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Rhizomatic Assemblage: A diffractive ethnography on the geographical constitutiveness of organising

J S Vandeventer

PhD 2019

Rhizomatic Assemblage: A diffractive ethnography on the geographical constitutiveness of organising

James Scott Vandeventer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Marketing, Retail and Tourism
Manchester Metropolitan University

October 2019

Declaration

I declare that the thesis submitted is my own work and I have maintained professional integrity during all aspects of my research degree and I have complied with the Institutional Code of Practice and the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees.

Signed:

Dedication

for the Redbricks

Abstract

This thesis contributes to a narrative about the interwovenness of the sociomaterial world. To do so, I propose a new way of thinking about collective activities as a fundamental part of our lives: namely, I argue that organising is geographically constituted. Problematising existing engagements in organisation studies with geographical ideas and pointing to the lively debates about space, place, scale and territory in human geography, I draw these together by arguing for the ‘geographical constitutiveness of organising’ as a conceptual framework at the intersection of these two fields, which incorporates a processual, relational, and sociomaterial view of the world. Further, by plugging in (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) the notion of rhizome to assemblage, I suggest ‘rhizomatic assemblage’ as a metaphor for thinking at this intersection. Building on this, the research question that this thesis addresses is: *How can collective activities of organising be understood as geographically constituted?*

To respond to this question, a methodological argument draws on new materialism and Barad’s (2007) ‘agential realism’ in favour of a diffractive ethnographic approach (Gullion, 2018), in which ‘agential cuts’ implicate the researcher’s ethics and ways of knowing with the phenomena that exist in the world. Diffractive considerations of my subjectivity as researcher and my values inform why the focus of empirical fieldwork was on a particular rhizomatic assemblage: the Redbricks, a housing estate in Hulme, Manchester. Findings from the fieldwork are discussed in terms of four agential cuts to the rhizomatic assemblage: genealogising, shaping, cultivating and geometabolising. Each provokes a new perspective about how collective activities on the Redbricks are geographical accomplishments, and how organising is geographically constituted. Throughout, organising (on) the estate is (re)considered as a rhizomatic assemblage: as consequential unfoldings of geographically constituted activities also imbued with potentiality. Thus, this thesis enlivens our thinking about sociomaterial collective activities as becomings-together that give meaning to our lives, and points to ways that such activities should be encouraged.

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1 Introduction

Narratives help us make sense of ourselves and organise the world around us (Weick, 2012). Although narratives impose 'counterfeit coherence' on our experiences (Boje, 2001:2), they profoundly structure those experiences (Bruner, 1991). Today, narratives about contemporary society are diverging radically. In one narrative, societies will progress if they can deliver economic growth; if governments, organisations and institutions encourage globalised interconnectedness and democracy; and if individuals work hard and play by the rules. This manifests in the discourse of neoliberalism (Springer et al, 2016), in the argument that the world is flat (Friedman, 2005) and in the proliferation of consumerism (Miles, 1998).

A second narrative has recently gathered strength. Specifically, this narrative questions the inevitable benefits of globalisation, taking issue with its adverse impacts on some individuals and with the free movement of people through immigration. Echoing this, the rise of nationalism in many countries draws on individuals' insecurities that others have stolen their right to progress (Hochschild, 2016) and exploits the reactive cultural backlash (Inglehart and Norris, 2016). Troublingly, the pursuit of progress through growth and the reification of the individual are not questioned. However, another narrative is emerging that confronts the centrality of growth and individualism in accounting of modernity.

A third narrative of contemporary society questions if progress can be equated with growth, if the current model of globalisation is fit for purpose, and if individuals are indeed atomised. Instead, this narrative steps back and reframes society as interconnected not through our economies, but through our relation with – and dependence on – the natural world (Bellamy Foster, 2000). Popularised in the sustainability discourse (McManus, 1996), one strand of this narrative promotes 'green growth' as a way to reconcile economic growth with environmental impact (Victor and

Jackson, 2012), albeit without challenging the individualist ethic. Some, however, take this further and argue for the interconnectedness of economies, nature *and* social relations. Here, individuals are not autonomous, atomised consumers, but rather social beings. Taken to its furthest, this narrative coalesces in notions such as diverse and community economies (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Roelvink et al, 2015), degrowth (Schneider et al, 2010), post-growth (Paech, 2012), and others. These are unified in asserting a narrative of contemporary society that recognises the interrelatedness of economy, society and nature, while ultimately respecting our dependence on the latter. By interweaving the relations of society with the economy and natural world, this narrative reframes our understanding of the contemporary world and seeks to encourage practices that realign social values (e.g. Roelvink, 2016). This thesis makes one effort to contribute to this third narrative.

In seeking to improve our understanding of the relationship of the social to the economic and natural world – in other words, to materiality – I continue a long tradition in the social sciences and philosophy. While beyond the scope of the present work to exhaustively review these developments, in recent years, scholars drawing on Marx's 'historical materialism' (Marx, 1845) have been challenged by postmodern and poststructuralist thought that turned to language and discourse (e.g. Foucault, 1981; Murdoch, 2005). However, contemporary developments in 'new materialism' (e.g. DeLanda, 2002) call for a return to materiality, but also for new ways of thinking about its interwovenness with the social world. New materialism acknowledges the agencies emerging from both humans and materiality, arguing for their co-implication in generating reality (DeLanda, 2002). This finds resonance with the narrative that the economy, nature and materiality more generally are fundamentally interwoven with social relations. Related to new materialism is the 'ontological turn,' which calls for challenging academic notions of representation and the separability of researcher from the researched (Gullion, 2018). Instead, researchers are *part of* the phenomena they study, enmeshing the ethical stance of researchers in any inquiry (Barad, 2007). Finally, efforts in this vein suggest thinking *with* theory and data gathered about the world in

order to develop new on the world (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). In these ways, new materialism asks researchers to better capture the complexity of the interwoven *sociomaterial* world through new combinations of ideas, and by making their ethical orientation clear.

In aligning with new materialist philosophy, this thesis seeks to say something new; to acknowledge the need for a narrative that accounts for the interwovenness of contemporary society with materiality; to think with theory and data from multiple perspectives; and to imbue research with an ethical orientation. In doing so, I consider collective activities of organising to be a fundamental feature of our sociality as humans (Hinings, 2010), which are also irreducibly material because phenomena of organising are enacted through social-and-material – sociomaterial – processes and relations (Orlikowski, 2007). To this end, I consider organisation studies a useful heuristic tool for making sense of collective activities of organising (e.g. Scott and Davis, 2007; Gabriel, 2010; Hernes and Maitlis, 2011). It is here that this thesis begins.

Chapter 2 reviews extant debates in organisation studies, including critical approaches to the field. Through a review of the latter, I articulate the critical perspective on the social sciences adopted in this thesis, which requires that researchers account for the assumptions underpinning inquiry and acknowledge the political nature of research. Building on this, I argue that elements of a critical perspective align with work in organisation studies that considers how collective activities relate to the geographies of the world, motivating a review existing literature applying geographical notions in organisation studies. In these works, the concept of ‘space’ has been most prevalent (e.g. Weinfurter and Seidl, 2019), while some scholars draw on notions of ‘place’ (e.g. Sergot and Saives, 2016), ‘territory’ (e.g. Maréchal et al, 2013), and ‘scale’ (e.g. Taylor, 2011). However, to date, such efforts tend to delimit their focus to a single geographical concept, with limited acknowledgments of their interrelatedness. In fact, in human geography, a concern with humans’ relation to the geographies of the world has led scholars to draw on different philosophical perspectives in developing space, place,

territory and scale as fundamentally interconnected concepts (e.g. Agnew and Livingstone, 2011). So, this chapter problematises existing organisation studies engagements with geographical ideas, challenging them to more fully incorporating conceptual developments in geography and to account for the essentially geographical nature of organising, in addition to the sociomaterial nature of collective activities. To this end, I problematise and extend Wilhoit's (2018:2) proposal that 'organizational space is constitutive of (and constituted by) organization.' Rather than only space, I argue for the *geographical* constitutiveness of organising.

Having problematised existing OS engagements with geographical ideas, in Chapter 3 I turn to a review of human geography literature. Engaging with human geography debates, I specifically examine literature on space, place, scale and territory in order to show how geographers have developed these four notions by drawing on different philosophical perspectives and by theorising them as fundamentally interwoven. Through this, I also point to the enabling factors from the review of human geography that motivate the understanding of space, place, scale and territory in this thesis. Here, at the intersection of organisation studies and geography, rather than beholden to theory, I challenge the academic silos of both fields and think *with* the theoretical ideas that each offers.

Having challenged the boundaries of organisation studies as it relates to human geography and considered the diversity of ways geographical concepts have been developed, I propose in Chapter 4 a means for bringing them together: namely, the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a new conceptual framework. Further, because enacting research involves 'plugging in' different concepts to allow new ideas to emerge (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012), I argue that the geographical constitutiveness of organising can be thought of in terms of plugging two concepts in to each other: namely, Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notions of rhizome and assemblage (elaborated by, for example, DeLanda, 2006). The resultant conceptualisation of 'rhizomatic assemblage' serves as a metaphorical tool for understanding the sociomaterial world,

for apprehending the rhizomatic nature of assemblages of collective activities and their consequentiality-and-potentiality, and also for appreciating the co-implication of the researcher and their ethics in discerning particular rhizomatic assemblages. Finally, in this chapter I arrive at the research question: *How can collective activities of organising be understood as geographically constituted?*

To respond to this question, I develop in Chapter 5 a methodological argument that draws on new materialism and, in particular, Barad's (2007; 2014) agential realism to argue in favour of a diffractive ethnographic approach (Gullion, 2018) to thinking about the geographical constitutiveness of organising. In line with a critical perspective, diffractive ethnography demands making clear the political stance of inquiry. To this end, I develop a philosophical argument that the 'agential cuts' researchers enact in phenomena imply the researcher's own ethics and way of knowing the world (epistemology) are both interwoven with what exists in the world itself (ontology). Through this methodological argument, my own ethical stance toward justice surfaces as I interrogate my perspective through several diffractions (Barad, 2007). These diffractions elaborate the research site, my approach to fieldwork – including the methods used to gather data – and the process of moving iteratively between gathering data, analysis, and writing.

