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Into the Divide: Community Identities and the Visualisation of Place

This article discusses the experience of place in a profoundly divided urban area of Sheffield. At a time when the gap between affluence and poverty has reached its widest point since the 1960s, this paper explores the relationship between individuals and their sense of place and of the trenchant divisions separating communities. The study employs various methods but centres upon the use of hand drawn maps; creating a dialogue between the interviewers and a number of local residents. These maps and the accompanying commentaries demonstrate the diverse individual sense of a particular place and a dialectical sense of space. The resulting picture is one of both the persistence of historical divisions, suggesting regulation and control through planning and policing, but also of complex entanglements of social identities, habitus and place which defy easy categorisiation.

Key words: habitus, mapping commentaries, sense of place, social divisions, spatial practices, urban polarization.

Introduction

The artist Paul Klee suggested that art does not 'reproduce the visible but makes visible.' (Klee, 1961: 76). Everyday life is routinised; the surfaces of our cities appear so commonplace they often evade scrutiny. Ingold (2008: 2) following Klee, is interested in developing an '…ontology that assigns primacy to processes of formation as against their final products, and to flows and transformations of materials as against states of matter. Form, to recall Klee's words, is death; form-giving is life.'

These thoughts are a valuable starting point for an examination of the urban; it is not the physical contours, the mute forms of buildings and objects which are of interest, rather, it is the dynamic processes behind them which need to be revealed. The inner-city spaces; buildings, the web of pathways and roads, shopping centres, parks, pubs, derelict buildings, are the cluttered end products, the detritus of living. To go beyond surfaces it is necessary to recognize the dialectical

nature of these end forms; an appropriate task for sociology. This article attempts to highlight the spatial narratives developed about living in an inner-city area of Sheffield; its boundaries, ruptures and contradictions, and by doing so to present the complex multiple versions of an urban area which transcend easy categorisation of class demographics.

Recent studies of social class show a complex evolving picture with new emergent categories, but certainly a quantitatively widening divide (see Savage, Devine et al., 2013). There is a need for more finely-grained analyses, to examine what such polarisation means at the individual level. This paper highlights details from an ongoing, mixed method exploration of the Sheffield suburb of Broomhall; its meanings, representations, identities, divisions and conflicts. Through a collaborative visual approach a fuller picture of the complex construction of place either side of an economic and social divide has been produced, illustrating how social divisions play out in people's everyday perceptions and practices of everyday life in a British city.

Sheffield has long been recognised as a city where sharp economic and social differences exist between neighbouring suburbs (Sheffield Fairness Commission Report, 2012; Lee et al., 2013; Aurigi and Graham, 1997). A recent study of the distribution of wealth and social goods in Sheffield (Thomas et al., 2009) demonstrated this graphically; mapping and delineating these demographic boundaries. The research aimed to quantify the patterns of poverty apparent in the map and examine whether Sheffield, like the rest of the country, was becoming more polarised. Thomas et al, in their conclusion, highlighted the decline in the city's fortunes from relative prosperity in the 60s and 70s, to a more divided and precarious situation:

During the first decade of the current century it became clear that many social inequalities within cities such as Sheffield were continuing to rise despite much of the extra resources resulting from the national economic boom being redistributed to rebuild and improve infrastructure in places such as Sheffield's poorest districts. (Thomas et al., 2009:106)

Arguably these inherent contradictions of class and ethnicity are part of the process which shapes the cities we live in. It has been suggested (Spencer, 2011: 83) that:

Cities are powered by inequality; every Fulwood and Ranmoor has its Brightside and Pitsmoor[i].... Contradictions are there in the unique forms of the city, but how manifest is the social disunity in Sheffield? One could be forgiven for the view that Sheffield is really two quite distinct enclaves, separated by patterns of affluence and education, housing, health, and occupation. The stark contrasts between the wards of Brightside and Hallam, for example, are among the most polarised in the country.

Indeed the succession of welfare and public sector cuts, the stagnation of wages and the concentration of wealth amongst a very few, have it appears, widened the gap which was already at its greatest span since the 1960s.

Looked at through a distributional lens, it would seem that George Osborne's[ii] economic strategy is deepening, rather than resolving, the great wage-profit imbalance at the heart of the UK economy's malfunction. GDP growth may be rising once again and unemployment may be falling – but the distributional disparities of the British economy look likely to intensify over the years ahead. (Lavery, 2014:1)

In addition, Sheffield's inner city areas have been transformed by the loss of steel production on a scale to rival Pittsburgh. The spatial consequences of clustering associated industries and residential areas around the steel hub, has meant that attempts to transform Sheffield to a knowledge-based economy requiring different communicative relationships was hindered and both cities were left with predominantly blue-collar working forces with largely obsolete and unmarketable skills in a changing economy:

> … the suburbanized and fragmented geography of Pittsburgh and Sheffield is detrimental to the cities" efforts to develop a "knowledge economy". The two cities" economic geographies do not facilitate the transmittance of the crucial tacit knowledge needed for innovation…Because Sheffield began to focus on the downtown core only in the late 1990s, the area is still deficient in some of the architectural and cultural features which make a downtown appealing (Devoy, 2009: 65).

1. A Tale of Two Cities

The focal point of this paper is Broomhall an inner city area with a unique history of physical division; in fact it is an area in which an exclusive elite community was originally separated by gates from the terraced houses of workers. This diverse area is named after Broom Hall, the ancient manor house in the heart of the area (Victorian Society, 1980). The illustrations below (Figure 1) give a clear indication of this legacy. Shaped by the expanding steel industry the middle classes moved to avoid its unhealthy consequences, and the area of Broomhall Park evolved:

The middle classes had first moved towards Broomhill, but Sheffield's expanding industries moved in that direction too. The new West Street and Portobello Street soon accommodated steelworks and cutlery businesses as well as houses. Industry did not get as far as Glossop Road, however. Professional people and successful businessmen set up homes and consulting rooms thereabouts, away from the smoke and the grime.... During the 1840s, the growing professional and managerial classes favoured Collegiate Crescent and neighbouring parts of the well-wooded Broomhall Park estate, where no commercial development was allowed. Lodges still stand at the former gated entrances to the private roads there (Hey, 1998: 186).

The Broomhall Park estate demonstrated applied 'Picturesque' principles in the layout of an exclusive suburb of large villas set in pseudo-naturalistic surroundings in contrast to their urban setting. The exclusivity of the area was enhanced by the provision of gates and lodges at its entrances. This elite area is still clearly visible in the aerial view, below, as a leaf-shaped area to the left of the social housing area.

