temporally mal-adjusted back into education; back into (the time) line.

Over the fieldwork period I was increasingly confronted by the 'multi' in the research. Plural appreciations of space and time in everyday life deconstructed the hegemonic truths contained in neo-liberal aspiration, territory, four walls, borough boundaries, national borders and ethnic categories, while acknowledging their propensity to order. They highlighted the necessity of viewing the youth club as a vehicle of travel and displacement as well as a site of fixity. The practices that happened in the youth club and the meaning made there were not contained by their walls. I did not feel that the youth club negated the need to conduct ethnographies of other physical spaces; rather it offered a vehicle to do just that.

4. *Doing* ethnography

From the outset I intended to *do* ethnography. This was a political commitment to participant observation as the only method that could listen to the plurality of the research experience (Back 2007), mediate the undetermined and unknowable consequences of the research encounter (Alexander 2003, p.143), and respond to the power dynamics of the research process (Ali 2006; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). However, as this fourth section explores, this commitment was easy to *think* and harder to *do* (Alexander 2003, p.147).

As a voluntary youth worker, I did much of what the other sessional staff did: I policed the building (see Chapter Three), took part in activities, organised projects, ran workshops and got nervous when things were about to kick off. I built relationships with young people. I learnt individual and collective stories and they learnt about me, to the extent that any of us were interested or wanted to share. The high turnover of staff at the After School Club meant that after about a year I was the longest-serving staff member. I was probably, for some young people, the most regular adult in their life. However, with little scope to reflect on this real-time, I reasoned that the harder I worked as a youth worker, the better I would be as an ethnographer and vice-versa. This was certainly not the formulaic procedure methods manuals advise (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Patton 2002).

Accounting for this now seems to add stability to what were unstable environments. Staff and young people came and went. The After School Club sometimes had as many as twenty new young people for each session. Projects also changed. With the Albanian Youth Group, I was coaching football one week and then off to plan for an art exhibition the next. This made it difficult to work closely with any particular young person or follow any individual story. It was a slow and uncertain process. For most of the first year I felt in the dark in terms of my research and on the periphery in terms of the institutions. As I clocked time this improved, although some young people and staff always remained distant. In response to the lack of certainty, I got involved in activities (participatory methods) that would add nuance and complexity to my interpretations. Some I instigated myself, and some I joined in on. Through involving staff and young people in the formulation and design of activities, I hoped that their voices would become more prominent, the dialogue deeper and thus deconstruct (to the limited extent that this is possible) the power of the researcher and adult as expert. I also hoped that a greater variety of activities would engage a wider range of young people.

The methods grew organically in keeping with the unpredictable nature of youth work. A number of ideas never made it. Some were poorly publicised or not followed through. Some did not capture the interest of staff or young people. Others were overtaken by other events – something that had happened at school, a bad mood, or the general dynamic of that day. We put together a music studio that got no use; I helped coach a football team where all the players were better than me; we started a youth club at the Albanian Youth Project that was barely attended; and developed a video project that had no take-up. There was a high degree

of uncertainty in everything except that I would be there again in a couple of days. It made planning difficult. But the more we tried, the more chance we had of getting something off the ground; and the more I offered my time, the more I learnt, the better I listened and the less I understood.

During the spring break 2009, I offered to facilitate a video project around dance sessions started by volunteers and young people at Leyham Youth Club. I was 'YouTube Man' and the project was *Leyham Dances* (see Chapter Four). The video-making process was predictably stop-start-and-renegotiate. However, the re-starting, the making and the discussing provided excellent ethnographic opportunities and moments of dialogue. I learnt about the meaning of the music, bodies and spaces, public communication, performance, and the politics of the dance. This project involved about thirty children and young people aged between ten and sixteen. Eight children and young people were involved in the interview and film editing process. This was the first in a series of participatory methods – collectively called participant landscapes[22] and soundscapes.[23] This analysis of young people's cultural productions latterly extended into the exploration of other hip hop/grime music videos addressed in Chapters Four and Five.

At the Albanian Youth Project, I initiated photo-elicitation interviews and a video and sound-mapping project.[24] These gave insights into the young people's historicised and spatial worlds.

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[22] See also Back 2005; 'Home and Away' exhibition at the Museum of Childhood; Sanderson et al. 2007; Veale 2005.

[23] See also Back 2003a; Connor 2003; Gilroy 2003; Ihde 2003; Schafer 1994; Thibaud 2003; Tonkiss 2003.

[24] Participatory photography, especially when accompanied by the narrative of the photographer, has become increasingly recognised in ethnography (Back 2005; Cook and Hess 2007; Pink 2007; Thomson 2008; Twine 2006) and action research (Dennis Jr et al. 2009; Krieg and Roberts 2007) as a valuable way of gaining insight into social worlds. The use of participatory photography engages young people in capturing aspects of their social world (Dennis Jr et al. 2009, p.469). When young people make decisions on image selection, image placement and provide narrative, the technique yields powerful stories of young lives in local spaces. Combined with participatory social mapping (Veale 2005, pp.256–259) and participatory cartography (the 'Home and Away' exhibition at the Museum of Childhood; Sanderson et al. 2007), participatory photography can enable young people and children to think about their local experiences and the meaning these have for them.

The photo-elicitation interviews were conducted either in groups or peer-to-peer. Five male and female young people aged between thirteen and seventeen took part (see Chapter Five). The video and sound-mapping project, under the title *Where I Live, What I Want*, concentrated on the sights and sounds of where they lived. I was interested in the way that young people thought about space and how they projected their horizons (see Chapters Two and Five). As a piece of action research, the organisation was interested in providing the young people with advocacy and research skills. After five months, the project resulted in a young-person-centred sonic and visual map, made up of videos, sound recordings and interviews with local people. These outputs were analysed and decoded by the young people and exhibited at Oxford Town Hall.

Because of the physicality of participation in the youth clubs and my concerns about being seen as spy, I only ever made minimal and discreet field notes in the session itself. Consequently, the field notes (including description and analyses of events) were largely written or recorded after the sessions. Most notes from the After School Club were written up in a cafe on Barking Road while I waited for my dinner. The Leyham sessions were written up when I got back at ten o'clock in the evening or recorded while cycling home. The Albanian Youth Project field notes were also written when I got home. The format of the notes and where I wrote them mattered. Speaking the notes into the hands-free set while cycling home was less restrictive than writing them, and seemed to offer the freedom to be less sociological and more narrative in my analysis of events. These notes were also more emotive and less constrained. Notes written up in the cafe were probably hindered by my omelette and chips. Verba, King and Keone would not have been impressed with my inattention to reliability (King et al. 1994). In total I collected hundreds of thousands of words of field notes.

Participant observation and participant methods were the principal means of producing the stories contained in this thesis, but semi-structured interviews were employed too. Semi-structured interviews (Rubin and Rubin 2005) with young people, staff members and volunteers were used to focus on new themes and ideas that arose during the research. This technique allowed the research to move out of the youth club and into previously hidden personal, collective and historical spaces. Semi-structured interviews were also employed at the beginning of the project to gather the perspectives of youth service providers. I conducted twelve interviews with staff and twelve with young people at the centres where I worked. Of

these, half the respondents were male and half female, both for youth workers and young people. Most interviews were one-on-one but some were conducted in small groups. All the young people I interviewed were aged between thirteen and nineteen. Most interviews with young people lasted about twenty minutes although some lasted for one hour. I interviewed twenty-four youth service providers: seventeen male and seven female. Interviews with staff and service providers lasted between thirty minutes to one hour. In total forty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted.

As part of the research dialogue and informed consent, I engaged the young people in the formation of interview schedules – taking drafts to youth clubs and asking for feedback.[25] Occasionally they asked questions of clarification but usually they pointed out spelling errors. After the interviews had been conducted, I wrote them up and returned them to the interviewees. I was interested in what their responses might be. Some of the young people had made strong and potentially controversial statements and I wanted to give them a chance to reflect on their comments. However, I didn't directly solicit this. Despite my encouragement most were not interested in reading the transcripts. Those that were, pointed out more typos or laughed at the controversial things they had said. Other young people left them around the youth club for others to read.

Following the conclusion of the fieldwork, all research materials were entered into NVivo which has the capacity to manage and code text, sound files and videos. NVivo was used primarily as a management tool to facilitate the navigation around hours of video and sound files and 100,000s words of text. It was also used to code and establish conceptual framings for chapters. Rather than follow a grounded theory model that relies on the belief in a real scenario from which the data grows, the model of analysis I adopted was more akin to Willis's method for developing concepts and testing theories (Willis 2001; Willis and Trondman 2002). To that extent, the analysis was an iterative process between the literature, fieldwork and collected ethnographic materials.

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[25] Duneier and Back provide discussions of this dialogic process (Back 2007; Duneier and Carter 2001; Duneier and Back 2006).

This section has presented just some of the fieldwork practices involved in the practice of *doing* ethnography. These are not designed to legitimate the substantive chapters. Rather, their telling indicates the process and day-to-day dialogue inherent in the research encounter. They show how fieldwork practices were negotiated; how dialogue and indeterminacy were contingent characteristics of the ethnographic process; and, how different approaches were taken in response to field events. They speak of failure, and the agency of staff and young people. They show how the ethnography unfolded in connection with other people within certain spaces, and how fieldwork practices were formed through "complex judgements with myriad contingencies" (Rosaldo 1993, p.117).

5. Ethics: complicity, (dis)comfort and dialogue[26]

The preceding sections outline a commitment to *thinking* and *doing* ethnography. They discuss the multi-sited nature of the research, how fieldwork practices were undetermined and co-determined rather than pre-determined, and how meaning was allegorical and co-produced rather than real and monological. This final section addresses the ethics of the research, not as a detached and duplicitous statement of unrequited intent but as an engagement with ethics as dialogue: productive and produced; complicit and (un)comfortable.

A quick flick through a methods book (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Patton 2002) or an ethical statement (British Sociological Association 2002) reminds the reader of standard ethical concerns and practices. 'Rapport', 'sponsors', 'gatekeepers' and 'harm' provide carbon-copy headings for ethical practice. Although these standards oriented my initial approach, as they interacted with other ethical considerations they became increasingly blurred. The three youth clubs were complicated, personal and institutional, ethical spaces with which the research became intertwined. Initially, these ethics seemed at odds with my personal and professional orientation. However, over time the ethics of the youth club became intuitive and habitual (Merleau-Ponty 2002) and my original orientation only one of many competing influences.

I learnt the ethical position of the 'youth worker'. This was largely the 'youth worker' that young people and staff expected. When I was working, I exerted authority as an adult, a man, a

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[26] Complicity has also been discussed by Alexander (2003, p.142), Back (2002), and Ware (2002).

white, an 'English', and a university student (Alexander 2006, p.405; Ali 2006; Butler 1999; Yuval-Davis 2006, p.201). I accepted some locations and rejected others. I was called upon to be authoritative and I did it, sometimes reluctantly. I established myself in certain rubrics that affected the space, people's experiences of me and my interpretation of events. Through these performances, my values were made evident, and admittedly this showed me to be uncomfortable with certain kinds of play that I probably mistook for something more sinister. It also showed the extent to which I fitted in and didn't.

These locations, knowledge and competencies were cross-cut by class, 'race' and gender. In some cases, my whiteness became apparent as a feature that suddenly made sense of racial and racist dynamics. I was often uncomfortable with banter I perceived to be, but sometimes wasn't, racist. I had been brought up liberal middle-class and subscribing to the values of anti-racism, ironically often articulated in terms of 'race'. As such, racism was something I felt I should avoid but over time it became clear that I was part of its production. I wrote in my field notes how Sarah and Kylie were trading insults. Kylie said "your mum sold her teeth for crack". Sarah retorted "your mum sold her whole house to a Lithuanian for crack". Both the 'whole house' and the figure of the 'Lithuanian' were used to make the joke more extreme. I laughed, the extremity was funny, and then felt guilty, complicit. I was part of the meaning making. As an audience member, my whiteness and class position had made the joke possible (Hewitt 2007, p.12; see also Chapter Three of this thesis). My deep discomfort with these locations only confirmed the way I was ordered in them.

However, the way I located myself in these racial dynamics was often at odds with the ways the young people positioned me. Although I thought I was being read in certain ways, sometimes I wasn't. The After School Club was attended by young people from many different migratory backgrounds. At the beginning, as a new arrival, I imagined that I existed outside of their cosmopolitan framing (explored in Chapter Two) and in this way assumed the privilege of white middle-class invisibility (Dyer 1997); that was until Kamil, one of the young men, asked if I was Spanish, then French, then Australian before deciding that maybe I was "an English".

I also learnt the gendered ethics of the youth clubs. All the youth clubs, and particularly Leyham and the After School club, were masculinised spaces. Order was largely maintained through the threat of violence – verbal or physical – and at times I felt like a club bouncer

standing on the edge of too-loud-to-talk music and dancing bodies. Both the female and male workers took part in these forms of crowd control. However, it was left to the male staff to get physically involved (see Chapter Three). On occasions, they ran out into the local streets after assailants, went off site to break up fights between young people, and told stories of physical protection. I often felt that I should regale them all with my prowess but was largely uncomfortable with this role (Robins and Cohen 1978). This is not to say that I wasn't positioned as a man. Masculine ethics were a structural feature of the youth clubs. There was a male presence in all sessions in case anything kicked off, which it sometimes did. Leyham would not open unless there were two male workers on site. Although I was only ever a volunteer, I was also sometimes asked to be the second male presence. This gave me an uneasy responsibility as the young people and staff expected me to act accordingly, and on more than one occasion I was called upon to 'ban' a young person from the site (see Chapter Three).

Adopting these habitual positions also affected my relations with female attendees. On the whole it was deemed appropriate, by staff and young people alike, that the female staff worked with young women and the male staff with the young men. Conscious of this I tried to transgress these lines, but found that these conscious acts of transgression were out of step with the habitual ethics of the youth club (Merleau-Ponty 1989), and their obviousness hindered the conversations I sought.

However, the inevitable existence of these power relations and my conformity to them did not result in cynicism. I tried, but often failed, to adopt a least-oppressive approach to masculine authority, physical strength, projecting sexuality and middle-class morality, understood in the specific contexts in which I was working (Pascoe 2007). And I tried to understand the ways that axis of oppression manifested itself in different spaces, with different people and on different scales (Ali 2006, p.476; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). At the After School Club, most of the attendees were young men and the activities – football, table tennis, pool and computer games – were oriented towards them. In an effort to provide space for the growing number of female attendees, discussions were held on how to create a space for the female members that was not conditioned by the male gaze (Haraway 1988). Both young men and women enjoyed flirting and objectifying each other. However, when the young men got bored they had the security of the male-centred pool table or football match to retreat to. The young

women had no such recourse. In response, we held a consultation with the young women. This led to a female discussion group and a female football afternoon. The double bind (Gunaratnam 2003) of these efforts was that through promoting spaces for female expression we were spatially enacting heteronormativity.

I was also complicit in maintaining my middle-class location. It was overwhelmingly class that I was aware of when I started working in Leyham. Soon after moving to North London from Whitechapel I decided that the quickest way to Newham was by bike, cutting half an hour off the journey by public transport. I hadn't previously regarded my bike as a status symbol but going to work in a 'deprived' place suddenly made me think about it that way. The bike was a bottom-of-the-range, seven-year-old Specialized mountain bike that cost about 300 pounds. On my arrival, this perception was confirmed by comments from staff and youth workers who asked how much it was worth and where I got it. I developed a story that played down its value (by saying it was available for fifty pounds on EBay) and consequently the amount of money people thought I had. In retrospect, this discomfort merely confirmed my class position. My accent also changed, not hugely but significantly. I was brought up in Hertfordshire and speak in a London suburbs drone. In Leyham this was considered posh. Again, conforming to the habitual space, I started speaking more like the youth workers. This tonal change became apparent when I started voice recording my fieldnotes. Again, through trying to fit in, I had distinguished my class position.

As I became aware of my own location in terms of 'race', class and gender, I also became familiar with the professional and personal ethics of the youth club. I was trained in safeguarding (child protection), CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checked and never alone with young people behind closed doors. When I conducted interviews with young people at Leyham, I was in eyeshot of another member of staff. I never went off-site with young people unless it was for a specific organised event or activity, and even then a member of staff or parent would accompany me. A friend studying anthropology once asked me how I could possibly learn about young people if I didn't follow them to their private spaces. I retorted, "I don't want to be locked up".

Discussions of risk were often articulated through condemnations of paedophilia, and staff were constantly concerned with the potential fallout from an accusation of this kind. Staff

members monitored me in collecting consent forms from parents before I could store any visual footage of young people. On the surface these concerns fitted perfectly with academic research guidelines (British Sociological Association 2002, p.4)[27] and with my own normative ethical orientations. However, in fact, the ideals of participation and children's rights enshrined in academic and youth work guidelines[28] were a long way from the culture of risk and self-preservation that dominated the issue of informed consent at Leyham, and increasingly in my own research.

Before starting I signed a service level agreement with all the youth clubs I worked with. This included a commitment to keep the young people informed about the research, which I did. I regularly put up posters and handed out information sheets on my research. Of course, the posters were soon covered over or replaced with other items, and the information sheets were left on the floor for me to collect at the end of the session. Although the staff and young people knew I was conducting research, they were never informed to the extent that my own neurosis desired. This wasn't because they trusted me to tell the story; they simply had more important things to think about.[29]

For this reason, the names of young people, youth clubs and identifying places have been anonymised. However, the borough and some key non-identifying locations have been named

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[27] The British Sociological Association's ethical guidelines note that "research involving children requires particular care. The consent of the child should be sought in addition to that of the parent. Researchers should use their skills to provide information that could be understood by the child, and their judgment to decide on the child's capacity to understand what is being proposed. Specialist advice and expertise should be sought where relevant" (British Sociological Association 2002, p.4).

[28] Informed consent is implied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1990) where the emphasis on the participation of the child meant that researchers were no longer required to use adults as proxies for research with young people (Kirk 2007, p.1251). This shift resulted in attention to ethical research practices and informed consent. Informed consent is also alluded to in the Human Rights Act 1998 (HM Government 1998). The Human Rights Act 1998 guarantees the right to respect for private and family life and thus supports provision for the young persons' and parents' informed consent (Masson 2004, p.44). Data on young people must only be held with consent (Alderson and Morrow 2004, p.51).

[29] Duneier discusses similar sentiments at the end of *Sidewalk* (2001, pp.345–357).

to provide the thesis with the necessary history and social context. The only places in the thesis where more specific descriptors are provided are in relation to the analysis of the videos of Upcoming Movement. The group has been named because they did not attend any of the youth clubs and because their work has already been published on YouTube.

The ethical space of the youth club was not defined by rules and statements but was collective and habitual. Ethics were attained through latent interactions and defined in specific moments (Bakhtin 1993; Bender 1998). Ethics for behaviour were applied in specific contexts and spaces, and through personal histories. Each youth worker brought their own fluctuating standards to the club. These personal ethics were often expressed in the manifest truth of proverbs, like: "young people need boundaries". These boundaries related to swearing, running and interacting in certain ways. Although there was certainly a habitual order (Merleau-Ponty 1989) within the youth club, a form of unwritten moral consensus to which people could be held, most ethical boundaries depended on such things as: the day, whether people were tired, what the session had been like and whether there were problems at home. The enacting of moral boundaries was predicated, then, on specific, contextual and personal circumstances, in addition to more general agreements. Despite their underlying logic, boundaries were never consistently enacted across the building, or on a day-to-day basis. And youth workers sometimes even credited young people with breaking them. Tessa once told me, after Didier has just broken a boundary she had set by running through the back lobby, that she liked kids with a "bit of spunk" (that broke the rules). She thought that growing up in Leyham it might be the only thing that got them somewhere.

It was officially recognised that the adults established the ethical framework for the youth club. It was not so recognised that the young people were also highly active in establishing the ethics of the space. The ways young people interacted with the space and staff was critical to the ethics of the youth club. Young people established boundaries by pushing what they perceived the boundaries to be. In response, staff recognised they were trying to transgress them and enforced the rule. The young people and youth workers acted together in a game of setting and transgressing. Young people turned up the music, turned off the lights, fought and threw food to elicit a response. The youth workers, playing at authority, responded to these wilful infractions by formally marking the boundary through comment or reprimand. In similar ways, boundaries were marked through the interactions between older and younger members

of the clubs. The younger members set up boundaries by challenging the older ones. The older ones acknowledged the boundary by responding physically or verbally (see Chapter Three).

As the fieldwork took shape, the statement of ethical practice and my commitment to anti-oppressive research became one of many competing moral schemas for thinking and acting in the youth club as an ethnographer and as a youth worker. The changing ethical space of which I became a small constituent part was augmented by numerous personal histories, professional norms and political commitments formed through habitual dialogics (Merleau-Ponty 1989; Reynolds 2004) that depended on shared understandings and responses. The ethics of the youth clubs were always in flux, although it was also possible to discern certain features and rubrics or behaviour. Some of these fitted with my original orientations, some didn't. The ethics of the youth clubs were also often counterintuitive. As I challenged 'race', gender and class oppression I also participated in sustaining them. In other cases, ethical frameworks that seemed stable were subverted as boundaries were transgressed and rules were made to be broken. These processes demanded a more complex account of research ethics than is forthcoming in statements of ethical practice and research manuals. The research ethics were unique to the productive processes of the fieldwork space. The implications of power in the research process could only be considered in this context.

Conclusion

With attention to ethnographic plurality, the research locates itself against realist forms of *thinking*, and standardised forms of *doing* ethnography whilst uncomfortably recognising its own role in flattening the social and complying with the dominant. This chapter has highlighted the research's commitment to dialogue and listening. Through engaging with ethnographic and textual approaches it has discussed the means of moving beyond the standard methodologies used to explore young people's lives. It has shown the necessity of viewing the youth club as a vehicle of travel and displacement rather than a fixed and selected site. And it has argued that fieldwork practices should be recounted as uncertain processes shaped by contexts and micro-sociological moments. The chapter has also discussed how research ethics cannot solely be addressed though detached professional norms. Research ethics are complex formations that interact with personal histories, moods, spaces and habitual knowledge in and beyond the youth club. They are cross-cut by axes of power ('race',

gender, class, age and sexuality), and confirmed and subverted through perceptions of shared moments. These are both comfortable and uncomfortable processes; they are complicit and contested. Finally, this chapter has located this study in a tradition of British sociological work that holds social justice and anti-racism at its core.

Overall, this chapter has addressed the *thinking* and the *doing* of a politically located methodology. It has celebrated the messiness of the ethnography, and the importance of its malleability to the unruly nature of everyday life. Developing the discussion on researching different times and places, the next chapter explores the memory practices of young people and youth workers in Newham.

Chapter Two – Whiteness, loss and diaspora mnemonics: the collective memory practices of young people and youth workers in Newham

Neil [a first generation Canadian], Jay [a second generation Indian], Tessa [a third generation Scot] and me [Welsh and English, but new to Newham] were in the kitchen making a cup of tea when a conversation started about the decline of East London community. They discussed the loss of community spirit and blamed it on people not speaking English or knowing English history. They blamed the Indians and Pakistanis for the language and cited a Polish worker on the second charge. He had apparently claimed that Henry VIII had killed the Pope.

Field Diary, November 2009

I was out with Besa, Eva, Alma and Jeton. We interviewed a woman outside Newham market. She was from the Philippines. We asked her what she liked about the local area and she said the fresh fruit and meat. She never mentioned 'home' but in his video analysis of the conversation Besian assumed she associated fresh products with 'home'. He did. For him they were associated with Albania.

Field Diary, December 2009

They laughed about accidents they had, and comedic situations they had found themselves in: falling down a hill or having a cow run at them. At the same time as being memories of Albania, they were also just memories of events. I participated in these memories, not on the basis that I was Albanian, or had been to Albania, but on the basis that I too had similar stories to tell.

Field Diary, March 2009

Over the two years I worked in Newham I learned a lot about the memory practices of young people and youth workers. Like the quotes above, these practices drew attention to competing nostalgias of 'home' and post-national recollections, at the same time as they addressed the mutability of exclusive memory practices tied to whiteness and national belonging. However,

while these loud and silent, shared and exclusive memory practices were part, and always had been part, of the place where I worked, East London's past is more commonly remembered as the home of the white working-class – a narrative which silences a more complex, long-term and contested history (Wemyss 2008, 2009).

This chapter explores the memory practices of young people and youth workers. In so doing, it develops some of the methodological considerations on dialogue, multi-sitedness, diaspora and temporality discussed in the previous chapter. Specifically, part one investigates the maintenance of memories of whiteness and belonging, and how these memories were shared among a multi-ethnic population. That is, it addresses how racial hierarchies are re-formed through memory practices and how the ambivalence and allure of whiteness and class loss co-existed in a 'super-diverse' place (Vertovec 2006). Part two analyses first what these memory practices forgot, by discussing the existence of other memories of home and belonging that existed alongside investments in whiteness. Second, it addresses how memory practices in Newham's diaspora space complicated national and ethnic notions of home. Through an exploration of solidarity, the possibility of living other people's pasts, and a presentation of the ways in which national and ethnic memory are deconstructed, it shows how Newham's mnemonic folds afforded young people the possibility to remember and interact beyond the constraints of nation and ethnicity.

Literature on memory practices in London has explored investments in pathologies of national loss (Gilroy 2004) and the recollection of diasporic homes (Brah 1996). It has addressed the significance of hidden ethnic and national memorialisation in urban space (Alexander 2011, Forthcoming; Wemyss 2008, 2009) and the frictions and connections these produce between people who share local histories (Brah 1999). However, so far it has not provided an ethnographic account of diaspora mnemonics in East London. Consequently, the overlaying and tracing of different memories in Newham, and how they sustain, and move beyond, racial and national orders are not fully understood.

To facilitate this analysis the chapter makes use of ideas associated with 'memory practice', 'collective memory' and 'diaspora space'. Memory as 'practice' allows the chapter to focus on the lived production of memory as creative and plural, as opposed to viewing memories as facts or essences – as history (Billig 1995). Viewing the memory practices of youth workers and

young people as 'collective' provides the means for thinking about memory as more than an individual act (Halbwachs 1992). Young people and youth workers remembered pasts individually, but they also remembered collectively (Ricœur 2004). To move beyond the national confines of East London's popular memory, the notion of 'diaspora' permits an appreciation of the field of memory practices young people practised; a field formed through the trajectories and interactions of multiple 'homes' (Brah 1996) and cultural flows (Gilroy 1993).

The view of collective memory taken in this chapter is also dialogic rather than phenomenological (Bakhtin 1986a). Phenomenological accounts hold subjective experience as primary (Halbwachs 1992; Ricœur 2004). This occludes the plurality of the past in favour of the subjective present (Bakhtin 1984) thus leading to a tyranny of the now – the problem of 'small time' (Bakhtin 1986b). So while this chapter explores the past projections of young people and youth workers it does so with attention to how these practices of the present were made over 'great time' (Bakhtin 1986b). The approach allows for an appreciation of the 'tracing' and instability of memory (Bennett 2005; Derrida 1976; Spivak 1976). Viewed in the context of 150 years of migration from UK, Europe and the World (as discussed in the Introduction), this approach makes it possible to view Newham's past not as an essence of whiteness but as a 'fan of history' in which different memories are folded down one on top of the other into the collective memory space (Benjamin 1978). In this way, Newham's past is overlaid on other pasts, any of which can be resurrected in the service of the present. As Bakhtin explains:

> Even *past* meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of the past
> centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) – they will
> always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future
> development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the
> dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual
> meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent
> development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed
> form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will
> have its homecoming festival. The problem of *great tim*e (1986b, p.170).

Part One – The ambivalence and allure of whiteness and class loss

The Golden Era in popular culture

Whereas great time opens the memory practices of Newham to the plurality of the past, popular fictions of Newham reduce it to a distorted snapshot. In literature, film, academic texts and television documentaries, East London is portrayed not as a diaspora space but as the historic home of whiteness, community and of working-class morality. This is evident in numerous outputs that meld together Bethnal Green in the east, with Barking and Dagenham in the far east. A subgenre of books on the old East End community dedicates itself to the resurrection of this essential memory (Gudge 2009; Hector 2010; McGrath 2002; O'Neill 1999; Worboyes 2007). Feature films, *Krays* (Medak 1990) and *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Ritchie 1998), tell similar tales of a priori (criminal) whiteness, morality and community. Contemporary versions of this sentiment were also exemplified in the title sequence that accompanied the BBC's controversial White Series (BBC 2008c), where Britain's popular English National Anthem, 'Jerusalem', played behind an image that depicted the blacking out of a white man's face with scripts from non-English languages – the erasure of a white memory through non-white immigration. Tying this message to East London, episode six was set in Dagenham. Located in the post-war period, these works activate the nostalgic fissure between the romance of the spirit of the Blitz and decline through immigration – described as the 'Golden Era' (Dench et al. 2006, p.18) or 'Classic Period' (Hobbs 2006, p.122). In these accounts, the Blitz, associated with white East London and a British blend of morality – 'pluck, luck and resilience' (Gilroy 2004, p.96) – is contrasted with the immorality of post-colonial and non-white immigration.

This racialised popular memory is further nurtured in political discourse and in academic texts. In political discourse, the seed, famously sown by Enoch Powell (Powell and Wood 1969), was propagated by East London Labour MP, Margaret Hodge when she pronounced that the historic entitlement of 'indigenous' white working-class people in her East London borough, was beyond "the legitimate need demonstrated by the new migrants" (Hodge 2007; Sveinsson 2009). Maurice Glasman and East London MP Jon Cruddas have trodden a similar line on

immigration through their Blue Labour initiative.[30] Like the literature, films and TV documentaries above, these discourses have sought to instrumentalise a notion of East End working-class whiteness and a priori belonging for political gain by contrasting it with the illegitimacy of the immigrant. These developments in political discourse are part of wider trends in the racialisation of the working-class as *white* brought to the fore during frequent pronouncements on the death of multiculturalism[31] (Cameron 2011; Phillips 2005) – pronouncements based on the disadvantages suffered by the white nation and white working-class people, at the hands of multicultural policy and its black and minority ethnic beneficiaries (Denham 2009). These political discourses have the dual effect of promoting whiteness, historical entitlement and loss, at the same time as they lambast black and minority ethnic solidarity and anti-racist struggles (Bottero 2009; Gillborn 2010; Sveinsson 2009).

In Newham, these politics of white historical entitlement and loss were promoted through discourses on the "New Citizen". As presented to me by a council official in youth services, the 'New Citizen' is someone "inclusive" rather than someone that supports "cultural preservation". The official's rejection of multiculturalism was accompanied by the need to focus more attention on the white working-class. For him, rather than confound the possibility of white historic ownership, Newham's history of immigration (and resulting super-diverse demographics) heighted its necessity. As he explained:

> It's an interesting thing. With new migrant communities there have been a number of things that have happened over the years. In Newham we have such a rapidly shifting population. What I have to say is that I think that the emphasis is far more now … is around inclusion and is around a sense of the New Citizen which is more inclusive. The difference in Newham is that Newham was the first population in any borough to have a majority of a

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[30] Headed by Labour peer Maurice Glasman (2011), Blue Labour (2012) is an influential tendency within the Labour party. Other prominent supporters include James Purnell, Jon Cruddas, Chuka Umunna and David Lammy. Blue Labour is an attempt to revive a conservative Labourism historically common to some working-class areas (Orwell 1937).

[31] Various authors consider that 'multiculturalism' – in the sense of a state policy of multi-ethnic governance and citizenship – never existed in the UK outside of local government policies and some central government funding streams, and therefore that its condemnation in political rhetoric has only been at the service of pursuing nationalism, neo-liberalism and whiteness (Gilroy 2012; Lentin and Titley 2011; Younge 2011).

non-white population, particularly marked among young people. Therefore we felt the need to move away from targeted specific programmes aimed at particular cultural, ethnic or religious groups and I think the reason that we've done that is …There is one thing about supporting cultural preservation which is fine. It's another thing providing groups that want to make provision for their own community. The whole thing about Newham is that we have to move forward. We have to build an inclusive and integrated community and if we don't make it work here we don't make it work anywhere. The emphasis will often be for all projects to be inclusive and encouraging young people from all backgrounds to be involved and that's the current agenda in Newham and it's big time. For example in terms of targeted engagement, in terms of all-out projects, whether it be NEETs [not in education, employment or training], whatever, our biggest problem group is white working-class men that might not – I know it is on the public agenda – but not in the way that you get BME [black and minority ethnic] stuff mentioned elsewhere. In Newham that's not the case we need to target more around white working-class males that are our issue group more than any others … It's complex and it's about, in Newham, bringing people round to these ideas that we want an inclusive community that people are integrated and are developing more common understanding of what it's like to be a citizen and I think that's where we're at.

This re-emphasis on white historical entitlement and loss has also been registered in recent sociological work. In sociology, the nostalgic fissure of the post-war period was famously captured in Young and Willmott's *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957). This text documents the close kinship networks of Bethnal Green families, and as with work on Newham (Hill 1976; Hobbs 1988), posits white terrains and close-knit communities, paying little attention to the contested and multi-ethnic formation of the area (Keith 2008). The recent revival of this narrative came through *The New East End* (Dench et al. 2006). *The New East End* skipped the intervening fifty years of population and cultural changes in East London to reinvest in assumptions of white permanence. Investing in white legitimacy and East End nostalgias, *The New East End,* cemented in sociological analysis the myth of the 'Golden Era' (Dench et al. 2006, p.18) – also proposed as the 'Classic Period' (Hobbs 2006, p.122). The Golden Era is the period of near full employment after World War Two. However, the Golden Era is only possible because of the decline that occurred after it. In this narrative, the hardships brought to the East End through deindustrialisation are written over by immigration. Whiteness becomes associated with the golden past and non-white and immigrant bodies with the declining present. On this basis of legitimacy and loss, the text exculpates 'indigenous' Eastenders' hostility to 'newcomers' (Alexander 2011; Farrar 2008; Keith 2008; Moore 2008). In so doing, it contributes to the melancholic conjuncture descried above whilst ignoring the

well documented phenomenon of recurring nostalgias for better times (Pearson 1983; Williams 1973); the urban as a historically constituted space of strangers (Tonkiss 2006); and whiteness as racial signifier that is traced and negotiated rather than being fixed to bodies and territory.

Finally, this whitened history of East London is also assisted by more recent works that note the 'imagined' existence of the white working-class community in the area (Foster 1999; Mumford and Power 2003). While these texts pay attention to projections of whiteness, rather than accept as de facto its historic legitimacy, they nonetheless fall short of understanding whiteness as a process in East London. Relying on Anderson (1991) they posit an originary community from which the wider mythic community becomes imagined. In this way, they also ignore the layered histories of belonging in East London and the ways that whiteness is traced over 'great time'. Through relying on 'imagined whiteness', contested hierarchies of whiteness and their reformation through migration remain absent, reifying whiteness and legitimising a priori belonging.

How youth workers traced whiteness and loss

Parents and youth workers who had grown up in Newham in the post-war period also relayed stories of the Golden Era. These were memories of full employment, national resilience and communal living, exhibited during and after the Second World War. They were memories of the various chemical and rag stripping factories[32] that existed, and the possibility of leaving one job at lunchtime and getting another at the end of the day. They told of close-knit families, and of aunties, grandparents, cousins and friends just around the corner. These scenes of family and work life were part of innocent childhoods pieced together from fragments of history into coherent narratives to make sense of uncertain presents. Holidays were in caravans on Canvey Island, children played knockdown ginger, hopscotch and two balls up the wall, TVs were just coming into the area, the doors were left open, crime was honest and the local mob would get you deals for your Christmas presents just as long as you didn't "shit down their street" (Tessa).

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[32] Fabric rags were used in the manufacture of paper products.

Tessa, a female youth worker at Leyham, born and brought up around the Royal Docks, with a migratory history that took her back to Scotland, explained to me how, at that time, everyone 'felt safe and secure'. The streets, the home, the workplace and the docks were the physical settings for Tessa's Golden Era. Highlights included England winning the 1966 World Cup, West Ham winning the 1966 FA Cup, painting everything 'claret and blue', the Silver Jubilee street party of 1977, and the 'bunting and flowers'. Again, these were not chronologically accurate but were 'splinters of messianic time' (Benjamin 1968) pieced together to make sense of the present.