Through a diffractive lens, different perspectives on the world emerge and, in the context of this thesis, a diffractive ethnography on the geographical constitutiveness of organising provokes multiple perspectives on the rhizomatic assemblage of empirical inquiry: the Redbricks, a housing estate in Hulme, Manchester. While any number of agential cuts could be enacted, I discuss in Chapter 6 the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage through four cuts: genealogising, shaping, cultivating and geometabolising. These provoke new ways of thinking about the relationship of collective activities to geographies, such as the constructions of continuity that stabilise a genealogical historical perspective; the fluctuating intensities and relational agencies of collective activities; the values and sociomateriality associated with cultural

territories, and their relation to a place-based community; and the relationality of scalar unfolding(s) on the Redbricks to other material changes. Together, this chapter enlivens our understanding of sociomaterial rhizomatic assemblages, geographically constituted collective activities, and the becomings-together that constitute the world.

This thesis joins others in seeking to think with different perspectives in order to say something new about a complex world. In this particular case, organisation studies and geography provide a means for contributing to a narrative of sociomaterial interdependence. The geographical constitutiveness of organising provokes a new understanding of the world as rhizomatic assemblages of collective activities, and for thinking, doing and acting differently. It makes an effort to further a narrative about the interwovenness of our sociomaterial lives, and with an ethical orientation toward justice. Still, there is much more work to be done. The opening broached in this thesis could – and should – be developed further and extended into new contexts, which I consider in Chapter 7.

Finally, I note that, through my empirical fieldwork, I do not aspire to provide a comprehensive accounting of the Redbricks. Rather, by selecting *some* of the diverse practices on the estate to research – and therefore to improve – I seek to enliven our understanding of the diversity of everyday life. In this sense, I present a narrative that can begin to highlight the multiplicity of ways our lives are interwoven sociomaterial unfoldings, the different ways organising on the estate is geographically constituted, and the necessity for both research and practice to adopt an ethical orientation. Thus, in this thesis, I have sought to interweave insights from different disciplines in order to something new and contribute to a compelling narrative for the future.

2 Literature Review I: Organisation studies and engaging with geography

This chapter reviews relevant literature in organisation studies in order to position this thesis with respect to extant literature, and to begin the development of the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework. It does so by first providing a brief introduction to organisation studies (Section 2.1). Then, it reviews literature by identifying a split in the field between organisation and organising in order to contextualise the contribution of this thesis (Section 2.2). Next, it reviews critical areas of inquiry in organisation studies, building an understanding of the critical perspective adopted in this thesis (Section 2.3). Finally, it reviews engagements of organisation studies literature with space, place, scale and territory (Section 2.4). Thus, this chapter develops toward a more in depth examination of these key geographical concepts in Chapter 3. In this chapter and the next, I adopt a narrative approach (e.g. Hammersley, 2001) in reviewing existing research in order to establish an understanding of the complexity of ideas in both organisation studies and geography. Indeed, this chapter serves as an entry point into debates in organisation studies, whilst acknowledging that, far from having reached a conclusion, these debates are alive and ongoing.

2.1 Introduction: What is organisation studies?

Before reviewing literature in organisation studies, this section begins by briefly asking a more fundamental question: What is organisation studies? This question implicitly frames the entire chapter, as the forthcoming review will highlight divergences in the field about: the subject of research in organisation studies (hereafter 'OS'); the underlying assumptions and approach; and the existing theoretical engagements, in particular with regard to the geographical concepts of space, place, scale and territory. Still, before pointing to the differences within OS, I briefly point to commonalities of the field.

Drawing on a range of contemporary understandings, OS in this chapter is considered a broad area of study that seeks to better understand how humans engage in coordinated, collective activities as part of the social world (e.g. Barnard, 1938; Fineman et al, 2010). These activities are seen to encompass the study of organisation, organisations, organising, and ‘the organised,’ (Hinings, 2010:661). This broad remit enables OS to function as a heuristic for focusing inquiry about the social world, while still remaining open to drawing upon an interdisciplinary range of theoretical and methodological perspectives (e.g. Jackson and Carter, 2009; Hinings, 2010). However, the range of perspectives has not been unproblematic for OS researchers, and significant disagreements culminated in the ‘paradigm wars’ of the 1980s and 1990s (Czarniawska, 1998; Weick, 1999). Still, more recently, scholars have embraced this plurality and acknowledged the potential for meaningful interdisciplinary engagements that contribute to OS (Augier et al, 2005; Hjorth and Reay, 2018). This is particularly true in critical OS research (e.g. Alvesson et al, 2009), and indeed, this thesis seeks to make one such critical contribution to the field.

I begin by reviewing two approaches of OS: namely, research that focuses inquiry on organisation and that which focuses on organising. In doing so, I do not intend to definitively establish a ‘true’ scope of the field. Instead, such a perspective contextualises this thesis as one furthering of ongoing debates in OS. Indeed, I adopt the view of Hughes (2013:270, citing Eccles and Nohria 1992) that this review seeks to counter a ‘...pragmatic concern that when we are immersed in the present it is hard to know what is fleeting, what is idiosyncratic, and what is part of more permanent and systemic change.’ Thus, the following section draws out significant, more permanent cleavages among scholars with respect to OS research on organisation (Section 2.2.1) and organising (Section 2.2.2), after which these are both problematised (Section 2.2.3), leading to a consideration of critical research in the field (Section 2.3).

While the first sections of the chapter trace key divergences in the focus of OS literature and approaches taken – and in so doing highlight the plurality of OS as a field – I do so

with the aim of offering an assimilative view of OS as a field with an enduring concern for collective activities of organisation and organising (Weick, 1999). As will become clear, an unsettled question revolves around the boundaries of OS – where and how to demarcate the limits of collective activities. Briefly looking ahead, I will return to the how boundaries have been taken up in existing OS literature engaging with the geographical concepts of space, place, scale and territory, and a concern with boundaries is interwoven with the ‘geographical constitutiveness of organising’ as a conceptual framework. Indeed, while I aim to contribute to the interdisciplinary debates in OS, doing so will itself require ‘cross[ing] over a perceived boundary’ (Hughes, 2013:272) into geography to explore the notions of space, place, scale and territory in more detail (Chapter 3). First, however, a review of literature in OS serves demonstrates the field’s enduring concern for understanding collective activities, a concern which this thesis takes up.

2.2 The subject of OS: Organisation or organising?

While research in OS studies of a range of social areas of collective activities, understandings of what constitutes the subject of this study – in particular whether to study organisation as a singular entity, organisations in the plural grouped by certain shared characteristics, organising as a process, or ‘the organised’ – is not universally agreed (i.e. Hernes, 2004; Scott and Davis, 2007). Still, an enduring split in these different understandings is a focus on organisation on the one hand, and a processorientated interest in organising on the other. To examine these debates, this section first reviews of research that focuses on organisation (Section 2.2.1), then research on organising (Section 2.2.2). Finally, some initial reflections on these two approaches are offered (Section 2.2.3), which motivates a review of OS literature that adopts a different, more critical perspective.

2.2.1 OS research on organisation

While delimiting research within the remit of OS is contestable, it is generally agreed that early OS sought to improve productivity by applying a range of techniques to studying organisations guided by a scientific method (e.g. Scott and Davis, 2007; Tosi, 2009; Grey, 2017). This gradually shifted to the pursuit of insights about worker behaviour, their motivations and informal relationships, and the role of leadership in organisations (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939), which coalesced in human relations theory and people management. A concern with the human side of organisation led to explorations of decision-making by, for example, considering the characteristics of particular kind of organisations (March and Simon, 1958; Woodward, 1965) and by drawing on economic ideas in agency theory (Mitnick, 1986). Still, this research generally shared the aim of prior OS research: namely, to improve an organisation's efficiency and competitive performance (e.g. Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Eisenhardt, 1989).

Over time, the concern with human relations evolved and organisation scholars more ambitiously sought to understand organisational culture. This encompassing focus on culture reflected a shift in understanding: studying organisations in terms of the behaviour only partially explains what happens in organisations. Instead, the focus turned to the collection of shared values and assumptions that comprise an organisation's culture (Dawson, 1996). At the same time, researchers sought other ways for framing the study of organisation, including by describing how characteristics of an organisation are adapted to reflect contingencies arising from its particular situation (Donaldson, 2001); and how organisations are adaptive to their environment, and how that environment simultaneously constrains the possibilities of organisation (Hannan and Freeman, 2009). This and subsequent research has begun to frame OS around the idea of change. In particular, moving toward the present, studies of organisation have rethought the dominant bureaucratic model of organisation, which has been accompanied by a surge in OS around managing change in 'postbureaucratic' organisation (Grey, 2017).

Shared among these approaches to OS is an emphasis on the organisation as a structure that constitutes the subject of inquiry, within which human relations, culture, and so on, occur, and which ought to be managed and controlled in order to improve organisational performance. Within this remit are many of the topics scholars conducting research on organisation continue to focus on. These include work and management, efficiency, social relations within organisation, decision-making, culture, bureaucracy, and change. However, what also begins to emerge from this is a sense that diverse disciplines and ideas have been incorporated into OS, including engineering, sociology, behavioural science, economics, contingency theory, and so on. Similarly, it is also clear that OS has sought to generate better understandings of collective activities from these different perspectives, whilst maintaining a particular focus on how collective activities occur in formal organisations (i.e. corporations, bureaucracies). Additionally, there is a shared emphasis on improving the efficiency and performance of organisations across these perspectives.