 (Figure **1 here - shows the gated area in 1891and in the Google Earth aerial view today**).

Today Broomhall is an inner city suburb with a diverse population of some 6,500 residents. Broomhall has a majority of BME communities, Somali in particular, and substantial professional and student populations. Between 2001 and 2006 there was an increase in migrant groups living in Broomhall from 36% to 67%. (Sheffield City Council, 2011 Census)

However, the legacy of the historical divide survives; there is a marked difference between the residential areas of Broomhall Park and Broomhall. The gates were in use up until the First World War.

Today this division between relative affluence and poverty, is still palpable, particularly at the boundary between the Broomhall Park area and the beginnings of Brunswick Street (see images in Figure 2); a crossing from leafy suburban streets of mature trees and large Victorian manors with substantial grounds and driveways, to a long street of terraced brick houses and, nearby, areas of high rise social housing. This is also a divide which reflects patterns of migration, and ethnic and religious composition of the area. Like many inner-city areas the community is composed of groups well established over several generations and others which are more transient, including students who make up about 20% of the population.

The Broomhall side of the area is mixed residential incorporating residualised working class areas, the survival of a purpose built estate area and a central tower block. Contrasting architecture (see Figure 2) gives a very immediate sense of the divide between the two areas and their genesis as separate enclaves. Quotes from interviewees highlighted and reinforced the physical impact of the different styles of housing.

> "…we are in big houses, we are very fortunate, we don't shut our gates; this is not a gated community: you don't have to get through what were once the gates into it..."

"I would see the Broomhall Park bit as an astonishing enclave of leafy privilege in an inner-city setting."

"…the visible frontier is obviously stone to brick."

" sometimes up at night round the University is on one side and the houses on the other are very, they're literally some of them are so far back from the road, they've got their own drives; it almost looks like they go to a different universe [laughs] back there from where you live in."

(insert Figure 2 here)

Interestingly the above comment about the openness of the area makes reference to the historical gated community with the suggestion that no such boundaries exist today. Yet the tangible differences are stark. One resident suggested that the "posher" area was intimidating and that the leafy spaces might provide places for potential muggers to hide. He suggested that this view was based on knowledge of how some from Broomhall area had previously made use of the terrain. So what might appear regal, gentile and orderly may be differently perceived:

'Occasionally the kids will venture up the area and do street robberies and stuff like that because there's rich pickings and whatever, but generally this area is another area that's

used as a conduit into the other areas. So you'll see a lot of movement with students and professionals moving in and out of it, into town. And it's another area they've got to go past - this group as well. This area if you think about it you could actually perceive that as an intimidating road if you was that way attuned or you could see it as "I'm passing through an area which is culturally different."'

This division, would invite the interpretation that this is a clear case of the persistence of historical class boundaries. However, while quantitative evidence presents a picture of urban life where cities in Britain face growing divide between the more and less deprived populations (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Rae, 2011; Savage et al., 2013), evidence suggests that the subjective sense of belonging to this or that class is increasingly one with which people dis-identify (Savage et al., 2001; Skeggs, 1997). In other words the manner in which people recognize class identity appears to have undergone some changes; class is not a strong source of identity for most people and dis-identification with class is common, as class is seen as a threat or an embarrassment to individual identity (see Bufton in Taylor and Spencer, 2006; Sayer, 2002).

Bourdieu's approach to examining social divisions, avoids the acceptance of ready-made categories of 'class', suggesting these are overly reified and counterproductive. Instead Bourdieu recognized the interlocking and homologous relationship between symbolic, social and material forms of power and space through which differences are expressed, maintained, reproduced, negotiated and sometimes transcended. Social relations are treated as fluid, to be assessed *in practice* rather than as abstract entities.

Following this approach it might be suggested then that the links between experiences of social and material divisions shape sense of self and home and constitute the different fields through which habitus is manifest. Bourdieu defines 'habitus' as; "the past which survives in the present", "immanent law.... laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing", "The habitus.... makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks" (Bourdieu 1977: 81-83, 87). Thus the habitus constitutes the link between social structures and social practice (or social action) and offers the basis for a cultural approach to structural inquiry which permits a focus on agency. Furthermore, Bourdieu's approach about the shaping of everyday social identities helps us to recognize that feelings for place, home and belonging are inherently entangled with complex social identities: 'The habitus is closely linked to the phenomenon of 'home' as both a form of unreflexive knowledge and of ontological security.' (Dovey, in Hillier and Rooksby, 2005: 285).

To better permit the expression of some of these ingrained dispositions about home, belonging, security we asked residents to produce their own map drawings of their neighbourhood of Broomhall and conducted interviews which reflected on these hand-drawn maps.

2. Mapping Individual Spatial Understanding

To obtain this more fine-grained understanding of residents' perceptions and examine how social divisions play out in everyday experience; a variety of methods were employed. These included traditional qualitative approaches to data collection: observation, review of archival and contemporary documents and interviews. But central to the investigation was a form of

participative mapping in which residents were asked to draw a map of Broomhall while providing a verbal commentary. The mapping and reflective commentary was recorded on video. The approach evolved to focus mainly on respondent's hands as they drew the maps, firstly to avoid intrusion and exposure which full video coverage can have (Rosenstein 2002), and to concentrate the locus of enquiry on to emerging drawing of the area on the paper. This focus evolved after two initial interviews which demonstrated the richness of employing the hand-drawn map commentaries.

In addition an examination of relevant research literature on mapping and on place and spatiality (for example Wheeldon and Faubert 2009, and Massey) showed a need to expand on the traditional definitions of concept mapping to include more flexible approaches to collecting visual representations.

Analysis of the map commentaries permitted a grounded and inductive approach to the map data rather than overly abstract schemes of analysis (Lynch, 1960; Gieseking, 2013). As Wheeldon and Faubert (2009: 69) suggest there are progressive possibilities for data analysis when working with respondent-created maps:

> By basing data analysis on participant-centric visual representations of experience, maps offer a unique means to ground theory within data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and can assist researchers in refining subsequent data collection strategies. As such, using maps might provide a middle ground in the long-standing discussion about how systematic analysis within qualitative research can unfold.