These nostalgias (Boym 2001, p.13) were contrasted with the loss that occurred at the end of the Golden Era. The 1960s onward saw the collapse of local industry (Canning Town Community Development Project 1977; Hall 2007, p.85; Hill 1976; Hobbs 2006; LBN 1976) and soaring unemployment (Canning Town Community Development Project 1976). Lynn, a youth worker who had grown up in Leyham, and was from a Romany family, explained that while some from Newham had found jobs in different parts of the country, or through government schemes, many were left unable to feed their families. This dislocation was compounded by the effects of the slum clearance programme reinstated after World War Two. Lynn explained how people left homes they had grown up in and moved, often against their will, to other parts of the borough to take advantage of new properties with indoor toilets, bathrooms, hot water and central heating. The result of these changes, she said, was the end of community spirit.[33]

Memories of loss were made sense of through the term 'cannon fodder'. 'Cannon fodder' provided a coherent narrative for the way that the East End working-class "ha[d] been shit [shat] on for years and years and years". It was used by Tessa to link the deaths of East End people in World War One – literally 'cannon fodder' – to family members being sent off to fight in World War Two, to the horizons envisaged for her first son at the hands of the middle-class education system ("more cannon fodder") (see Chapter Five), and to the life chances of young people at Leyham Youth Club in a time of aspiration and consumption. In this way, Tessa explained the uncertainties and declines that she saw around her, through the idea that East

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[33] Similar opinions are presented in a number of texts on East London (Dench et al. 2006; Willmott 1963; Young and Willmott 1957).

End people were always destined to die a social death at the hands of the powerful. These were a collection of war generals, local authorities and middle-class consumers. As Tessa explained when talking about the parents of young people:

> And [the parents] do stuff with [their young people] on the weekend and they are pretty good with them but you can see the difficulty in it, and it is difficult, and it is all because you've got to have this and you've got to have two cars and you've got to have mobile phones and they've got to go to Spain and Butlins in one fuckin' year. You know, everything's pushed at them. You make money, make money, make people richer and richer and our little society is just falling on its face and what do they do with the kids 'we'll lock them up. Give them an ASBO [Anti Social Behaviour Order] […]. Give them an ASBO. I really do feel when these people go on about racial harassment. I think come down and […] see how the East End people have been getting on. I got to go Malcolm, but that's how I feel. I feel that we have been shit [shat] on for years and years and years, I really do. So no I don't vote. Fuck 'em. They should have blown up the houses of Parliament. Guy Fawkes should have succeeded then.

In this narrative Tessa also positions her analysis of class loss against the demonisation of the white working-class as racist. Her comment "I really do feel when these people go on about racial harassment" is rejection of the labels associated with underclass discourses (MacDonald and Marsh 2005; Murray 1990, 1994) that have been applied to white working-class populations locally and nationally (Ware 2008) (see Chapter Five), and a frustrated acceptance that racism is the outcome of a history of criminalisation and marginalisation.

Although the locus of nostalgia for the Golden Era was remembered in terms of class and community loss, it was also remembered through loss associated with post-war immigration. By looking to blame migrants for post-industrial decline and the anxieties caused by social fragmentation under neo-liberalism (Yuval-Davis 2012, p.156), it followed a familiar history of blaming racialised others for wider social problems (Banton 1955; Humphries 1981; Jones 1971; Richmond 1954). In this way, immigration overlaid class loss and became its own source of resentment. The illegitimacy of migrants then concurrently established the legitimacy of those bodies that could lay claim to the traditional white working-class community; the one that was imagined to exist before the immigrants arrived. At the time of conducting the research, this form of memory practice had continued with reference to white Eastern European migrants who were identified as not being white enough.

The character of whitened memories of belonging was 'autochthonous' (Geschiere 2009) – a 'myth of entitlement' (Moore 2008, p.356) and a majority discourse of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2012). However, it was not confined to white bodies. Whiteness in Britain and East London is a popular phenomenon (Bonnett 2000). Different (but not separate) from the US examples of racial uplift (Newitz 1997; Roediger 2007; Wray 2006) and Victorian ideas of whiteness as bourgeois or elite (and 'dirty white' as savage) (Booth 1890; Mayhew 1861; Sims 1883), autochthony in East London grew out of a history of white popularism that followed imperialism, the welfare state, the Second World War and post-colonial xenophobia (Bonnett 2000). This popular condition of autochthony meant that whiteness was widely distributed and indeed could be traced by people of various ethnicities and migratory trajectories.

This is not to say the memory practices of black and Asian youth workers were the same as their white counterparts. While they mourned the loss of autochthonous community, and the decline brought by new immigration (particularly Eastern European migration), they did not mourn the loss of white community. The white community in Newham was a highly problematic place for many black and Asian youth workers. In the 1960s, black people living in the area had their windows smashed, until they left. The area had a National Front presence (Husbands 1988) and the descendants of the mob who gave out Christmas presents to those lucky white kids were also the local National Front activists, and not so beneficent to young black and Asian kids. Through the 1980s and into the 1990s serious street-level racism continued around Leyham. Black and Asian youth workers commented on the area's reputation for racism and the daily incidents of racist abuse they endured. Not only did these youth workers not mourn the loss of the white community, they also thought it a good thing that the most ardent racists had left for the hinterlands of Essex and Kent.

Ryen and Jay were two youth workers at Leyham Youth Club. Ryen, in his early twenties, was black and had grown up in the local area. Jay, early thirties, was Asian and had been working around Leyham for the last decade. They explained their experiences:

> *Ryen*: I did know this area before, because I actually lived in Leyham for a
> bit as well. I lived here back in the early 90s … But due to racism my family
> moved out of the area.
> *Me*: When was that?
> *Ryen*: '93, '94
> *Me*: Because there was quite a lot of racism then?

> *Ryen*: Yeah there was. This area was mainly white people in the area.
> *Me*: And was it bad.
> *Ryen*: Yeah, bad. There was quite a lot of racism.
> *Me*: What kind of thing?
> *Ryen*: 'Dirty coon', 'niggers'.
> *Me*: Just like walking down the street?
> *Ryen*: Yeah, just walking down the street.
> […]
> *Me*: What do you reckon Jay?
> *Jay*: Yes, definitely. I've been here for about 11 years and when I started there was one culture and it was really tough for me.
> *Me*: Do you mean a white area?
> *Jay*: Yeah, a lot of white children and stuff like that. I found it really hard because I am from a different background, because I am Indian. […]
> *Me*: Did you used to get racism stuff before, at the beginning?
> *Jay*: A lot, a lot. … [A]nother thing that I notice about people that are racist, they don't want to be here. They moved away and that's true. They want to be somewhere that they feel comfortable.
> *Me*: They've gone to Essex or Kent or stuff like that?
> *Jay*: That's it. That's so true.
> *Me*: So do you think the area's improved round here, got better, got worse?
> *Ryen*: I think in certain things it has got better, like multiculturalism [increased ethnic diversity] has improved the area.

Nonetheless, youth workers and parents of various ethnic backgrounds and migratory trajectories mourned the loss of 'community'. As part of the recurring construction of Golden Eras (Pearson 1983; Williams 1973), they too told tales of childhood, morality and simple pleasures. These childhoods had common features. Youth workers, some only in their twenties, with migratory trajectories that connected Jamaica with Ireland, England and India, told me how there used to be more innocence and less crime, drugs and gangs. They told me how children played on the streets and doors were left wide open. They also associated loss with new migrants – particularly Eastern Europeans. They identified immigration with cultural decay: alcoholism, violence, the problematic occupation of public space (drinking in the park, hanging out on street corners), black-market business practices, gangs and the lack of street safety. These ideas of moral and social decay were further played out through discussions about welfare shortages and a lack of jobs for young people, again attributed to immigration. One youth worker, who arrived in the UK from Guyana forty years ago, thought that new migrants hadn't been in the country long enough to start taking housing, jobs, welfare and the "food out of the mouths" of British people. In this way, the incompatibility of the old nation with new people was retraced and maintained across ethnic boundaries. In this way, the

exclusions and historic de-legitimisation that had been enacted in the past were retraced and practised in the present.

The breakdown of Golden Era notions of community, rising crime and street violence was generally verified by the fact that people 'kept to their own' or 'didn't talk over the garden fence' anymore. Youth workers regularly commented on the loss of community and attributed this loss to the rise of consumer capitalism and individualism. However, while the youth workers did ruminate on these structural issues, the problem of 'people-keeping-to-their-own' was also used to identify the problematic memory practices of Asian communities. Perceptions of strong cultural memory among Asian communities were written over structural uncertainty and changing forms of social interaction. These cultural memories were fetishised and envied for having maintained the close-knit community that the English had lost and could not regain. For those who invested in St George's Day as a crumbling bastion of a purer past, the celebration of Eid and Diwali were symbols of this. The liberal rejection of St George's Day – "political correctness gone mad" (pers. comm.) – then fed back into this racialised memoryscape, making nostalgia for the Golden Era all the more painful.

The dialogic formation of immigration and class loss, and its mutability across racial boundaries, was vividly demonstrated one evening at Leyham. Three youth workers: Neil, a first-generation Canadian who had lived in the borough for about twenty years; Jay, a second-generation Indian who has worked in the borough for the last decade; and Tessa, a third-generation Scot, also born and raised in Newham, stood with me in the kitchen making a cup of tea. I am white, was brought up in Hertfordshire, live in North London and have a migratory history that connects South Wales to Bristol and south-west London. The topic of conversation was the decline of East London community. The loss of community spirit was lamented and they concluded that it was unlikely to return while people didn't speak English or know English history. They all blamed the Indians and Pakistanis for the language and cited a Polish worker on the second charge. He had apparently claimed that Henry VIII had killed the Pope. Sifting between the Second World War and William the Conqueror, we all clutched for fragments of our GCSE or O-level official history. After a while, it turned out that none of us had an accurate account of those events in the 1530s. Anyway, it didn't matter, and as they were concluding that it was a good thing that they were all really accepting of difference, Neil said, 'Shhh! Ed's mum is coming.' Ed's mum was black and everyone was quiet.

The conversation demonstrated the plurality and creativity of memory practices associated with whiteness and loss and their creative use of cultural and racial codes. The three youth workers of different migratory histories and different embodied experiences were able to collectively lament the decline of community located in the Golden Era. They did so with recourse to local stereotypes about Indians and Pakistanis and they linked this effortlessly to the newer violation presented by the figure of the Polish worker – who was seen simultaneously as an illegitimate presence and a direct threat to British 'history'. We were all accorded access to this conversation through our connection to Newham's past. As a new arrival in the borough my white skin and its relation to the melancholic nation gave me this dubious privilege. Neil's white skin and time in the area facilitated his. Tessa, white and born and brought up in the borough, had no charge to answer. Jay's brown skin was also not an inhibitor to this discussion. While he did not celebrate the same idea of white community as the other two did, he was still able to access and use memories of whiteness to make his own autochthonous claims.

Based on this discussion, Neil, Jay and Tessa concluded that they were all really tolerant of difference. By this they meant that despite their perception of these cultural problems, they were happy to get along with people of different backgrounds on a day-to-day basis. The contested history of their discussion, and the different exclusions it entailed, became apparent with the physical presence of Ed's mother's black body. Ed's mother's body brought into relief the different kinds of historic legitimacy enjoyed by Polish, English, Welsh, Scottish, Canadian, Indian and black Caribbean migrants in the area, and the different bases from which their collective and nostalgic lament had been possible. While we all had access to white memories, the ways that we accessed them depended on our bodies, on the collectivity of the lament, and on the presence of 'others'.

How young people retraced whiteness and loss

My original interest in dialogic memory practices and their challenge to the popular fictions of the white East End did not start with the youth workers but with the young people at Leyham Youth Club. Specifically, the idea for this chapter began while I was observing young people's rituals for St George's Day at Leyham Youth Club. At the time, I assumed that because the area was so multi-ethnic, there would be little, if any, interest in the occasion. I was mistaken,

however. Increasingly, St George's Day and the St George Cross have been mobilised in the service of national melancholias (Gilroy 2006), and Leyham was no exception. These memory rituals, or everyday acts of memorialisation (Alexander Forthcoming) had a particularly strong resonance in the youth club. Unlike some of the other youth clubs that would celebrate Divali, Eid or the African Cup of Nations with equal interest, Leyham focused on English and Christian festivals. Like Christmas and Easter, St George's Day was a marked occasion and the youth club was dressed with associated symbolism.

In the run-up to St George's Day, the youth club had been decorated in the colours of the St George flag. Fifty children and young people of various national, ethnic and linguistic trajectories sat around the craft tables making a selection of red and white objects. Participation in the rituals provided them with an official language through which to trace their own versions of whiteness and class loss. This was the after-school group rather than the whiter youth group I worked with. Tessa was making a red and white hat for Lynn to wear when she called the bingo at a local Working Men's Club. Kylie, eighteen, sat down on the sofa with me to watch what was going on and I asked her what she thought. She told me that the rituals were important. "They [have] their day, so we are going to have ours." Forgetting Christmas and Easter, she continued, "We still don't get a day off school though … *They* do for Eid and … I can't remember the rest of them [religious holidays]."

For Kylie, celebrating St George's Day acted as a form of protest against the cultural erasure she associated with multi-ethnic society, multiculturalism and political correctness. Indeed, the displays of red and white that coloured the youth club lent themselves to the same conclusion. Tessa and Lynn were making a statement that Leyham still remembered England. However, the table of young people seemed to suggest a more contested history. The ambiguity and allure of these memory practices resided with two women of Romany and Scottish heritage encouraging tables of multi-ethnic children to enthusiastically glue together red and white flowers.

However, while this event pointed back to the post-war conjuncture, brought to light national and local mythologies of whiteness, and demonstrated the tracing of whiteness and loss in a super-diverse place, it also left a lot of questions unanswered. During my two years at Leyham Youth Club, the ambiguity of these ritual practices, and exactly what they meant to young

people, was filled by more banal moments (Billig 1995). Kylie, Molly, Dawn, Samantha and Josie were aged between sixteen and eighteen. They had all been born in the borough, were white and had parents, grandparents and great-grandparents with migratory histories that connected Greece to Ireland, and Bethnal Green to the migrations of the Romany population. Kylie and Molly were friends as were Dawn, Samantha and Josie. They were all working-class. Dawn and Samantha had achieved some grade Cs at GCSE and the others had fared less well. Molly, Dawn and Josie wanted jobs but along with 53.9 per cent of young people in the borough aged sixteen to twenty-four (LBN 2010b, p.44), they were struggling to find work. Aside from Kylie and Molly all the young women were living with their parents or guardians, although they wanted to move out. In addition to worries about employment and problems getting housed they had concerns about crime, and perceived the area to be in social and economic decline.

As in the accounts presented above, these young women used memory practices to make sense of class loss through discourses on immigration.

> *Me*: What do you think about migration in this area? Is there a lot?
> […]
> *Dawn*: Lately it's been getting worse
> *Me*: Like what? What's worse?
> *Josie*: More cultures are coming and they're taking all the jobs.
> *Samantha*: More Russians.
> *Me*: More what?
> *Josie*: More Russians and Lithuanians and that; foreigners.
> […]
> *Me*: Didn't it used to be like that?
> *Dawn*: No.
> *Josie*: Not as bad.
> *Samantha*: When my dad grew up round here it wasn't. It used to be all
> one. I don't really mind but sometimes I do.
> *Me*: Because of what?
> *Dawn*: Crime has gone up.
> *Samantha*: Yeah.
> *Josie*: Crime has gone up a lot [pause]. That's like boys round here anyway.
> *Samantha*: No… Yeah, there's a police thing on black crime, just on black
> crime only, so it must be affecting.

Molly and Kylie provided a similar analysis:

> *Molly*: Another thing that has annoyed me, right. As I said, I got kicked out by my mum and dad and as I said I am living in a B&B. Someone comes over from Lithuania, Poland …
> *Kylie*: … they get a flat straight away.
> *Molly*: … anywhere. They come over with their black bags and they're in a flat within two weeks. Why has it taken me so long? Because all of the people who come over from their countries get the flat and stops me from getting the flat. And I think they should prioritise. The people that lives in this country, the people that are born in this country should be prioritised before the people that come over.

Through these analyses the young women traced memories of loss and decline, and as with the previous examples presented in this chapter, they did so with reference to the figure of the immigrant. Samantha makes direct reference to this historically layered practice. Tracing the memories of her father, she says: "When my dad grew up round here [crime, unemployment and immigration] wasn't [so bad]. It used to be all one." In this way, Samantha shows how her father's memory practices of class loss and whiteness are used to make sense of her present situation.

The young women also acknowledge shifting parameters of whiteness. Molly and Kylie are careful to distinguish between those that are 'born in this country' and 'people that come over'. In this way, they exclude the immigrant while they acknowledge that nostalgias for the Golden Era are not only available to those with white skin. However, at the same time that the young women acknowledge the mutability of white memory practices, within autochthonous parameters, they also demonstrate how these are constrained by older forms of racism. Their largely xenophobic narratives contain traces of older racial formations. The previous section discussed how the body of Ed's mother drew attention to the different embodied locations from which claims to white memory were possible. Samantha, Dawn and Josie, above, also end their discussion of loss and immigration with a statement that takes them back to the alien figure of the young black male associated with post-war moral panics and social decay (Alexander 1996; Gilroy 1987; Hall et al. 1978; Solomos 1988; and see Chapter Four of this thesis).

These memory practices were negotiated alongside the young women's own migratory histories. They were the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of migrants. In this

way, the young women were part of a dialogic history of 'becoming white' (Brodkin 1998; Dunbar 1997; Ignatiev 2009; Roediger 2007; Wray 2006). It is notable that while the young women were negotiating 'becoming white', previous generations of their own families may not have been white enough. This shows the powerful alliances and ambiguities of race and culture in local constructions of British nationalism (Gilroy 1987). The young women acknowledged how some members of their families had different claims than themselves to local belonging. Molly explained how her mother was Greek and how they had a Greek uncle living with them who didn't speak much English. She said he was "so Greek" he was "basically black". She meant that while she was white and belonged; her uncle didn't because he was not white or English enough. In this case, his darker skin and inability to speak English denied him access, in her eyes, to Newham's past. However, while her uncle made clear her family's contested access to local forms of white belonging, he did not subvert her own claim. In fact, it was through the presence of her uncle that she negotiated her own place in Newham's history.

This articulation of whiteness also enabled Molly to blame those who were not white enough for the economic and social hardships she dealt with. Whiteness and Greekness, in this sense, had a very different meaning from the kinds of ethnic identity mobilised by the middle-class children discussed by Reay et al. (2007) when they describe how these children can use minority ethnic identities as social capital. However, Greekness was not available to Molly as a form of multicultural capital; rather, it was whiteness that provided her with mobility. This was a self-conscious whiteness rather than middle-class white blindness. Through overlaying structural disadvantage with immigration, and phenotypical racism with xenophobic exclusion, the young women 'became white'. In this way, they remembered pasts not available to their parents and grandparents. This form of memory practice made sense of being working-class in a super-diverse place. It also made sense because, not in spite of, the young women's migrant backgrounds.

Young people also traced histories of white legitimacy through the spatial practices of "keeping to your own", "ignoring the foreigners" and through a form of street etiquette called 'respect'. On the basis of their imagined historic connection to the area, Kylie and Molly felt that they were due respect. Respect could be granted by them because of their more legitimate historic claim to the territory. If they were granted respect, they would give respect back. This masculinised spatial and memory practice (similar practices are discussed in Chapter

Three) extended to respect for the country. In this way, the young women constructed their threatened sense of entitlement, not by seeking to empathise with other people disenfranchised by global capitalism but by confronting their physical presence on the street (Seidler 2006, p.105).

As a mark of the barbarity of new immigrants, Kylie and Molly explained to me how they once had to defend two old people against Lithuanians who were being rude to them. This act was a defence of local and national territory against an alien invasion. The 'old people' symbolised the perceived vulnerability of the autochthonous community to immigrants. As captured in the cheek of Lithuanian women (who did not even have the deference to speak English around them) it was also a rejection of multicultural policies that had given rights to immigrants over natives.

> *Kylie*: I had a fight with two Lithuanian women. They was being really abusive to old people walking down the street. And see with me and all my mates, we don't allow that. That's disrespectful to the old people. So we followed them, not starting an argument. We followed. We're like, 'you going to go back and say sorry to them or we're going to make you go back'. They're like 'this is England, you should say sorry to us'. They like talking about us in their language.

In conclusion, these memory practices showed how whiteness was traced rather than permanent. The openness of tracing meant that whiteness and its association with national culture was mobilised by young people and youth workers of different migratory trajectories. This did not mean that white, black, Greek, Romany and Asian people practised memories of belonging in the same way, or that xenophobia and phenotypical exclusion disappeared. Rather it showed how national, cultural and racial ideas of autochthony were overlaid and interpenetrated. Built at national and local levels, these memory practices referenced national discourses on the East End, the death of multiculturalism, the plight of the white working-class and the St George Cross, but they also attended to local narratives of class loss, immigration, dislocation and post-industrial decline.

Part Two – Diaspora mnemonics

The forgotten memories of diaspora space

Memory practices of whiteness and loss were only part of Newham's diaspora mnemonics, however. Whereas part one has explored how whiteness was traced and loss coded through immigration, part two explores memories that are 'forgotten' (Connerton 2009) or silenced (Bakhtin 1986b; Nietzsche 1983) when Outer East London is remembered as white. It discusses how young people shared diaspora memories, how they negotiated different memories of 'home' and dispersal, and how they participated in acts of remembering that existed beyond ethnic and national forms of solidarity. Built through 150 years of constant migration and movement, memories of white belonging in Newham interacted with memories of numerous other global 'homes'. This first section of part two explores how other national memories were traced, negotiated and laid down alongside the myths of white pasts.

The After School Club's super-diverse demographics provided a different insight into the diaspora mnemonics of Newham. Whereas Leyham had a large white population, the After School club was populated by young people with Eastern European; African; and Central, South and South-East Asian refugee and migrant backgrounds, in addition to black, Asian and white young people with longer family histories in the area. The overlaying and intersection of memories of different homes in this space drew attention to the forms of memory practice hidden by narratives of whiteness and loss.

Serena was about fourteen years old and had recently arrived in the borough from Portugal. I worked with her in the After School Club. She didn't speak English well but what she couldn't articulate she made up for with bodily performance. She interacted well with the other young people, many of whom had similar experiences of dislocation, and much of her time was spent taunting the young men and playing practical jokes. However, she also made fairly frequent reference to her memory of Portugal. In this way, Serena brought another phantasm of 'home' and belonging into Newham's diaspora memory space.

One evening, as the young people were leaving the youth club, Serena decided to make an intervention and share a taste of Portugal with the departing crowd. From the computer terminal in the adjacent room could be heard the blaring sound of Portuguese pop, closely

followed by Serena, who came running towards the departing young people. Her aim was to simultaneously draw attention to the music, its relation to her body and to disrupt an orderly exit from the club. On all counts her success was limited. First, she was so often disruptive that the young people ignored her provocation. Second, while it was important for her, having just arrived in the area, the performance of 'home' also didn't elicit much interest. Lots of the young people at the After School Club practised memories of different 'homes' and therefore the content of Serena's actions was run-of-the-mill rather than shocking. It seemed that Serena hadn't been in the After School Club long enough to realise that her claim to difference was one of many. After the crowd had left I spoke to Serena, feeling she needed some validation for what she had done. I asked if she was Portuguese. She said that she was, and told me proudly that because she was, she always listened to Portuguese music.

Serena's memories of home were just one of a number played in the background of the After School Club. *Kampala via Boda Boda* offered shots of the Ugandan capital city from a motorbike. John watched it intently on YouTube. It was a connection to a home he had lived in, or maybe one his parents had told him about. Whereas Serena had used sound and her body to bring her home to the youth club, John was using space and light to illuminate a corner of the computer room. His friends occasionally glanced over but were more interested in working out lyrics to an instrumental that had been placed on GrimeForum's online portal. John continued watching the street scenes and providing ambient lighting for the youth club's diaspora memoryscape.

In this way, memories of home at the After School Club were banal but in other places they required a more conscious negotiation. Freddy was about seventeen and had recently left school and started a college course in construction. He had been born in Newham to Colombian parents and attended Leyham Youth Club. Freddy talked to me about holidays in Colombia, of the Colombian food he ate at home, and of the Catholic religion he practised. These were all means of tracing links between Colombia (where he had never lived) and where he was *at.* We had a good relationship and while he didn't talk about these subjects with his friends, he shared them with me. Freddy knew I had lived in Latin America and spoke Spanish, but maybe I was also sufficiently strange to Leyham to suggest openness to his stories. Freddy told me his friends were "all from here" (he meant white, English and from Newham) and uninterested in his stories. He was as white skinned as they were, he had been born in

Newham like them, he also shared a history of dislocation, but at the same time he felt excluded from their more autochthonous memory practices.

Like Freddy, Endrit also used his national nostalgias to reflect upon his position in Newham's hierarchies of belonging. Endrit was 14 years old and I got to know him through the Albanian Youth Group. He recalled how every year he and his family drove to Albania for their summer holidays – a fairly common journey among the Albanian-speaking families I knew. The journey took Endrit from England, through France and into Central Europe. Endrit used the journey as a means of communicating his own story of dispersal and migration. While describing the journey, he told me about the smell of the countries he passed through. He thought that France stank, especially Paris, and he thought that London smelled bad too. He held this in contrast to the fresh air and pure water of Albania. In sharing his memories of home and in retracing the route that had originally brought him to the UK as a refugee, Endrit constructed Albania as a green and pure past that existed in contrast to the overdeveloped western European metropolises. However, this was not only a verification of nostalgic purity, essence, and subsequent dispersal and loss, but also a means of addressing a history of European civilisation he felt excluded from. By remembering Albania as a green and pure land he was confronting the widely held stereotypes of Albania, and Albanians, as backward (King et al. 2003). By romanticising Albanian's nature and purity, Endrit was confronting his own embodied existence in a discursive field of western progress and eastern stagnation. Endrit's story of his journey home, then, provided a vehicle through which he traced and negotiated his own belonging in Newham.

Eva's projection of social mobility (discussed in Chapter Five) opened up possibilities for memory practices unavailable to Freddy and Endrit. However, these still needed to be negotiated alongside the memory practices of her mother. Eva was fourteen years old and was becoming independent from her mother. I also worked with her on photography and media projects at the Albanian Youth Project. Her mother was one of the youth workers, and over time I got to know both of them quite well. Eva's increasing assertions of independence had made her mother worry that they were becoming estranged. In an attempt to create empathy with Eva her mother had assured her that she remembered what to was like to be fourteen. Eva set her straight, telling her it was "ancient history". Her mother's memories of the past, based on what Eva considered to be a conservative upbringing in northern Albania, were of

limited relevance to Eva's life. Eva had been born in Newham and shared with her friends the desire for greater independence promised to aspirational young women. Eva's mother sometimes asked me for my take on the relationship between her and her daughter. I think she thought, as someone who had grown up in the UK, I might be able to shed some light on Eva's experience. Eva, however, demonstrated no more affinity with my childhood than she did with her mother's. We were all of different times and spaces. Eva could not take on her mother's memories or mine because they were made in another time and space – one that did not fully make sense of Eva's present or future.

However, while memory practices often referenced national nostalgias they also moved beyond the national, and ethnic boundaries ceased to be determining. Besian was seventeen years old and also worked with Eva, her friends and me on photography and media projects at the Albanian Youth Project. Besian had been born in Albania and had arrived as a refugee in Newham when he was a young child. He and his mother had become part of the Albanian Youth Project and in this environment he had been brought up with Eva and her two best friends Alma and Besa. They were three years his junior. As mentioned in Chapter One, we worked on a project called *Where I Live, What I Want*. For this project Eva, Besa and Alma interviewed residents in the local area, taking photos, video footage and recording sounds. At the end of the project Besian cut the footage together into a video. As part of this editing, he selected a soundtrack that played during the interludes between the interviews. The tracks Besian picked were: Sean Paul – *So Fine* (2009), Noizy – *Oh My* (2010), Brick and Lace – *Bad to Di Bone* (2009), and Giggs – *Talking the Hardest* (2009). The tracks were a mixture of R'n'B, reggae and hip hop. Sean Paul and Brick and Lace are Jamaican artists, Giggs is a British artist from Peckham, South London. Noizy is an Albanian hip hop artist who had lived in Woolwich, south-east London, for a number of years before returning to Albania. His music is well known in Albania, and among the Albanian diaspora in the UK, but is not known in the UK mainstream. Besian had chosen the tracks to impress Eva, Besa and Alma but they also functioned as a form of diasporic memory practice (Gilroy 1993) and a negotiation of local belonging.

Aside from Noizy's *Oh My*, the tracks selected by Besian might have been found on any number of young people's mobile phones. The temptation then is to focus on Noizy as Besian's referent for a history of dispersal and a means through which he traces a memory of home.

When he premiered the video, however, Besian did not give precedence to Noizy. While Besian related to Noizy partly because he was also an Albanian and lived in London, his signification of dispersal was played alongside the other tracks, all with their own diaspora histories. In this way, Besian's compilation of memories was not wholly contained by national nostalgias; rather they were in dialogue with other traditions and other pasts that existed in Newham's diaspora space (discussed further in Chapter Four). The young women expressed their appreciation of Besian's music choice and, in so doing, let it be known that this collection of dispersals, traditions and memories made sense to them too.

The vignettes above show how memories of diasporic homes were traced and negotiated through bodies and spaces in collective environments. They have shown how in some places diaspora mnemonics were banal and ambient whereas in others they needed to be negotiated alongside competing histories and pasts. Besian's video makes clear how traditions of dispersal came together and syncretised with other pasts contained in diasporic cultural flows.

Diaspora solidarities, living for others and post-national mnemonics

Just has the national containers for memory were broken down through Besian's playlist they were also challenged and deconstructed through forms of memory practices built on diaspora solidarities: living for others and post-national mnemonics.

The possibility for diaspora solidarities first became apparent to me while I was working at Leyham Youth Club. Kevin was a thirteen-year-old young person at Leyham who had Barbadian and Irish grandparents. He lived close to the youth club and attended the sessions when he didn't have homework to do. He was keen to help me with my research and in an interview I asked him about migration in Newham. Kevin's response to my question challenged autochthony on the basis of his memory of past movement and his projection of future travel.

> *Kevin*: Yeah, there is quite a lot, Lithuanians. There is nothing wrong with that. It's just, I hate it when people say 'you must speak the language if you come into this country'. I think it's very rude. And some people say in my Spanish class, in Spanish, 'I don't like terrorists cos they are taking up all the space and jobs. I thought 'how can you say that' you don't know what they have been through. How do you know they don't want to make a new start of their lives? How do you know? … They've probably had a miscarriage or whatever. You can't see things, you must know things to say things.
> *Me*: So you think it's rude that people say that?

> *Kevin*: Very, because if I didn't come from England and I lived in Ireland and I wanted a new life, or came from Afghanistan or whatever and I wanted a new life, then I wouldn't like someone to do it to me.

Kevin understood that xenophobia existed and that it was related to ideas of belonging and loss. Using miscarriage as a metaphor for a form of trauma he associates with the anxieties of dislocation and resettlement,[34] rather than accept the xenophobia of his classmates he challenged it by imagining how it related to his own past and future movements.

Kevin was not alone in this way of thinking. Freddy, who has already been introduced, recalled that when he was younger discrimination had made it difficult for his father to get work. Like Kevin, this memory led Freddy (whose parents were Colombian) to be critical of the idea that Eastern European people had taken English people's jobs.

> *Freddy*: Yeah, I think there is a lot of racism. I don't mean just in London but in immigration as a whole in England. They say that Eastern European people took English people's jobs but … I don't reckon. I reckon yeah it could be to do with that they [building contractors and other employers] were getting cheap labour. But if you are a better worker than someone else then [that person is] going to get sacked. I think it also has to do with that they came over to find a job so they will be [prepared] to work more and harder than other people who take it for granted to have a good paid job … A lot of jobs here you can sit around and not really do a lot and get good pay and people take it for granted. And if someone else was to come from another country they would work for the money that they earned. So, I think it's really important.

Freddy and Kevin's solidarity with other migrants was based on their imagination of their own pasts and futures in terms of other people's struggles.

The possibility for forms of memory practices that broke down national ideas of belonging was apparent in other everyday interactions. Outside Queen's Market in East Ham, as part of the documentary project *Where I live, What I Want*, Eva and her friends at the Albanian Youth Project conducted interviews with local residents. One interview was with a female migrant from the Philippines. Standing outside the entrance to the market with her child she was asked

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[34] At the time I thought he might have included this comment because of his experience of someone close to him having had a miscarriage, but I didn't ask.

by Eva what she liked about the local area. She said the cheap fruit and fresh meat that was on sale. When Besian cut the material together into a final film he added the caption "[she liked] cheap food, fruit and vegetables … but most importantly it reminded her of home". Like Endrit, above, he associated ideas of purity and freshness with Albania, and for him the woman's comments were made in the same vein. But while the woman had mentioned that Queen's Market was like the markets in the Philippines she had not placed any importance on the relation between the market and her memory of 'home'. Besian had sought and found his own nostalgia in her. Besian and the women shared a collective memory that did not require them to be from the same place, and that existed across national boundaries.

Childhood accidents and comical occasions were also shared beyond the boundaries of national nostalgia. When released from national and racial ties these memory practices offered the basis for empathy and sharing. On alternate Saturdays I played football with a group of Albanian-speaking young men, aged between twelve and sixteen, and all born in the UK. The games were held in a school hall near Barking, hired by the Albanian Youth Project. During the games they shared stories of holidays in Albania. They talked about going up into the mountains and having falls. They talked about the comedic danger of having a cow run at them. These were stories of danger and absolute safety, told in a humorous way as if nothing bad could happen. However, at the same time as being memories of home, they were also just memories of events. While they were exclusive they were also open and I participated in these memories, not on the basis that I was Albanian but on the basis that I had similar stories to tell. Through these conversations we shared pasts not dependent on our migratory trajectories but on childhood experiences.

The possibility for diaspora mnemomics was facilitated by the ways in which diaspora space threw up constant ambiguities when ascribing national memories to individual bodies. At the After School Club, the ethnic, national and linguistic diversity of the space meant that such ambiguities regularly arose. The best friend of Serena (the fourteen-year-old purveyor of Portuguese pop who has already been introduced) was Helena, who had arrived from Romania at the same time as Serena came from Portugal. Both were learning English and finding their feet. What they shared, in addition to an interest in the same boys, was a feeling of being out of place and out of time. And because they had both arrived at the youth club at the same time, there was occasional confusion about who was who. Serena performed being

Portuguese very loudly and because Helena was quieter some of the young people thought she was Portuguese too. In this way, for a period of time, Helena embodied Serena's memories in addition to sharing her dislocation. Although this may seem of little significance, it was hugely instructive about the everyday lives of the young people in the youth club. The diversity of migrations to the borough meant that in some cases it was difficult to locate memory in terms of national, ethnic or linguistic belonging. Consequently, forms of living for the others became widespread and young people became comfortable with the ambiguities they implied.

At the After School Club the ambiguity and diversity of past belonging also meant that national and ethnic difference could be played with in ways that detached it from hierarchies of 'race' and nation. Two of the young men that came to the After School Club had the same Congolese surname and Mel, one of the youth workers, asked if they were brothers. Kane said "no", they weren't and if they looked alike it was because they were from the same tribe. He said that there were only two tribes in the Congo. Kane was winding Mel up, they were in fact brothers. The reference to where they had come from was rooted in a curiosity over the surname and therefore of provenance, but the receptive environment of the After School Club ensured that the question was not rooted in a questioning of legitimacy. Kane knew that because he knew Mel and he knew the space in which his joke was to be received. He shared Mel's memory of movement and multiculturalism in Newham and assumed there was no judgement of legitimacy in her question. This enabled him to wind her up.