However, this OS research on organisation can be problematised. First, some scholars have suggested differing origins of OS research, such as by pointing to the work of Max Weber on bureaucracy as an origin of research on organisation and a key influence in the development of the field, though they acknowledge Weber's work was often misinterpreted in OS (Perry, 1992). Second, others have built on this by arguing that histories of OS are constructions that serve to justify the role of managers within organisations, in other words to legitimise management as a feature of organisation (e.g. Grey, 2017). Third, in this narrative there is a clear sense of progression and distinction between different streams of thought in OS. However, others have shown how OS as a field is not historically determined, but rather can be distinguished by the underlying assumptions that researchers adopt in seeking to understand organisational phenomena (e.g. Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Tosi, 2009). A related concern is the assumed aim of research on organisation: namely, to what extent should efficiency and improving management be the motivation and goal for OS? More fundamentally, accounting for the assumptions underpinning inquiry suggests it is necessary to

consider, justify, and potentially rethink *whether* the structure of organisation constitutes the subject of focus for OS research.

Building on the above, some scholars have highlighted that OS research is not solely focussed on organisation, but rather that it should ‘encompass more attention to flexibility and process – organising vs. organisations – and [use] more dynamic relational models rather than to those portraying stable entities’ (Scott and Davis, 2007:x). Such an expansion of focus from structures of organisation to processes of organising reflects a shift in philosophical approaches to OS (e.g. Hernes, 2014), which some have described as the postmodern turn in OS (e.g. Fleetwood, 2005). This shift is evident in the social sciences more generally (e.g. Doherty et al, 1992), including in geography (see Chapter 3). So, while OS research focusing on organisation continues, another area of research in the field inquires into processes of organising, which is reviewed next. It is worth noting that further OS approaches have brought into question the aim of research, and the ways that OS research on *both* organisation and organising might legitimise management or seek to improve its performance, reflecting a critical approach (e.g. Alvesson et al, 2009), which is reviewed subsequently (Section 2.3). First, however, let us turn to OS literature that focuses on processes of organising as its subject of inquiry.

2.2.2 From organisation to organising in OS

A catalyst and essential contribution to the shift in OS from organisation to organising point was *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (Weick, 1969), and in particular its subsequent, more well-known 1979 edition (Weick, 1979) (e.g. Chia, 1999; Anderson, 2006; Czarniawska, 2008; Langlely and Tsoukas, 2017). While Weick continued the broad tradition in OS of seeking to understand systems, this work stimulated a reorientation toward processes of organising into OS debates (Czarniawska, 2005; Clegg et al, 2005). Within the turn toward organising, early research focussed on the

importance of processes in the context of organisation, such as sensemaking (Weick, 1979), organisational change (Pettigrew, 1985) decision-making (March, 1994) and innovation (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). Taken further, organisation itself has been considered emergent phenomenon (Cooren and Fairhurst, 2004), and there has also been a considerable broadening of research to include a much wider range of phenomena of organising, with a focus on process as fluidity, flow and interconnections over time (see Langley and Tsoukas, 2017 for an overview). Indeed, while scholars study organising within a 'typical' organisation, such as a technology company (e.g. Blackler et al, 2000), this has also extended beyond the organisation itself. Consider that an entire issue of the journal *Organization* explored organising *between* organisations (Ahrne et al, 2007). Scholars have looked at organising in the context of: collaborative entrepreneurship as the creation of heterotopias (Hjorth, 2005), women and (dis)organising the city (Czarniawska, 2010), organising Christmas (Hancock and Rehn, 2011), partial organisation (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011) temporary organising (Bakker et al, 2016), and many others. Shared among these is destabilisation of the focus on organisation as a fixed, stable structure. Instead, with a shift toward organising, the interplay of actions and time came to the fore (Hernes, 2014), and a processual focus explores how interactions over time give rise to emergent phenomena, and a broadening to consider collective activities of organising in new context, and with new subjects for inquiry.

Nevertheless, this perspective can be problematised for presenting the transition to organising without adequately accounting for the influences driving it. As the book's title makes clear, Weick (1979) writes from the perspective of a social psychologist, and the turn toward a process orientation in OS derives from this: social psychology is about the relationships among individuals and how these relationships in turn influence those individuals (Stangor, 2011). In other words, building on a concern with processes of interaction among people, Weick extended processes of interacting in relation to organising. However, an interest in process is only one of many turns toward engagement with social theories in OS. Indeed, some scholars have linked Weick's

work with the emergence of postmodern philosophy more generally (e.g. Langenberg and Wesseling, 2016). But, as mentioned previously, Burrell and Morgan (1979) likewise contributed to rethinking the assumptions in OS from an explicitly philosophical perspective. Applying insights derived in sociology, they established distinct paradigms for the analysis of organisation as a part of the social world. Significantly, this brought explicitly into OS debates a concern with the underlying assumptions of the field. In doing so, one might consider the uptake of Burrell and Morgan (1979) in OS as encouraging a wider range of interdisciplinary engagements with social theories than Weick's application of social psychology (see, for example, Jones and Munro, 2005). Seen this way, the turn toward processes of organising is part of a broader attempt at elaborating the philosophical underpinnings – and therefore justification of and focus for – OS.

Building on this, and indicated previously, rather than focussing on a defined, fixed entity – namely, 'organisation' – an emphasis on organising destabilises the analytical scope of OS to include a wider range of social practices (Peltonen et al, 2018). In other words, organising challenges the question of what ought to be the subject of OS. Indeed, if process is understood as the 'emergent relational interactions and patternings that are recursively intimated in the fluxing and transforming of our lifeworlds.' (Chia, 1995:582), then it entails 'leaving open what actually emerges from processes' and thereby introduces the potentiality for change (Hernes, 2014:4). Seen this way, the focus on organising entails breaking down the boundary of what can be considered the focus of OS. Instead of organisation, it becomes possible to examine organising as a phenomenon of the social world in a more diverse range of contexts.

Still, a concern that remains unaddressed in the shift toward organising in OS – also raised in OS research on organisation – is the extent that such inquiry seeks to improve the practice of organising, and specifically managing and controlling such organising (Grey, 2017). Indeed, building from work that considers the philosophical assumptions about OS, it is possible to distinguish different approaches to studying organising based

on the aim of research. Similar to research on organisation indicated previously, on the one hand, research might seek to understand organising in order to recommend how to manage organising processes. For example, following their consideration of Weick's philosophical ideas, Langenberg and Wesseling (2016) conclude by discussing and the implications these have for management. On the other hand, research might seek to critique the aim of managing and controlling processes of organising and, in some cases, seek to actively explore alternatives. These latter approaches are taken up in a critical approach to OS, which I explore below (Section 2.3). First, however, based on the narrative reviews of organisation and organising I draw out several relevant reflections about OS.

2.2.3 Origin myths: problematising the trajectories of OS

Having presented succinct narrative reviews of research on organisation and organising in OS, it is worth asking: why does this perspective matter? While I seek to convey to this a particular significance, my intended meaning may not be clear. Indeed, I cannot know the meaning ascribed to such a review by the reader, which will inevitably depend on any of a variety of factors (existing knowledge, the particularities of the moment, pre-existing beliefs, and so on). In other words, there is a risk that reproducing these narratives leads to a negative double contingency, whereby the reader misses my intended meaning and I fail to anticipate their interpretation (Luhmann, 1995). To confront this and aspire toward a positive understanding, I shall be clear: my intended meaning is to point to significant cleavage, thought by no means the only one, within OS that reflects longer-term, enduring changes in the field (Hughes, 2013; for an elaboration on historical analyses in OS, see Üsdiken and Kieser, 2004). Specifically, the cleavage I focus on is a difference in understanding of the subject of focus: organisation as a fixed entity or organising as an ongoing process. As discussed previously, this is connected to a difference in the underlying philosophical perspectives about the social world adopted by researchers. Additionally, by pointing to this cleavage

in a historical context, I intend to describe how the current state of OS came into being, but also how it might change (Rowlinson et al, 2009). Thus, my intended meaning is to not to establish a background of the field of OS, but rather to offer an interpretation of these narratives.

While a variety of debates exist in OS, reflections on the literature reviewed thus far enables a focus on several points of departure for this thesis.

First, in one sense, the construction of a dichotomous split between organisation and organising is false. As March (2008:9) pointed out over a decade ago, OS was diverse and plural, a 'large, heterogeneous field' drawing on a range of disciplines. It remains so today (e.g. Hinings, 2010). Still, it is clear that there is no singular origin of OS. Instead, these different approaches might be considered 'origin myths' that enable comprehension of how organisation and organising emerged as focal points of inquiry (Munro and Huber, 2012; Burrell, 2018). Maintaining either of these myths depends first on its adoption, then for focusing analysis on particular aspects of organisation (structure, decision-making etc.) or organising (process, change, sensemaking etc.). In fact, these might be usefully viewed as complementary: practices of organising depend on structures of organisation, just as the type and characteristics of organisation depend on processes of organising. A narrow focus on either upholds the false premise that the remit of OS is to prioritise one or the other (Hernes, 2014).

A second reflection builds on whether research adopts one or the other myths. Assumptions about organisation or organising entails adhering – often uncritically – to previous scholarship in accordance with the 'giants' upon whose shoulders OS scholars supposedly stand (e.g. Chen, 2003; Courpasson et al, 2008). Indeed, the two narrative reviews and divergent understandings of the subject of OS are reflective of a divergence in the social sciences more broadly. In particular, this divergence stems from adherence to underlying philosophical perspectives. Without giving this topic the nuance it deserves (it will be returned to when discussing the critical perspective of this thesis in Section 2.3.2, and further developed in Chapters 3 and 5) these approaches

can be seen as two distinct approaches to understanding the social world. On the one hand is a structuralist view, with a focus on the forms and structures that constitute the world (Gibson and Burrell, 1979). This generally aligns with studies of organisation as a fixed entity. On the other hand, postmodern and poststructuralist philosophical perspectives have variously sought to move past structuralism to consider processes and the capacity for action to influence change, calling in to question the stability and fixity of the structures advocated in structuralist thinking (e.g. Strati, 2000). This latter understanding can be seen to parallel the stream of research on organising. Although OS has continued to adopt philosophical underpinnings grounded in both form (organisation) and action (organising), some OS research has drawn on social theorists that seek to bridge these, such as Luhmann, Latour, Elias and Giddens (e.g. Hernes 2004; Jones and Munro, 2005; Czarniawska, 2017). In a sense, these are attempts to merge the myths of the origins of OS, or potentially create new ones, and explore how social theorists and contemporary thinkers can improve our understanding of organisation and organising (Jones and Monroe, 2005). As we shall see, works across these different philosophical perspectives have all been engaged with in geography debates, as well (Chapter 3).