David Gauntlett also makes a case for 'activity-based ethnography' as a way of getting respondents to *do* something and observing the process of the doing, (2007). Such an approach enables a more grounded and effective understanding of the theories and models which people create about their lives and the world they observe. This approach needs to be seen rather as an intersubjective approach to an unfolding narrative, not a static artefact to be analysed. Capturing the process of creating the maps reflects that the understanding of place itself is on-going and multiple (Kitchin and Dodge, 2007). It is particularly important, we believe, to ensure that the study is not perceived as what Buckingham (2009) has called 'naïve empiricism' which somehow assumes it is possible to reach into an unmediated expression of identity through the researcher's interpretation of the images.

There is no delusion here that these visual methods provide direct or unmediated insight into the identity of the respondent, but we argue that the inclusion of mapping commentaries develops an expressive and rounded understanding of the degree of attachment people have to the neighbourhood and arguably highlights forms of cultural capital (embodied and symbolic forms), the expression of habitus and mastery in different 'fields'. The latter point is controversial, as the habitus, for Bourdieu, was largely beyond the reach of reflexivity and conscious grasp. There has been significant debate around this point, with literature suggesting some agreement that the habitus and reflexivity might be fruitfully considered as hybrid (see e.g. Jenkins 1992, Adams 2006, McNay 1999). In other words reflexivity itself may be part of the habitus and hence these dispositions which constitute habitus might be articulated.

The process of drawing can certainly reveal lost memories and realise spatial coordinates (see Spencer 2011 pp 69-79) adding texture and detail to interview situations and generally provide what has been termed 'extra somatic memory' (Khun, 2007; Prosser, 2008). For these reasons it seems likely that lived experience which constitutes habitus may include reflexive practice when its elements are visualized in drawings or photographs.

3. Significance of Place and Spatial Practices on Identity

Parallel to this rich empirical evidence about life in Broomhall it is important to question how 'place' can be understood. Place is a social construct which may appear commonsense, something simply revealed and easily reduced to a set of material coordinates; for example in local studies and archives, this may permit the area to be reified and promoted as heritage. Such 'Essentialist and internalist' notions of place (Massey, 1995: 183) reflect a dominant, often conservative myth. However, place is always a product of multiple interlinked discourses. Place is at once unique, an 'ever shifting constellation of trajectories' (Massey, 2005: 151). As such, place is an on-going process; a unique intersection of global forces and relationships (themselves spatially uneven in their impact) a temporary articulation; the identity of place is multiple, conflicted, not inherently coherent; not simply bounded it is a mesh-work of individual and collective constructions over time. This complex weaving of individual biographies with the apparent bounded sites of movement is echoed by De Certeau. His meditation on the nature of 'walking rhetorics' (1984); the many thousands of city stories paced out by walking feet, ends with a description of the relationship between 'spatial practices and the constructed order'. He concludes: 'The surface of

this order is everywhere punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve order' (in During 1993: 160).

It seems clear that the reality of the city is selectively filtered through the "sieve" of individual practices and concerns producing many versions of the city. Just as (Wright, 1985) suggests with regard to the ethnically diverse London borough of Hackney, there are diverse sometimes conflicting meanings, distinctive ethnic and class interpretations and complex intersections between these and other dimensions, but the very diversity of impressions make the place what it is. Shields' calls for just this recognition of the city as a multidimensional space:

> Rather than discard the urban because of its spatial hybridity; rather than disapprove of representations because of their treacherous selective vision of the city, we need to construct multi-dimensional analyses which, rather than imposing monological coherence and closure, allow parallel and conflicting representations to coexist in analysis…leads to a dialogic approach to the spatialisation of the urban. (Shields, 1996: 245)

The validity of the more plural approach we are outlining goes some way to achieving this premature closure as it avoids imposing ready-made dichotomies and shows how sense of belonging is complex and multifaceted. Theoretical discussions of spatiality draw attention to something very commonplace but largely ignored: our own sense of being in a particular place and the associations and taken-for-grantedness of these surfaces. The development of a dialectical sense of space allows us to conceive of this everyday relationship as something abstract and strange, akin to the alienation expressed in the writings of the surrealists and existentialists of the early 20th century.[iii]

Sociologically it is important not to disregard the everyday: the collision of the perception of individual milieu with the process of history and large-scale social change distinguishes the sociological approach (Mills, 1959). The commonsense acceptance of the city at face value belies the complex and often contradictory dynamics which are operating beneath the surface. While, to an outsider, the contrasts between the areas of Broomhall might appear stark indeed, local understanding of the space was often conceived of in terms of individual history and shorter term needs, and reflected a dense diversity which tended to reduce the perceptions of a socio-economic divide. Again the findings of the research to date suggest that employing multiple methods, and shifting the focus away from ready-made constructions of social class or ethnic identities so readily affirmed by media stories, present a much less polarized view of the inner city.

For example, the contrast between the large stone houses in the conservation area, many still private residences, and the brick of high rise and tenement blocks, was rendered less visible by the complex street by street differences across the whole area; and the way that interviewees limited their mapping of the area to reflect individual trajectories, concerns and specific spatial practices.

Nevertheless, the claim that the area of Broomhall is deeply scored with historical class divisions is inescapable. Objective measures of relative deprivation present maps of many British cities as almost tribally divided (see maps in Rae, 2011). But as one researcher points out (Muela Meza, 2010) the historical boundary of 'Broomhall' encompasses four quite distinct areas. The affluent Broomhall Park area should not he claims be considered in the same bracket as the other areas which include quite different populations, having this large elite area of grand stone built manor

houses distorts the perception and needs of the greater area. This is true economically but also socially. Muela Meza's research suggests a perception of the Broomhall Park as: 'self-ghettoized with an imaginary wall, (one respondent) called it the Broomhall Wall':

> …it's very interesting, I would say... there is like, it's not a physical wall but there is what I call the Broomhall Wall …you know, where there are the Broomhall Park Association, Broomhall Forum... middle upper class associations run by rich people who own big houses in the Broomhall Wall, the rich side of Broomhall. [a working class resident from section B of Broomhall] (Muela Meza, 2010: 103)

4. Map Commentaries

In the course of interviewing and obtaining mapping commentaries it became clear that knowledge about the locality varied greatly. Some participants had an extraordinarily minimal understanding of the area. One interviewee was aware of only two or three street names; and a couple of landmarks. Others displayed a much richer personal or in-depth sense of engagement with the place.