These sorts of curiosities were common in the After School Club. Young people of different migratory trajectories – European (including British), Asian, African and Latin American – asked each other 'what their country was'. While this attended to national orders, it was very different from the accusation 'where are you from? No, where are you *really* from?' It was an open curiosity similar to Derrida's analysis of hospitality (2000). While working within national orders of being, these forms of speech did not seek to action a hierarchy of belonging on this basis. This openness, and the partial detachment of migratory trajectories from national hierarchies, was predicated on a shared diaspora consciousness that allowed for migration to become a fact of everyday interaction.

Young people made friends on the basis of feeling out of place, they shared nostalgias for the same kinds of events in different times and spaces, they lived memories for others and they

protested forms of autochthonous exclusion. These recurring practices disinvested memory of its nationalist and ethnic baggage and permitted a playful approach to belonging. These memories of other homes, and none, were not included in the histories of whiteness and loss. They were, however, the ever-present condition of migration and movement in Newham. Rather than signifying a lack of belonging, being out of place and out of time infused everyday life with ambiguities that were productive rather than debilitating. They challenged the racialised hierarchies through which autochthony and loss could be claimed.

Conclusion

Located between the Golden Era and the perceived decline brought by immigration, popular culture, political discourse and sociological analysis posit a reduced *history* of Outer East London. By forgetting the dialogic creativity of whiteness as a popular and traced category of being and knowledge, this history serves national melancholias and white invisibility. It also does a disservice to the complexity of everyday memory practices in Newham. Through an ethnographic investigation into whiteness and loss in Newham, this chapter has unpicked the reified *histories* associated with the Golden Era, unfolding Newham's fan of history to show the dialogical formation of racial hierarchy, and the porosity and allure of whiteness and class loss in a super-diverse place. The chapter has shown that while there was nothing whole, permanent or timeless about whiteness, nonetheless it functioned to create autochthonous narratives based on racial and national hierarchies of belonging that overlaid phenotypical racism with newer xenophobias. The necessity to exclude on the basis of an a priori myth of belonging found common resonance among youth workers, parents and young people of different migratory trajectories. However, this did not imply that all exclusions were the same. The different embodied histories and experiences of people still affected the way they accessed the soil.

The historical and social conjunctures in which these practices of whiteness and loss occurred were particular. While they were part of a national formation of post-war nostalgia they were also specific to Newham, and to Leyham. Taken forward in the following chapter through a discussion of the politics of territory and defensive community formations, they drew attention to the history of migration in the area (and the resulting super-diversity) at the same time as they were predicated on forgetting that same past. And they drew attention to the

long history of economic stagnation at the same time as they were predicated on replacing this notion of loss with the figure of the immigrant.

These forms of racialised legitimacy functioned through what they forgot. But what was silenced still existed in the fan of history and in the memory practices of young people. Newham was made through 150 years of migration that brought with it memories of many different homes. Some of these homes were national essences but their ubiquity and their openness to appropriation gave rise to forms of ambiguity that became estranged from their national and ethnic anchors. Personal memories and projections of migration were used in solidarity with other migrants against the dehumanising consequences of xenophobia. Through cultural production different memoires and trajectories were played together in uncomplicated alliance. In some spaces, the openness to different pasts and the uncertainties involved in defining where people were *from* allowed for interactions that were temporarily stripped of racial and ethnic hierarchy. Young people whose national origins were mistaken found themselves in the position of living memories for their friends. This resulted in a disinvestment from nation and 'race' and an openness to mnemonic play that worked against the hierarchies of belonging sustained in popular culture and everyday life. Contrary to Golden Era accounts, these memories were all part of Newham.

Chapter Three – The politics of territory

In February 2010, the building of the new fence commenced. It was the third incarnation of border architecture at Leyham Youth Club. The first incarnation was a boundary indicator – a metal picket fence. At four feet high, it kept some footballs in, but any physical protection it offered was based on consent rather than strength. The second incarnation was a temporary builder's fence. Standing eight feet high, it restricted physical movement and protected the nascent construction of the new adventure playground. This more aggressive structure provoked nightly attack and far from dispelling the lingering threat staff felt from the outside, it confirmed it. The final fence was eight feet high, made of steel bars and enclosing the perimeter of the youth club. Cemented into the ground, it could not be overturned. This fence accompanied increasing levels of policing and criminalisation at the youth club. Although justified through the need to protect the adventure playground, any physical protection it provided was minimal. Scaled on a nightly basis it attracted more attention that it deterred. As Will, one of the youth workers said, "No fence would be more effective". He was right. But the real purpose of the fence was not to physically prevent entrance to the site but to make a statement of force, define a threat, and locate a moral community – a community that extended from the youth club, out through the iron bars and into the wider neighbourhood.[35]

The procession of fence building at Leyham Youth Club provided a useful allegory for the developing territorial politics in the local area. These territorial politics drew attention to wider concerns for the un-freedoms – 'alienation' (Lefebvre 1996) – lived by lots of the young people I worked with. The fence symbolised marginalisation and exclusion from public space (Kofman and Lebas 1996, p. 21; Lefebvre 1996). Invested with authority by the police, the youth club and the 'local community', it was a demarcation of order (and disorder) that constrained young people's freedom to *be* in, and collectively produce, their local environment (Berman 1986; Harvey 2008; Isin 2000; Lefebvre 1996; Marcuse 2009; Merrifield 2011; Mitchell 1995;

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[35] The aesthetics of the fence were discussed and a metal-bar construction was deemed appropriate by youth workers and the local authority because it would allow visual connection between the youth club and the wider community.

Soja 2010). Developing considerations from the previous chapter, these notions of order were partly defined through autochthony. However, the fence also provided a metaphor to explore the other scales on which order and disorder were defined. The fence was not the only social and territorial boundary young people encountered. On the street, in the youth club, and in micro-sociological interactions between young people, youth workers and the police, other boundaries were constructed and dismantled.

Political geographers have noted the symbolic importance of territory for negotiating forms of inclusion and exclusion (Smith 2001; Soja 2005). In sociology, Back has discussed how terrains around youth clubs were created and coded through fluid, local nationalisms (1994). Alexander has explored the youth club as part of a wider nexus of racially coded territory (2000). Other texts have described the youth club's territorial prominence in young people's local landscapes (Robins 1992; Willmott 1969). However, the youth club has also been explored as a feature of the urban landscape constituted through its relationship with national, local and micro-politics (Robins and Cohen 1978). This work shows how the territory of the youth club is socially constructed and negotiated through the interrelation of different geographical scales – referred to as the 'politics of scale' (Harvey 1989a, 2000; Jonas 1994; Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996; Swyngedouw 1997, 2000; Thrift 1997). Leyham Youth Club was constructed and negotiated in this way. It was not a fixed site of territory and social meaning. Instead the territorial authority of the youth club was continually redefined through its relationship to national, local and micro political geographies.

Through exploring the intersection of these different territorial practices the chapter argues that the territorial politics of Leyham can only be understood when different scales of territory, and their accompanying discourses of order and disorder,[36] are viewed as mutually constitutive. The chapter proceeds by exploring the different scales of territorial negotiation: moving from outside the youth club to the inside, and then to the micro-politics of dialogic interactions. The first section of the chapter discusses how the policing of the streets became part of the youth club. It shows how national and local framings for disorder extended into and

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[36] Discussions of order and disorder as a territorial phenomenon are evident in Schmitt (Schmitt 2003; Schmitt 2008) who uses the concept of the 'nomos' to define spatial, political and juridical order against the chaos of the sea. Schmitt's ideas are usefully discussed and critiqued by Agamben (Agamben 1998; Agamben 2005).

changed the youth club's role in local territorial governance. The context for this discussion is the public spending cuts and the move from a top-down to a local partnership provision of social services. The second section addresses how the youth club developed its own regimes of territorial control. This is explored in the context of the increased role of the third sector in local governance. The character of this governance builds on discussions of autochthony elaborated in the previous chapter. The final section, addresses the forms of territorial governance formed at the level of the micro. Through a discussion of banter and ridicule it shows how territorial inclusions and exclusions were enacted through forms of dialogue. The movement through the chapter, and the interrelation of its different sections, reveals the development of territorial governance in Outer East London, and how the police, the youth club, youth workers and young people produced and negotiated inclusionary and exclusionary terrains.

1. Policing the streets through the youth club

In Newham, public space was divided by the police into spaces of order and disorder – the street was a site of disorder and the youth club a site of order. As a site of disorder, the street was also a site of criminalisation. Its function in this regard is well documented. Numerous sociological works have explored how working-class young people were criminalised by the police. These works have addressed how young people were criminalised because of their working-class position (Hall et al. 1976; Corrigan 1979; Humphries 1981; Pearson 1983), and because of their racialisation (Alexander 1996, 2000; Gilroy 1987; Hall et al. 1978; Isal 2006; Solomos 1988; Webster 2006).

In contemporary Newham, the young people I worked with experienced regular stop-and-search and felt they were subjected to aggressive and demeaning treatment by the police. This included rudeness, violence and the reported (illegal) practice of being stripped in the back of the police van. They were targeted because of the threat they represented to public order. One evening outside Leyham Youth Club I saw every group of young people that walked past being stopped and questioned. At the hands of community support officers their freedom was further compromised. Categorised as disorderly congregations they were moved on from the stairwells of council flats and street corners. As one of the local community support officers confirmed, this was not because they were causing trouble but because they were thinking

about it (Loader 1996). Their presence was seen as out of order, before they had done anything wrong.

Seeing the streets as their own, and as a site of relative freedom compared to the home, school or youth club (Valentine 2004, p.83), they often protested. Using the masculine vernacular of street contest,[37] young people (male and female) responded to the police's masculine aggression by teasing their authority through shows of bravado (swaggering, kissing teeth and aggressive posturing) and indicating indifference and resistance to their power. Through these acts of winning back space they kept the long traditions of cat and mouse alive. However, while the political geography of the street has received substantial attention (Humphries 1981; Samuel 1981; Corrigan 1979), there has been less concern for how the territorial politics of the street play through the decentralised institutions of the neo-liberal city into the youth club.

Different police officers had different approaches to young people but all the police I met understood the youth club in a criminal justice context. The youth club was positioned as a terrain of order, defined against the street – a sea of disorder. PC Duncan Jones, a local officer in the area with a liberal approach to young people, did not think that groups of young people were 'gangs' and did think the best way to work with them was through communication rather than antagonism. Nonetheless, he saw the youth club as a receptacle of order and the streets as a site of crime. In practical terms, he felt that when young people were at the youth club, local residents would not phone up the station to complain about them.

The perspectives of the police mattered because over the time I worked there, Leyham became increasingly co-opted into the forms of criminalisation that had been previously confined to the streets. These negotiations of order and disorder entered the youth club through partnership working. In Newham, and across England and Wales, the death of Victoria Climbié and the subsequent authoring of *Every Child Matters* (HM Government 2003) led to an Integrated Youth Support System designed so that no more children would fall through gaps in

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[37] Authors have explored the masculinised dynamics of public space (McDowell 1999; Pearson 1983; Rose 1993; Tonkiss 2006).

the welfare system.[38] Combined with the increased responsibility of third sector organisations to provide local services (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002), these moves to partnership working brought youth clubs into the ambit of local service-delivery alliances and practices of sharing information with the police.

As a local third sector body, Leyham Youth Club's partnership work resulted in a number of shared endeavours with the police. Occasionally, orders emanating from police liaison meetings would reach the youth clubs and new courses for provision were set down. At Brookbridge Youth Club these partnership meetings resulted in changes to the opening hours. About six months after I started volunteering there, provision times shifted from 7–9pm, to 7.30–9.30pm. The police had informed youth services that trouble was occurring in the local area after nine o'clock in the evening. This actually amounted to the young people talking in the carpark after leaving the youth club – the youth club the police ironically wanted them to attend. Nonetheless, their collective presence was deemed a 'hot spot' and the police intervened in youth club policy to change the hours. Through similar strategy meetings joint working initiatives were also established whereby youth workers took part in outreach work with the police, travelling around local areas in unmarked police cars, or on foot (with local officers) to stop and question young people. In this way, the youth workers helped soften the image of the police, the police collected intelligence they otherwise would not have had access to, and the lines were further blurred as to where the youth club as a site of order began, and the street as a site of disorder ended.

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[38] The policies detailed in *Every Child Matters* (HM Government 2003) and *Youth Matters* (HM Government 2005b) are central to current youth service provision. *Every Child Matters* was published by the government following the death of Victoria Climbié. Victoria Climbié's death was partly blamed on the systematic failings of children and young people's services. *Every Child Matters* outlined five key outcomes that should be achieved when working with children: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and economic well-being (HM Government 2003, p.14). *Youth Matters* applied these same outcomes to working with young people. In Newham the aims and objectives of *Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters* have been translated into the Children and Young People's Plan (LBN 2006a). *Youth Matters* has also provided the basis for Newham's Integrated Youth Support Services: a borough-wide strategy for all youth providers set around the triumvirate of information advice and guidance, targeted youth support, and positive activities for young people (Brailey 2008).

Similarly motivated, the police attended youth club sessions to 'improve their relationships' with the local youth. The police were overwhelmingly distrusted by the kinds of young people they were most interested in. And while the streets contained avenues for escape, the youth club provided a captive audience for their advances. They also provided an ideal site for gathering intelligence. They could, and did, ask youth workers to identify 'suspicious' young people and they asked to see the register and personal details kept on file (this was declined). I saw police officers drinking their tea while conducting surveillance. They stood outside while twenty young people played in front of them. As they watched the young people climbing through the smaller apertures of the climbing frame, they openly discussed who might have been responsible for a spate of local burglaries. One young man had already been asked to appear in a police line-up. He hadn't been convicted yet, but his dexterity on the climbing frame seemed to make it increasingly likely.

However, this was not the only way that the unfreedoms of the street became incorporated into the fabric of the youth club. Through partnership working, the police and the youth workers shared intelligence on young people. The police in Newham maintained a list of those most at 'risk' of committing criminal activity. The list was shared with youth service providers who monitored the respective individuals. Young people who might previously not have been brought to the attention of youth workers were 'labelled' (Alexander 1996; Cohen 2002) and viewed as potentially criminal.

While some youth workers approved of these initiatives, others were sceptical and concerned that a hard-won trust was being eroded as young people saw youth workers siding with the enemy. On this basis, Sabiha, the centre manager at Brookbridge Youth Club, resisted co-operation with her local authority bosses over youth workers' participation in outreach patrols. She saw the criminalisation of youth clubs as a problem, as she did the co-option of youth workers in police projects. Raising concerns held by other youth workers, she maintained that the youth club should be a place where young people felt free and safe. Playing through a fictitious scenario, she imagined being present on an outreach patrol as a young person she knew was arrested. The trust she had built up would be lost, she told me, if the young people saw her as a spy for the cops. Will, at Leyham, had different reservations. He knew that any perceived friendship with the police carried the risk of young people thinking he was a grass. The consequences of this might be his parents' home, where he also lived, getting its windows smashed. While Sabiha was concerned to maintain the youth club as an institution

that placed the needs of young people at its centre, Will's reservations showed the long history of distrust and anti-police sentiment in working-class Outer East London.

However, Leyham's manager, Neil, was more enthusiastic. A believer in community participation and local empowerment, he saw joint working as a positive step in developing local forms of citizenship that could reduce crime and be more responsive to young people:

> I am a believer in the whole happening, right. Use it as a whole. Knife crime won't be stopped by zero tolerance from police, right, but it can be stopped by zero tolerance from police; it can be stopped from us working our trade and working it properly; teachers educating – a whole – all departments coming in and working with it. There is a positive end to it, if they have patience and if the whole works.

Neil's enthusiasm for partnership working was ideological but also pragmatic. This was demonstrated when he put the club forward as a 'community hub'. 'Community hub' was the status given to the borough's most important – usually the largest – community facilities. They housed youth clubs, libraries and other social services.

For most of the time I worked at Leyham Youth Club, it was under threat of closure. The club had previously belonged to the local authority, who eight years earlier had handed ownership of it over to the third sector organisation that now ran the site. As part of this arrangement, the local authority had agreed to fund the youth club for the first few years while the new owners put fundraising strategies in place. This grace period had come to an end and was being renewed on an annual basis while the new owners continued searching for a revenue stream. The feeling among the staff was that this arrangement would continue, but this did not take into account the public spending cuts that were about to hit the borough. In 2010, Newham prepared to undertake the highest public spending cuts in London (BBC 2010). As a result, the funding was not renewed and the staff (the few that were permanent, most were sessional) were put on redundancy notice. Neil's enthusiasm for the youth club becoming a hub was part of an attempt to make the site viable again in the eyes of funders.

The cuts also directly contributed to an increase in the police presence at Leyham. Before the cuts, the youth club had managed to operate with relative autonomy from the police. Cooperation had existed alongside a vibrant agenda of games and activities, rolled out by an enthusiastic workforce. As the cuts hit, both equipment and morale was reduced. With nothing

to do, and no one to do it with, the young people started making their own fun mocking the youth club's authority. At the same time attendance at the evening sessions rose sharply, and many new members arrived, some with challenging behaviours. Whereas a year earlier they would have been easily integrated, a demoralised workforce ceded authority. There were regular fights, abuse towards staff, bullying, the breaking of youth club property, and misuse of the site (going behind the building, going up to the mezzanine where youth workers had their desk spaces). In this environment, staff became concerned for their own physical safety, and although some were uncomfortable with the decision, a police presence was deemed increasingly necessary. Facilitated by the contacts established through partnership initiatives, the police became indispensable allies, and what used to be drop-ins became all-night visits. There was even a rumour put around that Leyham was going to get burnt down so that the police would attend more regularly. Through partnership working and funding cuts, the criminalisation that had occurred on the streets entered the youth club.

Young people protested against the new police presence. These protests were not undertaken on the basis of abstract concerns for the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 1996; Merrifield 2011) or 'spatial justice' (Marcuse 2009; Soja 2010) but rather as a response to the police's encroachment into what they felt (and had been encouraged to believe) was their territory. On this basis, they contested the police and community support officer's presence in the youth club. The community support officer who moved them on from street corners and council flat stairwells was routinely goaded. Young people called him a 'wanker' behind his back (loud enough for him to hear) and tried to steal his hat. They wanted him to retaliate so they could confirm he didn't have the power to arrest them. What he took away from them on the street they sought to win back in the safety of the youth club. The police were called 'officer' sarcastically – a term of abuse rather than deference – and were continually challenged to arrest them for any number of real or invented crimes. In this way, the young people sought to make a mockery of the authority they embodied. Jack, fourteen, was often at the forefront of these endeavours. Led by Jack, a group of young men climbed onto the roof of the adventure playground to shout and direct pelvic thrusts at the five police officers assembled below. To their amusement, the officers could do nothing. Their uncomfortable looks and insincere smiles showed their authority had been called into question. However, while these acts of resistance were more graphic than what would have been permitted by the police on the street, rather than disrupt the criminalised delimitations of order and disorder in the local area

the young people confirmed it. The ridiculing largely took advantage of the safety of the youth club and therefore stayed within the police's delimitation of public space – the street as chaos and the youth club as order. As long as the young people were in the youth clubs and not on the streets, their victory could only be partial.

Acts that challenged the police's social and territorial categories of control were more subversive. Social and territorial assignations of chaos and order were used by the police as forms of biopolitical power[39] (Foucault 2003) to contain and manage the heterogeneity and therefore uncertainty of the local environment (Berman 1986; Lefebvre 1996; Sennett 1993). The Introduction presented the super-diverse demographics of the borough. These demographics caused specific problems for policing the local area because many of the young people in Newham did not fit easily into the thirty-year-old 'IC' ethnic codes[40] used by the Metropolitan Police to describe and thereby control potential criminality. Likewise the movement of young people between friendship groups and different territorial and institutional allegiances meant the police had a hard time accounting for young people on territorial terms. As Kevin, one of the young people at Leyham pointed out, friendship groups fluctuated; young people were friends one day and not the next; and, everyone seemed to know everyone, even if they were not directly friends with them. Kylie, one of the young people at Leyham, also noted the fluidity and contradictory nature of many local alliances:

> There's people in Thamesbury school who live round here who will still have a fight with a Leyham person. And there is people in Central School who live round here who will still have a fight with a Leyham person. Even though every Leyham person round here goes to that school, lives in this area. So basically you are fighting your own friends because of your school.

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[39] Foucault notes that management is at the heart of neo-liberal governance. Mechanisms, technologies, discourses and practices work to regularize the random element that is human life (Foucault 2003).

[40] "The 'IC 1-6' identity codes have been used (and are still being used) and recognised by the Metropolitan Police Service for over thirty years. These codes are used by officers to identify people using broad, easily defined and recognisable groups – an essential part of routine police work." The codes are: IC 1 – White European; IC 2 – Dark European; IC 3 – Afro-Caribbean; IC 4 – Asian; IC 5 – Oriental; IC 6 – Arab (Metropolitan Police 2010).

The consequence of territorial and ethnic heterogeneity for policing the local area became apparent one evening. At nine o'clock, Mandy, one of the youth workers, was having a cigarette when five young people including Abs came over from the park. Abs was a sixteen-year-old mixed race, or Asian (we didn't know), young person who sometimes attended the youth club. They said a woman had been shouting at them and they had shouted back. There was a commotion and concern for the safety of the youth club. It died down and then the police came over – first the police responsible for the local park and then the local policeman. According to them a mentally ill woman had run away from her carer, caused a disturbance with some of the young people in the park (or the other way round) and the police had picked her up. Again, it died down. Then we heard a police helicopter. Soon five police cars and a police van were onsite. They were apparently after Abs, who had been seen running away. They believed Abs was carrying something, maybe a knife, and rumours started circulating. From snippets here and there I, and everyone else, tried to put together a narrative of what had happened. Texts were sent and mobiles rang. While the police knew very little of what was going on, the young people and most of the staff knew something.

Later on, the police came over again. They couldn't catch Abs and said he was "taking the piss"; using it as a "badge of honour". They said he was deliberately flouting order and wanted to put a stop to it before disorder started to spread. To do this they needed more information, but their categories for social control were too crude. Abs was the number one suspect but the police's only evidence was they had seen an Asian boy of his build fleeing into the dark. However, Karlee, one of Abs's friends, was adamant it had been a mixed race boy, with lighter skin. Karlee might have been lying to protect Abs or telling the truth. Either way, racial profiling wasn't straightforward in a place like Leyham and she knew that. The police asked around but nobody grassed. Knowledge of Abs was easy to deny. An infrequent visitor, Abs's ambiguous location between the youth club and the street was to his advantage. "They say they know nothing to protect themselves", Molly said afterwards. Keeping silent was a statement of solidarity against the police and something all the young people had a vested interest in.

Later on, I was standing with Neil, the centre manager, when Kylie came over. "Why are the police in the youth club again?" she complained. I sympathised. Neil explained that they wanted to see the young people's registration forms so they could ID Abs. He had consented. He was returning a favour – protection for information. But he also explained the reciprocation

was only in principle. He didn't keep registration forms. It had always seemed an oversight but the lack of compliance in this technology of surveillance now seemed necessary. Neil explained that although he wanted to help, he couldn't. It seemed as if he had played this game before. Keen on partnership working, further funding and protection, Neil wanted a relationship with the police but not at the expense of grassing on the young people.

A few months later Abs came back. I guess it had blown over. I didn't ask. He just told me he wanted to keep his head down, do something positive, and we started playing pool.

Throughout the time I had worked at Leyham, the youth club had been designated as a site of order by the police and the streets as a site of disorder. To this extent, the youth club had always been involved in maintaining territorial governance. However, the incident with Abs demonstrated how new governance practices were being applied. Through partnership working and the cuts, the policing of the streets had extended into the youth club. And while their rationale for involvement was benign, the reality was that the youth club had become increasingly criminalised. The protests from the young people over the police's presence in the youth club did little to disrupt these new orders. However, Abs's banal challenge to the territorial and social categories the police used was more subversive. Demonstrating the fragility of their power, the police's response was emphatic. A helicopter, five cars and a van were sent out to stop the disorder before it spread.

2. Creating community ownership

In conjunction with the police and the new regimes of order and disorder, Leyham Youth Club produced its own form of moral community under the heading 'community ownership'. Like local partnership working, this form of governance was part of the shift from a centralised welfare state apparatus to the neo-liberal politics of entrepreneurship (Brenner 2001, 2004; Harvey 1989b; MacLeod and Godwin 1999; Peck 2002; Russell 2005; Swyngedouw 1997). In particular, community ownership was part of the discussion on community empowerment, responsibility and local citizenship that characterised New Labour's 'roll-out' of social services to third sector providers (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Civil Renewal Unit 2004; Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002). At Leyham Youth Club, 'community ownership' assumed a 'neo-communitarian' character (Peck and Tickell 2002; Peck 2002; Purcell 2003; Swyngedouw 2000).

Like the police, youth workers at Leyham defined the youth club as a site of order. The idea of order only made sense when disorder was also established and at Leyham this occurred through a variety of narratives that defined chaotic young people through popular media and local imagery (see Chapter Four). But the order of the youth club also had a positive identity. This drew on the imagination of autochthonous community (discussed in Chapter Two). The confluence of these discourses led to a 'gated community' mentality as the youth club simultaneously constructed itself and the threat it faced (Anzaldúa 2007; Blakely and Snyder 1999; Brown 2010; Low 2003; Rose and Miller 2008; Sennett 1993).

Drawing on these neo-communitarian narratives, 'community ownership' combined local citizenship, threat and autochthony into a theory and practice of local governance. As Neil noted:

> I think people are very apathetic. My philosophy is that people don't talk over the fence. When people used to talk over the fence they used to have this philosophical thought process, whether they knew it or not, and that talking over the fence would be like the butterflies starting the hurricane. It would start that. You would get this instant talk all over the community, this instant action and integration all over the community. Now it is a closed-door community.

> [I would like to see] complete ownership of the club because if they had complete ownership, I could draw … a graph of ownership. I could draw friendliness, respect of ground rules, respect of each other, right? If they had ownership, right? This is their club. If you want to come into our club, don't wreck it, you go by our ground rules. So I think ownership – that is what I am trying to create – ownership first amongst all things. I wouldn't get the vandalism. I wouldn't get the cheek. 'Hey man, this is our club, don't wreck it.' I've seen holes punched in walls. If there was ownership, the peers of the club would be going, 'Hey this is ours. Don't wreck ours'. This is our little place.

At an event called 'Friends of Leyham', it became apparent that these ideas were widely shared by young people and staff. 'Friends of Leyham' was part of Neil's vision to establish Leyham as a hub. The vision, Neil said, was about "everybody coming together" young people, parents and representatives from local service providers, in the interest of establishing a local form of ownership. In the preceding days, young people had been consulted on the meeting and had agreed to attend; senior figures in Leyham's parent organisation, the local police, other service providers and parents were invited; and food was laid on. On the night, thirty

local young people came to discuss their needs, local facilities and the future of the youth club. Parents and local service providers did not appear, and the police arrived after it had all finished. The parents were thought to be too scared or too busy, the local service providers uninterested, and the police's absence was somewhat ironic seeing as they came nearly every other night. The lack of institutional representation meant the event had changed its nature to one that was addressing an audience of mainly young people. A discussion about the needs and desires of the local community was abandoned, and instead the evening started with a plenary in which the young people spoke to the Director of the third sector organisation (that owned Leyham) about the facilities they would like. The level of sincerity and energy with which the young people discussed improvements to the local area came as a shock to most of the youth workers. After the plenary session, young people and staff, myself included, broke into four rotating discussion groups, each with a theme and a flip chart for noting down proposals. One of the groups was called 'creating ownership' and the flip chart produced can be seen in Figure Four.

Figure Four: Flip chart produced at the 'creating ownership' table during the Friends of Leyham event.

The flip chart showed how young people and staff viewed community ownership predominantly in terms of protecting the youth club from threat – highlighting security, CCTV cameras and a greater police presence around the centre. This was in spite of the fact many of the same young people felt uncomfortable about the regular presence of the police at the youth club. However, the chart also covered ideas of partnership working, the breaking down of 'jealousy', building better relationships and collective responsibility for the club. Overall, it demonstrated how the young people also saw the youth club as a neo-communitarian entity. They noted its closed identity had led to rifts with other 'jealous' young people, and that these needed to be addressed. However, at the same time they acknowledged that the club should be protected from the outside by surveillance and the police.

Constructing chaos

Neil was frustrated at a lack of ownership at the youth club but this did not mean that the young people and staff were not close-knit. Unlike Brookbridge Youth Club (introduced in Chapter One), the core staff had remained the same for years, and most of the young people had grown up together on the same streets and through the youth club's play schemes. While this didn't mean that everyone liked each other, it did mean for the most part that people trusted each other. Personal belongings were left unattended, bikes were left outside and the doors were open for anyone to walk in; yet it was rare that anything went missing, or that anyone came in who was not already known.

These forms of intimacy, and institutionally encouraged ownership, were tied together with long histories of local territoriality – established in working-class culture through local pubs, politics, social, religious and cultural institutions (Robins and Cohen 1978, p.74). This was particularly the case in relation to the perceived threat embodied in young people that came from Millfield. Millfield neighboured Leyham and bad relations between the two postcodes was said to go back to the time of people's parents. Young people told oral histories of fights, tit-for-tat retaliations and occasional incursions. Most said they wouldn't walk in Millfield alone. This rivalry between two of the most deprived parts of the borough had also become racially marked. As discussed, Leyham had an autochthonous collective imaginary, and young people and staff there associated Millfield with more recent African immigration to the area. As such the territorial rivalry between the two areas had become racialised. Large groups of unknown black young people outside the site were often viewed sceptically. These fears were

confirmed on the occasions that Millfield young people did come down with bats and dogs to settle scores. These local ideas of racialised chaos fed into a wider pool of social disorder that youth workers and young people at Leyham used to construct ideas of threat. These included media imagery (discussed in Chapter Four) and a series of tales that circulated in the local area about acts of extreme violence between young people.

However, just as disorder and order were constructed discursively, they were also constructed through specific practices. As the physical manifestation of the divide between order and chaos, one of these practices involved maintaining the perimeter fence. Youth workers were concerned with the exterior boundaries of Leyham. For the moral and spatial order to be kept intact, male youth workers occasionally patrolled the perimeter fence looking out into the night for signs of trouble. Sessions required the presence of at least one male youth worker and in this way the male body was intertwined with the 'architecture of social control' (Davis 1990). The ontological centrality of the fence and masculinity to Leyham's territorial politics was most evident when threats from beyond were viable: for example, if the youth workers had received intelligence that young people from another area were coming down for a fight. The fence was then imaged as the limit of youth club security and the line that male youth workers would have to defend to maintain the feasibility of the site. Like the fence, light was also crucial to the youth club's architecture of social control. In the darkness youth workers could not easily ascertain the identities or actions needed to govern the territory. In winter months floodlights were used to illuminate the grounds and lighting the youth club was a practice through which order and disorder were defined. However, once the youth workers shut down the lights and left the youth club at half past nine the perimeter was denuded. At this point, the young people came back, climbed over the fence and spend the evening drinking, chatting and smoking inside the perimeter. We all knew this happened, and as long as they had the courtesy to wait until we had left, none of us minded.

Investments in the fence also fluctuated with forms of practice that were deployed for specific calendared events. The lawless nights (Sandhu 2007) of the winter months added a sense of unease not present in the summer, and Fireworks Night in particular created apprehension. Much of the week before was devoted to discussions of threat and the need for heightened vigilance. Young people were anticipated to use the cover of darkness to launch a rocket attack. On Fireworks Night 2009, Neil had stayed on to provide additional male support and,

together with Will and me, spent the evening tracking young people as they circled the perimeter. Peering into the darkness we strained our eyes, listened for cracks, sniffed for traces of gunpowder, imaged the chaos that existed outside and the order that we were protecting. The heightened concern over a rocket attack was based on Leyham's historic relationship with arson. Years ago the youth club's old adventure playground had been burnt down, on or around Fireworks Night. A new one had recently been built and staff were concerned that the same destruction could happen again.

This oral history was central to the youth workers' and young people's construction of order and disorder, morality and immorality. When I arrived at the youth club, the fate of the earlier adventure playground was suggested by the charred but colourfully painted stumps left standing around the site. Most of the young people were not old enough to remember the original structure but like me they enquired and were told stories by staff and older siblings that brought the glory of the former playground to life. Through these tales, the old adventure playground was missed, and the attack that ended its life condemned. Although we all knew it had been burnt down, no one was quite sure how, and this uncertainty gave rise to conjecture that was used to make sense of future arson threats. In this way, the original act of arson was reconstructed to make sense of contemporary and future concerns for order and disorder. Some workers thought the original arson was done out of malice – an attack against the youth club as a symbol of order. One youth worker thought it was born out of frustration – the young people did not have the means to consume the way richer kids did, so they destroyed what they had (discussed in Chapter Five). In all these accounts the fictitious young people said to have carried out the attack were condemned and contemporary disorder imagined on these terms. But as Kylie, one of the young people, pointed out: wasn't it just an accident, a shelter on a Saturday night, and then a fag, and then some booze and then a lighter, and then … "It's just common knowledge, ain't it?", she said. Kylie was drawing attention to a series of accidental actions through which the boredom of leisure time had been alleviated (Corrigan 1979; Robins and Cohen 1978). This was maybe a more accurate reflection of unintended consequences, but this common knowledge was washed away in a desire for a more declarative conclusion. As the new adventure playground was built, these lingering fears and mythologies conditioned relations of order and disorder at the youth club. As the metal fence went up, it became increasingly clear how and where disorder was being defined.

However, youth workers' role in managing the moral and territorial order of the youth club was not only concerned with securing the site from external threat. Within the perimeter of the youth club, youth workers also worked to ensure young people respected social and territorial boundaries. At a banal level, they used a number of different technologies to control the space. Closing the door to an open access area could facilitate an environment amenable to serious discussions and workshops. Likewise, if the privacy afforded by a closed door or a screen was leading to acts that could only occur in private – inappropriate sexual behaviour between young people, for example – then the door could be opened. These activities depended on the coordination of the body of youth workers, not just on the individual. From the perspective of the youth workers, sessions ran well when boundaries were observed: when the staff team know what each of the others was doing, where they all were, and what rules to apply.

Policing the space on these terms was generally balanced with other aspects of youth work: talking to young people, building esteem, teaching, solving problems and participating in games and sports. However, when youth clubs were busy, or when staffing was short, softer skills were put to one side and youth workers concentrated on maintaining territorial and moral order. In these situations, if boundaries were transgressed youth workers took action through 'banning' or 'barring' young people from attending the youth club. Banning was rare when staff morale was high, resources were plentiful and the collective body of young people and youth workers functioned towards a habitual equilibrium (Merleau-Ponty 1989). However, it became more commonplace as staff and financial resources ran dry. In these situations, while staff were often aware that boundary breaking was related to wider personal problems, if not simply the lack of activities, they felt forced to revert to a kind of rotten apples theory – and rogue young people were discarded to preserve the rest of the barrel. Employed in this way, the ban functioned as a local form of exception (Agamben 1998) and enforced the youth club's idea of order. The inside was ordered and moral because the place where the banned young people were sent (outside the fence) was disordered and immoral. As funding cuts and staff shortages became more acute, and large numbers of new young people arrived, the ban was increasingly employed.

While both male and female staff evoked the ban, in the last instance what lay behind the command was the threat of masculine force – the ability (not necessarily carried out) to

physically remove a young person from the club. Again this confirmed the connection between masculine authority and control at Leyham. Occasionally as a male worker (although I was officially a volunteer) I stepped into this role. The first young person I banned was Jack. Introduced above as the young person who aimed pelvic thrusts at the police, Jack had been causing trouble for Jane, a sessional worker, in the front room. He knew that as a woman, but also because of her manner, she did not carry the requisite threat to discipline him. As I walked into the room, Jack threw a shoe at one of the other young people – a clear violation of the rules. I shouted at him and told him to get out. Testing me, he didn't move and without thinking I pushed him out the front door. He had called my masculine authority into question and I had responded. Disappointed by how I had acted, I spoke to Jack and his friends outside. They were not shocked, or even annoyed. In fact they expected it. Jack professed boredom as the reason for throwing the shoe. I sympathised. Still feeling guilty, I walked back into the room and apologised to Jane for undermining her. She was only disappointed I hadn't acted sooner.