Finally, a third reflection relates to the challenge that research on organising makes to the conceptualisation of boundaries in OS. In particular, while research on organisation focuses on a definable entity with clear boundaries (e.g. Tosi, 2009), research on organising emphasises that inquiry can extend to a range of contexts, and that organising occurs outside the formal organisation in the social world (e.g. Wilhoit and Kisselburg, 2015). Indeed, this challenges the field to confront a fundamentally ontological concern with what can be said to exist. This ties to the aforementioned philosophical divergence and hints at deeper ontological considerations (returned to in Chapter 5). However, in both cases there is an underlying assumption regarding the subject of focus. Thus, organisation assumes an entity with boundaries, whereas organising assumes processes of collective activity within, between or – in some instances – without organisations. Still, what generally remains assumed in both is that

studying organisation and organising ought to focus on collective activities, often occurring in the context of formal, paid work (a point feminist scholars have critiqued at length, e.g. Calás and Smircich, 1996).

Building on the split between organisation and organising as myths, these reflections establish key areas of debate in OS. Indeed, several major points of disagreement between them emerge. The differing subject of focus – organisation or organising – is connected to understandings of structure versus process, which relates to the underlying philosophical assumptions upon which research builds. While this brings different understandings of the boundaries of OS to the fore, it does not offer a conclusive means for conceptualising those boundaries. Still, evident in both narratives is a concern with understanding collective activity, despite differences in the aim and approach. Some research seeks to improve the performance of organisation or organising in the social world, and in so doing furthering the aim of managing those structures or processes. Others, however, question this prevailing emphasis, making different subjects a more central concern for research and stating explicitly the aim of inquiry. This latter stream of thought builds upon social theories to inform the development of knowledge about the social phenomena of organisation and organising. This can be considered a more critical approach to OS that questions key assumptions of OS, and is reviewed next.

2.3 Critical research on organisation and organising

Scholars adopt critical perspectives in OS in a variety of ways and, as alluded to previously, these often explicitly critique the aim of research and the ways of developing knowledge toward that aim. To do so, many critical scholars make explicit the link of their research with social theories, adhering to a range of underlying philosophical orientations, including Marxism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, post-colonialism, feminism and others (e.g. Alvesson et al, 2009; Alcadipani and Hassard, 2010).

However, what these share is an attempt to integrate social theories into the critical study of organisation and organising, as well as management.

In reviewing this literature, this section first provides an overview of the trajectory of critical streams of thought in OS by focusing on the Critical Management Studies area of inquiry (Section 2.3.1). Building on this, I draw out what is understood as ‘critical’ in this thesis and outline the critical perspective adopted herein (Section 2.3.2). Finally, the prior review of research on organisation and organising is brought together with this critical perspective (Section 2.3.3). From this, a conceptual opening emerges for expanding how OS engages with theories and ideas in other disciplines, including relatively recent efforts drawing on ideas in geography.

2.3.1 OS and Critical Management Studies

Much of the research in OS that could be considered critical sits within the broad interdisciplinary area of Critical Management Studies (hereafter ‘CMS’). Importantly, some scholars argue that CMS debates inadequately represent perspectives such as feminist voices (Calás and Smircich, 2006); require rethinking CMS’ understanding of critique (e.g. Böhm and Spoelstra, 2004); or do not have a firm foundation in social theory (Klikauer, 2015). Partially, this may reflect the limits of what is deemed a contribution to CMS, in particular how the label ‘critical’ is applied. Indeed, what it means to be ‘critical’ remains – and likely will continue to remain – a concern for CMS scholars (e.g. Butler and Spoelstra, 2014; Klikauer, 2015). This thesis faces the same concern (and seeks to address this in Section 2.3.2 and Chapter 5). However, as a starting point, a background of CMS serves to contextualise this thesis and its contribution to critical research in OS.

Some scholars link the origin of CMS with the publication of an eponymous edited collection (Alvesson and Wilmott, 1992; see Klikauer, 2015), while others suggest its

roots in fact extend earlier in historical and cultural critiques of management and organisation (Adler, 2007; Spicer et al, 2009; Alvesson et al, 2009). For CMS, 'mainstream' management research is inherently connected with and complicit in the dominant capitalist system. By extension, challenging this link constitutes a key driver in the development – and indeed definition – of the discipline (e.g. Alvesson et al, 2009; Stoborod and Swann, 2014). In this sense, CMS research takes as its starting point a critique of various features of capitalism, and more specifically on their manifestations in management and organisation contexts (Alvesson et al, 2009).

Aside from adopting a critical perspective on the connection of management and organisation to capitalism (e.g. Jessop, 2013), there are debates about many features of CMS, not least how to characterise it. Fournier and Grey (2000) describe CMS as, 'primarily, an academic phenomenon' and sub-discipline of management studies that aspires toward 'theoretical plurality' (Fournier and Grey, 2000:12). On the other hand, others describe it as a more multidisciplinary movement incorporating a range of perspectives, and drawing on the philosophical traditions of (Frankfurt School) Critical Theory, critical realism, poststructuralism, postmodernism and Marxist labour process theory (Alvesson et al, 2009). Whether seen as a sub-discipline or a movement, there is little doubt that CMS remains an academic undertaking largely confined to business schools in the United Kingdom, which is the case for OS as well (e.g. Alvesson et al, 2009; Rowlinson and Hassard, 2011). However, in recent years, increasing international academic engagement with CMS is evident, particularly in business schools in the United States and Europe, and through the biennial International Critical Management Studies Conference (e.g. Koss Hartmann, 2014; Grey et al, 2016). Still, it remains relatively confined to academia, and at the same time has developed diverging viewpoints over the extent to which CMS applies the philosophical traditions argued to comprise it (e.g. Adler, 2007; Klikauer, 2015) and over whether CMS should engage with the practitioners – identified by Parker (2010) as activists, managers, and policy-makers – for whom CMS research is directly relevant. This reveals the wider debate regarding the politics and aim of social research, similarly reflected in the prior

review of OS, in which some research sought to improve the managing and controlling of organisation and organising. In CMS, this becomes a political question for researchers: how should the field respond to the unquestioned pursuit in 'mainstream' management studies (Visser, 2010) – and in 'mainstream' OS – of performativity?

Performativity, understood as the pursuit of knowledge to improve efficiency (e.g. of business and organisational performance), is problematised in CMS and some consider a 'non-performative intent' to be a key way of delineating research as critical and therefore within the remit of CMS (Fournier and Grey, 2000:17). In other words, and recalling the prior narratives of research on organisation and organising, CMS is distinctive for bringing into question the desire to improve management and organisation performance. Indeed, this has been a key concern of CMS research, which King (2015) labelled the 'performative turn' in the field. However, what this stance therefore favours is unclear. Indeed, this leads to several questions: Should researchers avoid considering how to improve performance or should they challenge a performance orientation directly? And how does this inform the (dis)engagement with the aforementioned practitioners?

Alvesson et al (2009) favour a distinction between 'technical performativity' and 'critical performativity,' and echo Spicer et al (2009) in advocating for the latter, which consists of 'active and subversive intervention into managerial discourses and practices...[that is]...achieved through affirmation, care, pragmatism, engagement with potentialities, and a normative orientation' (Spicer et al, 2009:538). However, this understanding of performativity has in itself been critiqued from various perspectives, including that it relies on a misinterpretation of the original theorists who developed the idea and, in so doing, nullifies its political potential (Cabantous et al, 2015); that it overemphasises the power of discourse in leading to emancipatory change (Fleming and Banerjee, 2016); and that it misses the complexities that arise from real interventions (King, 2015). Alternatively, the notion of 'progressive performativity' has been proposed to alleviate some of these concerns (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014). Still, the continued debates about performativity for CMS reflects how CMS research and researchers bring the aim

of their research into view and make it explicit (e.g. Parker and Parker, 2017). The concern with performativity, as with a 'critical' perspective on the relation of management, organisation and organising to capitalism is a further key feature of CMS research.

If the claim about performativity with respect to CMS has been contentious and provoked ongoing debates, two other key features seen to delineate CMS have proven less so. These features, as proposed by Fournier and Grey (2000), are denaturalisation and reflexivity. De-naturalisation involves problematising the status quo as 'natural' and inevitable, thereby opening up the possibility of alternative formulations of society. And reflexivity casts doubt on the objectivism and universalism that characterise 'mainstream' research, and in so doing questions the values and knowledge claims within one's own research. As Thompson (2004) notes, however, these two concepts are both relatively accepted not only in CMS but also in much contemporary critical social research. Thus, while making the aim of research explicit and challenging performativity remain essential, the question of what constitutes CMS – what to include and therefore exclude – remains an ongoing concern for scholars in the field. For example, CMS researchers grapple with how to reconcile teaching performance-oriented management in business schools with their own critical research, a clearly reflexive and somewhat contradictory position (e.g. Rowlinson and Hassard, 2011; Learmonth and Humphreys, 2011).

The three characteristics of CMS outlined by Fournier and Grey (2000) have been reproduced in many subsequent CMS works (e.g. Tadajewski, 2010; Alvesson et al, 2009; Koss Hartmann, 2014; Wickert and Schaefer, 2014; Fleming and Banerjee, 2016; among many others). Indeed, they constitute a starting point – but not a definitive conclusion – for reflecting on what constitutes a 'critical' perspective, and in particular how to deal with the pernicious issue of performativity. In particular, this thesis draws on recent CMS work that has sought to move past the preoccupation within CMS on capitalist management, organisation and organising. Drawing on anarchist theories, these scholars direct research toward 'alternative organisation' (Parker et al, 2007;

Parker et al, 2014), understood as radically different social arrangements that are guided by principles such as autonomy, solidarity and responsibility. Building on this, Parker and Parker (2017) urge ways of thinking and of researching that move beyond the preoccupation with performativity. Instead, they point to alternative organisations as allies with whom CMS should engage, as part of an ‘agonistic’ stance toward political engagements. This will be returned to in the next sub-section.