The interviewees drew the boundaries of the area very differently (see Figure 3) often in ways which bore little resemblance to the official boundaries of the district. Indeed their sense of the boundedness of the area differed: one drew the area as an "island", a "fort"; another saw it as very tightly bound but with 'rat runs' for quick escapes by criminal elements (see Figure 6 short video extract from Interview 1). Another saw it as very hard to envisage mentally at all. For one

interviewee, the listed building Broom Hall (which dates back possibly to late 15th Century (see Harman, and Minnis, 2004) had been the central landmark around which the conservation activity which shaped her view of the area had been organised; the only other person to mention it, said they had never quite worked out where it was and knew no one who did know its location.

(Insert Figure 3 - Maps A, B, C and D about here)

So clearly individual's cultural and social capital varied widely. This was reflected in the knowledge of key landmarks and roads – reflecting in each case different spatial practices. They knew the location of some local amenities, such as shops and pubs; though often these were less significant than city centre resources. They knew how to get from A to B. People had knowledge of local populations and specific individuals as acquaintances. These coordinates also were often motivated by a picture of which areas were safe and when. Again it appeared that this was based partly on tacit knowledge: "gut feeling", and hence proved harder to draw on the map.

In addition, importantly, people were able to articulate some sort of overall characterisation of the area, largely composed of these elements, and not surprisingly, none of these was primarily historical or essential (Massey 2005). Instead, people understood the area through direct physical encounter, be that through wandering or more likely through specific spatial practices such as taking particular pathways to and from work, walking the dog, or taking children to play in the small recreational park areas. One participant drew small wavy lines to capture her explorations of the area with a camera (see map D in Figure 3). She valued the small differences between houses, which made everything unique. She also played a game with a friend who took a photo in the area, then she had to go and take the same photo.

Most navigation of the area was purposeful, for example: walking to a particular shop or going to the allotment or making one's way across the area to access another area. For one interviewee walking the dog led to encounters, in a very particular type of way. Children were attracted to pet a dog; this stimulated parents to check out the dog's owner. In this way she became known and trusted by local people.

Enhancing the interviews with respondent-generated maps allowed residents to express their feelings and make them concrete in their drawings. The act of sketching out the area; its boundaries and passages demonstrated the person's connectedness to the area and articulated memories in context. The examples above (figure 3) were not rehearsed, but stream of consciousness drawings reflecting the resident's unfolding commentary on their neighbourhood; the areas that they know and complex relationships that are important to them. Map A for

example, highlights boundaries between 'Posh Houses', the university ('Hallum' – refers to Sheffield Hallam University) and areas of 'conservation' and residences of 'students' and the Exeter Drive area of social housing. Whereas, Map B highlights a specific section of the wider area concentrating on this section rather than the two most contrastive housing areas, but representing this area very systematically. Finally, Map C (from a relatively new migrant) depicts an even smaller area, the focus is on the resident's flat, portrayed here as the large empty rectangle to the right of the sketch.

Insert Figure 4 about here

There are clearly constraints on this method. There were marked differences in how comfortable individuals felt about map drawing. Also many everyday practices proved difficult to illustrate: taking a dog for a walk, going to the corner shop for a paper on Sunday morning, rushing off to work in the weekday, jogging, noticing things in the street when sitting in the house, observing the street while doing the front garden, and so on. However, these 'map commentaries' allowed some reflection on place in the here and now; producing a synchronous representation of the multiple relationships the individual has to the area. This process also collects impressions diachronically. When one sketches the contours of a place there is a tendency to relate incidents, narratives, memories, associated atmospheres, the way a place has become associated with a feeling perhaps over years. As Sweetman suggests there is evidence that such representations '…can act as

prompts and personal mnemonics as well as powerful ways of capturing and conveying information in an accessible, economical and non-verbal way.' (Sweetman, 2009: 20).

5. Urban Others, Media and Moral Panics

It seems that attempts to isolate and segregate populations who are perceived as 'other' are as old as cities themselves. In the Nineteenth Century the working class was segregated by physical barriers from the leafy enclave of the elite. Fear of the wrath of disenfranchised cottagers following the Enclosure movement, would be remembered. 'In 1791 the dispossessed rioted (a result of the Enclosures[iv] Acts) and their focus was Broom Hall, home of the Reverend James Wilkinson, vicar of Sheffield and magistrate. His library was burned. For their sins the ring leaders were marched to York and executed' (Fitter, 2011: 5)

One powerful defining source of information about an area and the relationships between different parts of the city are the dominant media representations. There are sporadic 'moral panics' and the circulation of urban myths often leading to stigma which an area finds hard to shake off. This form of misrecognition is often due to enduring cultural associations. Urban fears and reputations are rife in certain streets of the city. Urban planning is argued to be a discourse saturated with fear Sandercock (2000: 22) lists: 'fear of disorder, dis/ease, women, working classes, immigrants, gay, youth and so on.'

Sandercock (ibid) suggests that in the last 100 years four basic 'solutions' have evolved to attempt to control or manage this anxiety. These range from a focus on law and order and especially calls for more policing, attempts at spatial containment and segregation (not dissimilar to the extreme process of hyper-ghettoisation which Wacquant has discussed in the US context (2001) to assimilationist policies (language and citizenship classes become compulsory) to effectively 'make the other into one of us', and also to processes of moral reform which may include planning urban facilities which have a supposed 'civilising' function.

Figure 5, below shows a number of community-based, 'civic minded' initiatives. Apart from the development of cultural balm in the shape of green and mixed arts projects there are also indications of some rather paternalistic interventions by the Broomhall Park community leaders, for example, the drive to stamp out the red light area by calls to prevent the free flow of traffic in the area (there are now a series of barriers and speed bumps and the area cannot be easily accessed by cars). This was considered necessary to deter curb crawlers. One resident who had taken action on this issue said:

'…and there were prostitutes *always* outside; it was a known red-light area round the time of the Yorkshire Ripper was being hunted – that attracted attention to it. Sheffield magistrates were reckoned to be quite kindly, and the girls used to come in on day tickets from Doncaster, Barnsley, Rotherham, wherever. Um, people were sorry for us. In the end, as far as I understand it, the various policing moves *cracked* into place when the two Universities said 'look, we are major income-bringers into Sheffield: if this area is unsafe as that for young women, and there's a lot of student housing around, parents won't let their kids come'. And

then the police decided, and as everyone knows, you only ever move a problem on, and I'm afraid people said 'ah, as long as it's not here, we accept that somewhere, somehow'. I think the risk was that particularly some of the Muslim communities might have been turning towards the kind of vigilanten [*sic*], vigilantism that was that was *positively* dangerous.'