In summary, community ownership functioned through defining order and disorder at different scales. Community ownership was made possible because of the increasing authority of the youth club in local governance. These responsibilities were taken forward through partnership working with the police. In this way, community ownership was formulated though ideas of order and disorder defined in relation to policing agendas. However, community ownership was also neo-communitarian in character and the ideas of order and disorder defined by the police were mixed with local ideas of threat. These ideas of threat engaged with local territorial disputes that had become racialised, with memories of attack and with popular media and local imageries of youth criminality. These ideas of threat made sense alongside autochthonous forms of community identity, and through practices of surveillance and masculine violence that occurred at the border and within the youth club.

3. Wind-ups

Territorial order and disorder in and around Leyham Youth Club was not only negotiated at these levels, however. Largely unconsidered in political geography (Brenner 2004), territory was also negotiated at the level of the micro, through moments of dialogue that took the form of 'wind-ups'. At Leyham Youth Club, the wind-up was a form of banter and provocation that

functioned through the testing, setting and transgressing of territorial rules. It was based on quick wit played out through humour, insult and ridicule. As a ubiquitous mode of negotiation it could operate to the rhythm of a functioning youth club and to the tune of disorderly acts – its potential was both subversive and confirming.

Proficiency in this territorial micro-politics required an intimate knowledge of its 'compositional and stylistic forms', and the constantly changing permutations that made wit funny, and insult injurious (Bakhtin 1986a, p.80). To gain proficiency in this genre, participants needed to be adept at navigating the ambiguities that defined it. A wind-up, for example, was never simply exclusionary or affirming. It brought young people into being in both positive and negative ways (Butler 1997, p.5). By means of a joke, territory was won and belonging affirmed, at the same time as ground was denied and abjection stated. As a newcomer to the area, and the youth club, I was always a novice in the subtleties of these negotiations. I often failed to recognise when a joke was a joke, or when it was a more serious challenge to my authority as a youth worker. This often worked to my advantage. Colleagues and young people commented that I was not easily flustered, but the reality was I often didn't understand that I was being mocked. It was also a disadvantage as I occasionally misread and over reacted to wind-ups I should have taken as jokes.

My introduction to the wind-up as a practice of territorial negotiation came literally 'at the hand of Scott'. I met Scott on my first day at Leyham Youth Club. Scott was about fourteen and had grown up in the area before a recent move to Dagenham – a fairly common migration associated with a higher standard of living. However, with friends in the Leyham area, he regularly returned to the youth club. On my first day, when Neil was showing me around, he sauntered over offering a grin and a hand to shake. Surprised, but also pleased, I reciprocated. But before our palms met he withdrew. He smiled; Neil smiled. Scott had simultaneously welcomed me to, and rejected me from, the youth club. Like my hand, I had been left hanging.

As I settled in at Leyham, I tried to learn how the rules of the space worked. I started with the official regulations of the youth club that as a youth worker I was supposed to uphold. Aside from the studiously ignored 'Ten Rules' posted on the youth club wall, which included things like 'no cycling inside', 'no playing football inside' and 'no fighting inside', there was no guide-book on how to do this but generally none was required. Basic regulations were obtained

habitually (Merleau-Ponty 1989; Reynolds 2004). Through interacting with the staff, the building and young people, I picked up what I needed to know and applied it. As I did this, young people sought to assess my competence through minor infractions. No fighting, cycling or playing football inside may seem unambiguous but in fact these straightforward principles had many grey areas. Did cycling a bike halfway into the front room break the rules? Did a play fight constitute 'fighting' or 'play'? Did doing a couple of keep-ups inside equate to 'football'? The answers depended on individual dispositions, on the collective knowledge of the rules at the moment, and on the young people's desire to push the boundaries. In this way, whereas it had previously seemed that the youth club and youth workers set regulations for bodies in space, it soon transpired that young people played an equal role in negotiating the grey zone of territorial order.

For example, young people used the wind-up to challenge regimes of light, sound and bodies in space. As discussed, lighting was a feature of institutional control especially in the winter months, and turning the lights off broke the ability to regulate bodies in space. The soundscape was also regulated. And although loud and quiet did not relate to the control of bodies as light and dark did, it still offered a sensorial platform through which to ridicule authority. Youth clubs are loud places but the tolerance of volume did not mean all sounds were acceptable. As introduced in Chapter One, the Teen Buzz was a downloadable, and consequently Bluetooth-able, sound file that produced a continuous high-pitched (15 KHz) sound that imitated the Mosquito device (Compound Security Systems 2010) promoted to clear young people from public spaces. Like the church bell, the real Mosquito device was a symbol of devolved state power (Bakhtin 1984) telling the young people where (not) to be at certain times. The Teen Buzz developed as a parody of the original device and was played from mobile phones hidden under chairs. The high pitched sound made it difficult to locate as well as uncomfortable to hear. The young people amused themselves as staff demanded to know where the mobile was.

The interactive nature of rules, and their dependence on the moods of the people involved, meant that youth workers and young people solicited the boundaries in different ways. A fight at home before a session started, money problems, an argument at work could all lead youth workers or young people to respond very differently to wind-ups. However, it was not only these affective conditions that made the wind-up an unstable system of territorial control. It

also depended on the relationship between young people and youth workers. To this extent the rules of the space applied differently to different people. These conditions meant that if there was a rule, there was always an exception to it, and the grounds on which exceptions were made were often affective, personal and brought from outside the youth club. For example, when young people at the youth club reminded Tessa of her own children, her application of spatial regulation changed. She let Didier run through the back room when she had told him not to because he reminded her of her son (see Chapter One).

However, wind-ups were used not only to establish youth workers' knowledge of the rules, but also to negotiate the control of the space between different young people. It was common for younger members (twelve or thirteen years old) to test the authority of older young people. One evening Pawl was winding up Mo. Pawl was the younger of the two and had recently arrived in the area from Poland. Mo was older and had grown up around the youth club. This wind-up was a form of masculine jousting. The older members of the youth club, often by virtue of being physically stronger, had more authority than the younger members and the younger members sought to win some of that authority back. That evening Pawl was pulling Mo's jumper but keeping out of arm's reach. Mo ignored him, and then responded, chasing him into the back room, as Pawl had predicted he would. Indeed he needed him to respond to receive the appropriate verification for his action. However, it was not only Pawl's peers that were prefigured in this act, but also the space and the symbols of authority within it. Pawl had run to the back room because there was an exit outside should he need it, but he stopped and stationed himself behind me. My embodied authority had also been prefigured and accepting this Mo walked away.

In general it was expected that provocations would be responded to in kind. If Mo had responded too harshly his actions would have been perceived as unjust and potentially led to an unwanted escalation, brought on by staff or young people. In this way, the wind-up functioned with the equilibrium of the youth club. The best response to the wind-up – to gain control of the game – was, in fact, to respond through a more humorous retort. This had the effect of disabling the original provocation by turning the force of collective laughter onto the instigator. This form of response retained authority whilst not offending the person who had initiated the game.

What was perceived as funny and acceptable was defined through relatively stable hierarchies of power at the youth club, with the youth workers and senior young people most likely to generate laughter while younger or less dominant members making the same joke might be seen as irritating, or getting above their station. In order for them to maintain their invested position the staff and young people needed to remain competent at this form of banter. They each had their own styles. Some, like Will, used outright masculine energy and humorous displays – shouting, running around and playing games – to ensure they were always ahead of the curve. Others, such as Sarah, a female youth worker, used sardonic wit or on-going ridicule. Some of the best examples of this latter approach were evident in the dozens that were played at the youth club. The dozens is a game of verbal exchange attributed to African American vernacular. In the dozens, a player tries to outdo the other with insults and wit (Labov 1972, pp.307–321; Smitherman 2007). The game then becomes a site for the negotiation of territorial and social control as each player tries to gain the upper hand, and higher standing, by winning the game through verbal rather than physical assault (Smitherman 2007). Success was verified not by the players but by the audience showing respect through laughter or other signs of approval. Played in a predominantly white working-class youth club in East London, its existence drew attention to the diasporic formation of local territorial negotiation (discussed further in Chapter Four). However, the dozens in Leyham was not simply a replication of its US counterpart. Rather, some characteristics had been lost and others remodelled. Notably, Leyham's dozens did not contain the more elaborate rhyming verses and did not provide a carnivalesque site in which the rules of society were temporarily subverted (Abrahams 1972, p.220; Bakhtin 1984). But they did retain the 'your mamma' invective and used absurdity, profanity, humour, exaggeration and spontaneity to win.

As with other forms of wind-up, the rules to the dozens were taught and learned. Mostly this happened through slow and non-specific inductions into the speech genre (Bakhtin 1986a), but in some cases the teaching was more explicit. Jermain, a youth worker at the After School Club, taught the game. He called it the "dissing day". The idea was for young people to beat him at dissing through playing the dozens. Jermain explained the rules: they should say something offensive to him, anything, and see if he couldn't turn it round with greater hilarity and force. Then it was their turn. The point was, if you could play the game you didn't need to take offence. You could retain social control without resorting to physical force. As Jermain explained, if someone says something to you about your mum, as the object of humour and

scandal (Abrahams 1972, p.227), rather than getting up and stabbing them you could just turn the insult back, and not care.

At Leyham these forms of humour functioned as a system of territorial negotiation in two senses. Through humour, the dozens provided a means of negotiating social hierarchies, but the categories of profanity used also showed who was considered inside or outside of the moral territorial community of the youth club. Sarah, a youth worker, and Kylie, one of the young people, were the club's most proficient practitioners and regularly traded 'your mamma' insults. As introduced in Chapter One, they moved from "your mum sells crack" to "your mum sold her teeth for crack" to "your mum sold her whole house to a Lithuanian for crack". The 'whole house' was used to accentuate the insult; the figure of the 'Eastern European' represented racialised scandal and humour; and the invocation of the mother symbolised defilement of the sacred by patriarchy (Legman 1975, pp.704–727). "Your mum sold her whole house to a Lithuanian for crack", won.

While the dozens was used to mutually affirm belonging it also maintained and negotiated autochthonous territories by casting those who did not belong as objects of scandal and ridicule. In this example, these forms of humour were fed by the media depictions of Eastern European men as violent, drunk and criminal (Daily Mail 2006a, b), which followed the accession of Eastern European nations into the European Union and the subsequent migration of their inhabitants to Newham. This was part of a local understanding of profanity which also encompassed 'Poles', 'Russians', 'Lithuanians', 'Kosovans', 'Gypsies' and 'crack heads'. When a chair went missing, for example, Kylie joked "Poles came and took it". This was synonymous with "Pikeys took it" or "Crack-heads took it".

These forms of profanity were part of a wider discriminatory repertoire used to define belonging. When we played football, Tommy and Nigel wound Pawl up by saying his mum was 'Russian' and 'Romanian' even though they knew that she was Polish. Insults directed at him were often prefixed with "you little Polish…". During the 2010 World Cup, Will invited the young people to sit round and watch the England game with the words "we should all sit round and support our country". He didn't quite mean it as it sounded but Nathe seized on it and said to Pawl, "your team is Poland". In this way, Pawl's otherness on Leyham territory was sustained.

The white territory of the youth club was also maintained through ridiculing the black body. One evening, Kylie and Josie were playing the dozens with Nigerian accents – a reference to the character George Agdgdgwngo in *Fonejacker*. It wasn't immediately clear whether this play was racist, everyday or even subversive. However, Ryan, a black youth worker, responded as if the banter was partly directed at him. Aware of a number of racist incidents in the youth club, this response wasn't surprising. As if to dispel any remaining doubt, the round of dozens finished when Dawn semi-seriously suggested they go and beat some people up. Daphne suggested "Club Afrique or the Polish hairdresser" as venues.

The body was always present in the wind-up, either by providing a corporeal container for abjection or esteem (sometimes racialised) or through the threat of masculine violence. Luke, twelve, attended Leyham Youth Club for a few months. Luke lived down the road from the site, was mildly autistic, and as with a number of other young people was on ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) medication. Although he tried hard to be friends with the other young people and participate in their jokes, he always slightly misread them, at least in their terms. As he settled into the youth club, familiar routines emerged. Young people would try and negotiate their own belonging by winding him up. As young people made it through to the next round of Wembley[41] being played in the front room, they came into the back room to harass him. It began with Jack, as it often did. Walking over to him, Jack informed him that he was going to hit him and then whispered something in his ear. Luke complained to me. I was monitoring the computer room and I told Jack to "Shut up!" The bullying continued for a few minutes. Then Mandy came in and I left for the game. When I came back into the computer room, another young man had gone through, walked into the back room and was doing the same. These encounters followed the pattern of the wind-up, but what made them distinctive was the limited scope Luke had for winning. The way the young people defined Luke meant that away from the gaze of youth workers, he was always a target, and his body was at risk from physical attack. This form of territorial politics meant that after a few months he left the youth club. The space was too threating for him.

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[41] Wembley is a football game. All players compete against each other to score goals against a single goalkeeper. Participants who score go through to the next round.

The wind-up was also used as a system for establishing territorial control in arguments between friendship groups. One evening at Leyham there was a standoff between two groups. All were longstanding members and weeks before all had been friends. The argument that night had started because Josie, who fancied Nigel, had been spreading rumours about him and another girl on Facebook. Nigel had told Josie he didn't like her anymore and the confrontation had pushed the opposing groups onto different sides of the youth club, and into different online alliances. The territorial fault line was mutually acknowledged and over the course of the evening individuals from the different sides moved into the opposing territory to provoke a response or send a hostile message. At the same time they navigated an online game of exclusion and inclusion through publicly haranguing each other on Facebook, for which both parties received updates on their mobile phones.

Josie was losing support rapidly and halfway through the night had only one real-world 'friend' remaining on her side of the youth club. I couldn't tell how she was faring on Facebook. The exclusion she was about to face was becoming apparent. This was a big deal for Josie. She came almost every night, it was where she socialised and it was where she felt she belonged. As a final attempt to bolster her waning credibility she became more animated to communicate to herself and her rivals that she didn't care. As part of this process she exaggerated her allegiances with the male youth workers, coming over to us and using her sexuality to generate conversation. In this way, she sought to align herself, perhaps as a form of protection, with the symbols of masculine authority in the youth club. At the same time she was showing Nigel she could do without his attention.

As a result of these actions tensions rose and by the end there was a small gathering outside waiting to confront her when she left. Coordination for a fight was on-going and mobiles were pinging and ringing. When Daphne (who had a reputation as a good fighter) turned up, physical violence was on the cards. Josie was adamant she could "have her". Anything else would have been capitulation. The youth club closed and the workers left. I never saw how that night finished. But later that week Josie was a notable absence. I asked where she was but nobody wanted to say. They weren't going to grass. Then a few weeks later she came back. Walking in she announced proudly "Josie is back". She was dressed in a baggy oversize T-shirt with a flower clip in her hair. It was a bold statement. She was reclaiming her territory.

Conclusion

All of these practices, by and large, maintained a way of using the youth club space that young people, staff and police found acceptable. We all knew roughly where the boundaries were and it was rare that a provocation or response didn't meet the expectations of the collective. This is not to say that the youth club did not contain peaks and troughs of collective emotion but, if tensions rose, a timetabled break, like the school holidays, reset the balance. These forms of authority and consent meant the youth club continued to function as a space of social and territorial order. However, the effects of the cuts, mediated through masculine violence, autochthony and neo-communitarianism started to change the balance of authority. The wind-up, which had previously functioned towards a collective equilibrium, started to provide a vernacular for challenging the systems of dominant order.

At the end of one evening there was a confrontation between Will and Ross. Ross was having a difficult time at home. Allowances were normally made for individual circumstances but the cuts were biting and the lack of resources and good quality staff was being keenly felt. At the time, Will also had problems at home, affecting his capacity to 'take a joke'. So rather than 'laugh Ross off' when he acted up, Will shouted at him, and rather than accept the telling-off, Ross made a raspberry at Will. Will banned Ross for a week. Needing to defend his masculinity in front of his friends, Ross refused to go. His mum was called and in the end Ross left vowing to come back the next day. The day after, he teased Will's authority by scouting the perimeter of Leyham Youth Club on the handlebars of Nathe's bike.

This event did not signal a sudden downturn but rather a slow shift in control over the space. One of the major features of this slow shift was the increasingly masculinisation of youth club governance embodied principally in Will. Will's willingness to make use of this physicality[42] to

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[42] Before I arrived, a local kid had been badly beaten up by two members of the youth club, who had knocked couple of his teeth out, broken his nose and hand. Because his assailants attended Leyham at the time, the father of the assaulted young person had come over to sort them out. He was "a big piece of meat, like he had three necks", Will told me. He had come into the youth club and Will, a sessional worker at the time, had got up to greet him. Mistaking Will for one of the assailants, the guy swung at him landing a punch on his chin. Will stumbled back, got himself together, ducked the second punch, jumped on the man and pinned him to the pool table by his neck. When the man had calmed down, Will

prevent the youth club from closure was, for a time, sufficient to maintain control over the space. However, the pressure took its toll and sapped his enthusiasm for the job. Each of his increasing absences was marked by serious transgressions from the young people, to which other staff could not respond. Longstanding symbolic boundaries were the first to be broken. Young people ran around the back of the youth club, where builders' materials were kept, they climbed on cars, smoked in front of the building, refused to register their names or pay their subs, and on a couple of occasions went up into the staff offices that were strictly out of bounds. Augmented levels of violence and abuse accompanied the changing balance of power, and racism from white young people towards black and Asian young people, and youth workers became increasingly vocalised.

This behaviour fed out onto the street and in a related incident Will's brother was attacked at the local pub. The young men that were involved in the attack came back to the youth club a few weeks later to steal the Wii controller and more importantly to further mock Will's authority. Days later Will was sitting outside when he was shot at with a catapult and had a lump of concrete thrown at him. That was the end. Will decided to leave the youth club. Pushed into the role of bouncer he had been outmuscled.

The construction of the fence and the response of the young people defined the development of the politics of territory around Leyham Youth Club. What the fence really demonstrated were the extent to which neo-communitarianism and policing had become ingrained in the local area. More important than its protective role was the illusion of a defiant community it provided. It solidified desires for autochthonous belonging and neo-communitarianism in the face of increasing uncertainty, cuts to the welfare state and concerns for the imagined youth threat. These ideologies of threat were part of the wider discourses of chaos and order that were core to local agendas on policing and criminalisation. Through raising its perimeter, the youth club was defining where order and disorder existed, and thus where young people should, or should not, legitimately be. For a club drained of resources, the fence symbolised a move from practices of consent to those of violence.

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let him go, explaining that he couldn't come to the youth club looking for a fight. The guy shook his hand and left.

However, the fence was also an allegory for other territorial politics. The different scales of territorial politics in and around the youth club were intimately interlinked. It was not possible to consider the politics of territory in Leyham without also considering the politics of the streets, Facebook, the home and the pub. It was also not possible to consider the construction of neo-communitarian community at Leyham separately from the wider community of which it felt part. Discourses of security and belonging were made sense of through the history of local rivalries and their racialisation. The politics of territory also functioned though the micro-politics of dialogue. These micro-politics showed concretely how young people (not just youth workers, the police and local institutions) were involved in the negotiations of territories in which they resided. The form of micro-political vernacular (known as the wind-up) provided a medium for maintaining a habitual equilibrium. This equilibrium was defined through consent to the collective order of the youth club. However, it also provided codes through which order could be mocked, transgressed and attacked when the funding was reduced.

Finally, this chapter has presented an analysis of the increasing criminalisation and unfreedom of young people in public space. The 'roll out' of the welfare state has led to an apparatus of policing that extends well inside the youth club, defining what youth clubs do and influencing how they define their territories. This was a move beyond youth clubs as a site of order (defined against the streets as a sea of disorder) to youth clubs as sites of criminalisation. Young people resisted these new regimes. While acts that took advantage of the safety of the youth club did little to challenge the police's authority, more profound challenges were evident in the everyday solidarities and heterogeneities of young people and youth workers.

In the following chapter, the politics of territory are brought into dialogue with the diasporic flows of hip hop. The following chapter explores the local and global ways in which hip hop chaos (nihilism) and territoriality were conflated and how young people used the aesthetics of nihilism to communicate and move beyond postcode violence and anti-sociability.

Chapter Four – Sold-out and nihilistic? East London hip hop productions

Between spring 2009 and the beginning of 2010 Leyham Youth Club moved to the rhythm of three music and dance productions. The first of these was *Leyham Dances*. Inspired by the hugely popular Britain's Got Talent (ITV 2009), *Leyham Dances* was a collective effort at 'streetdance' – a hybrid of break dancing and athletic, group dance routines popularised through the all-male dance groups Diversity and Flawless. Imitating the Saturday night TV format, young men and women organised practice sessions and choreographed routines. Any remaining sociological doubt about hip hop's sold-out cachet (Gilroy 2003) seemed dispelled. The third production took place at the beginning of 2010 in the form of a YouTube posting called *Kill all a Dem*, a hip hop/grime video made by a trio of local young white men backed by youth club members. Like *Leyham Dances, Kill all a Dem* made use of hip hop's sold-out aesthetics, but also engaged with its nihilistic repertoire. Hosted on an Internet platform, it communicated the themes of masculinity, violence and turf warfare typical of many local productions. At first glance these productions seemed to confirm two principal critiques used to silence young people's acts of public communication (Calhoun 1992; Fraser 2007; Gilroy 1993; Habermas 1989; Negt and Kluge 1993) – that they are nihilistic and sold-out.

Discourses on nihilism have developed differently in the US and the UK but in both countries they have been used to close down young people's public productions by equating them with irrational forms of black street culture. In the previous chapter, forms of disorder were viewed territorially. This chapter advances those discussions by showing how territorial chaos was also part of a transatlantic conversation concerned with commercialised black cultural nihilism.

In the context of this chapter, 'nihilism' enters the sociological canon through West's analysis of hopelessness, despair and anti-sociability in post-slavery black America (West 1994). However, whereas West's analysis understands black anti-sociability as the outcome of social and cultural processes, dominant discourses position nihilism as an authentic and pathological mode of living for black people. In this discourse, cultural productions, such as hip hop, and particularly gangsta rap (Lucas 1998), are read as communications, and often promotions, of

nihilism because of their association with black bodies (Baldwin 2010; Gilroy 1993, 2000). Rather than view hip hop as a valid interjection into public debate and dialogue, it is discarded as dangerous and irrational. In this way, dominant discourses on nihilism become part of the armoury of white supremacy used to reduce the democratic participation of black populations (West 1994).

In the UK, dominant discourses on nihilism, as it relates to black culture, have a different if related genesis. This genesis connects moral panics over rastas (Gilroy 1987) and 'muggers' (Hall et al. 1978) to fears over London grime nights. Following the interventions of Conservative MP Enoch Powell, and his well-known 'Rivers of Blood' speech (Powell and Wood 1969), black culture in the UK shifted from being portrayed as a culture of political resistance to an apolitical culture of violence adrift from mainstream white society (Alexander 1996; Gilroy 1987; Solomos 1988). Through discourses of bad parenting and broken families that extend from racist assessments of slave culture (Patterson 1965), through discourses on the bastard nature of Caribbean culture – between the mother land and the 'dark continent' (Gilroy 1987), black culture was associated with dislocation and degeneracy (Hennessy 1988). These conditions were subsequently read through the cultural signifiers of dreadlocks, Jamaican dancehall events, sound systems (Gilroy 1987; Pryce 1986) and confrontations with the police (Solomos 1988).

These discourses also fed off the historical condemnation of white working-class young men in Britain (Humphries 1981; Pearson 1983; Willis 1977; also discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis). Fears over 'nihilism' as a working-class subcultural condition were evident in the moral panics over the mods (Cohen 2002) and over the skinheads' fetishisation of violence as 'aggro' in the 1970s (Clarke et al. 1976; Robins and Cohen 1978, p.83). These forms of violence were understood through the commodification of youth culture, and the consequential detachment of young people from their parent culture and associated rules of comportment (Robins and Cohen 1978). However, lifestyles of young black men were not read only as working-class male cultures of delinquency but specifically as *black* cultures of nihilism (Alexander 1996; Lawrence 1982b). The legacy of these discourses is evident today in moral panics over hip hop and grime music. Recurrent concerns over hip hop's promotion of knife culture (BBC 2006) and postcode

wars, and the police's use of risk assessment form 696[43] to close down 'black' grime events (Hancox 2009; Lowkey 2012; Pearse and Taylor 2009), is the confluence of histories in which black people and their artistic expressions have been related to ideas of anti-sociability, violent dislocation and the 'hood, and in which working-class culture has been associated with violent detachment and turf warfare (Cohen 2002; Downes 1966; Willmott 1969).

However, while young people's public communications have been silenced through discourses of nihilism, they have also been delegitimised through their apparently sold-out and commercial cachet. The argument that youth culture is sold-out is well documented (Kitwana 2002; Patton 2009). And while this needs to be carefully substantiated (Gilroy 2000), particularly as a response to claims for hip hop's authentic revolutionary character (Rose 1994),[44] less rigorous conflations are often made. These note the demise of urban youth culture on the grounds of being no more than the replication of commercial tropes; what Bauman, following the 2011 UK riots, discussed as 'shopping' (2011). In popular discourse, this left-wing critique of consumer culture combines with hegemonic, post-modernist analyses to position young people's cultural productions as inauthentic. Following Jameson, these interventions tend to state that because their production is no more than a pastiche of commercial images, rather than a more authentic modern (and Euro-centric) scream, they not valuable contributions to public debate (Jameson 1984, 1991).[45] The confluence of these arguments has been elided with dominant discourses on nihilism to deny alternative forms of positive public expression (Gilroy 1987).

Recently, this contemporary intersection of sold-out and nihilistic discourses on youth culture has been best captured by Powellite and Conservative historian David Starkey's analysis of the 2011 British Riots:

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[43] Form 696 is a risk assessment that the police require a venue, a promoter or licensee to provide in advance of an event. The form contains information including the names and addresses of DJs and musicians, the type of music that will be played and the target audience. An earlier version of the form, since revoked, also included information on the ethnicity of the performers.

[44] Gilroy contends that "hip hop's marginality is now as official and routinised as its overblown defiance, even if the music and its matching life-style are still being presented – marketed – as outlaw forms" (Gilroy 2000, p.180)

[45] See Gilroy for a critique of Jameson's Eurocentrism (Gilroy 1993).

> There are two things about these riots. On the one hand they are completely superficial. Someone brilliantly put it there [in the audience] 'it's shopping with violence'; it's merely extended commercialism … The other is that there has been a profound cultural change … What has happened is a substantial section of the chavs you [Owen Jones] wrote about have become black, the whites have become black; a particular sort of violent destructive nihilistic gangster culture has become the fashion and black and white, boy and girl operate in this language together, this language that is wholly false, which is a Jamaican patois that's been intruded in England. And that's why so many of us have the sense of literally a foreign country (Starkey 2011).

Here Starkey uses his establishment position of white British authority to close down the public and political content of those summer nights. Nihilism is equated with the multicultural forms of black culture he sees as corroding English public spirit. This in turn is related to commercialism, falseness and violence that he contrasts to a mythic authentic Britain. Starkey's critique is a conservative, melancholic and white supremacist de-legitimisation of young people's multiculture. It is also a form of post-modern analysis, in which the atomisation of an imaginary British soul is mourned, and the nihilistic patois and commercialisation that has replaced it, condemned.

The contention of this chapter is that, rather than condemn the cultural productions of young people in Outer East London on Starkey's terms, it is necessary to explore how they are meaningful and political in the context of the globalisation of hip hop and nihilist aesthetics. So, while *Leyham Dances* drank Simon Cowell's Kool-Aid, it also provided a medium through which young people navigated local marginalisation. While *Kill all a Dem* translated hip hop's lucrative global language into a local story of masculine violence, anti-sociability and turf war, it also provided a means through which young people became political – questioning and critiquing marginalisation, criminalisation and anti-sociability (Shusterman 1991, p.627).

Starkey's account also highlights forms of cultural syncretism and performativity with which this chapter is concerned. The form of nihilism he identifies is multicultural. It isn't black or white but rather a mutable aesthetic. It is contemporary evidence of a legacy of urban creativity discussed in numerous other works (Back 1994; Gilroy 1987; Hewitt 1986; Jones 1988). In his account, nihilism no longer retains fealty to biologically specific anti-sociability but rather is presented as an open system of commercial and aesthetic coding highlighting the

shifting terrains of culture and race in Britain (Gilroy 1987). Developing the discussion of the historic elision of black and white working-class forms, this analysis allows for 'chav' – a referent to the white underclass (discussed in Chapter Five) – to be placed alongside fears of black and Asian working-class urban young people.

These dimensions of contemporary culture demand a re-evaluation of debates on authenticity as they relate to hip hop. Hip hop, and indeed its precursors such as jazz, has always been practiced by white musicians and performers (Harrison 2009; Wilmer 2012) in addition to an array of multicultural interlocutors. In this context, hip hop's location as an authentically black cultural form has always been more complex. Nonetheless, US discussions over whether Eminem was inauthentic because he was white (Kitwana 2005), and UK discussions over whether British hip hop pioneer and Radio One DJ Tim Westwood was faking-it (particularly with reference to his Caribbean-English accent) (Young 2005), had significant traction. Today, however, other than in conservative and white supremacist corners, these concerns over authenticity have moved on. Devlin and Professor Green, two successful white grime artists, have not been asked to racially account for themselves in the same way as their predecessors.

As discourses on authenticity shift, so too must academic analyses. Marxian approaches to youth culture saw the development of cultural syncretism through a shift from black struggle against white supremacy to a white struggle against class oppression (Chambers 1976; Jones 1988; Nayak 2003). Responding to the context in which their research was conducted these shifts proposed relatively fixed starting points – from which extended debates over whether white young people using black styles and music were faking-it (Jones 1988; Nayak 2003).

While these framings made sense of the contexts in which they were produced, they do not hold for contemporary forms of urban multiculture in Outer East London. Accounted for by two decades of additional citations of what came before (Butler 1993; Gilroy 1993), the terrains of analysis have shifted. In the last twenty years, baggy jeans, hooded tops, break beats and urban vernaculars have become mainstream and even passé. The analyses of cultural syncretism developed through sound-system culture (Back 1994; Gilroy 1987; Jones 1988) has new analogues that complicate earlier meaning making and politics. While it remains the case that "culture is not a fixed and impermeable feature of social relations" and that the "forms change, develop, combine and are dispersed into historical process" (Gilroy

1987, p.294) the forms of detached cultural practice and communication evident in Outer East London today, and the kinds of politics they provide vehicles for, are not the same as they were. Neither are the forms of technology that enable them. Previous studies explored the capacity of the 33-rpm 'long play' records. These records allowed for dub tracks[46] to be placed on the B-side enabling artists to freestyle over instrumentals and make new music from old. Turntables facilitated the mixing and cutting together of different tracks into new pieces of music. The breaking circle provided the patterns for sharing and developing dance steps (Banes 2004; Gilroy 1987; Holman 2010). Today the Internet and mobile technologies provide different possibilities for sharing, and different sites for dialogue and creativity.

These forms of cultural syncretism and sharing throw up new dimensions of the urban paradox (Back 1994) – the qualification of the "cultural dynamics of the sound system by their proximity to the practices of racial terror" (Banerjea and Barn 1996, p.198). Whether it was the local performance and citation of commercial hip hop; white rappers using black diasporic aesthetics; white rappers being produced by Asian and black peers; the commitment to mobile technologies of communication and sharing; or the collaborative efforts that went into the productions, the works explored in this chapter provide insight into how contemporary collaboration and creativity existed alongside nihilism and territorial conflict.

While this chapter explores the extent to which young people's cultural productions were, and were not, sold-out and nihilistic, it is also concerned to highlight the methodology through which this analysis is possible. The stories presented below have been made possible by holding in tension the textual, performative and phenomenological aspects of the productions (discussed in Chapter One). The movements of the narrative between these three analytic approaches open up different ways of reading and listening to the productions. It allows for the exploration of the transcendent and the diasporic, and for the location of these in embodied experiences and horizons. It allows for the image, sound and lyrics to be evaluated alongside the performance and the context in which it occurred.

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[46] Instrumental versions of the track on the A-side in which the vocals had been removed and the drum and bass often enhanced.

Through a discussion which moves from the seemingly commercial and the apparently nihilistic, this chapter addresses how young people in Outer East London use nihilistic aesthetics and sold-out genres to make sense of their lives and provide vehicles for political reflection and evaluation. Through attention to aesthetics, performance and experience, it argues that these productions drew attention to new forms of multicultural syncretism and new ways of doing politics.

1. Leyham Dances

At Leyham Youth Club, Josie and her friends regulated the radio dial on the sound system. At their behest, we listened to Kiss FM, Heart and Magic. In June 2009, Michael Jackson died and we listened to his 'best of' compilation, on loop. Occasionally burnt CDs were brought in and a mixture of bashment, dubstep, grime and R'n'B, played across the front room. This array of music, punctuated by different moments, elicited various dance styles.

From Easter 2009, these spontaneous productions were caught in the national fever of Britain's Got Talent. And for a few months the dancescape of Leyham Youth Club was transformed. Based on the Britain's Got Talent format, *Leyham Dances* sought to re-create the aspirational values of Saturday night TV in an East London youth club. The big-theatre, audience-oriented version of hip hop embraced by Diversity and Flawless, two of the most popular acts of the year, provided celebrity culture solutions for young people's marginalisation (see also Chapter Five).

Leyham Dances started when Joe, eighteen, and Natalie, sixteen, asked if they could teach streetdance to a group of ten- to fifteen-year-old young people at a half-term play scheme. Natalie (introduced in Chapter One) had formerly been a regular at the youth club but had been absent since she was lured to Thamesmead and beaten up. Joe, her friend, was a local young person whose mother had worked on the play scheme years earlier. Inspired by the success of Diversity and Flawless, both were keen to put together a rival East London dance troupe. Over the Easter holidays they held daily practice sessions demanding commitment and punctuality from their young participants. Mapped out on a blackboard by Natalie, the plan was to practise daily, do some smaller shows in local community halls, graduate to Stratford Circus Theatre, and finally take the O2 Arena by storm. Beyond this, they envisaged replicating

the business model used by Diversity and found a chain of dance academies across East London. Their friends would teach the choreography, and when they had raised enough money for a laptop, they would cut together their own dance tracks, again in the Britain's Got Talent mould.

Joe and Natalie were sincere about their work. They were 'the choreographers' – the leaders and the creators. They were the Marlon 'Swoosh' Wallen(s) and the Ashley Banjo(s) – the choreographers of Flawless and Diversity respectively. And they imagined their potential success in these terms. Joe in particular aspired to Wallen's mainstream success. He admired his "sick" (impressive) choreographed moves and the dexterity with which he cut the tracks together. The admiration for Wallen and Banjo's technical flare was combined with envy for their public acclaim and commercial success. From the Britain's Got Talent studio – where Amanda Holden described Banjo's choreography as "second to none" – to breakfast TV, both Wallen and Banjo had been openly commended. They had also made money. Flawless received 100,000 pounds for winning Britain's Got Talent in 2009 (Britain's Got Talent 2009). For a few months, the rags to riches trajectory or, as Flawless claimed on their website, "Hoodies to Haute Couture" (Flawless 2009) seemed possible. After all, Diversity was an East London crew, so why should it be different for Natalie and Joe?