From the above, it should be clear that CMS calls into question many of the elements of the prior narratives of organisation (Section 2.2.1) and organising (Section 2.2.2). For example, the recent turn in OS toward culture management might be seen as attempts to manage and control the internal world and identity of workers (Wilmott, 1993). As Grey (2017:65) describes, ‘culture management aspires to intervene in and regulate being, so that there is no distance between individuals’ purposes and those of the organisation for which they work.’ From a CMS perspective, therefore, culture management oppresses the workers’ individualist, autonomous identity in the service of management and improving performance. In the research on organising, a CMS perspective would challenge works that unquestioningly seek to improve processes of organising through researching them, and favour instead making explicit what kinds of organising to encourage (e.g. Reedy et al, 2016; discussed further in Section 2.3.2, below). Indeed, there is a clear shift in emphasis in CMS from seeking to understand phenomena of management, organisation and organising in general to particular approaches that challenge the existing dominant ways of understanding and, in various ways, engage with the question of performativity.

Building on the above, I now articulate the particular critical perspective adopted in this thesis, then draw this perspective together with the prior review (Section 2.2) of research on organisation and organising.

2.3.2 A clarification: What is it to be critical?

The previous section sought to establish some key contours of debate about features of CMS and critical research in OS. In building on this, I acknowledge that through this account of CMS, I have reproduced an existing narrative about this area of inquiry – not unlike the origin myths of organisation and organising (Section 2.2.3).

However, I enact a particular version of CMS in this narrative, and in doing so I likewise adapt it (McLean and Alcadipani, 2008). In the review, I drew out the aim of research as a central concern for CMS, and for OS more broadly. I also pointed to engagements with social theories that develop from different philosophical underpinnings. In this sense, I drew attention to how a critical perspective is constantly evolving through engagements with new ideas, not immutable, and therefore constantly capable of realising transformation (Czarniawska, 2004). So, having acknowledged the changing nature of critique, below I weave together salient characteristics to elaborate the critical perspective adopted in this thesis.

First, a critical perspective on OS entails recognising that, as the name suggests, the focus of research in OS is on organisation and organising as phenomena, not on management. This not only de-naturalises the ‘status quo,’ but also extends denaturalisation to existing understandings of OS that focus on contexts where organisation or organising are studied to improve the performance of management, but also CMS work that merely aims to critique management. So, drawing on the concern with performativity, a critical perspective concerns itself with the performance of organisation and organising. Relatedly, a critical perspective leaves open the possibility of new collective activities of organising becoming subjects of OS, as critique itself evolves. In this sense, a critical perspective entails not only moving past improving/critiquing management, but also the possibility of moving beyond formal organisation as the remit of the field, a move evident in some research on organising (Section 2.2.2).

Second, building further upon performativity debates, a critical perspective recognises that research is inherently tied to practice (e.g. Czarniawska, 2004). Indeed, a critical perspective recognises the inherently political nature of research, and therefore requires the researcher to make their stance explicit. This means reflexively accounting for the understandings and doings of the world that the research(er) seeks to improve. Therefore, a critical perspective entails a particular orientation toward improving practices in the social world, which I label '*selective* performativity.' In the context of OS, this means a selective, political choice about the kinds of organisation and organising that research seeks to improve. Drawing on Parker and Parker (2017) – who in turn build on Mouffe (2013, 2014) – this means that a critical perspective takes an 'agonistic' position: a middle between 'for' and 'against' that recognises the legitimacy and dominance of existing (capitalist) organisation and organising, but takes an adversarial stance toward them by demanding a continual series of confrontations. So, selective performativity involves making choices that select subjects of research that are confrontational instances of organisation and organising. By extension, this involves a political choice by the researcher in seeking to affirm confrontational practices. Thus, the researcher is implicated in the confrontational and political nature of research by choosing the subject of inquiry.

Finally, the prior points illustrate how applying a critical perspective demands that the researcher maintain constant reflexivity. Tied to the de-naturalisation of existing ways of doing in OS, it is necessary to continue to reflexively consider the core assumptions of the field. Among these assumptions, the philosophical underpinnings of research and remit of OS itself must be brought into view, questioned and challenged. The former leaves open the possibility that other philosophical traditions can offer novel insights into organisation and organising as phenomena of the social world. In this way, a critical perspective can enliven OS research and point to new directions for inquiry. By challenging OS, a critical perspective problematises the focus on formal organisation or organising, but also reflexively questions what constitutes organisation or organising itself. Thus, while collective activity frames this thesis' understanding of the focus of

OS, leaving open how and where this can be found in the world opens the possibility of new ways of understanding organisation and organising as collective activities in new contexts (however, see Chapter 5 for a reconsideration of reflexivity).

To conclude, by articulating this thesis' critical perspective, its application in research begins to emerge. A critical perspective means clearly focusing on organisation and organising, but with an openness to extending this to new contexts; adopting a selective performativity that acknowledges research as inherently political; and challenging core assumptions in the field. To illustrate this, the next section develops the critical perspective by reflecting on the prior reviews of OS and CMS.

2.3.3 Bringing together organisation studies, CMS and a critical perspective

This section draws together the review of OS (Section 2.2) with CMS (Section 2.3.1) and a critical perspective (Section 2.3.2). In doing so, I demonstrate the opportunity for considering OS literature in further detail that exhibits elements of a critical perspective, including OS work that engages with geography.

Returning to debates about performativity in CMS, these question the prevailing practice of aiming to improve management, which is often the aim of OS research on both organisation and organising. Still, discussions about performativity illustrate that the relation to performance is not a settled question among CMS researchers. Instead, these ongoing debates reflect that CMS research takes an inherently political stance toward what kinds of practice it seeks to improve (Parker and Parker, 2017). Indeed, research as political means giving preference to certain practices while seeking to produce particular knowledge(s) about the social world (e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Often in CMS, the prevailing critique of capitalism leads scholars to suggest their role is to encourage 'micro-emancipation' (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992) within organisations that exist as part of the dominant capitalist system. Others, looking

toward examples of difference in the present, focus their inquiry on other subjects, such as co-operatives (Malleon, 2013; Heras-Saizorbitoria, 2014; Cheney et al, 2014; Magni, 2014; Zitcer, 2015); community organising (Defilippis et al, 2009), rural collectives (Lambru and Petrescu, 2014), and the 'Occupy' movement (Lubin, 2012). In other words, the focus shifts to organisations that are alternatives to conventional or dominant capitalist organisation. Such a shift involves confronting the ethical and political stakes of research (Derrida, 1996), which in this thesis is understood as a political move made by scholars in aiming their research towards particular kinds of collective activities. Therefore, scholars that turn their focus to such alternatives can be seen to adopt the 'selective performativity' introduced previously. In this way, an element of a critical perspective is present in efforts to improve the understanding and performance of organisation and organising that aspires to be 'other,' and in seeking to realise difference from prevailing capitalist organisation and organising (Hjorth, 2005 relates such a stance to the idea of 'heterotopia' in Foucault, 1988). Still, this necessitates researchers making explicit their political stance about what *kinds* of difference and 'others' they seek to improve. Indeed, a terrorist organisation or white supremacist group might align with this element of a critical perspective. Thus, it is incumbent for researchers to make their political – and implicitly ethical – claims clear and justify the focus of inquiry.

By way of example, the political nature of research is evident in the prior narratives of organisation and organising, albeit often implicitly. Indeed, the review of research on organisation reflects an interest in studying organisation as a phenomenon from different perspectives (behaviour, culture etc.) with the aim of better understanding how managers can intervene and shape these features of organisation. The organising narrative is likewise political, first for taking a stance that questions the capacity to focus on the structure of organisation without understanding ongoing processes. However, in seeking to understand those processes (sensemaking, change, etc.), organising research may likewise aim to improve the management of these processes. Viewed from a critical perspective, such a stance is indeed a case of selective performativity,

but one that makes a political claim in favour of a managerial perspective on organisation and organising, potentially furthering the domination of 'managed' workers.

Aside from the inherent politicality of research, a critical perspective is also evident in articulations of the philosophical underpinnings of research. In CMS, a diverse set of intellectual origins – including Marxism, post-structuralism, feminism, anarchism, and others – suggest a move away from the unquestioning acceptance of the present so often clear in the narrative review of research on organisation, which might be deemed positivist for its unquestioning aim of improving management (e.g. Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009; Alvesson et al, 2009). The variety of philosophical origins in CMS suggests the plural perspectives that CMS seeks to build upon by de-naturalising the present. Additionally, while in the review of organisation literature a largely positivist approach was evident, in organising literature efforts are made to ground research in process theory (e.g. Hernes, 2014). Perhaps, this seeks to establish a clearer philosophical perspective for OS, as process theories also draw on a range of thinkers with differing philosophical perspectives (e.g. Bergson, Heidegger, Whitehead, etc.). Still, in both CMS and organising literatures, although established philosophical traditions infuse research with additional perspectives (e.g. Cunliffe, 2008), this often serves to retrench researchers' focus on prevailing formal organisation and/or organising (Klikauer, 2015). The critical perspective of this thesis asks scholars to make clear their political stance and direct attention to new areas of inquiry, *whilst also* reflexively establishing the philosophical perspectives and assumptions upon which research builds. Indeed, this can be done by opening up these philosophical ideas to rethinking.

Relatedly, CMS might be critiqued for its limited engagement with philosophical approaches drawing on process theory, in contrast to research on organising. The extent of thinking about process in CMS has largely to do with 'labour process theory' (e.g. Hassard et al, 2001). This, however, sits very much within the Marxist tradition in

CMS as it relates the labour process to work and organisation under capitalism. Indeed, labour process debates led to a significant theoretical split in CMS around the ‘missing subject:’ whether on the one hand labour process research focuses on labour processes in organisations and misses the subject of individuals, or on the other focuses on workers and managers and misses the subject of organisation (Thompson, 2009). While this hints at the broader split between structure and process within OS, it remains squarely focused on inquiring into relations within the formal, capitalist work organisation. In contrast, as discussed previously, research on organising challenges the boundaries of OS to look beyond this particular context, which CMS rarely does.