'And then of course I found out that it's a red light district...and I've got two, two young boys; very young, only three and eight. Um…and it put me off a bit. But now, of course, you know, I probably would have lived there perfectly happily all this time, um, without any problem at all because of course, the, basically as it got gentrified there were complaints about the prostitutes, so the one-way system was introduced, so they all moved over to Portobello on the University sector. Then the University complained about them, so that was all one-wayed [*sic*] and changed, so they've now gone down to Netherthorpe and Shalesmoor where the Arctic Monkeys sing songs about them. Um, so the crime doesn't go away...'

(insert Figure 5 here)

These accounts suggest that the interventions of the professional elite of Broomhall Park and the rather wry observation of another about the NIMBYism of the area and its simply moving the problem elsewhere rather than addressing its roots. The suggestion that without action other more radical Muslim action might have resulted shows a distorted and negative perception of the Muslim community and could be seen to indicate a sense of middle class duty of restoring order.

Further there is a sense of the complex hierarchy of strangers being managed, even though the outcome is locally pragmatic rather than based on any universal moral code. The Broomhall Park community recognises the bonds of service and the language of city capitalist politics, the first interviewee demonstrated personal commitment to this action, direct intervention to protect women who might be at risk of exploitation.

> 'My technique was to go and stand out alongside one of the women and say 'I have to warn you' – oh [correcting herself], 'are you waiting for someone? Well I'll stand with you because I have to warn you there are some bad men around here who mistakenly think people waiting for a boyfriend are actually looking for any business. So if I stand with you and a car slows down, I can encourage it to go away, and we can together take its number and get it to the police. And they got quite cross. But it did work, a bit. We had some eggs thrown at the house but nothing worse.'

Whether this is seen as crusading, almost missionary zeal, or selfless protection of the vulnerable, it certainly demonstrates a principled stand rather than mere rhetoric. What is interesting though is the fact that residents felt responsibility for the turn of events over the 'Broomhall wall'. Evidence perhaps that what happens outside of the BHP enclave may be seen as a dangerous contagion which has to be kept in hand.

Broomhall's parks and communal garden and arts projects could be cited as further evidence of the moral or reformative role of inner city planning. However much these might be seen as ultimately deriving from top-down reformative planning, they could be appropriated in personally significant ways. This very much supports Augoyard's findings (1979 / 2007) that what might

appear to be insignificant practices of everyday life can disrupt the apparently concrete coercion of the built environment, which does reflect economic and social divisions. This is not to downplay the importance of how aggressive austerity measures from New Labour through to the current Conservative government in UK have widened the gap between the classes, immiserating large sections of the working poor and those on long term benefits as well as dividing the middle classes, and benefitting the top elite who are formally identified in the new class categories. The point is that there is resistance to this assault, and the study echoes the findings of Augoyard (1979) and De Certeau (1984) that despite the appearances of spatial permanence, individuals often subvert and transcend these boundaries; they make unique meanings during their everyday practice of walking, and while it may appear that a grid is imposed they create and re-create their neighbourhood in ways that cannot be easily contained by the prescriptions of urban planners or commercial economy.

One participant, a recent migrant from North Africa, actively shaped his environment through gardening projects, planting fruit trees, vegetables and flowers around his flat, but also in a wide arc around adjoining flats and public spaces too, expanding the spatial boundaries of his own plot to such an extent that he achieved public recognition and the council permitted him extra space – even building a small fence for his vegetable patch (see Figure 4). In another example, the small conservation area close to her housing estate flat was important to one of the interviewees: she talked about it offering her contact with the changing seasons and seeing wildlife that she had never seen in the rural Lincolnshire village in which she had been born; it was an escape from family pressures; it was a place to recall memories of her dog; she also had volunteered in

cleaning it up – so had had active agency in maintaining it. Even the rather dilapidated play areas close to a high rise were an important place where families met:

> "But within there you've got parks – which is a very good social place. A lot of people that kind of get to know each other will find out about each other in the park in summer while they're playing with their kids. You know –you'll start off with – you know you're sitting on one side of the bench the other sitting on the other and throughout the month you'll kind of get together, because your kids are playing together. So it's a nice place to kind of integrate."

Each individual's Broomhall seemed an extension of themselves. Because local space was understood through individual history and needs, major socio-economic divides were effectively rendered marginal. The 'Broomhall wall' division was rendered less visible by the complex street by street differences across the whole area; and the way that interviewees limited their mapping of the area. At times there was a sense of successful fusion, e.g. when talking about the community centre or the allotments:

> 'The allotment's really interesting, because there's the people from I suppose, in their late eighties to their mid twenties, of every colour and creed you could imagine on there'

At other times, it appeared less successful, as in the perceptions of 'others' emerging from Broomhall Park resident's comments about other areas of Broomhall gardens and houses. There is

a fine line between pride in one's neighbourhood and being perceived as having a somewhat paternalistic view, almost as a custodian of the greater area. One resident commented that:

'And then you know when you've got into Housing Association housing and council housing: it's usually visible, in part because so many of the Somali families who went into some of the new build were never equipped with lawnmowers, and it took a long time for anyone to think cutting grass down once couldn't solve the problem of how to have an attractive-looking garden. And some have been taken into, as it were, communal care, and some haven't.'

The concerns about the cosmetic appearance of properties may not be the most pressing issues for struggling migrant families. Lingel (2011) emphasises migrants' personal histories in how they read the city landscape. She speculates that more settled individuals would tend to have increasingly similar conceptualisations. Yet each participant in the current study had a very individual, personal view of Broomhall – even though many had a long association with the area. This partly reflected very different socio-economic backgrounds: long residence in a privileged conservation area; or in a gentrified area close to the university; highly mobile students; those living in the high rise/apartment block area. One interviewee had a complex picture of the area, composite between living at the edge of the area as a child and a later return, when the district was quite different. Two interviewees had a sense of an area on the up; another had an almost apocalyptic sense of the impending social breakdown, idealising the past of a strong West Indian

community, now dissolving; and alienated from the Somali youth who were hanging out on the street.

More generally Broomhall has accumulated a stigmatized reputation and is associated with youth crime. Web Forum discussions include titles such as: 'Is Broomhall a safe area?', 'Somali Gangs in Broomhall', 'Was Broomhall ever a "good" area?' and 'Broomhall Exeter Drive'. (Sheffield Forum 2011). The persistent negativity of local media suggests that this was a 'moral panic' which reached a plateau and faded from immediate media interest but left a residual sense of stigma over the area. This volatility and disproportionality of media stories is well documented and especially if events involve young African migrants the violence is likely to be exaggerated and distorted to justify the outraged reaction that media has taken (see Goode and Ben Yehuda 2009 and Cohen 1972).