Natalie and Joe's investment in the celebrity dream made sense of their marginalised biographies. Following her beating in Thamesmead, Natalie had become depressed and rather than sit her GCSEs had stayed in bed. With no qualifications and little chance of getting a job she was thinking of joining the army, believing, perhaps hopefully, that women did not see active service (see Chapter Two for a discussion of cannon fodder). At the same time, she had moved beyond the McKenzie, Nike and Adidas tracksuits of her younger peers and sported her own version of Shoreditch haute couture: ironic 1980s fashion, fluorescent colours and legwarmers. Streetdance, then, seemed to offer her a future preferable to death and unemployment, and one that was in keeping with her fashionable femininity. Joe was two years her elder and his biography was not dissimilar. He mixed retro hip hop – hats, headbands and glasses – with a more contemporary US urban repertoire – basketball tops and oversized coloured string vests. He was a skilled break-dancer, and the loose-fitting clothes and other sartorial props were all part of the effect. Joe had also not done well at school and after leaving at sixteen, he had got a job as a teaching assistant but was sacked when they found out

he didn't have the requisite qualifications. Now, aged eighteen, he had spent the best part of the year unemployed. He thought he might do an NVQ level two in teaching, but like Natalie saw choreography as a preferable way out. Despite its commercial cachet, *Leyham Dances* could not be dismissed as simply superficial mimicry. Natalie and Joe's embracing of the sold-out format was a 'strategy for living' (Chambers 1976); it was a temporary anaesthetic and a dream beyond the marginalisation they confronted.

Joe and Natalie's specific stories of marginalisation and futurity were also told through the music they danced to. The dance group's most practised tracks were *Freeze* by T-Pain featuring Chris Brown (2009); *Wall to Wall* by Chris Brown (2007a); and *Yo (Excuse Me Miss)* by Chris Brown (2005b). It seemed apt, given their own hopes and biographies, that Brown should be their artist of choice. An allegory of hoodies to haute couture, Brown had grown up in a small town in Virginia to become an extremely wealthy double-platinum selling artist by the age of sixteen (RIAA 2012).

Practices for *Leyham Dances* initially took place in the front room, which provided enough space for ten to twenty dancers. Latterly practices were held on the basketball court. During practice sessions, they organised themselves in an audience-facing, Britain's Got Talent formation and performed their version of Brown and T-Pain's dance moves,[47] interspersed with moves from the global breaking vernacular. Slave shuffles, to minstrel dances, to James Brown, to Michael Jackson;[48] Irish jigs to flashdance; clowning to krumping; ancient Africa dance; Puerto Rican kung fu; and Russian dance, all these were the non-original components of this iterative process that had taken the breaking circle to Saturday night TV (Banes 2004; Holman 2010). *Leyham Dances* was another node in this diasporic nexus. Through local translation, the ontologies of black diasporic dance were again modified. The festive

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[47] Brown and T-Pain's dancing is influenced by Clowning and Krumping (Krump Kings 2008). The streetdance form known as krumping, whose best-known protagonist is LA breaker Tight Eyez, is a more aggressive, and explicitly Africanist progression of Clowning. Clowning was started by Tommy the Clown as a form of spiritual outlet following the LA Riots (LaChapelle 2005). Brown and T-Pain have taken these forms of dance to global commercial heights.

[48] Chris Brown has frequently presented his videos and dance as a tribute to Michael Jackson. His video for *Wall to Wall* (2007a) is an imitation of the film *Blade* (Norrington 1998), but also a homage to Michael Jackson's *Thriller* (1982).

components of breaking with their inbuilt challenges to plantation life and white supremacy (Kitwana 2005) shifted to a format that sought approval of consumers and commercial judges.

When dancing to the track *Freeze* (T-Pain featuring Chris Brown 2009), young people copied the lyrics and video by acting out the word "fly", in the line "You think I'm fly, don't you?" To do so, they stood on one foot and leant forward with an arm outstretched. When they were asked to 'Freeze!' they did just that, holding position until the music continued. However, this was more than sold-out imitation for an imaginary consumer. As they performed the moves they altered the meaning to make sense of their habitual bodies in the youth club environment (see Chapter Three). This was particularly notable in the ways they translated the sexual and racialised content of the video. 'Freeze' is about T-Pain, who is black, inviting a black woman to dance like him and with him. In the video, T-Pain plays himself, sings and has the central role. The woman performs for him, occasionally as a puppet on a string. This is a sexualised and patriarchal performance in which T-Pain takes control of the female body as plaything. T-Pain asks the women "Can you tick, tick, tick, tick pop, lock and drop it?" 'Pop' refers to popping the hip to the left and right; 'lock' to moving the hips in a locked central position; and 'drop it' to bending your knees and dropping your bottom to the floor before springing back up.[49] The movement, influenced by Jamaican Dancehall, is itself a diasporic citation of gender oppression. In T-Pain's rendition, the move does not appear as a site of sexual freedom, female agency and heteronormative subversion (as discussed by other authors in relation to dancehall, ragga and carnival [Cooper 2004; Miller 1991; Noble 2000]). For T-Pain the woman is his muse. The only voice she is given is through the sexualisation of her bottom, vagina and hips. In the US post-slavery context, this patriarchal domination and sexualisation is key to exploring black nihilism (hooks 2004). The black female body, hyper-sexualised by black male patriarchy, is a response to white America's sexualisation of the black body. In this way, through his domination and subjugation of the black woman, T-Pain wins back some of the manhood taken from him by a white supremacist society.

While requirements for black sexuality to appear publicly in this way demonstrate the global commercial success of racial subjugations and black nihilism (Patterson 1999; West 1994), the historical meaning contained in this video was reworked when danced by young people at

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[49] The move can also be seen in Huey's video for *Pop, Lock and Drop It* (Huey 2006).

Leyham. In faithful response to T-Pain's invitation, the women in *Leyham Dances* popped, locked and dropped it, while the male members continued in separate routines. But unlike the original video the young women did not perform for the male dancers. Instead they faced an imaginary audience while the men performed separate breaking moves: handstands, chest pops and robotics. This was not liberation from patriarchy or sexualisation. Rather, it was evidence of the ways in which global aesthetics could be used at the same time as their meaning was reworked. Through their version of pop, lock and drop it, the young people drew attention to their respective gender roles. While the young women performed the feminised routine, the young men showed off their masculine strength and agility.

This performance also allowed the protagonists to stay within the moral, racialised framework of the youth club (discussed in Chapter Three). A closer rendition of T-Pain's pop, lock and drop it could have been read as a sexually explicit mimicry of black sexuality and might have generated concerns for the over-sexualisation of children at the site. Unlike Brookbridge (the demographics of Brookbridge are discussed in Chapter One) where dancehall moves were regularly practised with little concern from the staff, youth workers at Leyham Youth Club, less familiar with these dances, may have seen immorality where others saw potential freedom or simply day-to-day fun. In this way, *Leyham Dances* translated US forms of black patriarchy to the racialised sexual morality of Leyham Youth Club. This all occurred without a discussion of whether the young people were 'faking' black cultural forms. This was not because racialised forms of authenticity had ceased to exist; rather because the terms of reference had moved on.

The inapplicability of faking-it was also related to the demographics of the dance group. *Leyham Dances* was not an encounter of black and white, as previously described (Jones 1988) but a citation of black diasporic culture in the context of super-diversity and 150 years of migration. Natalie and Joe were both mixed race. They had white and black parents and/or grandparents. The dancers were mixed race, first- and second-generation black African, Eastern European and white British (in the complex way that whiteness is discussed in Chapter Two). Because cultural authenticity was not easily read through their bodies they were able to participate in the dance without older questions, on whether their performances were genuinely black, arising.

In summary, whereas at first glance *Leyham Dances* seemed to confirm the thesis that youth culture was no more than a sold-out mimicking of commercial tropes, the production demanded a much more nuanced reading. The hip hop aesthetics present in the dance were orientated to the capitalist consumer but at the same time they were used to make sense of marginalised lives and provide an, albeit anaesthetic, alternative to their foreclosed futures. Beyond this, the diasporic formation and iteration of the music and dance the young people produced confirmed the creativity of multiculture beyond the notions of authenticity, associated with the thesis on nihilism and present in earlier academic works on black and white youth culture. This was partly facilitated by the global sanitisation of hip hop and the TV audience format of the work but it was also made possible by the history of multiculture in Newham. These dynamics implied that as racialised and sexualised form of being associated with nihilistic black culture were broken down, the dance was re-coded in the moral framework of the youth club.

Leyham Dances ended when the youth club's neighbours had had enough of the loud music, and the youth workers enough of Natalie and Joe's demands. At this point the particular rendition of marginalisation, alternative horizons, anaesthesia and diasporic multiculture ended. The young people did eventually put on a show but it was not the theatre performance they hoped for. Instead, they dressed in uniforms (black trousers and white tops), did their hair, and performed to a group of volunteers, parents and youth workers in a local community hall.

2. YouTube videos

Leyham Dances had ended but dance and music continued. Standing by the vending machines in the corner of the front room, young people showed off their moves. Jack (introduced in Chapter Three) had worked out how to body-pop his torso; Freddy (introduced in Chapters Two and Three) responded with simple footwork. The spontaneity, provocation and response were instantly recognisable as a production reminiscent more of the breaking circle than *Leyham Dances'* theatre performance. Will, one of the youth workers, watched. East London dance group K.I.G.'s *Head Shoulders Knees n Toes* (2008) came on and Jack, Lewis and Nathe started the routine before inviting others to join. Playing the patriarch, Jack went over to Josie and elicited a response by touching her head, shoulder, knee and toes. "Head, shoulders knees

and toes", sang K.I.G., with Jack echoing the now sexualised provocation from the "mandem" (a group of men): "ladies, let me see you go down low". The provocation from K.I.G. and Jack showed the commercialisation of dancehall and its translation to East London by a group of largely white young people. To the time of the music, young people started twirling the pool cues, throwing the pool balls up in the air. Noel adjusted the wristband on his new, sky-blue Adidas tracksuit and, highly conscious of his body, started playing table-tennis with choreographic precision. Stacey and Torri came over to the table. Torri started rubbing her hands in a circular motion on the surface while Rachael moved in behind her and completed the sexualised sequence.

Over the next few months, these spontaneous citations mutated into another set of productions. Jack, Lewis and Nathe, aged fourteen, were white young men who lived close to Leyham Youth Club and regularly attended. One evening they asked me to film their dance moves so they could put them up on YouTube. The dance sequence they wanted me to capture was partly choreographed, and in this way reminiscent of Diversity and Flawless, but it also included elements of freestyling taken from the breaking vernacular. Whereas *Leyham Dances* imagined the capitalist consumer as the audience, their work was oriented towards a local conversation with a producer called K-Line. K-Line had something of a mythic status among the young men and they looked up to his particular brand of white masculinity. They admired his "spitting" (rapping) and his "blue and white staffs" (Staffordshire Bull Terriers). K-Line, eighteen, had heard the trio could dance and suggested they appear in his music video. Eager to impress, this was what Jack, Lewis and Nathe were working towards.

As with *Leyham Dances*, the young men's biographies were important to understanding their investment in the production. While Nathe and Jack were in it for the enjoyment, cachet and recognition, Lewis, like Joe and Natalie, saw an alternative horizon. Caught in the Britain's Got Talent lights, he was also considering a career in streetdance. He took dancing more seriously than his partners and had already auditioned for Diversity's dance group. Having failed, he had signed up to another less well-known local troupe. His dancing skills had also won him new-found popularity among his peers, something he hoped to cement through impressing K-Line. Keen to assert their masculinity, Jack and Nathe had regularly bullied Lewis prior to this collaboration. Uncomfortable with returning physical aggression, Lewis was seen as an easy target. Through dancing he hoped to earn their respect.

Leyham Dances had used the main stereo and large areas of floor space. However, defined by the mobile communication rather than the Britain's Got Talent theatre format, the three boys required no more than a small piece of grass, the loudspeaker on their phones and a camera. Sony's Walkman range of phones facilitated both the image capture and amplification. They had among the loudest speakers and the volume limiter could be taken off –'chipped' – by following a few simple online instructions. One young man I worked with offered this specialist knowledge for cash in the school playground. The videos could also be shot on their phones, uploaded or shared with peers by Bluetooth. YouTube contains countless videos of young people rapping and breaking powered by similar mobile technology. Giggs's early video *Talking the Hardest* (2009) is emblematic of this low-tech, highly portable sound.

Facing the camera, and therefore K-Line (in addition to the less considered online audience), the young men did not engage with the text of the tracks as literally as *Leyham Dances* had done. Nonetheless their routines traced and remade diasporic traditions. Their incorporation of humour corresponded with British slapstick, and with African slave dances that parodied the moves of white slave owners (Banes 2004; Holman 2010). The young men used the wave roll, pulling in an imaginary rope, being shot and being electrocuted to add humour to their act. The walks off at the end – hand to the camera – were also reminiscent of the global aesthetics of the breaking circle.

Whereas *Leyham Dances* had embraced the sounds of T-Pain and Chris Brown, Lewis, Jack and Nathe moved towards heavier tracks, including: Missy Elliot's featuring Ciara *Lose Control* (2005) and an untitled track work by K-Line himself (K-Line 2010). Both were bassy, made use of techno riffs and were good to dance to. Appropriately, the Missy Elliot track drew on 1980s breaking culture, making extensive use of a vocal sampled from *Body Work* by Hot Streak (1983). *Body Work* featured in the 1984 film *Breakin'* (Silberg 1984). However, Elliot's video is not about break dancing but a homage to the US African-American musical tradition of the 1920s – the first time black people in the US had portrayed themselves in mainstream theatre, first to a black and then to white audiences (Robinson 2007).[50] Ciara, who features on the video, situates herself in the emancipatory movement. Elliot stays centre stage for the majority

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[50] The theme of emancipation is also present in Missy Elliot's video for *Work It* (2002).

of the video, and as is the case with many of her other works, does not perform as an object of sexual desire for the male gaze. Her grinds assert feminine power and freedom rather than a predisposition to accept patriarchal authority. In this sense she reproduces a version of 'slackness' also evident in ragga (Noble 2000), dancehall (Cooper 2004) and carnival (Miller 1991).

However, as performed in Leyham, these messages underwent a substantial revision. This was most apparent when Missy Elliot was performed back-to-back with K-Line's own recording. While K-Line's music resonates tonally with Missy Elliot's, and is evidently part of the same diasporic nexus, his message of local white patriarchal nihilism was distant from Elliot's commercialised emancipatory feminism. In the track *Untitled* (2010), K-Line emphasises his own ability as a rapper and states his claim to the soil – through being "born and bred" in the postcode area – which he equates with whiteness and the "white-boy scene" (see Chapters Two and Three). He advertises his sacred, masculine protection of this autochthonous zone with the violent warning: "I'll bang you once. I'll bang you twice. I'll bang you again like Jesus Christ."

When freestyling in the back room of the youth club his politics were similar. As he reeled out his lyrics, he gave respect to Leyham and himself. He then turned to highlight his own racial belonging by poking fun at Natalie, quipping "your mum's white, but your dad's black", before turning to chide a white young person for having a black mum – a comedic turn that provided him with space to address his real concern: the loss of authentic white belonging in East London. K-Line was not alone in his use of black cultural forms to pursue white territorial politics. Other young men used similar lyrics.[51] Unlike the development of South East Asian or

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[51] Lyrics from another youth club participant: Big up to the white boy scene/It's like xxx, xxx, xxx /Big up to the Leyham Youth Club/ xxx, xxx, all them crew/It's got the vibes, and it's like … /Come on wild with a swing and a punch/Thing that I hear is a crack and a crunch/See you go, I take her out for lunch/And get [her] to suck my cock like it's munch/Come on wild with a swing and a punch/Thing that I hear is a crack and a crunch/See you go, I take her out for lunch/And get [her] to suck my cock like it's munch/See yeah, cos u knows I'm back/Everyone knows I'm back on the track/We're out! [Walks off with his hand to the camera].

Hispanic hip hop scenes in San Francisco, this was not a construction of community identity in the face of invisibility (Harrison 2009, p.134) rather (as discussed in Chapters Two and Three) it was a defensive articulation of whiteness based on mythologies of loss, and on a right to local history. Performed alongside each other, these tracks raised important questions about black and white authenticity and the ways in which black cultural forms could be reproduced to support white autochthonous claims.

In summary, the YouTube videos Jack, Lewis and Nathe made for K-Line provided a different perspective to the debates on commercialisation, nihilism and cultural syncretism. As with *Leyham Dances* they were not simply commercial replications. The aesthetics of global hip hop provided the young men with strategies for living, and forms through which they could negotiate their masculinity and sexuality. They were founded on technologies of collaboration which extended from the ethics of hip hop through the use of mobile technologies. Again, their specific, class located iteration was a challenge to essential notions of black and white. The young men did not feel they were faking-it or translating black struggles to class struggles. Their participation in breaking and their back-to-back use of emancipation and white territoriality in no way jarred. Through their inattention to the ideas of authenticity in hip hop, they demonstrated fealty to the beat. However, at the same time that these forms of racial fixity were broken down, others were rebuilt; at the same time that they exceeded old demarcations of race and culture they produced new ones by re-politicising emancipation to make sense of exclusive white territories.

3. *Kill all a Dem*: nihilist aesthetics and political negativity

After a few months, Jack, Lewis and Nathe's enthusiasm waned, but the music and dance continued. Doneao's *Devil in a Blue Dress* (2007) came on the youth club stereo and Josie strutted around the pool table in an Adidas tracksuit making large energetic sweeps with her arms. Sticking Lewis's baseball cap under her hoodie she ducked down hiding her face; playing out surveillance evasion and nihilism with her white, street-camouflaged body. The default aggression – bobbing strut and horizontal arm gestures – indicated masculine performance and sexuality. Dawn and Abi, two of her close friends, joined in behind her swaying like chorus girls. They were the peripheral female bodies that complemented Josie's aggressive centre-stage routine. Exaggerated but not ironic, Josie too was translating global hip hop's aesthetics

of masculinity and nihilism to make sense of her relationship with the youth club, with the young people and with wider systems of social control (discussed in Chapter Three).

Out of these vibrations came the final production. *Kill all a Dem* was a music video performed by a trio of rappers called Upcoming Movement and produced locally by Hustler and Ice. It wasn't made in the youth club, and Upcoming Movement did not attend Leyham. However, a number of the young people I worked with attended the filming of the video and subsequently distributed the final work over Facebook and YouTube.[52] The video used a range of nihilist imagery to communicate messages of masculine violence, turf warfare and death.

Arriving at Leyham via the youth club's computer terminals, the video was received with a mixture of disappointment and concern by the youth workers. They saw it as a worrying reflection of the turn to disorder and as a ridiculous parroting of commercialised nihilist aesthetics. In this sense, it was detached from the official forms of violence that were permitted in the youth club and in the local area (see Chapter Three). In all these senses, it was roundly condemned.

This reaction was indeed the desired response. The imagery, lyrics and sound of the video were deliberately designed to evoke nihilism. Like Professor Green's *Upper Clapton Dance* (2009), Sway's *Little Derek* (Sway 2006) No Lay's *Unorthodox Daughter* (2008) and many smaller productions, *Kill all a Dem* was steeped in the London philosophy of gritty (grimy) realism (Bramwell 2012). It was shot in black and white to capture the stark reality of street life. Simple post-production techniques were used to highlight the colour of the bandana – the sign of territorial affiliation and the centre of the video's message. In keeping with the imagery, the pace of the instrumental was slow, creeping and orchestral and there was an air of suspense and premonition. The track opened with three haunting notes played on a synthesised piano:

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[52] Anonymity in relation to these productions is discussed in Chapter One.

Upcoming Movement - Kill all a Dem (2011a)

Verse one
I'm F […]
Back from Plaistow smoking a shisha [joint],
Back from Plaistow in memorial park,
With a zoot [joint] in my hand but I ain't no dealer,
Get on the wrong side of me once or twice,
[…] grab him up, grab him up,
Pull out the shank [stabbing weapon], stab him up, stab him up,
Leave him for dead, bag him up, bag him up.

Put him in a van,
Take him to Epping,
F that man now take him Memorial,
Head to the Cross ain't no tutorial,
NGZ it's territorial,
Pile on the pounds, I no skin and bones.
I'm moving quick, I no Kelly Holmes
I doing the crime, I ain't doing the time
Go '999' people on the phone

Chorus
Them man der, kill all a dem,
Cats in the estates, kill all a dem,
Do what I gotta, deal with it proper,
Draw for strap [gun] and kill all a dem,
Snitch MCs, kill all a dem,
Cats in the endz, kill all a Dem,
There's only one think that is on my mind,
It's snakes in the grass and I kill all a dem.

Verse two
Manor blacked out in the night time,
You'll get shanked [stabbed] in the face at the right time,
Don't really care none, spit [rap] on the half rhyme,
Come through shooting with a big black star 9 [gun],
Men are on the road to CT,
Back to West Ham, […] is easy,
Crime pays so I gotta do it part time,
Make a hustle a wonder like Stevie.

Little rats keep walking the vermin,
Attention seeking, you're still not learning,
Talking about making it O's [original] and G's [gansta],
You ain't smokin' the weed, you still smokin' the Sterling,
Pump a few weights, you start thinking your Giggs [Peckam rapper famed for gangster style],
Not bullet proof when the lead starts burning,

Rinse [shoot] a whole clip, heads start turning,
Bring you whole crew, I'm not […] of you pricks.

Chorus
Them man der, kill all a dem,
Cats in the estates, kill all a dem,
Do what I gotta, deal with it proper,
Draw for strap and kill all a dem,
Snitch MCs, kill all a dem,
Cats in the endz, kill all a dem,
There's only one think that is on my mind,
It's snakes in the grass and I kill all a dem.

Verse three
Get rude, I leave bodies in the cemetery,
River boat flowing, like down in the melody,
Them man there, I will leave them behind,
Cos trust me fam' they will never be ahead of me,
Territory's hype bringing the energy,
Grey bandanas marking the territory
Them man, with the hype on Facebook
Trust me fam', they can never befriend me

See me with the mandem [male friends] smoking the Dutch [splif]
Cheese and the lemon [cannabis types], lighting a Rizla
You'll mandem whilst screwin' at us,
Cos my man ain't hard to hear,
Cos my bars they open ears,
Go for the caps [bullets], who's rollin' here,
If I catch your mandem slippin', they'll get beat down so severe.

Chorus
Them man der, kill all a dem,
Cats in the estates, kill all a dem,
Do what I gotta, deal with it proper,
Draw for strap and kill all a dem,
Snitch MCs, kill all a dem,
Cats in the endz, kill all a dem,
There's only one think that is on my mind,
It's snakes in the grass and I kill all a dem.

The lyrics complemented the themes of nihilism and turf war communicated through the imagery and sounds. They play through the scene of stabbing someone from a rival area, bagging him up and taking him to Epping Forest – resting-place of unmarked graves. Verse after verse, the track imagines scenarios of extreme physical violence, stabbing, shooting and death. The banality of the violence accentuates the message. The commentary is functional,

without emotion.[53] The violence appears senseless. Anti-sociability is focused on other working-class young people – the 'cats in the endz' rather than more legitimate targets. The realism of the drama complements the flow. As with Giggs' track *Talking the Hardest* (2009), choreographic attention is paid to the theatre of conflict – the gun is drawn, heads turn and the opposition confronted. And all of this is justified through the defence of territory. Territory is demarcated through references to local landmarks. Violence is the necessary response for whoever transgresses these boundaries. Be it through by grassing or slipping (transgressing territorial boundaries), the consequences are severe. Every verse comes back to the chorus 'kill all a dem'.

The film opens (see Figures Five to Eleven) with a shot of angry-looking young white men before cutting to a face covered with a territorial bandana, referencing urban warfare and surveillance evasion. In the next image, the former message is anthropomorphised in an alert pitbull. These shots are interspersed with handbrake turns, wheelies on motorbikes, and a solo performance from Wiskin in which he makes shooting gestures. Women play only a background role appearing at the edges of group shots. Most of the video is taken up with shots of the three front-men rapping in front of other young men who rap along to the words of the track. In this way, the backing group shows agreement with the lyrics and with the collective cause for which they volunteer their bodies – masculine territoriality (discussed in Chapter Three).

Underlying the aesthetics of the video were negotiations (strategies of living (Chambers 1976)) and performances of sexuality, masculinity, labour and territorial belonging. The video draws attention to the simultaneously hardened male bodies of global hip hop and working-class culture. UK and US artists, 50 Cent, Jay-Z and Lil' Wayne and Giggs are all interlocutors. The body postures and shooting gestures are ways of presenting the disconnected 'bad boy' the

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[53] Gilroy notes that fear is closely intertwined with young people's hedonistic enjoyment of dance and music – how hedonism and danger are closely interlinked (Gilroy 1987, p.128) – but *Kill All a Dem* communicates fear not through enjoyment but through functionality.

Figure Five: Still from 'Kill all a Dem' – pitbull crossbreed (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011a)

Figure Six: Still from 'Kill all a Dem' – bandana and hood (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011a)

Figure Seven: Still from 'Kill all a Dem' – Upcoming Movement with territorial bandanas (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011a)
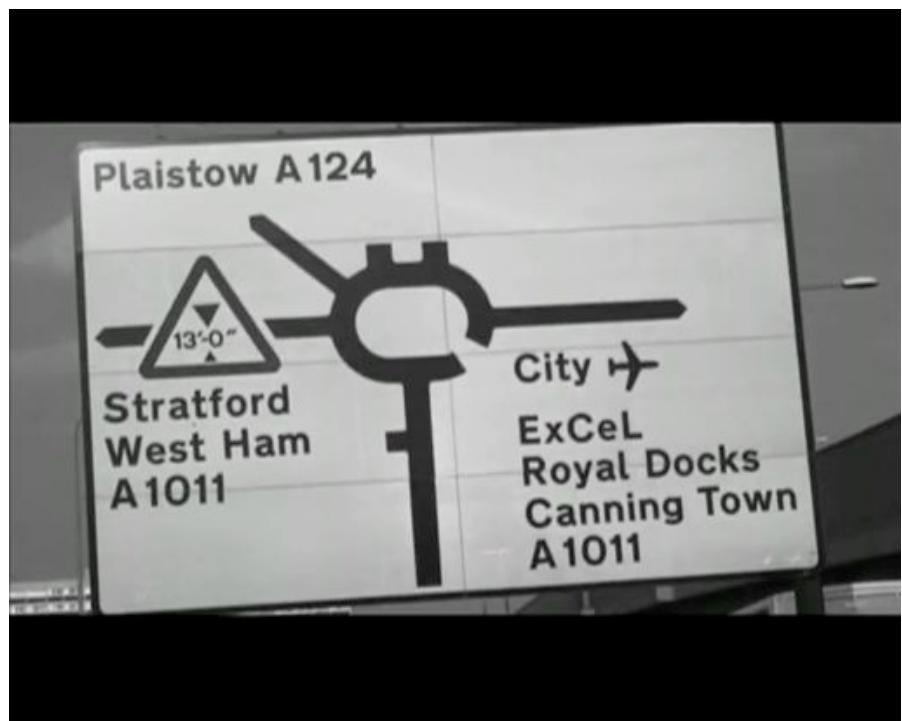
Figure Eight: Still from 'Kill all a Dem' – road signs marking the territory (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011a)

Figure Nine: Still from 'Kill all a Dem' – front man and backing group (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011a)

FigureTen: Still from 'Kill all a Dem' – front man and shooting gestures from backing group (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011a)

Figure Eleven: Still from 'Kill all a Dem' – handbreak turn (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011a)

young men feel is sexually attractive (Seidler 2006). Wiskin's reference to Giggs, casual crime, easy money and smoking weed tie these messages to hip hop ideas of labour and leisure – easy work, quick reward and relaxation – or 'getting paid' (Gilroy 2000). Ryan, one of youth workers at Leyham explained:

> *Ryan:* I think they are looking at rappers. There is no positive role models no more. The sad thing is it is a lot of young black kids that are getting involved in that …
>
> *M:* It affects the white kids as well?
>
> *Ryan:* Yeah it does affect the white kids as well. Yeah, to be bad, girls love a bad boy. When you are on TV girls are like wow look at this guy. He's got chains, he's got money and the young boys are watching and thinking okay the girls must like this. If I be like this, you know? That's what I believe really. Once you start making money and once you start being good, you have people who want to start looking good too and then you have competition. You have to change your image, acting up.

As a performance, "he's got the chains, he's got the money" cites Eric B and Rakim's 'Paid in Full' (1987) – a reference point for major US cities in the 1980s when a desire for upward mobility was being recognised and black audiences and artists were grappling with what it meant to be black and paid (Baldwin 2010, p.162). This conjuncture is reconfigured through *Kill*

all a Dem as they make their own enquiry into marginalisation and money. This is not simply an orientation of Leyham to the American Dream, but rather the reformulation of a vernacular that makes sense of, and communicates, marginalisation on another fringe. Wiskin's "hustle" connects a local history of informal earning and low-level criminality (Downes 1966, Hobbs 1988) to the rise of the consumer in the US and UK (see Chapter Five).

Territorial assertions are also made through littering the video with local landmarks. These magic symbols (Robins and Cohen 1978) control the material environment the young people live in. They include the use of postcode colours, local tube stations, the local park, road and pedestrian signposts, the flyover, and the disused and graffitied railway line. They also include the presence of the young people themselves, who are embodied and mobile markers of the postcode. Grime, as Zuberi has noted, is dominated by local territorial assertions, turf wars and postcode rivalries between crews (Zuberi 2010, pp.184, 186). Through the use of bandanas and colours, these notions of territoriality cite the US hip hop 'hood (Forman 2002, 2010; Gilroy 2010b). Evidence of this is starkly provided in the north of Newham where one postcode area is nicknamed the 'Bloods' and another the 'Crips'. Both use the colours of their LA counterparts. In *Kill all a Dem* this form of territorial symbolism is made through the use of the grey bandana – "grey bandanas marking the territory". The grey bandana (changed to orange in the video to facilitate post-production effects) is a local territorial symbol. The video shows young people wearing the bandana, covering their faces with it, and wearing it round their wrists. However, these representations of territory were both old and new. While the bandana was a relatively new arrival to the area, territorial rivalries between different neighbourhoods were long established. Downes, in his 1966 study *The Delinquent Solution,* quoted an informant who discussed the banality of turf wars in the local area (Downes 1966, p.201),[54]

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[54] However, the translations of US hip hop aesthetics to local turf disputes did not, in contradiction of some recent accounts (Pitts 2007), imply the take-up of US gang formations (characterised by hierarchies of leadership and initiation rites (Alexander 2008; Downes 1966). Freddy, one of the young people at Leyham, noted how it was never a 'gang' rivalry but a postcode rivalry. This is historically supported by Willmott's discussion of young men in Bethnal Green, East London. These young men stated they were leaderless and therefore not a gang in the US mould; rather they were just young people who associated in peer groups (Willmott 1969, p.34). Nonetheless they maintained territorial rivalries with local areas noting that the closer areas had the fiercest competitions (Willmott 1969, pp.150-51).

again showing how contemporary global vernaculars were applied to make sense of long-standing territorial politics.

The strategies for living and the citations discernible through the video's communication of sexuality, masculinity and territorial belonging were communicated at different sites of public dialogue. The nihilistic message of *Kill all a Dem*, the genre in which it spoke and the politics to which it referred were all intimately understood by the video's local interlocutors. These interlocutors also understood, like Upcoming Movement, that these forms of territorial communication were not only for the sake of art but also had real consequences. In *Kill all a Dem,* Upcoming Movement's public claim to defend the Leyham postcode is captured in its warning to outsiders not to transgress their boundaries. The act of transgression was known as 'slipping'. Front man Kempy claims "if I catch your mandem slippin', they will get beat down do severe". Although territorial rivalries were reasonably fluid, postcode transgressions did result in violence, and when Upcoming Movement's message was released on YouTube, it became simultaneously part of an online dialogue (defined through the performance of nihilism) and part of a real-life scenario in which the performance of nihilism might move beyond rhetoric to actual violence. As premised by Upcoming Movement's commitment to this dialogue, when the video was uploaded on YouTube local avatars responded and the comments section started to fill up with interlocutors who wanted to test the group's commitment to violence. Posts included:

> **Comment one**
> "lol man talkin bowt shankin [stabbing] bowt shankin.
> neva shanked someone but been shanked, dnt fink u know wat its like kid,
> and despite man stickin blade in me he looked horrorfied all u fannies r
> pussies mate.
> where u from u goats, look like faggots, 60 youngens wid some fat ass prick
> gimp."
>
> **Comment two** (posted by a different group of Leyham young men)
> "wat do u kno gangsters cum 2 da blocs an get duppied[55] [beaten up] sn u
> fat shit."
>
> **Comment three**
> "This is awful. i would duppy all 3 of you who jumped on this track. on 1
> riddim [rhythm]"

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[55] Jamaican vernacular meaning 'ghost' or 'spirit'.

In addition to demonstrating the various sites at which nihilism was negotiated and performed, these interactions questioned Upcoming Movement's commitment to anti-sociability and violence as a way of life. Upcoming Movement's entrance into dialogue where spectres of violence could become reality provides space for thinking about the dissonance between nihilism as performance and nihilism as a way of life. This further challenges the dominant discourses on youth culture as nihilistic. This dissonance became clearer when Upcoming Movement released a *Behind the Scenes* video for *Kill all a Dem* (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011b). The video showed the 'making of' what becomes the nihilistic performance. Shot in colour, it was a departure from the gritty black and white of *Kill all a Dem* showing the everyday humanity of the protagonists behind the austere façade. It shows the frontmen getting the verses wrong, young people smiling at each other, and winding each other up. In all these ways, it suggests that rather than living in a permanent and fixed state of violent territoriality and anti-sociability the young people had to rehearse its contours to achieve a convincing style of communication.

Behind the Scenes (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011b) also helps move away from the idea that *Kill all a Dem* was a performance of white territoriality. Considered in the context of autochthony and territoriality (discussed in Chapter Three), and based in the skin colour of the three front men, this might be an easy conclusion to draw. However, while the young people in the video were predominantly white, the producers were revealed to be black and Asian. This suggests on the one hand that loyalty to the production came before ethnic fealty (Gilroy 1994, p.52), and on the other that white territoriality can be produced by black and Asian young people at the same time that white young people perform black nihilism.

The extent of these multicultural paradoxes (Back 1994) cannot be understood aside from the genesis of the track itself, and the ethics of sharing at the heart of the work. In addition to being a pronouncement of nihilism and turf war, the production relied on borrowing and remixing across territorial boundaries (Gilroy 2000, p.199). The video shows young people freestyling over Nocturnal's remix (2009) of DVA's aka Scratcha (Rinse FM and East London artist) instrumental also called *Kill All Ah Dem*[56] (2010). The instrumental is not unique and it is

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[56] Different versions of the track have different spellings.

Figure Twelve: Still from 'Behind the Scenes' (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011b)

tonally similar to Wiley's *The Matrix Instrumental* (2010 [2001-2006]). In this way, Upcoming Movement's *Kill all a Dem* exists in a nexus of appropriation and reuse. This is far from plagiarism. As with Wiley's *The Matrix Instrumental*, Scratcha's version of *Kill All Ah Dem* was made to be shared and remixed, and has been covered by numerous artists including Dollar da Dustman (2011) and Tinie Tempah (2010). Collaboration is further evident in the use of technology and language. The camera shots are face height and, in all but sound and image quality, faithful to the previously discussed genre of grime videos that are captured on mobile phones and uploaded to YouTube. The language of *Kill all a Dem* mixes Jamaican, London, US and Arabic vernaculars to document the leisure time pursuits of smoking cannabis. In other verses West Coast rap terms (NGZ and OG) are mixed with UK prison vernaculars (shank).

However, beyond this, *Kill all a Dem* was an important negative political commentary. The grimy anti-social realism of the film did more than replicate a commercialised genre and communicate messages of meaningless violence. It also questioned the physical and expressive limitations on young people's lives. A brief glance across UK grime and hip hop reveals an array of artists with similar projections. No Lay, Dizzee Rascal, Roots Manuva, Wiley, Skinnyman, Devlin, Braintax, Task Force, African Boy, Lady Chann, Lioness, Lowkey, Akala, Sway

and Sowetto Kinsch have all been politically motivated. Through angry, grimy, nihilistic, sometimes humorous, social realist aesthetics, they have engaged with the injustices of immigration, unemployment, border security, nationalism, anti-sociability, bankers' bonuses, patriarchy, misogyny, poverty, criminalisation, the penal state, surveillance and imperialism. In this way too they have opened up the possibility of confronting these forms of marginalisation and considering ways of life beyond them (see Chapter Five).