On the question of boundaries, CMS tends to focus on a clearly bounded understanding of organisation, which stems not only from an assumption about the importance of structures but also from a more practical reality. The situatedness of most CMS researchers in business schools means that, in addition to research, they teach students who will mostly be employed in capitalist organisations upon graduation (Reedy and Learmonth, 2009). The scholars therefore have an interest in making their research relevant to practice. Interestingly, Rowlinson and Hassard (2011) argue that this has led CMS to undergo a process of institutionalisation as researchers accept their predominant position in business schools. While not seeking to overstate this point, it seems that direct relation to practice is a key feature of CMS, which also might be said to OS – similarly situated in business school contexts. More specifically, while a critique of management is a core feature of CMS (e.g. Spicer et al, 2009; Butler and Spoelstra, 2014), this itself is rarely problematised, nor is the focus of research the formal, capitalist organisation. In fact, when Czarniawska (2017:146) argues that ‘management and OS are not about human nature, but about certain ways of life, and, more specifically, certain ways of work,’ the focus on ‘work’ appears to adopt a narrow understanding of ‘work,’ typically work outside the home and in exchange for income (e.g. Calás and Smircich, 1996). The critical perspective on OS adopted in this thesis, though, loosens the grip on this narrow focus by challenging this core assumption about focussing on ‘certain ways of work’ and provokes new contexts for inquiry.

One area that is beginning to develop new areas of inquiry is the aforementioned area of research on alternative organisation (Parker et al, 2007; 2014), which looks at diverse kinds of organisation as a phenomenon that exists in additional ways to capitalist organisation. Indeed, these are, in essence, ‘alternatives’ to an ideal-type capitalist organisation. This is slightly problematic, given that CMS makes clear that there is no such ideal-type. Instead, struggle against attempts at ‘pure’ capitalist organisation is inevitable (e.g. Fleming and Spicer, 2008). Still, the argument alternative organisation researchers make is that by engaging with them – by focusing their critique in new directions – it is possible for CMS to take a positive political stance about what CMS is *for*, not simply what it is *against* (Reedy and Learmonth, 2009; Parker and Parker, 2017). In this sense, alternative organisation builds toward a critical perspective in CMS and OS by questioning the prevailing assumption about the subject of inquiry and adopting a political stance toward exploring alternatives.

Research on organising likewise explores new contexts, including the examples mentioned previously (Section 2.2.2). These examples – of organising between organisations, organising Christmas, temporary organising etc. – reflect the opening up of OS to new phenomena of the social world. Further examples of work in this vein include Dussel and Ibarra-Colado’s (2006) work on organising human activities of production and commerce in the context of globalisation – to which it might also be added reproduction; Coupland’s (2014) consideration of how a rugby league organises docile bodies; and Mumby’s (2016) work on how corporate branding in capitalism entails ‘organising beyond organisation.’ These cases – and there are indeed others – take OS to new contexts and challenge the notion that OS are squarely focused on the organisation. Still, research on these phenomena can be done in order to improve practice, and are thus haunted by the political concern: what kinds of practice does research seek to improve?

Thus, not only seeking new contexts for OS research, but also the question of the political aim of such research, must be considered as part of a critical perspective. Interestingly, Reedy et al (2016) explicitly combine these approaches in their consideration of how alternative organising in a 'confederation of activist groups' contributes to identity formation and prefigurative politics through a process of 'individuation' (Reedy et al, 2016:2). By making a choice to consider an 'alternative' and by combining this with an emphasis on organising, this work adheres to this thesis' understanding of a critical perspective. Indeed, Reedy et al (2016) question prevailing assumptions, provoke a new understanding of boundaries of the subject of OS inquiry, and take an explicitly political stance. Indeed, further work seeking to selectively improve processes of organising – whether in questioning an event (e.g. Christmas), globalisation, the body, a confederation of groups, and so on – that challenges assumptions in OS serve to enliven the field by drawing together the different elements of a critical perspective. It is such an effort that this thesis undertakes.

To summarise, this section brought into view a range of concerns about OS and CMS through an elaboration on how a critical perspective brings about new ways of thinking and researching in the field. Various efforts to rethink the focus of OS were highlighted because they provoke a reflexive consideration of the subject – which from a critical perspective should be focused squarely on organisation and organising. The inherent connection of a political stance and performativity was elaborated, reflecting that a critical perspective demands clear political commitments from the researcher. And works that reconsider the core assumptions of OS were highlighted for the ways they exhibit a critical perspective. In the next section, I review further OS literature that similarly has taken up elements of a critical perspective and, in doing so, enlivened OS debates. In particular, I focus on efforts that engage with ideas from geography as a way of questioning core assumptions in the field and considering the relationship of organisation and organising to the geographies of the world. Still, as we shall see, the political stance inherent to a critical perspective is not always made clear, which speaks to a deeper ontological consideration (taken up further in Chapter 5).

2.4 OS engagements with geography

Similar to the 'performative turn' in CMS (King, 2015), another recent shift in OS has sought to engage with ideas derived in geography. In particular, this review focuses on engagements with how the geographical concepts of 'space,' 'place,' 'scale' and 'territory' have been taken up in OS debates. Related to the broader 'spatial turn' in the social sciences (Hubbard et al, 2002; Halford, 2004; Warf and Arias, 2009), the following sections will consider how OS scholars have applied these geographical ideas in ways that lead to new, fruitful insights for the field. Still, it also highlights that these interventions have typically occurred by applying the geographical concept of 'space' and considering its implications for OS, though several engagements with 'place,' 'scale' and 'territory' are also notable. I begin by overviewing early interventions in OS that engage with these geographical ideas, then move to more recent engagements (Section 2.4.1). I go on to describe research on the 'communicative constitution of organisation' and how geographical ideas have been taken up in this area of inquiry (Section 2.4.2). Finally, the section summarises the conceptual openings identified throughout, and concludes by pointing to the potential for further engaging with ideas in geography (Section 2.4.3).

This section highlights the extent of engagements with geographical ideas, but also limited engagements with geography literature itself, in which space, place, scale and territory have been developed in significantly more depth. This leads to the next chapter's exploration of the debates in geography about different ways space, place, scale and territory can be understood (Chapter 3), which in turn points to ways these richer understandings are integrated with OS research through the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework (Chapter 4).

2.4.1 OS engagements with geographical concepts

Early engagements of OS with geography

Initial works of scholars integrating ideas from geography with OS drew primarily upon the geographical idea of 'space,' and explored how space improves the understanding of organisation and organising. In so doing, they laid the foundation for subsequent OS inquiry, though this has predominantly continued to focus on relating OS to space. As we shall see, among these early works, different elements of a critical perspective are evident.

One of the first works that contributed to engaging OS with ideas from geography aimed at 'bringing space back in' to OS (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004). In seeking to spur this debate, the authors consider how OS can in fact be seen from the perspective of a series of spatial interventions. As an example, they explain:

...within scientific management, what did Taylor do other than reorganise the spatial arrangement of the entire organisation by dividing space into individual cells, so that every single activity had to take place within its own space (cell), separate from the others? (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004:1096)

In other words, the prior reviews of research on organisation and organising might be usefully rethought and described from this spatial perspective. Building their argument, Kornberger and Clegg (2004) draw primarily on research in architecture to argue that buildings, far from being passive, are active and 'generative' of the organisation that occurs within them. In this way, they point to the significance of materiality, the physical material of the world, as influential in organisation. This builds to an argument for architecture and OS to consider how buildings might be a positive force for processes of 'learning and becoming,' and a site where 'surprises emerge that cannot be intentionally produced and controlled' (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004:1108). Thus, this research utilises space to integrate several streams of thought in OS: the structure – literally – of a building as the site of the structure of organisation; but also the processes of learning that occur; and an emphasis on the possibility for new practices to emerge

therein. Thus, several elements of a critical perspective are evident. The authors maintain organisation and organising as their subject, seeking to encourage particular kinds of 'becoming' – reflecting their political stance – and challenge OS to engage with the materiality of phenomena. Indeed, applying space in this way, as well as arguing that materiality is significant in studying organisation and organising, together comprise a significant attempt at overcoming the structure and process divide in OS.

A contemporaneous book, *The spatial construction of organisation*, similarly sought to address this divide. In it, Hernes (2004, xviii, emphasis in original) aims to develop a theory of '*organisation as space* and say that any act of organising is about creating a space for human action and interaction.' To do this, organisation is considered emergent, unfinished, multiple and amorphous – drawing explicitly on process theories (e.g. Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) in order to consider a wider understanding of organisation and its evolution. Then, summarising the philosophical positions in OS focused on form (structure) and action (process), Hernes (2004:30-39) introduces 'third pole' theories – primarily derived from social theorists Luhmann, Latour, Elias and Giddens – to bridge these positions and build an argument for the need to understand organisation as 'contexts for human action and interactions.' Faulting 'context' as evocative of inwardness and of a perceived immutability, Hernes (2004) proposes space as a more apt way of understanding organisation and applies the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991) in distinguishing between different kinds of space – physical, social and mental – to illustrate this.

Before devoting attention to Lefebvre's three kinds of space, Hernes (2004:78) argues the possibility of identifying boundaries of space, which he describes as 'spatial fields.' These boundaries can be based on the substance of space (again physical, social and mental), or on how the boundaries regulate space through ordering, distinctions and thresholds. Following this, each of the Lefebvrian distinctions is considered in depth with relation to existing OS research, emphasising the tangibility and symbolic ordering of physical space; the mutual understanding implied by, but also confinement to

'thought' of, mental space; and the bondedness and identity differentiation inherent to social space. Finally, an attempt is made at integrating these through a consideration of 'spatial dynamics' in relation to organisation.