Discussing the consequences of a shooting in Broomhall some six years ago one participant suggested media have created a disproportionate sense of notoriety around the area, as:

> 'So the attention given to this area by the press – I would say - alright then it's justified but things are happening and their job is to report the news, but are they justified in the way they report them? And do they in turn try and balance it out by printing the good news stories?…It serves its purpose for the papers doesn't it?'

This also suggests that some urban areas are demonized by the media, and that this tendency may have particular functions for both media sources and readers, creating a sort of moral consensus. It appears that negative media coverage associating the area with rival ethnic-based gangs has

eclipsed other less advertised aspects of the community and become accepted as received

knowledge on public forums as well as amongst some academics, who suggest this is indicative of

the area's need for resources and local government funding as a solution to vandalism and

violence (see Hogan, 2010).

Despite this mediated reputation as a violent and dangerous area, several participants claimed this

to be largely unwarranted, and a distraction from the generally harmonious relationships and

closeness witnessed within the community. The shootings of 2009 and the consequent media

interest is only one of a long line of occurrences which seemed to confirm the area's reputation.

However, one interviewee commented that the extent of the violence really just involved two

young men (one Somali and one African Caribbean) in a territorial conflict for dominance, rather

than the reflection of deep ethnic conflicts, which were emphasised in a number of media stories,

and there were generally convivial relations between the two communities.

Williamson and Roberts (2010) and Lingel (2011) point to the importance of the media and the

Internet as sources of local knowledge. For Broomhall, the local press was perceived to

consistently misrepresent and stigmatise the area. So despite being an important source of

information, there was a strong discourse of scepticism about aspects of its coverage. In fact, a

content analysis of coverage of the area in a sample of stories from the local newspaper (the

Sheffield Star, June 2011-July 2012) suggested that it was not biased towards negative stories

about the area (Seals, 2012). Interestingly, the Internet was rarely an important source of

information. Community media, such as the Broomhall News, distributed monthly by local

voluntary groups was probably important in actively constructing a communal identity, but again this was understood to have its own bias.

Conclusion

In conclusion, to capture the everyday meanings of an urban area requires attention to diverse residential footprints; the 'walking rhetorics' of spatial practices. These are both uniquely individual and communally formed, linking to complex socio-economic and ethnic identities. In addition, historical patterns have persistent resonances, determining how current boundaries are understood and how relationships have developed. Archive documents provide some sense of this. Forms of media construct mythologies about the area which are often treated as untrustworthy by residents but may be more broadly influential and functional.

Central to this enquiry were the residents' own map commentaries. These gave evidence of the sheer diversity of how this area is understood. This methodology complemented other forms of data revealing the reflexive relationship between place and identity. The picture of an area like Broomhall is complex and mercurial and belies the crude representations which portray a small, largely negative and distorted part of the whole. The language of class and clear cut major socio-economic divisions is not readily expressed, but symbolic dominance and symbolic violence is all too obvious to anyone crossing between the different areas of Broomhall. The point, however, is that local spatial understanding appears to reflect multiple and diverse individual practices and perceptions. While the official boundary presents this as a unified suburb, realistically, it is at least

3 or 4 separate and quite distinct areas. But more than this the dense diversity within even these

enclaves presents an extraordinary range of different individual narratives and spatial practices. It

is clear that a complete understanding of the area is impossible, and only by recognizing the

complex relationships between different individuals and the continuous influence of social and

historical processes can the many Broomhalls which exist beneath the appearances of place be

revealed.

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[1] Respectively 2 of the wealthiest and poorest suburbs in Sheffield

[v]For example Sartre's meditation on Bouville, an imaginary provincial town in *Nausea*, (1938) or Aragon's equally disturbing vision of the city in *Paris Peasant* (1926)

"In agriculture the years between 1760 and 1820 are the years of wholesale enclosure in which, in village after village, common rights are lost" "Enclosure (when all the sophistications are allowed for) was a plain enough case of class robbery". (Thompson 1991 217 & 237)

Illustrations
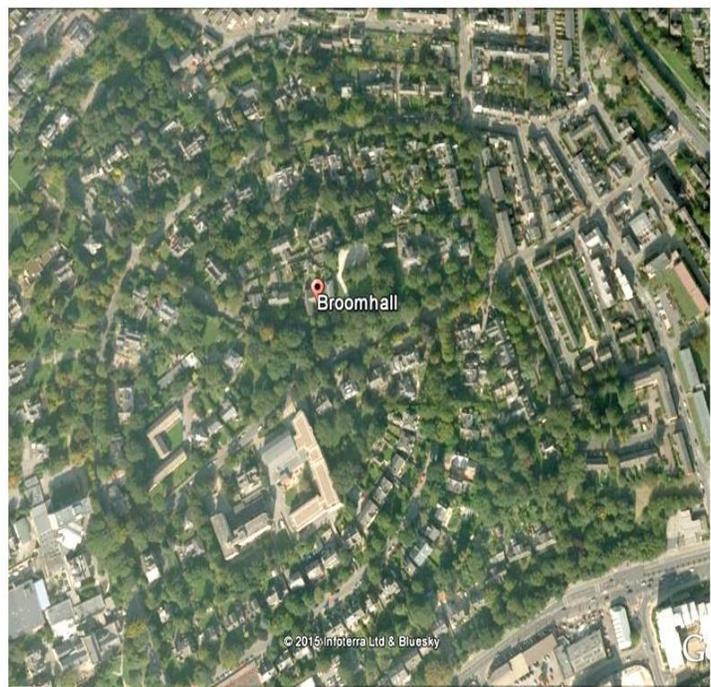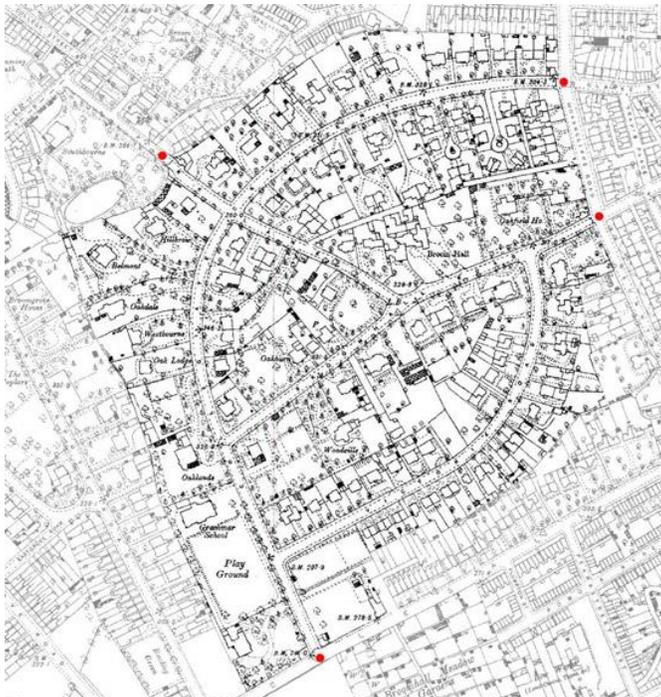
Fig 1. Left The Broomhall Park Estate in 1891.