Kill all a Dem is part of this tradition. It makes detailed commentary on the curtailment of young people's freedom, particularly with regards to the police and to police surveillance (also discussed in Chapter Three). While this presentation of conflict with the police and surveillance is part of the performance of nihilism, it is also a means by which the young people politically reflect on their marginalisation. Nearly all of the video was shot in publicly owned space – the park, under the flyover, the disued railway line – but there is a constant acknowledgement that the state is watching; that their presence in this space is potentially criminal. Specifically, the lyrics state "I'm doing the crime, I ain't doing the time. 999 people on the phones." Stevo's intention to stab his postcode rivals takes into account a response from the police, who he assumes will know what he did, even if they cannot catch him. As is the case with other videos in the genre such as Dizzee Rascal's 'Sirens' (2007), the eye of the state is present. The shots of CCTV cameras at the beginning of *Kill all a Dem* appear again as the video continues. Police officers make an appearance through an engagement with a group of young men and women sitting on the disued railway platform. The dramatic claim to kill postcode rivals also opens the way for questioning a system of public masculinity that leads some young people to make sense of their lives through performances and realities of violence and anti-social behaviour. As discussed further in Chapter Five, this politics is negatively political (Halberstam 2008) because while it does not provide a positive solution it does question the injustices young people confront, at the same time as it provides a tool for developing critical reflection and political consciousness.
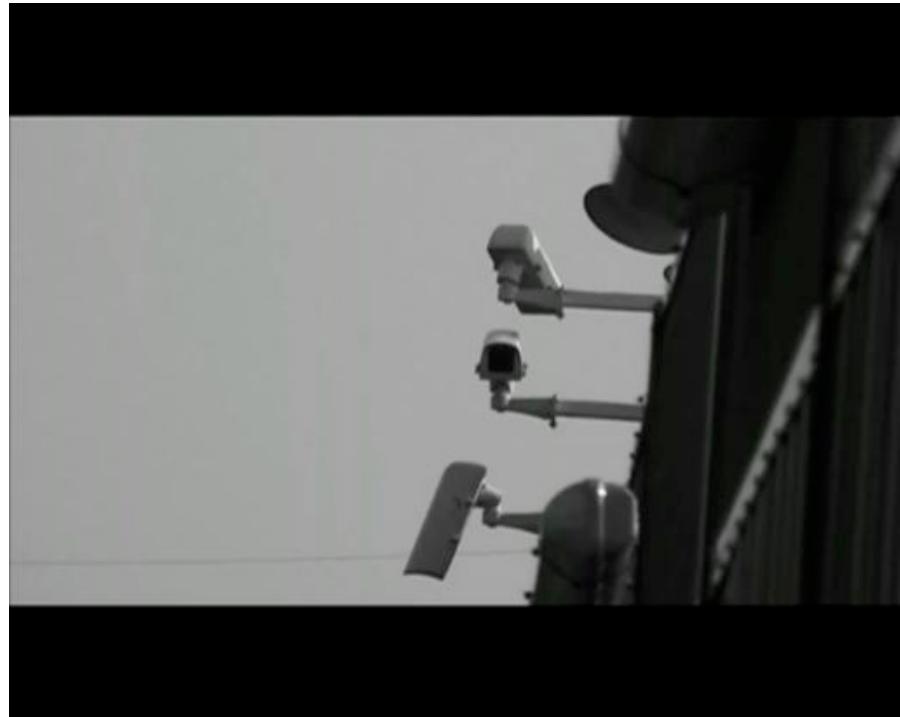
Figure Thirteen: Still from 'Kill all a Dem' – surveillance (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011a)

Figure Fourteen: Still from 'Kill all a Dem' – surveillance (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011a)

In summary, *Kill all a Dem* worked on different levels with different audiences. Whilst being a local production based on territory, masculinised violence and surveillance it was also part of a

highly commercialised genre that popularised nihilism. The young people cited this diasporic aesthetic for the purpose of negotiating local and global forms of masculinity, sexuality and territorial belonging. The performance ensured that black and white authenticities associated with territoriality, masculinity and sexuality were broken down and re-made. As white young people performed black nihilism, Asian and black producers worked with white autochthony. At the same time they ensured that ethnic fealty was disregarded in pursuit of a collective project.

Territoriality and masculinity were communicated, revealed and negotiated at different real and virtual levels. These various sites of dialogue exposed different dimensions of the performance, and the ways in which the young men engaged with and communicated nihilism. They highlighted that far from being a way of life, nihilism was an aesthetic system that Upcoming Movement had rehearsed 'behind the scenes'. These sites of dialogue also made stark the contemporary paradoxes of urban multiculture (Back 1994). While *Kill all a Dem* communicated anti-sociability and exclusionary territoriality, their work existed only because of intense collaboration across these boundaries. The virtual sites at which physical violence became real were also the spaces in which young people shared the music that made the production possible. In this way, the ethics of dialogue rather than detachment was at the core of the video. Finally, countering the assumption that youth culture is sold-out and apolitical, *Kill all a Dem* was part of a tradition of political work that allowed young people to evaluate the injustices they encountered.

Conclusion

Young people's creative and political work is often excluded from public and democratic debate on the basis that it is sold-out and nihilistic. Taking this as a starting point, the chapter has argued that while young people's productions used nihilist aesthetics and commercial tropes they were also meaningful and political. None of the productions presented in this chapter were mindless parrotings of commercial genres. Young people used nihilism for reflecting politically on forms of marginalisation and they also used sold-out genres to provide strategies for living. These included negotiations of sexuality, masculinity, femininity and belonging. Through discussions of citation and diaspora the chapter has shown how the claims to racialised authenticity, sexuality and masculinity, inherent in the thesis of nihilism, were

broken down. Addressing academic debates on cultural syncretism it has demonstrated that while associations with the cultural categories of black and white were broken down, new forms of authenticity arose. In the context of Leyham, masculinity and sexuality were reformed to make sense of local notions of territory and sexual morality. Music associated with dangerous black bodies was re-used to support white territorial claims, at the same time as black and Asian young people produced white territories. These seemingly counterintuitive ideas existed in uncomplicated alliance. The chapter has considered how the shifting sands of cultural syncretism were testament to the collaboration that existed beyond assumed ethnic and territorial boundaries. The dance moves and music young people reproduced were made from globally distributed and freely available materials. The technologies that facilitated this dialogue were chosen to maximise ease of collaboration and creative exchange. Overall, the chapter has argued for a re-evaluation of left- and right wing positions that condemn young people's cultural productions as mindless mimicry and apolitical nihilism. The chapter has demonstrated that young people's productions of globalised aesthetics were meaningful and political. They allowed them to negotiate their lives, provided a vernacular for public communication, reproduced an ethics of collaborations, and operated as a medium through which they could evaluate injustices.

Chapter Five, on the horizons of young people in Newham, extends this discussion to reveal further dimensions of their political consciousness, negative politics and the projection of alternative futures.

Chapter Five – Horizons: aspirational, marginalised and alternative

Young people are a lightning rod for the future. 'Cultural translators', business strategists, consumer psychologists, marketing experts, global multinationals and consultancies all try to unlock the impending desires of the so-called Generation Y[57] – the cohort of children born between 1979 and 2000 (Hoffman 2007; Lancaster and Stillman 2010, Lazarevic and Petrovic-Lazarevic 2007; O'Neill 2009; 2012; Quinn 2005, Tapscott 2009, Yarrow and O'Donnell 2009).These educated, middle-class, wealthy young men and women are courted as the future pioneers, navigators and consumers of technological, individualised and globalised advances (Harris 2004, p.15). On the flip side are those that lack aspirations. These young people are often working-class. They represent the uncertainties and dystopias of the world to come. Through these young people the negative implications of individualisation and globalisation – the breakdown of community and the increasing polarisation between the rich and the poor – are viewed (Harris 2004, pp.4-5). These young people haunt adult society "because [they] reference our need to be attentive to a future that others will inherit" (Giroux 1996, p.10).

Given the centrality of children and young people in accounts of the future, the almost total absence of ethnographic enquiry on the subject is surprising. While social scientists have been co-opted into numerous analyses of future 'risk' (Bessant et al. 2003; Cairns and Cairns 1994; Kronick 1997; Newburn et al. 1999; Richman and Fraser 2001) they have ignored at an everyday level how young people produce and experience their futures. Sociologists have produced work on 'youth transitions' – longitudinal analyses of labour markets and family in late modernity – but have largely left to one side young people's own cultural production of their horizons (Henderson 2007; Thomson 2009). Ethnographers have worked diligently on collective memory, history and context but have ignored the importance of the to-come manifested in all everyday scenarios (Appadurai 2004, p.60). This chapter is somewhat different. It invites an understanding of different futures from the perspectives of young

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[57] Also referred to as the 'Millennium Generation'.

people and through their cultural productions. It considers first, how young people projected aspiration; second, how young people projected futures marginalised from this vision; and third, how young people's cultural productions envisioned alternative horizons. The third section of this chapter builds directly on the analysis contained in Chapter Four, which ended by arguing that *Kill all a Dem* was political. This chapter takes that argument forward, showing how its reflexive politics and engagement with injustice manifested themselves in alternative visions of the future.

To some extent the thesis has already addressed the future. It has discussed how the actions of young people were conditioned by a collective knowledge of how they would be received. The wind-ups (discussed in Chapter Three) functioned in precisely this way. However, while the immediate future has been considered, this chapter is concerned with further thrown projections partially developed in Chapter Four's discussion of *Leyham Dances* (Natalie and Joe's attempt to create a future for themselves as choreographers). The tools for this analysis are found in phenomenology, hermeneutics and cultural theory. In phenomenology and hermeneutics the concept of the 'horizon' refers to a vision that any young person has from a standpoint in their life. As Gadamer notes, "The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (1989, p.302). As young people move toward the horizon (towards their future), it expands in front of them so that it is never truly closed (Gadamer 1989, p.304). And as we have seen with memory (Chapter Two), time is an individual and collective practice (Heidegger 1962, p.374). Young people exist in the world with others, and consequently their horizons are fused together (Gadamer 1989, p.303; Ricœur 1984; p.220). Through these interactions individual and collective understandings of the future are qualified and transformed (Alcoff 2006, p.45; Gadamer 1989; Heidegger 1962, pp.435–436). Although not appreciated in the linear projections common to longitudinal work, this makes the future unstable and creative (Alcoff 2006, p.44).

As with memory practices, the horizon is produced to make sense of the present. It is produced in what Ricœur calls a "space of experience" (Ricœur 1984; p.208). In this space, the future, like the past, is experienced through the body and through the fabric of the physical world (Ricœur 1984; pp.230–231; Merleau-Ponty 1989). However, in order to fully appreciate how futures are situated in 'great time' (Bakhtin 1986b) (discussed in Chapter Two) they also need to be understood beyond the phenomenologist's subject-centred body and through the

horizons of cultural production. As numerous authors have commentated, cultural productions (sound, video dance and lyrics) carry with them transcendental pasts and the futures (Du Bois 2007, Eshun 1998, 2003; Fanon 1991, Gilroy 2010a, Moten 2003) that are translated and made immanent through specific geographies and bodies.

In all these cases, the many futures explored below cannot be separated from their many pasts. And consequently this chapter cannot be read apart from the first chapter, or those that have come in between. In hermeneutic terms, if the horizon stretches in front of you, when you turn around, it also extends behind you (Alcoff 2006, p.43; Heidegger 1962, p.374).

1. Aspirational horizons

> Young people's aspirations matter too. The great failure is not the child who doesn't reach the stars, but the child who has no stars to reach for.
>
> Gordon Brown 2007b

Chapter Three has already explored how forms of decentralisation and third sector entrepreneurship, characteristic of the roll-out of the welfare state, affected the territorial governance of urban space. Post-2000, another defining feature of New Labour was a shift from welfarist models of state support to a politics of aspiration. The politics of aspiration marked a transition from earlier post-war conceptualisations of the future, defined through a politics of expectation – that deprived populations would expect future state support in difficult times (Raco 2009, p.437). Post-2000 the politics of expectation was replaced with the language of personal responsibility. Continuing earlier Conservative themes on the underclass – concerned with condemning the deprived populations' wilful, state-dependent and feckless immorality (Murray 1990, 1994; see also MacDonald and Marsh 2005 for a critique), New Labour argued that it was precisely the politics of future expectation that had generated ingrained modes of dependency (Archer and Francis 2007; Brown 2011; McDonald et al. 2011; Raco 2009; Sinclair et al. 2010). Young people were asked not to rely on the state and instead to take control of their own destinies. This was particularly evident in education, and latterly in third sector provision, including youth services.

The 2005 white paper *Higher Standards Better Schools for All* (HM Government 2005a) was described as "more than anything … a White Paper about aspiration" (Kelly 2005). And so, high aspiration as a cognitive state (Strand and Winston 2008, p.3) – "the goals they set for the future, their inspiration and their motivation to work towards these goals" (Social Exclusion Task Force 2008, p.5) – became central to educational performance and future attainment. It was even posited as an innate moral good, present in any worthwhile citizen (Dale et al. 2002). As the former Secretary of State for Business, John Hutton, stated: "aspiration and ambition are natural human emotions" (cited in Raco 2009, p.439). From 2004 onwards, aspiration in education was pushed through the *Aimhigher* programme (HEFCE 2012). The perceived successes of this programme for delivering, envisioning and managing young people's futures led to its introduction, in 2007, to youth services through *Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities* (HM Treasury and DCSF 2007, pp.3–4). Through these initiatives New Labour installed an ideal figure on young people's horizons. This ideal figure was a middle-class, educated, individual consumer and future citizen (Raco 2009, p.439). In Newham, these discourses played out through the politics of the 'New Citizen' discussed in Chapter Two.[58]

On the flip side of this coin was defined the cognitively deficient, unnatural young person commensurate with a 'poverty of aspiration' (Sinclair et al. 2010, p.3). Not being aspirational became the contemporary equivalent of Hegel's futureless future (Benjamin 1968, pp.259–260; Nietzsche 1983, p.104). This natural failure then provided New Labour with a catch-all explanation for any number of structural problems (Limmer 2008). However, discourses on the poverty of aspiration – the ways in which young people were marginalised from the right to imagine and produce the future on their own terms (Lefebvre 1996) – were not evenly applied. Those deemed to have a 'poverty of aspiration' were overwhelmingly working-class (Archer and Francis 2007, p.118; Harris 2004, p.25). And following familiar post-war discourse, this category was subdivided in ethnic and pseudo-ethnic categories. Particular attention was paid to educationally 'failing' young black and Muslim men, and the 'under-achieving' white working-class (Haylett 2001; Preston 2009; Reay et al. 2007; Sveinsson 2009; and see Chapter Two for a discussion of 'white working-class'). So while New Labour expanded middle-class

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[58] In this way, the promotion of individual success was related to a promotion of white working-class loss, and the rejection of multiculturalism in the context of a super-diverse and deprived borough.

consumerist and educational values to a wider (predominantly middle-class) market (Henderson 2007, p.38), they did so in ways that represented a continuation of earlier forms of racialised condemnation of the working-class (Humphries 1981; Reay 2009; Willis 1977; see also Chapter Three of this thesis).

In Newham, these discourses were particularly pointed. High levels of deprivation and poverty, that could previously have been understood as structural and as the responsibly of the local authority, became equated with poverties of aspiration.

> In areas like Newham they always say the young people aren't going to achieve, they're not going to accede [attain] – the media and everyone else; quite often the parents. We're about creating high aspiration.
>
> Newham service provider

> In Newham there is a poverty of aspiration as to what [young people] want to succeed to. It's a mixture of real poverty where you are short of cash and access to opportunities. It can affect what they do with their social time, [their] education … So there is that side of poverty and there is also this poverty of aspiration.
>
> Newham service provider

Young people I worked with navigated and participated in these discourses. At school, in the youth club, at home and with each other, young people were confronted with the language of aspiration, which they translated on their own terms. Besa, Eva and Alma, all thirteen, had been born and brought up in Newham. I worked with then at the Albanian Youth Group. Their families were not particularly wealthy. Their fathers worked in trades and their mothers worked in family roles, small businesses, and as coordinators for the Group. Through their involvement in the Group, and under the influence of their parents, the young women had been brought up in an aspirational environment. The Albanian Youth Group, run by their mothers, embraced the aspirational third sector agenda. It ran the *Aiming High* programme (introduced above) and through a range of youth and community activities Besa, Eva and Alma took part, met with role models and were encouraged to take up mentors. Their free time was filled with curricular and extra-curricular activities. In all of these a positive approach to personal future success was impressed upon them, often defined against the localised risk of falling into crime, street life or underachievement.

This aspirational environment was gendered in ways informed by the intersection of neo-liberal post-feminism (McRobbie 2009) and an East London version of Albanian family values. The Albanian Youth Group the three young women belonged to largely comprised migrants from the north of Albania, who had moved to the south of the country to escape poverty; and then come to the UK via other European countries. This migration largely occurred after the 'pyramid crisis' – the collapse of a private savings scheme – in 1997 (Vullnetari 2007). As northern Albanians, their parents had more conservative outlooks than their southern counterparts and looked to maintain their version of traditional Albanian gender roles in London. The women, as the "carriers" of culture and education (Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Yuval-Davis et al. 1989), ran the Albanian Youth Group (King et al. 2006, p.419; Kostovicova and Prestreshi 2010). As preparation for their transition to these roles, the young women were protected and policed in ways that the young men weren't (King et al. 2003, p.58). Eva, for example, was picked up from school. However, at the same time that Eva's mother was concerned to bring her daughter up in accordance with a good Albanian way of living, she also wanted her to succeed in the aspirational mould, do well educationally and attend the best universities (Gillies 2007, p.7). This implied independence and economic freedom.

The young women also navigated this intersection. They aspired to do well at school and get well-paid jobs, and they spent considerable time talking about the kind of fashion objects they should consume to project this trajectory. They were proud to be at the borough's best schools, presented themselves as committed students and had their sights set on going to Oxford or Cambridge University, and on eventually becoming doctors. Of the three, Besa was less sure of her future in these specific terms, but nonetheless the three young women shared a broad aspirational horizon. While they might have been considered lower middle-class in social and economic terms, like other migrant groups before them (Connor et al. 2004; Dale et al. 2002; Drinkwater and Leslie 1998; Middleton et al. 2005; Modood 1997; Wakeling 2009) they had very middle-class aspirations, fomented in their families and in the Albanian Youth Group. They were versions of the "can-do girl" (Harris 2004, pp.16–25) – young women with independent futures who verified their citizenship and entitlement through education and wage-earning capacities (McRobbie 2009, p.2).

The young women's version of aspiration was negotiated against their understanding of low aspiration. This distinction started to be revealed through their analyses of a photography

project they had taken part in. The project was called *My View of London* and had involved them travelling to Kensington and Stratford (West and East London, respectively), photographing images of poverty and wealth. The Director of the Albanian Youth Group (Eva's mother) explained how the project had impacted profoundly on the young women, forcing them to think about the disparities of poverty and wealth in a global city. In a series of peer-to-peer photo elicitation interviews (discussed in Chapter One) they analysed the photos they had taken; why they had taken them; how they felt about it; and, what they had learnt from the process.
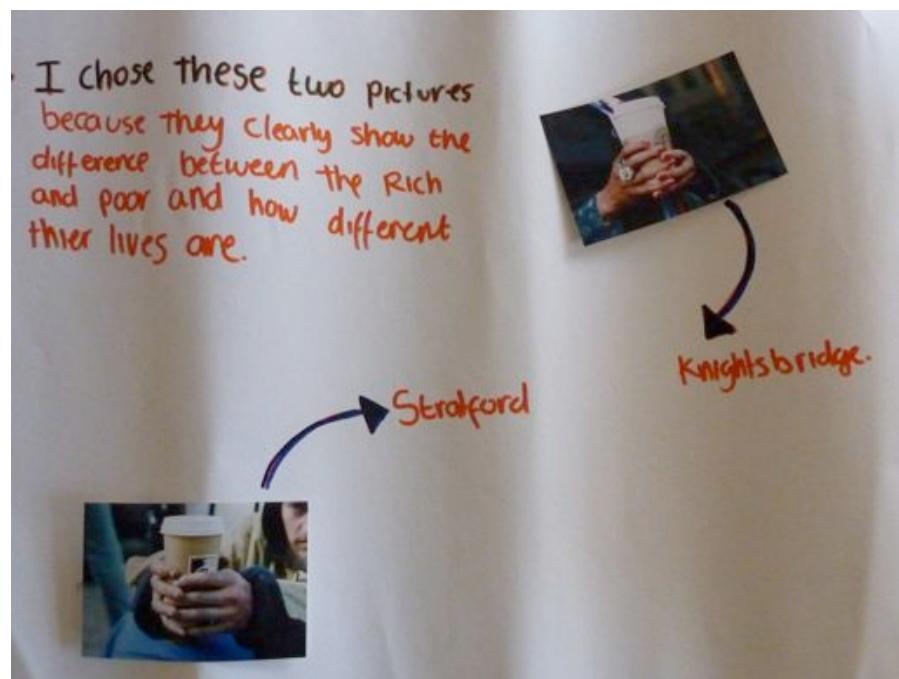
*Figure Fifteen: Photos analysed by Besa, Eva and Alma*
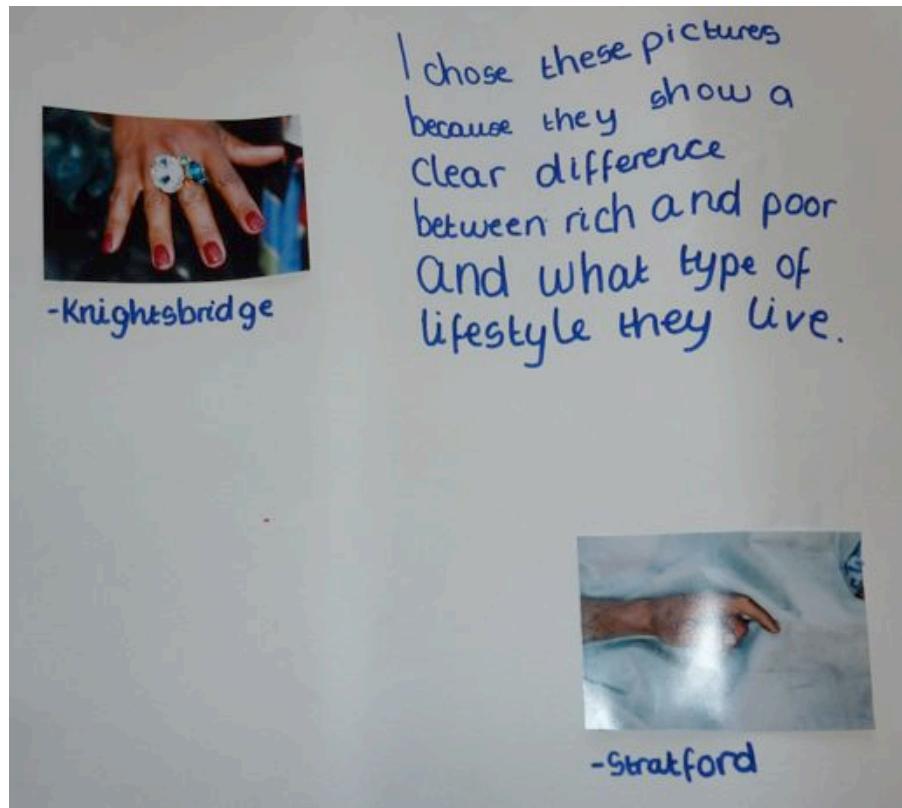
Figure Sixteen: Photos analysed by Besa, Eva and Alma

The interview transcripts and photo boards demonstrated, as the Director had suggested, how contrasts of poverty and wealth in Kensington and Stratford had impacted on them. However, in addition to demonstrating a concern for social inequality, the photos had invited a more personal analysis through which the young women projected their own utopias and dystopias. This is a transcript from one of the interviews:

> *Alma:* Describe each photo in as much detail as you can.
> *Eva:* In the first picture we saw a woman who had brought coffee from a shop. She had really expensive rings on. She had got her nails done and her hands were really clean and smooth. In the second picture we saw a homeless person who had probably been given this cup by someone.
> *Alma:* Why did you decide to take these photos?
> *Eva:* I decided to take these photos because they clearly show the difference between rich and poor and how different they are in the same area.
> *Alma:* How do you feel when you were taking the photos?
> *Eva:* When we were taking the photos of the homeless person, we felt quite sad for him because we have got homes and we have never experienced what it felt like to be homeless. It felt a bit sad. When we took the one [picture] of the rich person I felt 'I want to be like that when I grow up'. I don't want to be homeless.

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> *Alma:* What did you learn from taking the pictures that you didn't know before?
> *Eva:* I learn how different lives can be depending on the ways you choose it. If you carry on with your education you can be really rich and wealthy and have a good job in life but if you skip school and lessons you will end up homeless and you are going to be begging for your food.

In addition to addressing issues of social injustice, Eva read the images through her own aspirational horizon and the risks she associated with low aspiration. She equated the beauty and material wealth of the 'rich' women with her own ideal future and believed that attaining this was a matter of individual choice. The rich women's jewellery and skin was an image she desired. This was a version of femininity in which conformity to patriarchal codes of beauty was symbolic of success (McRobbie 2009, p.5). While Eva, Besa and Alma did not have the money to dress as the 'rich' women did, their clothes were carefully chosen, discussed and validated between them. They emulated, to the extent that it was financially possible, the image of upper middle-class chic. Scarves, jackets, hairstyles and leggings were all carefully coordinated. However, Eva did not project her horizons from the lofty position of someone who could not tangibly conceive of poverty; as stated, she was surrounded by stories, and realities, of low achievement.

The young women also projected their aspirations through parodies of Albanian-ness. These were forms of dis-identification (Skeggs 1997) – ways in which the young women distanced themselves from lower-class, less white social positions they were painfully close to. Locally Albanians were sometimes stereotyped for being rough, criminal and living on crowded estates, and anti-Albanian racism functioned along these lines (King et al. 2003, p.52). Aware of this, Besa, Eva and Alma sought to distance themselves from these positions. Besa's residence on one of Barking's 'Albanian estates' did not exclude her from this conversation. This negotiation of a whitened Albanian subjectivity allowed them to conform to the white ideal of aspiration discussed in the introduction to this chapter; it allowed them to imagine their entrance to the bastions of the white upper middle-class establishment – Oxford and Cambridge University – where 'ethnic hierarchies' have been consistently noted (Modood 2002, p.202; see also Modood 1993, 1998). This was not a disavowal of being Albanian. They were involved in the Albanian Youth Group (with the working-class Albanians they dis-

identified themselves from),[59] they spoke Albanian together and participated in a wide range of Albanian folk activities – dances, plays and Kosovo Independence Day. Rather, it was a distinction they made between themselves as can-do-girls and other less white Albanians with low aspirations.

These dis-identifications were further highlighted through a day's videoing that we undertook in Redbridge. I had borrowed two camcorders, and as part of a film project we decided to spend a few hours practising our filming and acting. The theme for the project was 'Where I live, What I want' and it was meant to critically document the sights, sounds and smells of the local area. Besian, an eighteen-year-old young man the young women had grown up with also participated. Filling the slow streets of Redbridge with muggings, 'hood rats' and 'chavs' over an afternoon, the four of them acted out, and filmed, parodies of urban working-class and multi-ethnic Britishness and working-class Albanian-ness.

Before going out onto the streets, Besian broke off a pre-film discussion to eat his BLT sandwich. Playing to the camera, Besian said "bacon, lettuce, tomato" imitating how their fathers or other less English (less white) Albanians might mispronounce the word 'bacon'. The three young women broke into hysterical laughter, recognising their fathers' accents, and then proceeded to say other words their fathers mispronounced. Joking about bad Albanian English, they affirmed themselves as higher status both in class and cultural terms. From here the young people moved out onto the street and what follows is a transcript put together from the video footage they recorded.

> *The young people start walking down a quiet suburban road, lined with cars and small blocks of 1970s terraced housing.*
>
> "Move out the way you street rat", Besa says to Alma as she tries to line up the first shot of Besian eating his BLT sandwich. "People eating on the road like normal; throwing litter on the ground; very, very busy roads", she continues. "In Dagenham it's quite clean though. There's just a few exceptions, like the young people."
>
> "Chavs", Besian corrects.

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[59] The young women were not performing Albanian identity as a means through which they attained social capital over 'less cultured' Albanians (see Reay et al. 2007 for the opposite argument).

Alma carries on, "This is the neighbourhood in Goodmayes. It's quite quiet. It's very clean. There's usually gangs around. They don't cause much trouble for the people living here though … as they said to us." As she narrates this she turns to shoot the four of us walking towards the camera, insinuating that we are the gang. "There's usually old couples around walking their dogs", she adds. Besian becomes an old person stooping forward and Alma confuses him with a 'chav'. "The hood rats", she says correcting herself. Besian puts his hood up and the girls laugh.

"Yeah, I'm a chav, I live in Goodmayes. There's an example of another chav". Besian points at Alma. "My yard bruv", he says. Imitating what he thinks is chav talk, he points to the house over the road. "Although I ain't got the keys. You get me?" He looks at the car next to us and the camera follows him. "That's my ride there. Vauxhall KE … Kosovo Injection. Cut, cut, cut."

I briefly take control of the camera with instructions from Alma. "It's very safe to cross the road", I say. On cue Besian runs across the road after Alma with his hood up. He is playing the chav-mugger. He grabs Alma and drags her down the pathway beside a house.

Besa, standing behind me, shouts "Mug her, mug her!" and laughs. "Sexual harassment!", briefly slipping out of the parody and acknowledging what the play is also making acceptable – bringing bodies into contact. Returning to the skit, she says, "I'd love it if the police come. Oh my days!"

Continuing the shoot we move down into a quieter residential cul-de-sac of red brick, three-bedroom, semi-detached houses. Besian takes control of the camera, "Yeah Dagenham, chavs walking about, like these three." Alma, Besa and Eva are further down the street. Alma runs across the road melodramatically screaming. He continues, "Look at this one there. She's mad."
Putting on her version of a chav voice and demeanour, Alma starts shouting and waving her arms up and down. "You got a problem?" she demands of Besa. "Talk to me then, hey!" At this she runs at Besa and the two start play fighting on the ground. "I hate you!" Alma shouts.

Besian continues, "Yeah Dagenham" before asking me to hold the camera. "I'm going in", he says, seeing an opportunity to interact with the girls. He helps Besa up off the floor and returning to his role of 'hood rat robber' demands "what you got for me?"

Besa laughs and also taking on Besian's character, she mocks, "You got p [money] for me blood? You got p for me blood?" Laughing, she explains "That's what everyone says at school to me, 'you got p for me blood'?"

Alma echoes the word "blood" and everyone laughs.

Alma, Besa, Eva and Besian used the parody of the working-class to define who they want to be vis-a-vis who they are not. The parody centred on the marauding presence of ill-mannered chavs and their father's inability to speak English as they did. Conglomerations of multi-ethnic working-class street culture ('chavs' and 'hood rats') and vernacular ('bruv' and 'blood') provided an allegory for their father's working-class status and Albanian-English accent. The forms of pollution evident in littering and the hood *rat's* anthropomorphisation, played into the Kosovo Injection car. The young people used humour, exaggeration, vulgarity, immorality and debased humanity to vilify through humour (Irvine 1993; Leach 2000; Legman 1975; Neu 2007). In this way, they dis-identified themselves from racialised and working-class forms of identity they were uncomfortably close to.

The figures they created in this sketch had real life corollaries. Jeton, a less regular participant at the Albanian Youth Group (who had also been involved in the project *My View of London*), was one such young person. Rather than photograph the rich and poor in Kensington and Stratford, he had decided to take photos of, among other things, what life was like in his corner of Newham. Jeton explained to me that his photo showed "the conditions we're living in in Newham". "It's like a ghetto. It's corrupt [in] some places", he said.

Figure Seventeen: Photo analysed by Jeton

For Jeton everyday life was about the "struggle", but for the young women this kind of attitude was evidence of low aspiration. So too was Jeton's demeanour and dress. He acted tough and uninterested; he wore dark loose jeans, trainers, a dark jumper and black Puffa body warmer, sometimes augmented by a grey beanie.[60] The aesthetics of this style and its relation to masculine strategies of living have been explored in Chapter Four. Jeton's style was similar to many of the young people I worked with. However, he was quite distinct from the young women. They said he was "chavvy". His dress, and attitude to life, was symbolic of being in the wrong crowd; that he was a trouble-maker rather than an educational achiever. To maintain this distinction, and thereby maintain their own future trajectories, the young women manœuvred their bodies to keep Jeton outside their social circle. They were reluctant to sit next to him, or work with him on projects. In addition, when he attempted to interact, through flirting, trying to make them laugh or initiating conversation, they showed no interest. It was not enough to be rude, but certainly enough to let him know that his advances were not reciprocated. He was thereby put in the odd position of being older, feeling he should be looked up to, that he should be sexually attractive, but at the same time remaining on the outside of the younger women's circle – a circle that sought to maintain their horizons. For the young women, Jeton was the wrong kind of Albanian. His perceived class location and his being not-white-enough was what they sought to avoid.

These forms of racialised and class distinctions, and their relation to aspirational futures, were not only understood through Jeton but also through their association with the built environment and with the recent and continuing development of Stratford Town. The forms of aspiration that are evident in education, youth service provision and in the young women's self-policing are also evident in the redevelopment of Stratford's industrial heritage. At the time I was working with them, the Olympic Park was under construction and cranes were dropping the final pieces of the Westfield shopping centre into place. "The city of consumption is an aspirational city" (Miles 2010, p.5), and Westfield (one of Europe's largest shopping centres) and the Olympic Development (2012's global consumption epicentre) optimised this message. These highly securitised developments have been designed as inward-looking temples of consumption. Bringing chemical highs to post-industrial deprivation, they were built for the aspirational classes. At Westfield this was later verified by the prices of the items on sale and the overzealous security guards turning away sports-clothed teens at the door

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[60] A 'beanie' is a round knitted or woven close-fitting hat.

(practices of criminalisation are discussed in Chapters Three and Four). However, for the young women, these aspirational structures and ideals of public life were part of the whitened post-feminist future they had signed up to. These spaces of consumption had in many senses been built for them.

We visited Stratford just before Christmas 2009 as part of the project *Where I Live, What I Want.* It was the last stop for the day's filming. Having previously conducted some interviews at Queen Street Market, Newham, we decided to wrap up with a few concluding remarks outside the new entrance to the train station. I suggested that Eva, Besa and Alma shoot some footage of the skyline and make some final comments. They agreed. Having filmed the cranes, the artist's image of the completed Westfield (Figure Eighteen), and the new train station entrance, their conclusion was that the development of Stratford was a good thing and that the area was changing for the better. In their minds, not much else needed to be done. This sentiment was echoed when Besian cut the film together for a final edit. In between shots of the skyline he added a caption that read "Now here is a governmental plan of the future in progress", "Our area is already improving".

Confirmation of their relation to the aspirational city was again provided by a counterpoint – a figure of low aspiration encountered outside the old Stratford Shopping Centre. With Christmas approaching, a man wearing a Santa costume was collecting money at the door for charity. The young women decided to interview him. Initiating the interview, Eva asked what

This image '*Figure Eighteen: Artist's image of the finished Westfield Shopping Centre, Stratford 2009*' has been removed, as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

Figure Nineteen: Artist's image of the completed Olympic development, with Stratford visible in the top left of the picture (Constructing Excellence 2010)

he liked about the area. He was drunk, and said that he used to like the area but he didn't anymore, not since his friend died. For me, his story resonated with the memories of loss explored in Chapter Two, but the young women didn't pick up on this and pressed on, asking what he *didn't* like about the area. He got the question the wrong way round and said the new shops were good, he supposed. He didn't really seem to believe it. Maybe he was saying what he thought they wanted to hear. Eva reciprocated by indicating that she *did* think the development of the area was a positive thing. As we walked away from Santa, Eva and her friends, embarrassed, laughed at him. He was drunk and confused but more than that he was of a different time to them. He provided the post-industrial contrast to the aspiring architecture of the new Stratford Town.