Hernes (2004) addresses important questions in attempting to integrate geographical ideas with OS. Similar to Kornberger and Clegg (2004), he takes up the challenge of bridging the structure/process divide, a significant cleavage in OS (recall Section 2.2). Still, equating context and space is, from the perspective of geography, problematic. Additionally, although likewise challenging core questions about organisation and maintaining this as the subject of inquiry, a reliance on Lefebvre misses the opportunity of potentially fruitful engagements with other geographical theorists. In fact, such engagements that limit their consideration to Lefebvre are common in OS explorations of geographical ideas. Still, Hernes' (2004) work clearly challenges core assumptions in OS, hinting at a critical perspective. Further, these assumptions are challenged with reference to other social theorists, which have likewise been taken up in geography debates to develop the notion of space – and also place, scale and territory – further (see Chapter 3). Finally, the effort to confront the question of boundaries by seeking to differentiate them spatially entails a significant rethinking of the boundedness of organisation and organising. This is taken up to an extent in work engaging with the notion of territory (explored further below). Still, an important question that is insufficiently addressed is the political nature, and therefore aim, of this integration of space with organisation. To what extent does it seek to selectively improve management, or to encourage new ways of thinking and doing?

OS scholars also explored place, scale and territory in early engagements with geographical ideas. In one such contribution, Brown and Humphreys (2006) identify ways people interpret their work environment as a 'place,' which they consider a discursive resource in which people invest meaning, and also one individuals use to articulate their, and their organisation's, identities. Similarly, Halford and Leonard (2005) consider place as a way to explore the contexts in which workplace subjectivities

are discursively formulated, though without seeking to develop an understanding of what constitutes place. As a final example, Alkon (2004) considers the role of heritage narratives in how a place seeks to address the challenge of erosion. While clearly efforts to bring the notion of 'place' to OS, these works offer limited development of existing understandings of place, instead emphasising the importance of particular places as relevant for analysis, and often explore the discursive ways place is understood in an organisation. From the perspective of this thesis, this might be seen as an uncritical perspective about the remit of OS by focusing solely – and unreflexively – on the formal organisation and not accounting for the assumptions underpinning place. An important exception to this is Burley et al (2007), who consider the ways that a 'sense of place' influences reactions to organisational reconstruction after a hurricane, and develop this through engagements with geographers. Still, 'sense of place' is only one concept related to place in geography, and there is substantial scope to develop this further (see Chapter 3).

Turning to territory, an early intervention begins with a conceptualisation of territoriality as useful for understanding organisations, defined as 'the behavioural expression of psychological ownership' (Brown et al, 2005:579) that extends to tangible and intangible objects, and also to social entities. In this, significant links with geography, and other disciplines such as environmental psychology, are made in order to build an understanding of territory. However, the authors describe the phenomenon of territory as having 'explanatory power' (Brown et al, 2005:578), betraying a positivist tendency, which is furthered by articulating the managerial implications of the research in the conclusion. Indeed linking this to a formal organisation and management misses an opportunity for a critical perspective at the intersection of geography and OS about the notion of territory. In fact, in early OS work engaging with geographical ideas, there are few other inquiries that develop understandings of territory in OS by drawing on a geographical perspective.

However, further early OS work continues to engage with the concept of space. Clegg et al (2005) argue that organisation exists in the space between order and chaos, which for them is the space where learning that can disrupt order occurs. In this way, they challenge an understanding of organisation as structure and instead relate this to research on organising as 'becoming' (e.g. Tsoukas, 1998; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002), while also drawing on key social theorists, including Deleuze and Guittari (1987) and Serres (1995a; 1995b). However, they omit any substantive explanation of their understanding of space, instead relying on correspondence between organising and learning, explaining that this occurs in the 'space between, in the grey area, where the borders are breached, where definitions are unstable' (Clegg et al, 2005:187). Perhaps, by using space as a metaphor, the authors seek to open its definition to multiple understandings. Still, this occurs without consideration for the variety of understandings of space, including some in geography that leave open the possibility of such plural understandings (Massey, 2005; see also Chapter 3).

Another OS work engaging with space seeks to rethink organisational entrepreneurship. Here, Hjorth (2005:387) argues for a new understanding of entrepreneurship that creates 'spaces for play and/or invention within an established order.' Linking this with the works of de Certeau and Foucault, Hjorth (2005) conceptualises these spaces as heterotopias that operate within organisations and the domination of management. This contributes to focussing OS research toward the spaces outside managerial control, and connects with philosophical understandings of space (of de Certeau in particular) that are not frequently taken up in OS. However, a critical perspective might ask where such heterotopian spaces exist outside the context of the formal organisation, and how the OS assumption that its remit lies in the study of organisation as structure, instead considering a process view of heterotopian ways of organising.

In an edited volume, Clegg and Kornberger (2006) draw together a range of scholars that contribute multiple perspectives about how space can be understood in OS. Still,

many of these take the role of management as a subject of concern, whilst acknowledging and/or encouraging resistance. Additionally, the book exclusively deals with 'space' and leaves out further ideas from geography. While some elements of a critical perspective are lacking, the volume does contribute to the ongoing questioning of assumptions about the nature of space in OS and to the establishment of an emerging area of inquiry at the intersection of OS and geography.

Reviewing extant OS literature at the time engaging with space, Taylor and Spicer (2007) offer 'organisational space' as an umbrella term at this intersection. Within this area of inquiry, the authors distinguish 3 conceptions of space in OS that rely on different assumptions: space as distance, space as the materialisation of power relations, and space as lived experience. Building on this, a Lefebvrian approach is adopted that neatly fits each distinction. Through the review, they incorporate distance, power relations, and experience. They also engage with the geographical concept of scale, arguing for the notion of 'spatial scales' to distinguish a 'spatial level at which social activity takes place' (Taylor and Spicer, 2007:336), and that each of them – the micro, meso and macro – is applicable to the analysis of organisation. While this hierarchical distinction 'scale' as 'levels' of space is problematic from the perspective of geography (e.g. Marston et al, 2005), as is the omission of other ideas in geography, this work makes another attempt to challenge OS assumptions and engage with the intersection of OS and geography. Still, as others previously (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004; Hernes, 2004), in seeking to combine structural (power) and process (experience) orientations, the authors rely primarily on Lefebvre. Additionally, the authors consider their theory applicable to OS, but adopt the more traditional subject of the field: workplaces and formal organisation.

A final key early engagement of OS with the concept of space is *The Spaces of Organisation and the Organisation of Space: Power, Identity and Materiality at Work* (Dale and Burrell, 2008). In this book, the authors expand the first author's prior work on social materiality and organisational control (Dale, 2005). As with others, they

primarily take a Lefebvrian approach to understanding space, although there are engagements with other theories in geography. Significantly, however, this work explores the *interaction* of space and organisation, arguing for:

the need to reconsider social relations as irreducibly spatial, embodied and material...[and]...a need to recognise the organisational and organised nature of social life and the political effects of this on the possibilities and constraints of social relations in spatial, embodied and material terms (Dale and Burrell, 2008:37).

This assertion is further developed into a theory of how power, identity and materiality manifest at the interaction of space and organisation. Through their discussion, the authors draw on geography, architecture, a range of social theorists, and OS, the latter including both the structure and process traditions. In doing so, the authors develop the notion of 'social materiality' that considers the world as social-andmaterial and as emerging from the result of their dynamic interplay. The authors set themselves a broad remit by endeavouring to take the OS beyond just the formal work organisation and toward the 'spheres of production or reproduction or consumption...[because]...the boundaries between the categories and social spaces of these different spheres are often blurred' (Dale and Burrell, 2008:36). Thus, they seek to theorise phenomena of the social world beyond the formal (capitalist) work organisation and organising. To this end, they call for consideration of the 'radical (re)organisation of space' including 'alternative space where a de-totalization of the dominant forms of organisation comes about' (Dale and Burrell, 2008:278). This call, and in keeping with their aim to incorporate both structure and process, it might usefully be added: alternative space where a de-totalisation of the dominant forms of organisation and *processes of organising* comes about. Still, despite this omission, the work contributes significantly to overcoming the process/structure debate in OS, and makes a strong case for a critical perspective that focuses on organisation and organising, challenges key assumptions about the scope of OS and makes a political stance for the consideration of alternatives that move beyond dominant OS areas of inquiry.

Before turning to more contemporary OS engagements with these geographical ideas, let us pause to reflect on the works reviewed thus far. Among them, limited engagements with notions of place, scale and territory are evident and the concept of 'space' is the prevailing geographical idea taken up in OS debates. Further, engagements with Lefebvre – often without a full appreciation for his dynamic understanding of how social space is produced - are predominant. In addition, there is insufficient accounting for the ways that these geographical ideas relate, and how distinctions between them are blurred in geography debates. While Dale and Burrell (2008) might constitute an exception to this, their principal concern remains with space as opposed to how this connects to other geographical ideas. In fact, geography views space, place, scale and territory as significantly interrelated (see Chapter 3). Additionally, geography debates deem these not solely physical concepts, but rather acknowledge their social nature as well. To an extent, the aforementioned works move beyond purely physical understandings, but there is significant scope for further inquiry in this respect. Still, the reviewed works can be seen to establish inquiry at the intersection of OS and geography, and often draw upon social theories that question prevailing assumptions in OS. In this way, applications of these geographical ideas to an extent can be seen to adopt a critical perspective. Indeed, engagements with further theorisations of these concepts in geography might add meaningfully to OS debates. While the limited utilisation of ideas in geography may reflect the defence of OS as a discipline (e.g. Hughes, 2013), it also means these works – with the possible exception of the contribution from Dale and Burrell (2008) – ignore potential insights that further interrelating OS and geography might yield. As we shall see, in more recent engagements these trends largely continue.