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The layout of the estate was based on applied 'Picturesque' principles to the layout of an exclusive suburb of large villas set in pseudo naturalistic surroundings despite their urban surroundings. The exclusivity of the surroundings was enhanced by the provision of gates and lodges at its entrances (marked by red dots) (South Yorkshire Historic Environment Characterisation Project 2005: 623). **Right** - **Google Earth** view of Broomhall – Note that the original leaf-shaped area of the Broomhall Park Estate is still easily recognized.


Fig 2. 'Stone to Brick' – Above: images 1 & 2 of Victorian stone houses, image 3 - Gatehouse on Brunswick Street and 4 - Brick terraces. Below: images 5-7 Social housing in Broomhall
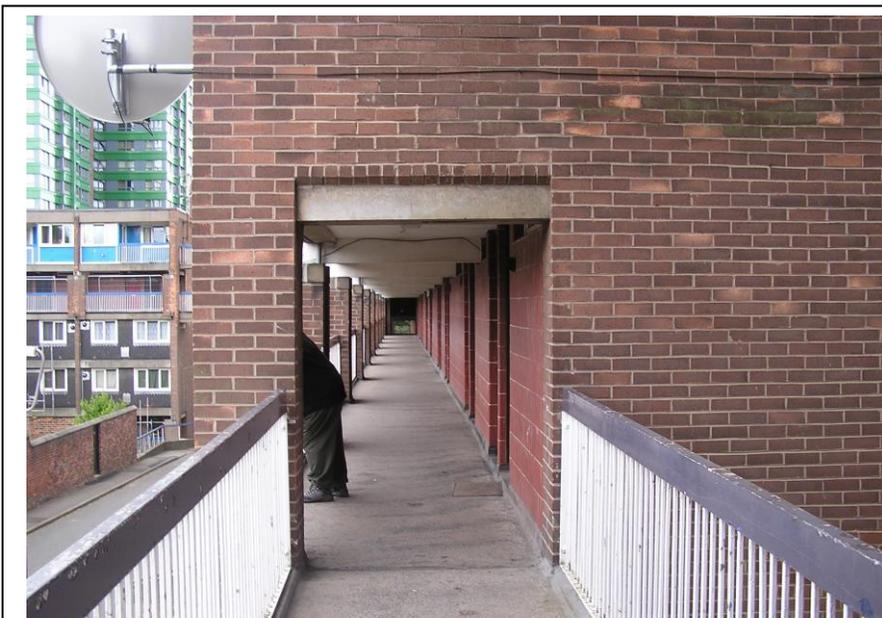
Fig. 3 Four samples of the hand-drawn maps which were part of an interview with residents
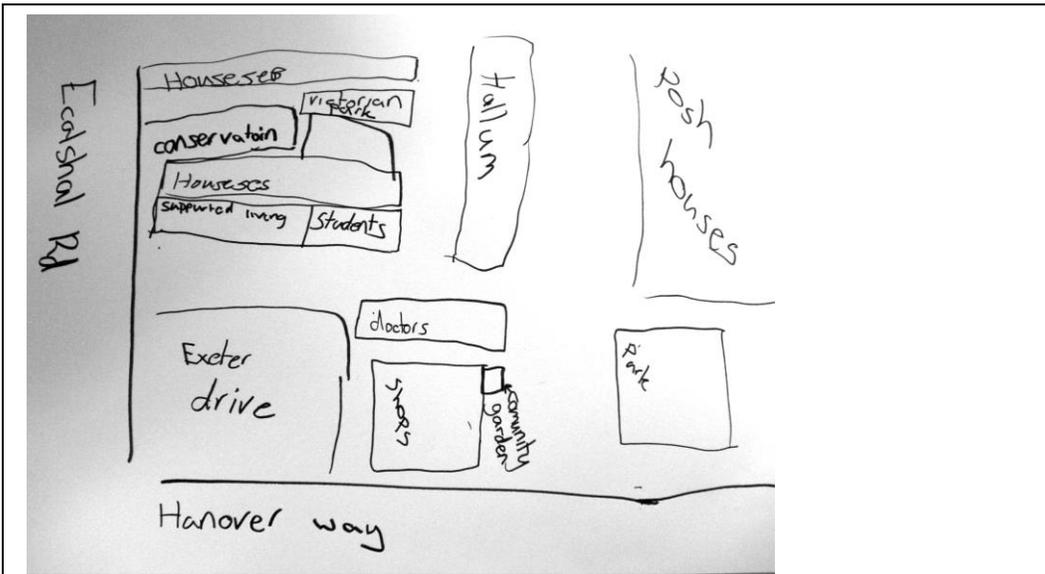