2. Marginalised futures and poverties of aspiration

'Poverty of aspiration' was a well-used phrase at Leyham Youth Club. And while it had evidently been imported from the New Labour mantra, it was not contained by it. At Leyham Youth Club, 'poverty of aspiration' was used to address the individual shortcomings of young people and families seemingly unable or unwilling to project an aspirational future. However, along with phrases such as 'cannon fodder' and 'they don't see no future' it was also used to

address a wider range of working-class indictments of middle-class hegemony (Gillies 2007; Reay 2009; Skeggs 1997, 2004).

'Poverty of aspiration' was introduced to me in 2008 by the Chair of the organisation that managed Leyham Youth Club. Subsequently, while working there, I heard the phrase, or variations of it, on numerous occasions and often when youth workers were trying to work out why young people acted with apparent disregard for a successful future. Why don't they go to school? Why don't they aspire to jobs outside of the local area? Why do they remain unemployed or only work for low pay? Youth workers explained how they had made efforts to train young people in youth work, or had helped them apply for jobs, only to watch them drop out or not turn up to interviews. Narratives of these kinds were partly located in the aspirational politics of the youth service and partly in the more conservative and working-class notion of hard work and self-respect that some of the staff endorsed.

However, 'poverty of aspiration' was not the only language used to think about young people's reduced horizons. 'Cannon fodder' and 'they don't see no future' were two associated modes of analysis that blamed the structural foreclosure of young people's horizons on middle-class visions of success.

'Cannon fodder' imagined a future social death at the hands of consumer capitalism and education. Speaking from the perspective of a working-class mother with three fully grown children, Tessa, one of the youth workers, explained how working-class young people were failed at school, and then pushed into anti-social behaviour or poverty through the pressures of middle-class consumption. In terms of education, she related the story of her own son who had been stigmatised. He was intelligent, she said, but had ended up conforming to the stereotypes the teachers had of him. He was wrongly accused of hitting a boy and was suspended. His retaliation to this injustice was to find the boy and fulfil the accusation by hitting the boy for real in front of the staff. After being expelled from school, he had ended up in jail and now worked as a bouncer. Working with his fists was the only thing he had ever been really good at, Tessa said. Tessa was pained by the outcome but, accepting a Marxian analysis, was resigned that in the end working-class young men were destined to use their fists to compete in a middle-class society (Reay 2009, p.27). However, her analysis of middle-class hegemony did not end with education but extended more widely into an analysis of neo-liberal

capitalism and in particular New Labour's aspirational programmes for creating consumers. She explained how working-class children were left alone at home while parents worked double shifts just to be able to afford the latest phones and tracksuits. She talked about the spiralling debts of families who wanted to take their children on fashionable package holidays. Her conclusion was that a society structured through middle-class education and consumption was foreclosing working-class horizons. She acknowledged how aspiration and consumerism had become mainstream discourses of success, but noted that these horizons were open only to those with money and social capital.

Whereas 'cannon fodder' predicted a structural death at the hands of the consumer, 'they don't see no future' drew attention to the foreclosure of young people's horizons. It focused on how poor education, lack of jobs and post-industrial decline shut down young people's potential. Lynn, one of the youth workers at Leyham, explained:

> They've got to have some sort of future and at the moment they don't see
> no future. What would you see? You wouldn't see nothing would you?
> Where am I going to live? Where am I going to work?

In terms of employment, the youth workers recognised there was good reason for the young people to be pessimistic. The local job market had never really recovered from de-industrialisation. The perception was that small businesses were still closing down, and big youth employers like supermarkets were dubious about employing local young people. Other youth workers blamed politicians for successive failures to create employment in the local area. The Olympic 2012 site was under construction but, despite promises, apprenticeships had not been forthcoming. Westfield, one of Europe's largest shopping centres, had also been constructed, and again no apprenticeships. This fed into a history of lost opportunities. For three generations, the futures of young people had been taken away and nothing had replaced them. "There was a trade mentality in this area," Neil told me. "It's a working-class area with the docks and things like that. So there would be trade aspiration [here]", he continued. "You won't find many people going to university. You know, not out of our little crew."

Young people did not discuss their futures in terms of 'aspiration' and 'poverty of aspiration' but this did not mean that they didn't understand or self-police through these discourses. Indeed, they were often required to account for themselves in this way and unfortunately it

was occasionally my middle-class location that made this necessary. One evening Josie and I were chatting in the back room and I used the word 'diss'. I was trying to explain the content of the YouTube posting by Bashy called 'Fuck Wiley' in which Bashy 'disses' Wiley. Josie laughed. "You're so funny, Malcolm," she said. She hadn't heard the word 'diss' for a long time. I asked what it should be, and she said 'cussed', 'hotted' or 'murked'. My language showed up my limited overlap with Josie's speech genre (Bakhtin 1986a). However, it wasn't just wordplay. Later that evening we continued chatting. It was a rambling, humorous conversation in the back room. As stories played out, young people and staff made jokes and wound each other up (see Chapter Three for a detailed discussion of wind-ups). Feeling part of the moment, I chipped in. The wind-up was aimed at Josie and continued our earlier banter. The conversation had moved on to talk of getting a job and when she said there weren't many opportunities in the local area, I said that she was stating the obvious. I said it sarcastically. Although it doesn't sound funny now, I expected her to laugh, retort and continue the game. But it fell flat and she responded seriously by telling me I was "thick". Not wanting to give up, and failing to recognise what I had just done, I retorted that being thick was what they taught you at university. She didn't find that funny either.

She didn't find it funny because I had asserted my class privilege. I had mocked her unwillingness to look for a job outside the area. And in this way I had flexed my labour market mobility, not to mention my age privilege, onto what she was finding a very limited horizon of opportunity. My second joke about 'university making you more stupid' was intended as a wry observation on 'the more you learn the less you know'. However, she took it as sarcasm and thought I was asserting my educational superiority over her, which was also a statement of her failure. In order for middle-class children to succeed, working-class children have to fail (Gillies 2007, p.77). Of course the joke was also highly elitist. It was predicated on having access, or being able to project access, to the higher education experience. She, and the vast majority of her friends, were not considering A-levels let alone higher education. She was all too familiar with the box I was unintentionally putting her in. She often told me she was thick, not because she was, but her contact with the education system had led her to believe it. Along with her friends who were similarly positioned, she was the young person in the corridor when she should have been in class. All in all, this confused exchange demonstrated how I inescapably existed as a middle-class and aspirational figure in the youth club. And it also showed how this coincided with Josie self-policing her own foreclosed horizon.

Discourses on aspiration placed an onus on education, professionalisation and consumption. And those not able to imagine their future on those terms were dubbed as having a 'poverty of aspiration'. However, while young people I worked with lived these discourses in 'bad faith' (Sartre 1969), they nonetheless explained their foreclosed futures through stories of education and employment. Among the young people at Leyham there wasn't a great deal of onus placed on education. Lots of them skipped school, choosing instead to spend fine days in the park. A few had also been excluded. Mickey, a young woman aged fourteen, had been kicked out for alleged ABH (Actual Bodily Harm) on a girl two years older than her. She was readmitted six months later. In the intervening period she told me with an uncertain pride (not sure how I would respond) how she had spent her free time drinking, sleeping and smoking. Another young woman had been excluded for assaulting her teacher. Of those who stayed in school until age sixteen, the majority, like Josie, didn't see themselves as educationally adept. Scoring a C at GCSE was something of a rarity, and a mixture of surprise, pride, shock and respect accompanied the revelation. This wasn't, of course, because there was a concentration of stupidity around Leyham, but rather, as earlier studies on education have shown (Humphries 1981; Willis 1977), the working-class young people at the youth club had been designed out of the system.

The reason for this approach to education was complicated. In some cases, the young people had difficult family lives, violent homes, lived in poverty, and were stigmatised at school. Some had learning difficulties that were not being adequately addressed. Some wanted to support their families financially by starting to work, instead of going to university. Others couldn't contemplate getting into the kinds of debt that an undergraduate degree entails (Connor et al. 2004; Woodrow et al. 2002). In addition to this, some young people didn't opt for educational attainment because they realised they could better gain recognition from their peers by protesting against the system that oppressed them – through breaking rules and performing disorder (Thomson 2010, p.27; see also Chapters Three and Four). These factors led to 'challenging behaviours' that did not fit with the educational ethos. As explained to me by Ryan, one of the youth workers, "the teachers are only interested in those who want to learn. Those who don't are left to it." In an education system with limited resources and orientated to middle-class success they were written off.

Some of the young people I worked with at Leyham were post-sixteen and had left education. Only Samantha was thinking about university. As supported by other research on young people not in full-time or part-time education (Middleton et al. 2005, p.23), most wanted paid employment but only a minority had obtained it. One young man was working as a builder's labourer, one worked in a supermarket, and one was training to be a fireman. Along with 53.9 per cent of young people in the borough aged 16–24 (LBN 2010b, p.44), most were struggling to find employment. Kylie had been one of those young people – expelled from the local school, sent to a Pupil Referral Unit and having not taken her GCSEs. Without GCSEs she had struggled to get a job, even at McDonald's. After years of unemployment she had finally got work with the local Council in recycling. Like her peers, Kylie dreamt of a mainstream future, not one that was nihilistic or criminal. She wanted to leave the bad memories of Leyham behind and move to Harlow "where there are green fields," she said. She wanted to retake her GCSEs and become a social worker, but at the same time she recognised the deck had been stacked against her.

The remainder of the young people bounced between unemployment and various, often unrelated, college courses.[61] In between, they hung out at home, waiting to meet up with their friends in the evening. They did the courses because there were no jobs. Most said they wanted jobs, to get some money and buy a house or car, and some wanted to move "up town" and be closer to the consumer nightlife they enjoyed. Their horizons were configured through ideas of independence and consumption but they did not imagine a long-term and prosperous future. Their to-come was much more precarious (Gillies 2007, p.146). There was always a significant dose of uncertainty when discussing the work they might like to take on. Popular options were nursery nurses, youth workers, teaching assistants, builders' labourers or office administrators. Some wanted to follow a career they enjoyed but were limited by financial reality. Dave, who made use of family networks to find work as a builder's labourer, said that he would really like to do something in sport, like coaching or physiotherapy. He said that he had started a course but it paid just twenty pounds a week. He could get a hundred pounds a week for labouring. The money offered him a degree of independence, and maybe the chance to buy a car. However, over a few months the novelty wore off and he reminisced with his

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[61] The 2008 borough figures for young people aged 16–18 not in education, employment or training was 7.7 per cent (LBN 2008).

friends about the fun they had had at school getting into trouble in the design technology class. I asked whether he might like to go back to sports science. He said he doubted it. He hated sitting in a classroom. "I get agitated," he said.

Just as the aspirational Albanian young women set up classed and racialised foils to provide themselves with mobility, the working-class young people at Leyham also explained their experiences of labour market marginality through racialised and classed distinctions that gave them a way of rationalising their social positions. Autochthony (explored in Chapter Two) became a means of explaining how they were disenfranchised and how their working-class work ethnic had been devalued. While a class analysis would have provided an insight into their educational and economic disenfranchisement, similar to the experience of many recent migrants to the area, they instead equated their precariousness with immigration and the illegitimate gains of newcomers. Dave, a few months into his labouring job, had got over the novelty of getting paid and was now acquainted with the tiring, physical reality of building work. He explained:

> *Me:* What jobs did your Grandparents do? Do you remember?
> *Dave:* My Dad's Dad did what my Dad does, did do before he had his accident – building and that, any job, labouring and that. I think my other Granddad was in the army and my Nan used to do cleaning and that.
> *Me:* Do you think there is a lot of migration around here, a lot of migration in the area?
> *Dave:* Yeah
> *Me:* Is that more or less since you were little? Or the same?
> *Dave:* It's got worse. People from different countries and that.
> *Me:* Yeah?
> *Dave:* It's got worse.
> *Me:* In what way?
> *Dave:* A lot of the Polish and Lithuanians have come over and like own most of the shops on the Barking Road now and there is always trouble. They always come out fighting. A man come out of the pub, didn't do no wrong and they beat him and they broke his legs and jaw and put him in a bad way. It's all different people in their different groups and people see them as threats really.
> *Me:* So what are the new main groups? You said Lithuanians, Poles. Are they the main ones?
> *Dave:* You get Somalians, you get some Chinese ones. You get all different. The more I think the Russian, Polish … They come over.
> *Me:* Do you think it's good, it's bad, or you don't care?
> *Dave:* I don't think it's really good that they come over and they get everything given to them and people here are struggling and that, and they can't get fuck all off anyone. And they come over and get everything. Down

that road there's Ukrainians who's lived here for six years now. They own shops, big X5 Jeeps and I think it's all given to them really. Some do work hard for their money but some, they are into dirty business.
Me: And if they work hard for the money that's good?
Dave: If they are working hard for the money [that's fair enough].
Me: Is it that a lot of people have a hard life around here so when they see people driving these big Jeeps …
Dave: Not so much. People are not struggling like. They have to work hard for their money, every day working hard, to earn the money. They [immigrants] come over here, get everything paid for and that. It annoys people and winds them up.

In addition to discussions of education and employment young people also made sense of their futures through forms of consumption and cultural production. Just as the aspirational young women understood their futures through the ability to desire objects and body images, marginalised young people articulated their futures through attaining goods. However, whereas the politics of aspiration deems the young women's consumption patterns normal, marginalised young people's choices are often considered "disordered" (Griffin 1997, p.16).

Kristen was about fourteen years old and had just started secondary school. She lived in a small property near the youth club with her mother and five brothers. The home was quite violent and her mother struggled financially to provide for them. Kristen had difficulties communicating with people. She was often withdrawn and would occasionally demand attention through sporadic outbursts. I had got to know her through making the video for *Leyham Dances* (see Chapter Four). Kristen didn't trust people very easily but through the filming process we started to have occasional conversations, when it suited her. Just after Christmas 2008 she came over to talk to me. I asked how her Christmas was. She didn't say whether she enjoyed it, but reeled off a list of presents she had been given: some tracksuits – one Adidas one that was too big and a McKenzie one that she was wearing but had 'scuffed up'. She had got it muddy playing on the adventure playground. Her family paid attention to consumer goods at Christmas and birthdays beyond their financial means. The McKenzie tracksuit had a hood and a zip that went all the way from the waistband to the top of the hood. When zipped up fully it completely covered her face. I asked, jokingly, if I could zip it up. She looked at me to gauge my intentions and said I could, if I promised to undo it. This was a test of trust. But she didn't completely trust me. She decided to zip it up herself but not all the way, leaving just enough space for her eyes to peek out. And then she acted out a street robbery. Changing into what she thought was a threatening posture she demanded I give her

my money. I unzipped her face and the performance ended. She told me with bravado, but no irony, that she was going to be a street robber when she grew up. Then she walked off.

Kristen's act was evidently a performance of nihilist aesthetics (see Chapter Four), but a number of things struck me about her actions. Kristen's tracksuit showed how young people from poor families were obliged to participate in forms of consumption they could ill afford, just to keep up. Christmas for Kristen, as for many other people, impressed on her the need for money. In this way, Kristen's horizons were being formed though her experience of marginalisation from the consumer dream. However, her performance of a criminal future was not an indication of a future vocation but a means of making sense of her frustrations (as a strategy for living) in a wider society in which anti-sociability and money were valued (see Chapter Four). However, this was also a very personal act of subterfuge. At the same time she was performing nihilism she was escaping her own shyness. Hidden in her hood, the act offered relief.

3. The negative politics of the future: *Time is Up* and *Home Town Glory*

This chapter has explored negotiations of aspirational and marginalised futures. It has explained how aspirational and marginalised young people projected their futures through forms of dis-identification and through their marginalisation from the dominant education–employment–consumption trajectory. However, it has not engaged with how young people envisaged horizons alternative to these scenarios. Alternative horizons have been largely absent in ethnography because cultural production as a vehicle for future analysis has been undervalued. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, ethnography has tended to focus on the pasts or presents understood from subjective and interpretive standpoints. In the first two sections of the chapter, these kinds of analyses have been employed to provide insight into young people's projections of aspirational and marginalised futures. However, to move beyond these binary positions it is necessary to release the analysis from the constraints of experience and interpretation and open it up to transcendental futures that travel beyond the phenomenologist's subject-centred body.

Whereas approaches of this kind are not common to ethnography, in work spanning over a century, many authors and artists in the afro-futurist tradition have been involved precisely in this kind of endeavour. Specifically, they have sought to project a vision of the future free from race and therefore free from the (racialised) body. At the same time they have expanded the methodological possibilities for understanding the future by placing the emphasis of analysis not on the constraints of subjective and interpretive experience (Chapter One considers how phenomenology is considered to be epistemologically complicit in maintaining racism), but on the possibilities of transcendental movements. Through the analysis of music and screams, they have engaged with the transcendental cry for freedom as a vehicle of cultural analysis in which a vision of another possible world is carried (Du Bois 2007, pp.8–9; Ellison 1995, 2001; Eshun 1998, 2003; Fanon 1991; Gilroy 1993, p.47; Gilroy 2000, pp.341–343; Mayer 2000; Moten 2003; Wright 1964; Yaszek 2006). However, in more recent times, authors working in this field have also argued that this utopian tradition in black politics has been in decline. Through the rise in commodification and an accompanying return to the racialised body (explored through discussions of nihilism in Chapter Four), a shift from the transcendental to the immanent has been observed (Gilroy 2000; Gilroy 2010a). While they do not argue for the end of radical and anti-racist forms of humanity (Gilroy 2004), they nonetheless reflect more popular narratives concerning the demise of utopias and the concurrent foreclosure of young people's horizons. At Leyham Youth Club, Ryan, one of the youth workers, noted this sentiment:

> I think they [young black men] are looking at rappers. There [are] no positive role models no more. The sad thing is, it is a lot of young black kids that are getting involved in that. Back in the day we [black people] had people we looked up to like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, and even down to the Black Panthers and Blood and Crips. And even Blood and Crips when they first started they was actually a movement until … They thought we have got freedom in America now what can we do. There [are] no positive role models. The role models they look at are rappers. They don't look at politicians. They look at rappers. There are black politicians but they don't look at black politicians, they look at black rappers talking about guns and whatever and they want to be like that.

This section, however, argues that the politics of alternative futures have not ended. While (as explored in Chapter Four) young people's cultural productions used nihilistic aesthetics centred on the body, and while they relied on commercial tropes for communication, their productions still carried alternative horizons.

To make this argument, the section develops the analysis of *Kill all a Dem* contained in Chapter Four. Chapter Four argued that *Kill all a Dem,* at the same time as being a performance of nihilist aesthetics, was a vehicle through which young people reflected on their marginalisation and considered the injustices they confronted. It explored how the video made a constant enquiry into technologies of surveillance and policing and how it addressed the injustices of criminalisation and anti-social relations. It argued that rather than be viewed as apolitical nihilism, Upcoming Movement's work should be viewed as politically negative (Halberstam 2008) – because of their use of nihilist aesthetics, but also because they critiqued oppression rather than providing avenues for emancipation. Whereas the politics of *Kill all a Dem* are somewhat opaque, this section demonstrates how, when considered in dialogue with Upcoming Movement's two subsequent works – *Time is Up* and *Home Town Glory* – they become explicit. In dialogue with these works, *Kill all a Dem* becomes not only a reflexive engagement with marginalisation but also part of a trajectory of work that negatively explores alternative futures beyond marginalised horizons. The remainder of this chapter explores these alternative and politically negative futures. It demonstrates how through an appreciation of these it is possible to understand how cultural productions confront and look beyond the contradictions of capitalist society (loneliness, exclusions and injustices) (Lipsitz 1994, p.25), creating alternative scenarios for the to-come.

Time is Up and *Home Town Glory* followed the release of *Kill all a Dem*. As with the former production, they were hosted on the group's YouTube channel which by March 2012 had twenty subscribers and 12,000 views. *Time is Up* is a three-and-a-half minute, colour video that was uploaded to the site in December 2011. It articulates an alternative horizon by directly acknowledging the marginalised futures against which Upcoming Movement work. The full lyrics of the track are as follows:

> ### *Time is Up* – Upcoming Movement (2011c)
>
> *Intro: Piano and synth*
>
> **Verse one**
> I lied though, I been hot with a Biro,
> They say I'm blind,
> I go in with my eyes closed,
> I ain't saying I'm the best but nothing like the rest,

But I'm consistent, so you know that I try bro'.

So many haters wanna see me fall off,
But I'm not at the top yet so I carry on climbing,
I never stopped my work rate,
You'll always see me writing,
Skateboarder life, I'm on the curb and I'm grinding.

I don't wish no death upon a hater,
I wanna move to … so all I see is paper [money],
Sooner or later, I'll be the saviour,
If you don't see it, go to Specsavers,
God forgive for the sins I have made,
I'm asking for one chance, so I can make a change,
I'm asking for the health of my family and friends,
And for you to look out for them if I went away.

Chorus
My haters want to bring me down,
They all want to see me fail,
But I'ma carry on grinding 'til my time is up,
Until my time is up,
Until my time is up,
Until my time is up.

My haters want to bring me down,
They all want to see me fail,
But I'ma carry on grinding 'til my time is up,
Until my time is up,
Until my time is up,
Until my time is up.

Verse two
I want to take you back to the future,
When I born it was the only time you ever see a shooter,
And nowadays it's like everybody's strapped up [armed],
And I was kinda rolling round and thinking that I should'a.

But for now I'ma carry on grinding,
Until my time's up and the light'll be blinding,
I'll never get it back,
It's like I'm left in the dark,
I wanna make face so I'll carry on trying.

Through the rain, from the lightning, whatever the weather,
I'm keep barring [rapping], cos barring is my pleasure,
People criticise but I make it constructive,
Cos constructive criticism only makes you better.

It lets you know your down sides,

But keep your chin up cos there's a plus to every downside,
Negative images of confused individuals,
That always want to swing but they never let it slide.

Never

Until my time is up
Until my time is up
Until my time is up

Chorus
My haters want to bring me down,
They all want to see me fail,
But I'ma carry on grinding 'til my time is up,
Until my time is up,
Until my time is up,
Until my time is up.

My haters want to bring me down,
They all want to see me fail,
But I'ma carry on grinding 'til my time is up,
Until my time is up,
Until my time is up,
Until my time is up.

Time is Up extends the analysis contained in *Kill all a Dem* to a more direct engagement with foreclosed horizons. The discussion of getting involved in gun crime, and the decision to look beyond it to another form of life – 'grinding' – represents an evaluation of, and departure from, the anti-sociability of *Kill all a Dem*. It demonstrates how political consciousness was formed through the group's engagement with the aesthetics of nihilism and anti-sociability. *Time is Up,* as the title suggests, is a work imagined against the limits of life. The production starts with a melancholic, slow piano introduction reminiscent of a slowed-down happy hardcore melody. This is accompanied by shots of the night's skyline: Canary Wharf and the Millennium Dome from the north bank of the Thames. The track tells the story of a continual confrontation with hardships, and the necessity of grinding out time until death comes. Death, not life, is used as the limit of the artists' horizons. "I'm gonna keep grinding, until my time is up", Kempy states. This meditation leads the artists to bring in references to God who plays the role of a greater wisdom, a judge, and a protector of friends and family, once the young men are dead. However, God does not provide salvation and hope, rather a yardstick through which they understand the grind.

The grind is presented by the artists as an alternative to involvement with gun crime and the darker sides of Newham life. This is a movement away from the celebration of crime that are contained in the nihilist aesthetics of *Kill all a Dem*. It is also a marked change from the three aspirational young women's vision of education, professionalisation and consumption. For Kempy and Stevo there are no such possibilities. Theirs is a "Skateboarder life, I'm on the curb and I'm grinding." Pleasure then comes to them not though the expectation of consumption but through the hard work and reward brought by leisure: "barring [rapping], cos barring is my pleasure." The young men profess to find solace from marginalisation in the working-class masculine endeavour of grinding out a life and writing hip hop. However, this is not simply conformity to oppression, rather a process through which the young men critically evaluate their lot, and provide strategies for negotiating their futures.

This is a particularly working-class, masculine understanding of the future. Hard work, sweat and labour are valued by Upcoming Movement as worthwhile and moral in the landscape of limited opportunities. However, their masculinity also informs their vision of the future. As has been discussed in Chapter Three, criminalisation and discourses of failure are often aimed at
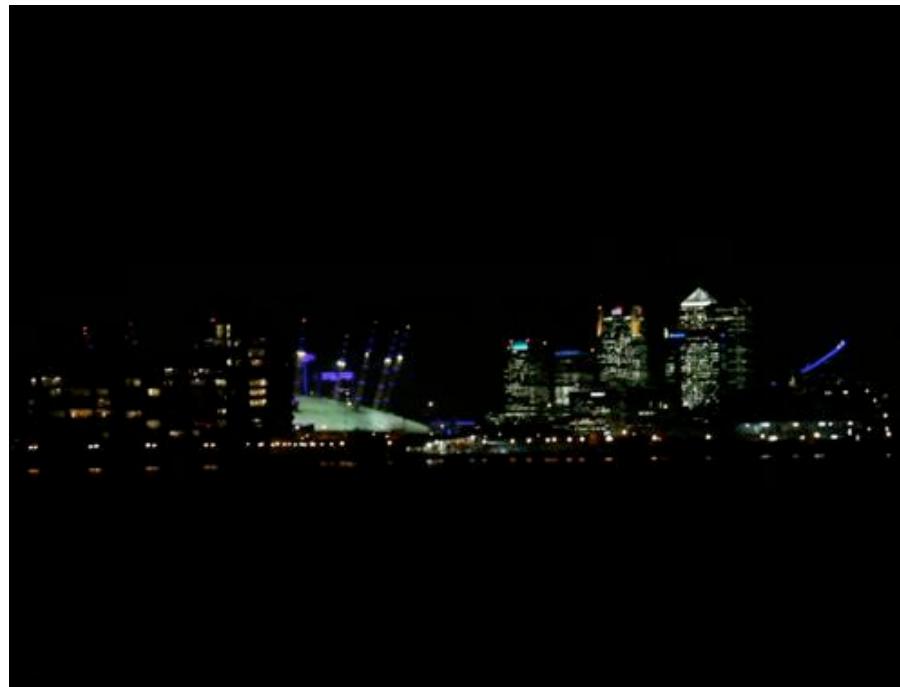
Figure Twenty: Still from 'Time is Up' – Canary Wharf and Millennium Dome at night from Newham (Ice Films Entertainment et al. 2011c)

working-class young men. Their wider projection of uncertainty and foreclosure can, then, be seen as symptomatic of a gendered aspirational politics from which they have been excluded.

This negative positioning is present in the video's imagery. The video was shot against the night's skyline – the Millennium Dome and the Canary Wharf (Figure Twenty). These buildings do not appear as part of a wealthy aspirational future, or as they do in Shystie's video for *Ima Boss* (2011) as a nihilistic celebration of money (also one of the themes of *Kill all a Dem*), but as an unobtainable mirage. *Time is Up*, then, offers the image of a future conditioned by marginality.

The second video, *Home Town Glory* takes this analysis a step further. It fills out the everyday experience of the grind, and its relation to death, with a detailed discussion of social injustices. *Home Town Glory* demonstrates how the group's enquiry into the politics of public space (in *Kill all a Dem*) and the future (in *Time is Up*) led to a political analysis of the curtailment of young people's horizons. As a form of negative futurity, this provides further evidence of thinking beyond marginalised horizons through the reflexive critiquing of capitalist contradictions. Again, while the group doesn't project a utopia, and in this sense retains the negative politics that characterises their work, they question the legitimacy of the horizons on offer.

Home Town Glory is a five-and-a-half minute colour video uploaded to YouTube in January 2012. Again the introduction is a melancholy and reflective piano riff, interspersed with a happy hardcore style of vocals – reminiscent of Babylon Zoo's *Spaceman* (1995). The riff is accompanied by shots of the local geography locating the production in Newham. Again, Canary Wharf occasionally provides a backdrop.

***Home Town Glory* – UpComing Movement (2012)**[62]

Piano and vocal intro

Verse one
Let me tell you know I'm feeling now,
Staring at the clouds got me feeling down,
Ever see ya guy turn snake [grass] for some skrilla [money],
You rub ya eyes and make sure that you ain't dreaming, fam' [family].

Evil brutality, money is the root of it,
Now take away but guys are on the strip moving through this shit,
Back then that was my way to get some profit,
But I changed my way,
Life's a bitch, it fucks you if you're rude to it.

Government want youths on the warfront,
So the country can get some better income,
Why fight for the country that don't want us,
Tell me what's ya […],

In this kingdom pigs [police] want to lock you up and throw away the key,
That little bit of p [cash/earnings],
We pay tax to the Queen,
Got caught in the cell cos I was trying to move some weed,
It's what the government does that makes us live the life we lead. One.

Chorus (sampled)

Verse two
Life come easy when I was just a kid,
Now I'm sitting back thinking why's it gone shit,
I never been the type of guy to rule the road,
I never told one person "come my postcode",

If the beef [trouble] gets messy nowadays,
People think it's right but they can't even fist fight,
And they think it's nice, suck ya mutha twice,
Then ya mutha lies and tells you it's gonna be alright.

When we all know for a fact that it won't,
Manor in ya north ratatat with no phone,
Kids snorting snow [cocaine] when […],
Everybody's out for the doe [money], no joke.

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[62] *Home Town Glory* shares some rhythmic and subject matter similarities with Lowkey's second album *Soundtrack to the Struggle* (2011).

Then we sit back and cotch [relax],
Watching the kids with the sticks in their socks,
What can I say?
The world's just changed,
I've lost all my mates,
We went separate ways.

Chorus (sampled)

Verse three
See I got glory for my home town,
Back in the endz [neighbourhood] I was ripping grey [postcode colours] for
N-Town,
But I'm about my music and my p [cask/earnings] now,
No turf wars, right path, I'm steering clear now.

Cos if you live by the roads, then you'll die by the roads,
Brain mashed. Getting taken over by Satan,
No body in the cemetery,
There left on the pavement,
Soul in the sky, shaking hands with the pagans [snakes/grasses/those with
no moral belonging].

So tell me how you can put the 'Great' in Britain,
The government took the 'Great' and the 'fake' into Britain,
They should pay attention to the words that I've written,
Should see the pain in the life that we're living.

Cos it's hard when you see a mother cry,
No money in her pocket and see her struggle by,
So you turn to the roads to put food on the table,
You can see why the crime is high,
There ain't no point in asking why.

Chorus (sampled)

The track marks the collective journey of Upcoming Movement since the release of *Kill all a Dem*. They note a conscious departure from the promotion of turf warfare, "Cos if you live by the roads, then you'll die by the roads". One of the protagonists acknowledges that he has never been comfortable with that way of life anyway. In this way, through their investigation of human detachment they have decided to live their lives beyond this form of anti-sociability. *Home Town Glory* bases its analysis on the horizons available to the young people. Like *Time is Up*, the artists allude to the existence of some higher authority that governs the rules and equilibrium of life and death – that define the future. The lyrics state "staring at the clouds got

me feeling down" and "Life's a bitch, it fucks you if you're rude to it." Unlike the aspirational young women, the future is not in their hands.

It also differs from the version of the future put forward in *Kill all a Dem*. *Kill all a Dem* focuses on a transition to adulthood – a schooling of the 'youngers' in the way of gangster life, the endpoint of which is part-time hustle and part-time leisure. *Home Town Glory* moves well beyond this to focus on the injustices of neo-liberal capitalism, war and the political class. It defines the structures and actors that foreclose their horizons. In particular, it identifies the problem of the individual pursuit of money in places like Newham where there is not enough wealth to go around. They note how mammon destroys trust and friendship: "Evil brutality, money is the root of it" and "Ever see ya guy turn snake [grass] for some skrilla [money]". Upcoming Movement reflect on how greed and consumption, central to advanced capitalism, are pernicious. Through this process of reflexive questioning the artists open up a space beyond their dystopias for a more convivial form of living they do not define.

Their critique of neo-liberal capitalism then extends into a discussion of criminalisation, imperialism and hierarchies of wealth and power. Kempy asks: "Government want youths on the warfront, so the country can get some better income / Why fight for the country that don't want us?" This examination of imperial greed draws on ideas of cannon fodder. This analysis of death and income, through war, and its connection to local marginalisation, is then extended by the artists into a series of observations on how young people like them, are trying to get by, in spite of the rich and powerful. They talk about the need to try and "move some weed" – a means of earning economically and acting against economic disenfranchisement, but they recognise the consequences of doing so are getting locked up. This is not *Kill all a Dem*'s celebration of crime, but crime as a means of getting by. In this way, they again note the circularity of the daily grind and how it is always frustrated by the presence of the police who want to "lock you up and throw away the key". This sense of frustration and injustice is then compounded by the knowledge that in spite of all this, they have to pay tax to the Queen – the epitome of wealth, power and class hierarchy.

This detailed analysis of foreclosed futures is prefigured in the context of continual local decline (discussed in Chapter Two). The artists discuss how the government has taken the "Great" out of Britain and put the "fake" into Britain. This can be seen as an extension of

autochthony and post-modern nostalgia as discussed in Chapter Two, but it is also an indictment of the failures of government with regard to working-class young people. They express their nostalgia for better ways of life through discussing their own childhoods and lamenting the violence they see in children around them. For these young men, children also provide reproductive vehicles for imagining curtailed future possibilities (Edelman 2004). However, while it is important to recall the presence of whiteness and loss in these narratives, it is also important to note the failure to mention the often ubiquitous explanatory variable 'immigration'. Instead, while their understanding of marginalisation is conditioned through a local history of hurt and foreclosed futures, they provided something approaching a socialist, not a xenophobic, analysis of imperial power and neo-liberal contradiction.

The account is also personal. The stories of limited possibilities are grounded in everyday experience. They discuss how poverty has affected their own families, and how their mother's lie "[that] everything is going to be alright" provides a weak anaesthetic to their understanding of what is to come. However, the analysis is not only for their own sakes. The production contains a wider solidarity with people in a similar position who do not have enough money to put food on the table. This culminates in a political message to those in power. Stevo demands that the government should acknowledge "the life that we're living" and the struggle they are going through. He makes the political assertion that this, rather than young people's poverty of aspiration, is the reason why crime is high.

While these productions do not put forward a horizon of freedom – as understood in afro-futurist texts introduced earlier[63] – they should not be discarded as a-futural or apolitical. Instead they are a negative politics of the future. These forms of futurity are based on the critique of marginalised horizons and the contradictions of neo-liberal society. They provide the basis from which alternative futures, and freedoms, are imaginable. Indeed, there is evidence that the artists have started working out these alternatives through the small ways in which they have modified their own lives so as not to conform to the dominant anti-sociability of capitalist society – rejecting profit and anti-sociability as ways of life. Implicit in this is a call to others to do the same.

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[63] See: Du Bois 2007, pp.8-9; Ellison 1995, 2001; Eshun 1998, 2003; Fanon 1991; Gilroy 1993, p.47; Gilroy 2000, pp.341-343; Mayer 2000; Moten 2003; Wright 1964; Yaszek 2006.

None of this is to say that the videos do not conform to other forms of oppression. The videos are heteronormative. They use the figure of the weak, defiled and sacred mother to make their case. This heteronormative impulse runs alongside an absence of analysis on the nostalgic politics of loss they engage with. Nonetheless, *Home Town Glory* and *Time is Up* are part of a reflexive political project extending from *Kill all a Dem*. In this project the artists question the marginalisation of their futures and the injustices which restrict their vision of the to-come. In this way, they provide alternative horizons not only for themselves but in solidarity with others. While these are not the utopias we had heard of, they nonetheless contain the transcendental cry for freedom albeit modified to a conjuncture of neo-liberal body politics.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how young people negotiated and self-policed their horizons through dominant discourses of 'aspiration' and 'poverty of aspiration', and how they produced alternative futures beyond this binary. The chapter has argued that New Labour's politics of aspiration created a system in which young people were made personally responsible for their own successes and failures. Aspiration was deemed a natural emotion and therefore people determined to have low aspirations were deemed unnatural. These ascriptions were racialised and classed. They were developed through a Eurocentric history of Hegelian progress – as white and middle-class futurity. This was simultaneously constituted through defining Hegelian futureless futures. At the level of the everyday, young people, marginalised from aspirational futures, self-policed through dominant discourses of their own future failure. These forms of self-policing related to their experience of marginalisation from the white middle-class educational–professional–consumer trajectory, but also to a history of loss in the local area. Running through these marginalised and aspirational futures were specific negotiations of race and gender. The aspirational young women worked out a version of post-feminine femininity at the same time that they negotiated Albanian gender roles. Through this process, they forged a whitened middle-class version of this femininity by dis-identifying themselves from working-class British and Albanian positionalities. The context for this was securing access to education and future consumption. The young men and women marginalised from these discourses also asserted their whiteness to secure their own precarious futures but did so through dis-identifying themselves from immigrants. However, at

the same time that young people negotiated aspirational and foreclosed horizons, they also produced alternative futures. These were not utopian but negative and political in character. Through a series of cultural productions they reflected on the injustice of their foreclosed horizons, became politically conscious, and opened up spaces for themselves with others to imagine alternative to-comes.

In the concluding chapter, I bring together the themes of multiculture, marginalisation and politics contained in this chapter and the rest of the thesis. Following a summary of the main arguments, the conclusion identifies the political imperative of continuing to engage with the themes, and restates its commitment to ethnography as a method which can address and engage politically with social injustices.

Conclusions and political endnotes

Leaving Leyham Youth Club was an emotional experience, distinct from the formalities at the After School Club and the slow drop-off at the Albanian Youth Group. I had become connected to the young people, youth workers and institution in a way I had not expected. This was partly accounted for by the hours I spent there – over twice as many as the other sites – and partly because of the relationships I had built, but also because of the in-depth, long-term associations the staff and young people had with each other, and with the area. However, my emotive departure was also a reaction to specific challenges facing the youth club in which I had become embroiled. Cutbacks in funding had propelled staff members into a firefight characterised by increasing attendance and reduced personnel and equipment. In an honest attempt to keep the youth club safe, a shift from governing through consent to governing through force had taken place. The police had become more closely involved, young people were arrested outside the gates and by the time I left a 'bouncer' had been hired. This employment of masculine force was resisted in kind by the young people, and youth workers were threatened and property stolen. Still needing their eight pounds an hour, some sessional youth workers discussed whether they should wear stab-vests or hide in the kitchen for the duration of the sessions. As the most physically imposing member of the staff team, and the one that the young people most respected, Will was called upon to step up, and in so doing he came to embody the new regime. As the downward turn continued he became the target of direct and indirect intimidation by some of the young people. When Will departed, his absence left the rest of us struggling or unwilling to substitute for his lost presence.

As these situations progressed, I started to consider how much longer I would stay. I had collected all the material I would ever be able to analyse in my remaining years on the PhD programme and most of the young people I had originally got to know had left, but at the same time I was reluctant to go. Then one afternoon, after another spate of trouble, I confirmed to Neil what I think he already knew. I had had enough. At this point, I had been at Leyham for two years, and while I had been there long enough to get emotionally involved, sociologically I was only scratching the surface.

For a time after I left, I was unable to escape the emotions I felt in those final days. The guilt at leaving, combined with the vulnerability I had felt, led me down fatalistic avenues. I was overwhelmed by the violence, anti-sociability and masculinisation of those departing moments. At the time, I fully understood the dominant coding of young people's actions as nihilistic because those were the conclusions I was drawing myself. It was only after going back over three years' ethnographic material – field notes, interviews and videos – and thinking more broadly about Leyham and the other youth clubs, that so many more sounds re-emerged. It was here, through allowing the ethnography to speak, that my immediate emotions were contextualised and the many other voices that comprised the ethnography re-surfaced.

These slowly emerging voices became grouped into the four substantive chapters I have presented. Chapter Two on 'whiteness, loss and diaspora mnemonics' developed from young people's connections to different pasts. It discussed how young people and youth workers traced pasts over other pasts, and what was at stake in this 'great time' of memory practice. Engaging with a theoretical framing that brought together collective (Halbwachs 1992; Ricœur 2004), diasporic (Gilroy 1993), dialogic (Bakhtin 1986b) and performative (tracing) (Bennett 2005; Derrida 1976; Spivak 1976) approaches to memory, it showed how those memory practices in contemporary Newham, being far from permanent or only based on a projection of the present, were part of a long history of tracing, renewing and suppressing memories.

Through a discussion of the migratory and cultural history of Newham, Chapter Two explored how the memory practices of Newham were not only based on the myths of a white homeland but also drew on wider diasporic and nostalgic formations. On this basis, it addressed the sociological, political and popular-culture investments in white East End terrains (Hill 1976; Hobbs 1988; Young and Willmott 1957) noting how these discourses, alongside a local and national re-emphasis on whiteness (Blue Labour 2012; Glasman 2011; Hodge 2007), had enjoyed a revival (Dench et al. 2006; Hobbs 2006), and how this revival could be understood as a combination of a melancholic conjuncture and a lack of prominent alternative accounts.

Engaging with 'autochthony' (Geschiere 2009; Moore 2008; Yuval-Davis 2012) – the concept of belonging to the earth – as a more malleable framing for practices of permanence in Outer East London, Chapter Two turned to the memory practices of youth workers and young people

to address how nostalgias made sense of loss, uncertainty and marginalisation. It discussed how in these memory practices, as in other studies (Banton 1955; Humphries 1981; Jones 1971; Richmond 1954), immigrants were blamed for decline. Moving deeper into these myths it explored how these discourses of white autochthonous belonging were not attached to white bodies but were floating signifiers (Hall 1996) that attained meaning through processes of 'becoming white' (Bonnett 2000; Newitz 1997; Roediger 2007; Wray 2006). It noted how these processes were taken up and remade by black, Asian, Irish, Romany and Canadian people I worked with. This did not imply that the memory practices of black and Asian youth workers were the same as their white counterparts, but it did show that while contemporary racism still ensured differentiation along axes of power, belonging and xenophobia were also open to appropriation and re-use across supposed racial boundaries.

The chapter ended with a discussion of how memories of phantom white homes silenced (Bakhtin 1986b; Nietzsche 1983) or forgot (Connerton 2009) other diasporic memories in Newham. In keeping with the conceptualisation of diaspora used throughout the thesis, diaspora mnemonics were explored through migration (Brah 1996) and through cultural flows (Gilroy 1993). The chapter demonstrated how diaspora mnemonics were constituent features of the borough. It addressed how other national nostalgias existed alongside autochthony. Moving beyond the nation and ethnic framing of memory it also showed how young people lived and shared other people's memories in ways that confused local and national hierarchies of belonging (Wemyss 2008). Through solidarities with refugees and migrants to the everyday dislocations of diaspora space, national hierarchies were disinvested. In this way, national memory practices became shared, playful and open rather than confrontational and ranked. The chapter also showed how diaspora mnemonics evident in the everyday practices of young people challenged the myths of the Golden Era and provided the basis to explore more genuinely diasporic ways of remembering.

Chapter Three developed this discussion of loss and whiteness through an analysis of criminalisation and territorial control in and around Leyham Youth Club. Framed through a concern for young people's freedom to use and produce public space (Berman 1986; Harvey 2008; Isin 2000; Kofman and Lebas 1996; Lefebvre 1996; Marcuse 2009; Merrifield 2011; Mitchell 1995; Soja 2010), the chapter drew attention to the multi-scale politics of territory in Newham (Harvey 1989a, 2000; Jonas 1994; Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996; Swyngedouw 1997,

2000; Thrift 1997). In this way, it demonstrated how national, local and institutional scales intersected to manage the heterogeneity of Leyham by policing and criminalising young people's use of public space (Berman 1986; Lefebvre 1996; Sennett 1993).

The chapter highlighted that while territory has been a recurring consideration in the study of young people (Alexander 2000; Back 1994; Robins 1992; Willmott 1969), it has less often (with the exception of Robins and Cohen 1978) addressed how the changing political geographies in and around the youth club relate to shifting forms of criminalisation and territorial governance in the local area. Engaging with masculine forms of territorial negotiation (Marston 2000; McDowell 1999; Pearson 1983; Rose 1993; Tonkiss 2006) and as part of a wider system of territorial control, it explored how whiteness and order (discussed in Chapter Two), blackness and chaos and other racialised associations of inside and outside fed into local territorial governance.

It also explored how these forms of criminalisation and order differed from what had come before. Through a discussion of partnership working and the roll-out of the welfare state (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Civil Renewal Unit 2004; HM Government 2003; Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002), the chapter revealed how the policing of the streets had entered the youth club, blurring older distinctions between disorder and order, and danger and safety. Developing this analysis it demonstrated how the cuts in public funding had exacerbated the influence of the police in the youth club, leading to greater criminalisation of young people. It also showed how these processes coincided with the development of Leyham as a neo-communitarian institution (Peck and Tickell 2002; Peck 2002; Purcell 2003; Swyngedouw 2000).

Building on the discussion of the roll-out of the welfare state, the chapter explored how the youth club's neo-communitarianism was constructed through the power provided to it as a decentralised moral governor of local territory. It addressed how Leyham Youth Club's neo-communitarianism was formed in conjunction with ideologies of disorder relating to memories and media images of chaotic young people and to ideas of order relating to autochthonous framings of belonging (explored in Chapter Two). It further addressed how these discursive formations of order and disorder were engrained through specific security and surveillance practices both at the perimeter and inside the youth club. As the real and metaphorical fences

went up, Leyham adopted the mentality of a fenced community constructing itself through its insecurities (Anzaldúa 2007; Blakely and Snyder 1999; Brown 2010; Low 2003; Rose and Miller 2008; Sennett 1993).

However, the chapter focused not only on the forms of criminalisation, social and territorial control enacted by the police and youth club, but also explored how young people resisted these practices. The chapter discussed how young people confronted the police, confused social and territorial order and showed solidarity against systems of criminalisation. While some of these forms of resistance merely confirmed the power of the police, others confused the biopolitics (Foucault 2003) and territorial order the police utilised to govern the local terrain.

Finally, the chapter also turned to the micro to address how young people and youth workers participated in the negotiation and governance of territory through forms of speech, banter and ridicule (Bakhtin 1984, Bakhtin 1986a; Butler 1997; Labov 1972; Robins and Cohen 1978; Smitherman 2007). Opening up the micro as a level of analysis revealed how the insides and outsides of territorial order were more dialogic than meso-level accounts revealed. Addressing the absence of the micro in discussions of political geographies, the chapter showed how the micro-sociological defining and re-making of friendship groups, abject bodies and racialised ideas of belonging and exclusion related to local and national scales of territorial politics but also to practices of sexuality and esteem. The discussion of the micro also enabled the chapter to explore how young people and youth workers alike were involved in constant practices of setting and transgressing regulations, and to see how this underlying vernacular could facilitate habitual equilibrium (Merleau-Ponty 1989) or the slow breakdown of order. Overall, in the context of the public spending cuts and the roll-out of the welfare state, the chapter showed at different scales how territorial un-freedoms were exacerbated as funding was reduced, policing was increased and practices of neo-communitarian protectionism and belonging were invested in. This implied an increasing criminalisation of young people but also an upturn in practices that sought to distinguish territory on racialised grounds.

Chapter Four explored how young people's cultural productions were condemned in dominant discourse and in the youth club as sold-out and nihilistic (Alexander 1996; Bauman 2011; Gilroy 1987, 1993, 2000; Hall et al. 1978; Hancox 2009; Jameson 1984; Jameson 1991; Kitwana 2002;

Lowkey 2012; Pearse and Taylor 2009; Starkey 2011) and how these delegitimising discourses silenced young people's acts of public communication (Calhoun 1992; Fraser 2007; Gilroy 1993; Habermas 1989; Negt and Kluge 1993). Through a discussion of David Starkey's response to the 2011 UK Riots (2011), it demonstrated how discourses of condemnation conflated previous panics of black and white working-class bodies to make sense of, and silence, the politics of London's public multiculture. Against this backdrop it showed how young people's use of commercialised hip hop and black cultural aesthetics was not only a vehicle for violence or mimicry but meaningful and political (Shusterman 1991). This was addressed through an analysis of the ways that young people used sold-out hip hop as strategies for living (Chambers 1976) and nihilist aesthetics as vehicles for reflecting on marginalisation and injustice.

Expanding the politics of scale in Chapter Three to an engagement with the diasporic, it explored how young people used the global aesthetics of nihilism in conjunction with local territorial and racial symbols. On this basis, it addressed the different virtual and physical sites at which this dialogue occurred, and the tension between performance and actual violence. This showed how new technologies were facilitating different kinds of communication and providing different sites of dialogue at which the bravado or reality of violence was performed and interpreted. However, it also considered how these often antagonistic communications were also part of the ethics of sharing that extended beyond the lines of racial and territorial hostility that the interlocutors drew in the sand. Thinking with the ethics of collaboration that characterise black diasporic cultural production (Gilroy 1993), and the traditions of racial terror with which they coexist (Banerjea and Barn 1996), the chapter presented these hostilities and convivialities (Gilroy 2004) as contemporary manifestations of the urban paradox (Back 1994).

Chapter Four also addressed the implication of performativity (Butler 1993; Gilroy 1993) in these works for authenticities associated with black cultural production, and black and white cultural fusion. The chapter showed how contemporary Newham could not be fully understood through earlier descriptions of black and white cultural syncretism or former assessments of authenticity and faking-it (Alexander 1996; Back 1994; Bennett 1999; Chambers 1976; Gilroy 1987, 1993, 2002; Hebdige 1979; Hewitt 1986; Jones 1988; Nayak 2003). Exploring the changing formations of cultural syncretism in Outer East London it addressed young people's performance of dance moves associated with black sexualised modes of being (Gilroy 2000; Harrison 2009; hooks 2004; Wilmer 2012). It noted how T-Pain's

misogyny (2009) was detached from its place of production and reformed through the gender politics and white habitual morality at Leyham Youth Club; and how the commercialised emancipatory politics (Robinson 2007) and slackness (Cooper 2004; Miller 1991; Noble 2000) of Missy Elliot (2005) were danced to alongside a track by K-Line (2010) which laid claim to a local white masculine terrain. In this way, while older forms of authenticity were broken down, new ones were rebuilt.

Whereas Chapter Two looked to the past, Chapter Five was oriented to the future. The chapter explored how young people have been central to dominant constructions of utopian and dystopian horizons (Edelman 2004; Giroux 1996; Harris 2004). However, the chapter noted that aside from risk (Bessant et al. 2003; Cairns and Cairns 1994; Kronick 1997; Newburn et al. 1999; Richman and Fraser 2001) and longitudinal analyses (Henderson 2007; Thomson 2009), young people's perspectives and cultural productions were absent from sociological discussions of the future. To respond to this, the chapter proposed combined hermeneutic (Alcoff 2006; Gadamer 1989; Heidegger 1962; Ricœur 1984) and afro-futurist (Du Bois 2007, Eshun 1998, 2003; Fanon 1991, Gilroy 2010a, Moten 2003) methodologies to address immanent and transcendental aspects of the 'to-come'.

Continuing the discussions of marginalisation in Chapters Three and Four, it showed how the politics of aspiration was part of a New Labour project that mapped out successful life-plan trajectories for young people as educated–professional–consumers (Brown 2007b; Dale et al. 2002; HM Government 2005a; HM Treasury and DCSF 2007; Kelly 2005; Raco 2009; Social Exclusion Task Force 2008). It discussed how these utopian discourses were middle-class and white and how they were set against discourses of working-class and not-white-enough underachievement (Haylett 2001; Preston 2009; Reay et al. 2007; Sinclair et al. 2010; Sveinsson 2009). Following a discussion of how these discourses were compounded in Newham because of the proximity to deprivation, the chapter explored how young people understood their futures through visions of aspiration or poverty of aspiration. Through a discussion of these dominant and foreclosed horizons, it showed how young people self-policed. Returning to address debates on the complexity of whiteness in Newham, the chapter specifically considered how a group of young Albanian-speaking women oriented themselves to a vision of middle-class white success – educated and independent young women with wage-earning capacities (McRobbie 2009) – through dis-identifying (Skeggs 1997) with futures

they saw as not white or middle-class enough. And it explained how this was done alongside navigating their roles as Albanian young women (King et al. 2006; Kostovicova and Prestreshi 2010; Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Yuval-Davis et al. 1989).

Chapter Five also discussed how young people self-policed through 'poverties of aspiration'. Returning to some of the debates covered in Chapter Two, the collective memories of working-class marginalisation were addressed (Gillies 2007; Reay 2009; Skeggs 1997, 2004). The chapter presented how these narratives were made sense of along the education– employment–consumer trajectory. Along this trajectory, through interactions with horizons of middle-class people and institutions, young people came to believe they were educationally inept, unemployable or suitable only for low-paid employment. Rationalising their difficulty in being successful on these terms some blamed recent immigrants for their difficulties and in this way established their own system of dis-identification based on whiteness and entitlement. These forms of self-policing existed alongside consumer desires. Many of these desires were mainstream – the desire to buy a car or a house – however, some were considered "disordered" in contrast to the consumption patterns of aspirational young women (Griffin 1997). Forms of 'disordered' consumption included the purchase of objects that fitted with the nihilist aesthetics explored in Chapter Four. In particular, the chapter discussed Kristen's acquisition of a hoodie with a full-face zip. This disordered consumer object and its nihilist aesthetics enabled Kristen to act out a robbery scenario. This was, in part, a performance of nihilism, as in Chapter Four, but it was also a projection of frustration at not being able to own the kinds of goods she was told to desire. Hidden in her hood, she had found a way to make sense of her own shyness.

As with other chapters, the argument ended by moving away from the binary positions of the dominant and dominated to consider the alternative horizons produced by the young people I worked with. Returning to the discussion of cultural production in Chapter Four, the chapter ended by showing how young people's cultural productions moved beyond their marginalisation to political evaluations of injustice and alternative horizons. Engaging with arguments that have highlighted the demise of utopias (Gilroy 2000), the chapter proposed that while the move to the body is evident in young people's cultural productions, this did not imply the end of alternative visions of the to-come. Through a discussion of Upcoming Movement's final two videos, Chapter Five explored how young people questioned their

marginalisation from the future and proposed alternative ways of living. While this didn't amount to the freedom cries of other times (Du Bois 2007, pp.8–9; Ellison 1995, 2001; Eshun 1998, 2003; Fanon 1991; Gilroy 1993, 2000; Mayer 2000; Moten 2003; Wright 1964; Yaszek 2006), and while it was oriented as a negative politics, it did keep alive the idea that another world is possible (Gilroy 2010a).

Through stories of young people's lives in Outer East London the thesis has explored multiculture, marginalisation and politics at a specific conjuncture. Returning to debates raised in the Introduction, it has developed sociological accounts of cultural syncretism and dialogue; it has investigated forms of order and disorder, futures and no futures; and it has addressed the strategies, resistances, subversions and reflexivities inherent in young people's practices and cultural productions.

These stories were all particular to the ethnographic context in which they were produced. Where the research was undertaken, who was involved, and when, provided its unique characteristics. The young people I worked with grew up in a place with a particular history. De-industrialisation, urban regeneration, economic stagnation and national romance coloured their lives in distinct ways, as did the consequences of cheap housing and 150 years of migration. All were the consequences of the borough's fringe location. The noxious industries, the docks; the shifts from 'slums' to tower blocks to reclaimed marshland housing; the Olympics, the Excel Centre; Westfield and New Stratford Town, were all part of their lives. These infrastructural and population changes instilled the normalcy of population churn in their collective imaginations. But these movements also existed in dialogic tension with the reconfiguration of belonging, territory, race and nationalism. All of these related to diasporic productions of culture. Hip hop's sold-out genres were taken, reconfigured and played back to make sense of loss, marginalisation, anti-sociability, racism and consumerism, at the same time as they reproduced ethics of sharing, friendship and creativity at global and local scales. The young people I worked with produced and navigated this contested landscape without slipping into existential angst, without falling off any social precipice and without conforming to simplistic narratives of chaos and conviviality. This was a place where exclusion lived together with an ethics of collaboration and where insecurity existed alongside solidarity.

The stories contained in this thesis were also produced at a specific ethnographic moment: 2007–2012 (from the first interviews with service providers to the last upload of Upcoming Movement) was an era of public spending cuts and limited employment opportunities. This affected the services available to young people and their ability to find work. It was also a time of increasing criminalisation and the replacement of youth service provision with policing. These increased hardships related to and were compounded by a series of moral panics around urban youth, including the 'Summer of Knife Crime' in 2008 and the 2011 UK Riots.

These stories could also not have been produced without the young people I worked with. Many accounts in this thesis are based on the lives of white young people at Leyham Youth Club, in addition to the voices of Asian, black, mixed, Latin American and Eastern European young people and youth workers from the same location. There are prominent engagements with the voices of young people from the Albanian Youth Club; with Eastern and Southern European young women; and Congolese, Kenyan, Guyanese, Ugandan and Black British younger and older men at the After School Club. These different voices have been juxtaposed to provide insights into the everyday multiculture of Newham. For example, debates on whiteness and class have been developed alongside the whitened aspirations of the Albanian-speaking young women and the diaspora mnemonics of the After School Club. However, the young people who have co-produced this thesis are far from defined by their ethnic or migratory histories. In addition to the ways in which they are racialised, their negotiations of class have been developed. Most of the young people who are heard in this thesis are working-class, and although some are middle-class, most were living in families with relatively low incomes. The thesis has also explored negotiations of gender and sexuality. However, in all chapters these forms of negotiation have been understood in the context of specific productions and politics that address and move beyond simplistic identity locations.

An attempt to keep close to the everyday lives of young people in Outer East London, and to understand them in the context of multiculture and diaspora, has required different ethnographic moves. While the thesis is grounded in an exploration of the experience, interpretation and performance of young people in Newham, it has needed to move temporally and spatially in scale, and through different vehicles of analysis, to respond to the research context. Chapters Two and Five, in different ways, have moved away from the now as a point of authentication, to consider the great time, temporal folds and horizons of Outer-

East End life. This has been taken on in Chapter Three through a long-term perspective on criminalisation, and through Chapter Four's consideration of diasporic trajectories and cultural flows. Chapter Three's shift between geographical scales has facilitated a more nuanced understanding of the politics of territory in and around Leyham Youth Club. Chapters Four and Five moved the vehicle of analysis from young people to their cultural productions. Holding the textual, the experiential and the performative in tension they opened up a different range of immanent, transcendent and diasporic possibilities for exploring politics, public communications and horizons that would not otherwise have been heard. This has also been a practical project. As addressed in Chapter One, the methodology employed responded to the fieldwork context. The range of methods used in this thesis reflected the dynamics of young people and the youth clubs. The thesis contains the analysis of dance and video projects because that it what the young people were interested in doing.

Political endnotes

However, this thesis would not be complete without a few political endnotes. At a conference in Birmingham, a few months before I submitted, a room of activists and academics asked me for 'the point' of my research. Concerned for the depoliticisation of sociology and ethnography as disciplines, they were asking after its political merit. Although the interrogation was straightforward enough, too much time in London's cultural studies lounge resulted in a less than convincing response. The encounter provided me with a timely reminder that social justice was the original motivation of the research. And indeed, while recognition of this commitment had become trapped under piles of ethnographic material and social theory, each chapter nonetheless has addressed forms of oppression and injustice. So while I maintain that this thesis is irreducible to a general argument on young people, it is important all the same to suggest how the analysis contained in these pages can help us think about wider issues to do with young people, multiculture, marginalisation and politics. The Introduction opened by setting out how the thesis fitted into these themes. Responding to my provocateurs, the Conclusion ends with a development of this framing and, based on the discussions conducted in this thesis, elaborates a set of statements on why it is important and necessary to continue this conversation.

Multiculture gone missing

As announced in the Introduction, while the analysis of urban multiculture is not new (Amin 2002; Back 1994; Bennett 1999; Gilroy 2000; Hall 2000; Hesse 2000; Hewitt 1986; Jones 1988; Nayak 2003; Sharma et al. 1996), over recent years it has received less ethnographic attention than it should have. At the same time the composition of society has not stood still. The forms of cultural syncretism evident in previous years now provide only a template and historical background for thinking about the formations of urban life today. Struggling between unfashionable Marxian paradigms, happy conviviality and black, brown and white coding of social life, we have entered a sociological void where the meanings and formations of young people's practices, productions and politics are passing us by.

However, while we are missing the trick, others are filling the gap. Undeterred by the unavailability of sociological frameworks or the fashions of the academy, conservative and white-supremacist analysts are putting together complex multicultural discourses to explain the moral corruption of urban youth (Starkey 2011). Others are turning to nostalgic accounts of post-war Britain (Dench et al. 2006; Hobbs 2006); replicating the commercially viable frameworks of community cohesion and contact theory (Cantle 2001; Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007; Institute of Community Cohesion 2008; Hewstone 2003; Mumford and Power 2003); or proposing whitened narratives of white working-class right, multicultural death and post-raciality (Goodhart 2004; Hodge 2007; Mirza 2010; Phillips 2005).

At a very modest level, this thesis has set out to address some of these shortcomings by attempting to listen to the sounds and rhythms of everyday life in Outer East London. To do this, it has explored different perspectives on the 'urban paradox' (Back 1994; Banerjea and Barn 1996; Gilroy 2004) – the existence of intense conviviality alongside conflict. Through developing notions of performance, citation and diaspora space (Gilroy 1993), the thesis has considered how the contemporary manifestations of the urban paradox are different but related to earlier discussions of this condition (Amin 2010; Butler 1993, 1997). It has demonstrated how these processes drew on the layered histories (Bakhtin 1986b; Benjamin 1968) of diaspora trajectories to make sense of local contexts (Gilroy 1993).

By these means the thesis has sought to engage with contemporary multiculture. Through discussions of nihilism (Chapter Four), it has explored how the racial and sexual content of US

hip hop videos (Gilroy 2000; hooks 2004) are translated into local framings for race and sexuality. This highlighted the openness and sharing of art across supposed national and racial boundaries (Gilroy 2000) but at the same time demonstrated how these local performances enacted new forms of racialised exclusion and sexual moralities, which opened up the black cultural codings of nihilism to a new multiethnic and multicultural landscape. It addressed how local territories were constructed through notions of belonging (see Chapters Two, Three and Four) and how these were superseded by forms of intense local collaboration and sharing. The outcomes of these collaborations were musical statements of territorial separation in addition to the continuation of artistic dialogue. These dialogues drew on the sold-out aesthetics of nihilism (Bauman 2011; Gilroy 2000; Jameson 1984; Jameson 1991; Kitwana 2002), but at the same time reworked these proclamations of black cultural anti-sociability to make sense of local slippages of race, nation and culture peculiar to the UK and peculiar to Newham. It explored how the sites of collaboration and conflict had shifted – from the LP record and the sound system clash (Back 1994; Gilroy 1987), to Bluetooth, mobile phones and YouTube. Finally, it addressed how these convivial and conflictive, diasporic and local, territorial politics were made sense of through the neo-liberal rescaling of space discussed in Chapter Three (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002; Swyngedouw 1997, 2000) and its associated formations of order and chaos, with which the nihilistic aesthetics became intertwined.

The globalisation of hip hop culture, the shifting of racial signifiers, the continual creativity of syncretic culture, and the shifts in global and local notions of territorialised and embodied chaos all imply a review of previous understandings of racial authenticity, urban creativity, multicultural society and territorial exclusion. These processes of citation open up the potential of multiculture for dismantling social and territorial orders based on race and nation, and challenge conservative and white supremacist accounts of contemporary urban life. They show the potential, and the actuality, of the breakdown of hierarchies of belonging, the possibility of living for others beyond national and ethnic boundaries, at the same time as revealing their re-inscription.

The invisibility and revival of whiteness

Within this analysis the thesis has addressed how discourses of whiteness are being revived though the condemnation of multiculturalism, the heralding of the white working-class, and

the pursuit of aspiration (Bottero 2009; Gillborn 2010; Raco 2009; Sveinsson 2009). This thesis has explored the investment in nostalgias for a white East End. It addressed how the borough was formed through migration but how discourses on the Golden Era were used, at a national and local level, to explain away structural and class-based inequalities through immigration. Seen in the wider context of aspiration and the much lauded death of multiculturalism, these national romances and xenophobias need to be widely understood if they are to be countered. So too do the invisible forms of middle-class white power that sustain them.

The thesis has challenged the investment in whiteness, through calling into question its claims to the soil – autochthony (Geschiere 2009; Yuval-Davis 2012). Claims to exclusive belonging in East London can be sustained only while a belief in an a priori notion of white permanence remains (Moore 2008). This is an argument to more fully reveal the complexity of whiteness and the ways in which it is sold through fetishising nationalist homes – such as East London. It demands attention to how these nostalgic locations were in fact made through migration and not primordial ownership, and how whiteness is not attached to white bodies, but is a floating signifier. As with other British forms of racism, autochthony is powerful because it can be claimed and practised by young people who, a generation earlier, might not have white enough.

If we are to address the allure of whiteness, it is necessary to engage with the process of tracings (Bennett 2005; Derrida 1976; Spivak 1976) and citation (Butler 1993, 1997; Gilroy 1993) that sustain it. Pursuing anti-racist claims on the basis that the *original* white working-class are prejudiced (Ware 2008) implies an a priori moment of fixity which is as problematic as buying into the myths that whites have superior rights because they were there first (Hodge 2007).

Marginalisation and being public

The thesis has also addressed how classed and racialised forms of social control and public marginalisation have been applied to young people. It has shown how these discourses and practices were part of a longer history through which the middle-classes maintained their wealth and status (Alexander 1996;Corrigan 1979; Gilroy 1987; Hall et al. 1978; Humphries 1981; Pearson 1983; Solomos 1988). Beyond disinvesting in the idea that these are wholly novel phenomena, the thesis has highlighted specific configurations of criminalisation and

marginalisation that require attention in order to counter the unfreedoms and injustices young people experience.

The thesis has discussed the relationships between increasing criminalisation and reduced funding provision. The increasing orientation of youth provision to the criminal justice agenda, partnership working, the joined-up accountancy systems of the Integrated Youth Support Service, combined with the extended policing of the streets through technologies of surveillance, curtailed public freedom and mainstreamed criminalisation in ways not previously possible. Aside from their marginalisation from public space, the thesis has also shown how young people's forms of communication were silenced for being nihilistic or sold-out (Bauman 2011; Hancox 2009; Lowkey 2012; Pearse and Taylor 2009; Starkey 2011). These condemnations from left and right meant exclusion from democratic debate and dialogue (Calhoun 1992; Fraser 1992; Gilroy 1993; Habermas 1989) and ensured that young people's political expressions and political analyses could not be listened to.

As part of these forms of marginalisation and criminalisation the thesis has noted the rise of neo-communitarianism (Peck 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002; Purcell 2003; Swyngedouw 2000). While the thesis is not suggesting that all forms of neo-communitarianism are the same, or all of them problematic, it has explored the exclusions that occur when protective forms of community feed on racialised notions of order and chaos to make sense of uncertainty and under-resourcing. Relating back to the cuts and to ideas of whiteness, the thesis argues that these neo-communitarian formations can re-entrench ideas of community that rely on whiteness and loss. This, then, exacerbates discourses of race, nihilism and underclass as it seeks to create moral insiders and outsiders. This is the mind-set of the fenced community (Anzaldúa 2007; Blakely and Snyder 1999; Brown 2010; Low 2003; Rose and Miller 2008; Sennett 1993), where rather than address the inequalities of society, people build racialised and moral fortresses to protect themselves from the threat they are simultaneously constructing. These forms of threat are similarly floating and malleable moral systems that deserve further attention, comprising increasingly complex and overlaid racial codes. In contemporary Newham, these codes of nihilism and underclass do not belong to black or white bodies. And while they receive a specific reading though it, they are malleable and applicable to wider working-class collectives. They are the place where chav and mugger,

underclass and nihilist come together with white-supremacy's fear of multicultural 'patois' (Starkey 2011). Again, if these discourses are not understood, they cannot be addressed.

However, young people were not only being excluded from public space and debate but also from dominant projections of the future. Held against whitened discourses of aspiration (Haylett 2001; Preston 2009; Reay 2009; Reay et al. 2007; Sveinsson 2009), working-class and not-white-enough young people were being consigned to futureless futures. The exclusionary discourses of the futureless were laid out along the education–employment–consumption trajectory (McRobbie 2009) and these were self-policed through a belief in educational ineptitude, unemployability and consumer frustrations. This was compounded by the sharp-elbowed exclusions of those pushed to define the futureless in order to project their own success.

Youth politics

Beyond these concerns, the thesis has sought to highlight the practices and productions of young people and their potential for resistance, subversion and political action. As with many earlier works on young people, this thesis has returned to the subjects of resistance and everyday subversion (Alexander 2000; Hall et al. 1976; Hebdige 1979; Humphries 1981; Jones 1988; Willis 1977). It has discussed contests with the police, with the youth club authorities and with the racialised systems of accounting, social control and territorial governance. It has shown how the police were challenged and how categories of urban control were confused through the everyday malleability of multi-ethnic body types, friendships, movement and solidarities beyond these boundaries. To this extent it has moved to re-politicise ethnographic work that has become too invested in liberal celebrations of the happy everyday, the romantically super-diverse and the irreducibly hybrid. Although it has largely returned the conclusion that these forms of resistance, whilst highlighting injustices, often remain within dominant systems of social control, it has also shown how forms of concentrated subversion opened spaces where racialised systems of social and territorial control were more radically overturned. In Leyham this was evident in the forms of solidarity and everyday heterogeneity that the young people and youth workers demonstrated in the face of the police. In the After School Club it was evident in how autochthonous notions of belonging were broken down when diaspora mnemonics were prominent.

Nihilistic aesthetics offered a different way of doing politics for young people. Young people used the aesthetics of nihilism as a vehicle to become reflexively aware of the marginalisation they were subjected to. Through their artistic productions they considered the forms of injustice they were subjected to: the criminalisation of public space, the limits placed on their horizons, and the constraints of their own anti-sociability. And while these politics were not utopian, and indeed were communicated as a form of negative politics, they did offer a critique of injustice and the potential for more humanistic ways of living. To this extent, rather than end the freedom cry through a return to the body (Du Bois 2007; Gilroy 2000, 2010a; Moten 2003) they created alternative scenarios for the to-come. In the context in which young people's actions are condemned by the left and right as apolitical, sold-out and nihilistic it is increasingly necessary to listen to their politics and alternative horizons, and understand the aesthetic formation of their upcoming movements.

As the research period ended, the necessity to engage with these themes was sharpened by an event. The event was the 2012 London Olympics. Coming after the Golden Jubilee of the same year, the London Olympics was 2012's pinnacle of jingoism, commercialism and neo-liberal body politics. Located in the north-east corner of Newham, not far from where I had worked, Stratford had once again become the centre of an empire this time sponsored by Coca-Cola and Adidas and oriented towards the aspirational consumer. Pumping out from the state-of-the-art media centre on the bank of the river Lea were the merits of individualised discipline and corporeal order. While this event was many things, it was also a declarative statement on the kind of Olympic Legacy that was being bequeathed to Newham's Arc of Opportunity (LBN, 2010 #784). The violent exclusivity entailed in this vision was marked by a counterpoint. Ten minutes' walk away in West Ham Park I stopped to speak to a group of young men sitting on a park bench. It was the beginning of the second week of the Olympics and I asked them what it was doing for them. They could have trotted out the usual TV platitudes, but they didn't. Happy to converse, a dialogue started. For them, this vision of aspiration meant being stopped by the police up to four times a day, harassed and (illegally) strip-searched in the backs of police vans. Mandated to protect the good Olympic community, it was hard not to think that the hundreds of police in the area were signalling the onset of deepening racialised and classed contradictions in Newham. Angry and affronted, the young men didn't have a solution but they were clear about the injustices, and the necessity for an alternative future.

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