Map A
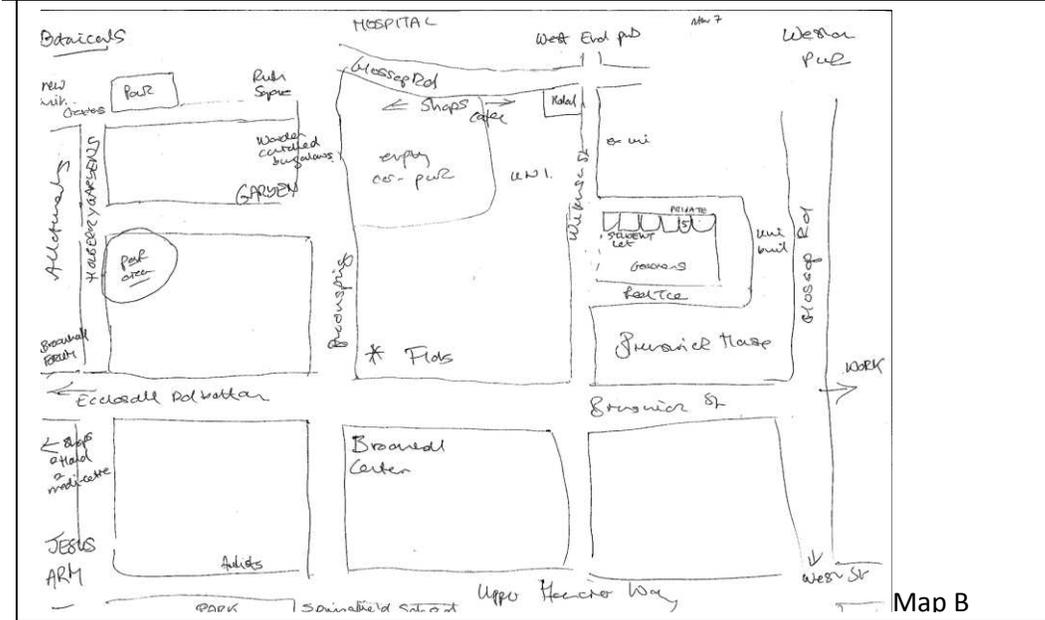
Map B
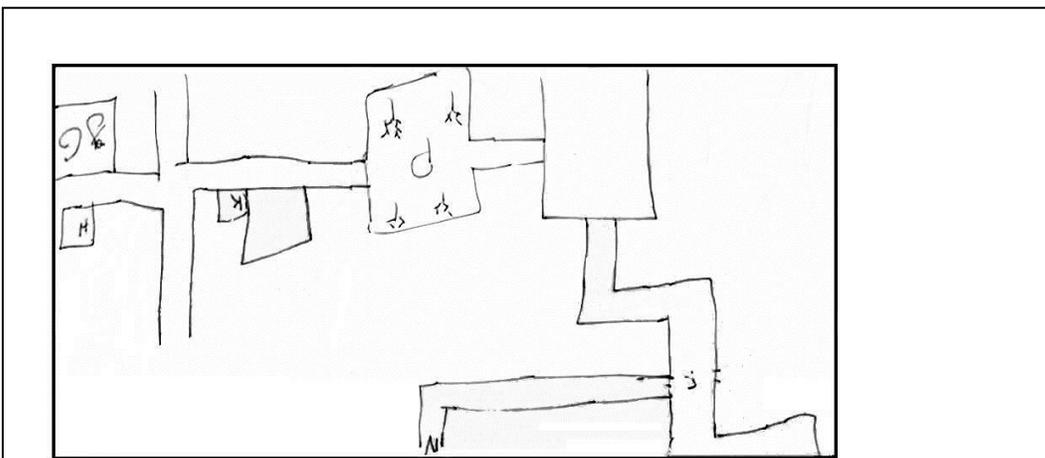
Map 'C'
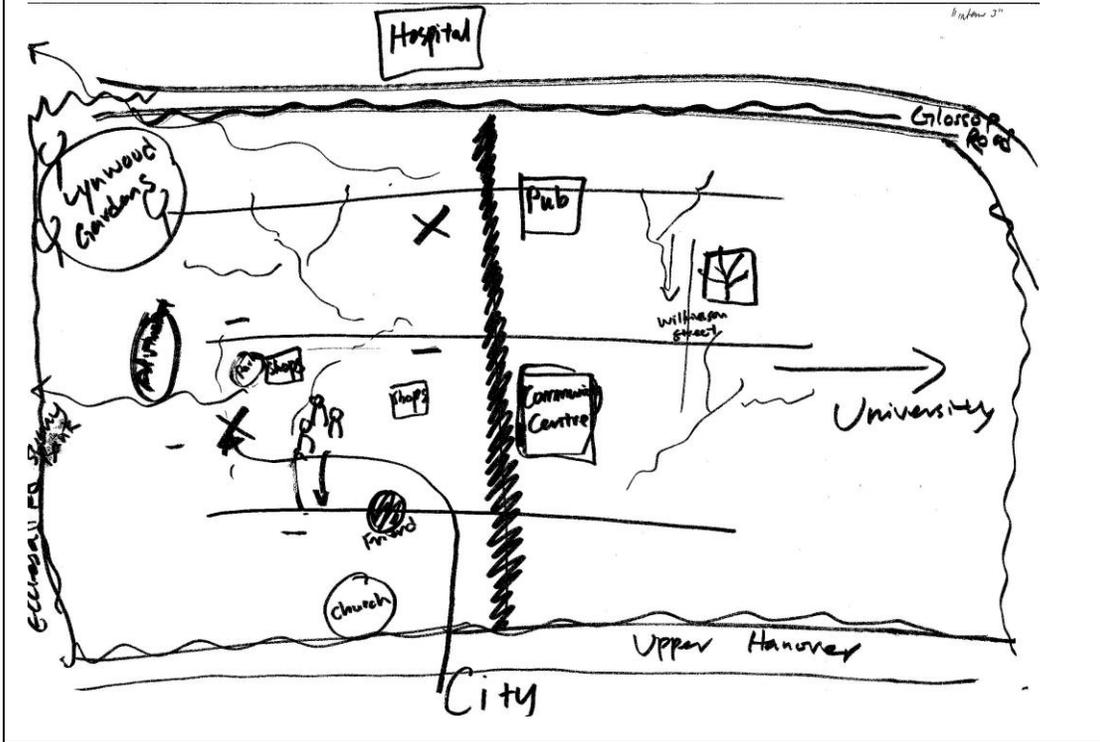
Fig 4. Left - Resident's garden, Right – detail of flats – garbage disposal chute (author 2012)

Fig 5. Green areas in Broomhall (author 2012)
Left – Frog sculpture in a park
Right – community gardening project, with a faded mural from a 80s and 90s community arts project

Fig. 6 – Short video sequence – Interview 1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8P3MfyUfehg

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i Respectively 2 of the wealthiest and poorest suburbs in Sheffield

ii George Osborne is the current Conservative party Chancellor and a driving force in the programme of austerity

iii For example Sartre's meditation on Bouville, an imaginary provincial town in *Nausea*, (1938) or Aragon's equally disturbing vision of the city in *Paris Peasant* (1926)

iv "In agriculture the years between 1760 and 1820 are the years of wholesale enclosure in which, in village after village, common rights are lost" "Enclosure (when all the sophistications are allowed for) was a plain enough case of class robbery". (Thompson 1991 217 & 237)