Recent engagements of OS with geography: space

More recently, OS has continued to engage with geographical ideas. There is a proliferation of such works, though engagements with the concept of space continue to be most prevalent (Weinfurter and Seidl, 2019). In these works, space has been

adapted in various ways, such as free space (Rao and Dutta, 2012), bodyspace (Riach and Wilson, 2014), experimental space (Bucher and Langley, 2016), and smooth space (Munro and Jordan, 2013), among others. These are explored with respect to various topics in OS (see Weinfurter and Seidl, 2019 for a review) and a discernable feature of these works is that many move beyond a purely physical understanding of space. Some develop space in research that seeks to improve understandings for management (e.g. Maaninen-Olsson and Mullern, 2009; Knight and Haslam, 2010; Hujala and Rissanen, 2011; Andersen and Kragh, 2015; Coradi et al, 2015; Gander, 2015; Bartolacci et al, 2016). On the other hand, others focus on organisation or organising, and demonstrate some elements of a critical perspective, including inquiry into online discussion forums as virtual spaces of resistance to organisational change (da Cunha and Orlikowski, 2008); the 'formative and perverse' spaces created through the collapse of a mental health organisation (Fischer, 2012); how a 'total institutional space' was created by an organisation committing genocide (Clegg et al, 2012); the stickiness and non-places of the 'kinetic elite' in consultancy firms (Costas, 2013); and spaces of control and resistance in telework (Sewell and Taskin, 2015) or in the context of an organisation's outsourcing plans (Courpasson et al, 2016).

Some works reflect the selective performativity of a critical perspective by adopting a political orientation toward exploring alternative ways of organisation and organising, including how spacing is enacted and slowed down through an artist's performance (Beyes and Steyaert 2012); the ways a theatrical collective organises urban space, prompting an 'unsiting' of analysis by making the familiar 'uncanny' (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013); practices of self-management in a worker co-operative in Greece (Kokkinidis, 2015); the ways that cyclist commuters' material and spatial practices constitute collective action of organisation (Wilhoit and Kisselberg, 2015) and how the commemoration of a historical alternative organisation, Finntowns, has been assigned a marginalised space (Rodgers et al, 2016).

Among these, the development of an understanding of space by drawing on geography varies considerably. Weinfurter and Seidl (2019) identify many that do not engage with any spatial theories, in geography or otherwise. They identify others, however, that do build upon sociological understandings of space (for example, the works of Goffman and Evans), anthropological understandings (including the works of Turner and Augé), as well as geographical ones. These latter approaches continue the trend toward engaging with Lefebvre (e.g. van Marrewijk, 2009; Wasserman and Frenkel, 2011; Decker, 2014; de Vaujany and Vaast, 2014; McNulty and Stewart, 2015; de Vaujany and Vaast, 2016). However, a few also base their understanding of space on the work of other geographers, including Massey (e.g. Hirst and Humphreys, 2013; McNulty and Stewart, 2015), Tuan (e.g. Frandsen, 2009; Korsgaard et al, 2015), and non-representational theories, in particular the works of Lorimer and Thrift (e.g. Beyes and Steyaert, 2012). All of these works apply a theoretically informed understanding of space to generate novel insights in the context of OS, thus building upon another element of a critical perspective. Still, as with earlier OS literature, the limited extent of engagements with geography, particularly scholars other than Lefebvre, presents an opportunity for further inquiry, to which this thesis seeks to contribute.

In their review of OS and space, Weinfurter and Seidl (2019) identify three conceptualisations of space – as boundaries, distance, and movement – and show that in many cases authors move beyond a physical understanding of each. From the interaction of these conceptualisations, they argue that there are four prevalent themes: distribution of positions in space; the isolation of space; the differentiation of spaces; and the intersection of spaces. However, the authors' argument that 'organisational space' constitutes a general way of understanding the intersection of OS and geographical ideas is not unproblematic. From a critical perspective, the aim of the review inadequately accounts for its inherently political nature. Indeed, by arguing for an encompassing notion of 'organisational space,' it might be construed that the authors are privileging space over other concepts – notably place – an implicit hierarchy

that has been extensively problematised in geographical debates (e.g. Massey, 2005). It would seem that the review is selectively considering space as a flexible concept that can apply to better understand organisation, without considering whether the aim is to improve the performance of management. Additionally, not denying the multiple understandings of space that exist, geography has developed space as a theoretical construct to a much greater extent than many of the works reviewed by Weinfurter and Seidl (2019). Such an opportunity to engage with these theoretically informed understandings of space is taken up in this thesis, with an understanding of the interwovenness of space, place, scale and territory. Further, the emphasis of works reviewed by Weinfurter and Seidl (2019) is squarely on research exploring space and formal organisation, with limited reflection of process theories of organising. Finally, the conceptualisations that Weinfurter and Seidl (2019) identify of space as boundary, distance and movement only partially reflect the diversity of understandings of space in geography. In this sense, the authors may be seen to seek theoretical closure, rather than critically challenging the nature of these assumed distinctions and their interaction.

Nevertheless, the theme Weinfurter and Seidl (2019) identify of 'boundaries' highlights a key area in which geography might inform OS. Namely, while, on the one hand, boundaries can be seen as relatively straightforward physical demarcations (e.g. Andrews and Shaw, 2008), others have complicated the ways boundaries relate to OS, such as by seeing them as physical, mental and social (e.g. Hernes, 2004) or bodily, discursive and material (Jarzabkowski et al, 2015). Indeed, these divergent understandings would suggest that geography might be well positioned to contribute to understanding of the concept of boundaries in OS. Indeed, the notions of place, scale and territory, in which questions of boundaries are discussed (see Chapter 3) would seem well positioned to address this concern. However, as we shall see, few works have taken up these ideas in OS.

Recent engagements of OS with geography: place, scale and territory

Aside from space, relatively few recent works in OS engage with geographical understandings of place, scale and territory. Sergot and Saives (2016) highlight the limited OS engagements with place, and urge further research in this area with particular reference to Massey's work in geography. Indeed, OS inquiries utilising place often continue to do so without a theoretically informed understanding of the concept from a geographical perspective, in which place has been theorised extensively (e.g. Creswell, 2004; see also Chapter 3).

Several authors have sought to meaningfully build upon these concepts. Among them, Guthey et al (2014) engage with humanistic understandings of place in geography and consider the ways that 'sense of place' might inform OS research on sustainability. In particular, they develop an understanding of place that includes both social and ecological dimensions, which they argue reflects the particularities of place. However, this may paradoxically reflect a universalising perspective about sense of place, which is a critique of humanistic geography more broadly (see Section 3.2.1). In other words, while interrelating place with organisations and sustainability marks a significant contribution, establishing the social and ecological as universal features of a sense of place may risk making a deterministic argument about how sense of place is understood. Additionally, by concerning themselves with organisations, Guthey et al (2014) omit potential insights from a broader consideration of organising. Still, by adopting a concern with sustainability, this work certainly makes its political nature clear, displaying an important, and often unaddressed in OS, element of a critical perspective.

In another work considering a geographically informed understanding of place, Hirst and Humphreys (2013) consider how geographical applications of actor-network theory enable the integration of the spatial and social worlds. In particular, they consider the influence of place on people in building a critique of managers' power over decisions about locating employees in particular places. Here, a critical perspective emerges as underlying assumptions in OS are challenged, particularly regarding the social-spatial

nature of organisation, and about place as not only more than physical, but as a consequential influence on people. Additionally, an effort is made to take a political stance that encourages resistance to managerial power. Still, such works engaging with place are relatively few. It would seem that Sergot and Saives (2016) rightly call for further OS work that examines place, an effort this thesis takes up (see also Section 2.4.2, below).

Additionally in more recent OS work, the concept of scale continues to be unproblematically utilised, often without engaging with works in geography that have theorised about scale (e.g. Marston et al, 2005; Brenner, 2019; see also Section 3.3.1). Typically, OS works scale to discuss 'large-scale' change (e.g. Lawrence et al, 2011) 'economies of scale' (Maclean et al, 2016), or other applications of the term. The few utilisations of scale as developed from a geographical perspective present an opportunity to reconsider OS and how scale is understood therein, another effort to which this thesis also seeks to contribute.

Finally, similar to engagements with place and scale, in a few instances the concept of territory in OS has been taken up from a geographical perspective. As with space and place, territory can be understood as more than physical in nature. However, this is relatively underexplored in OS, and Maréchal et al (2013) make a key contribution moving beyond the physical nature of territory and linking this with understandings in geography. In their extended introduction to a special issue, Maréchal et al (2013:185) develop the idea of 'the territorial organization,' arguing that organisation and organising entail both material and symbolic elements, which a territorial understanding can better capture. Indeed, applying territory to OS, they argue that notions of 'marking, manifestations of attachment, belonging, exclusion and inclusion or identification...can be freed from the confines of space and place' (Maréchal et al, 2013:186). To illustrate this, they consider how territory and territoriality problematise several conventional OS ideas: of defended, delimited (national, corporate) spaces by considering the dynamic nature of cultural elasticity; of mapping and navigating space as sensemaking

processes by emphasising that these are inherently power-laden and material processes; and of landscape as either natural or a symbolic ordering of space, given the interwovenness of landscape with practices and the stories told about them. Utilising territory to problematise OS topics leads the authors to propose the work of Deleuze and Guittari (1987) as a means for enlivening this understanding of how territory and organisation interrelate. In particular, Maréchal et al (2013) apply the concepts of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation to challenge the fixity of organisation and organising in OS, and instead view these as fundamentally processual, mobile, plural and nomadic, comprising inherently connected routes of flows and roots of groundedness.

This innovative contribution to OS debates about territory has, unfortunately, only received limited attention in subsequent work. Such works have related it to, for example, the treatment of context in OS (e.g. Johns, 2018), digital criminality (Goldsmith and Brewer, 2015), translocal work (Daskalaki et al, 2016) and resistance through network organisation in the particular case of Wikileaks (Munro, 2016). While these works engage with elements of this new understanding of territory and OS, there is significant potential to develop this further. This thesis aims to further such work, but problematises the view that territory is 'freed from the confines of space and place' (Maréchal et al 2013:186), given that such a detachment views space and place as analytical constructs, rather than fundamental features of the world. Indeed, recent work in the 'communicative constitution of organisation' area of OS develops an opening for understanding the fundamentally geographical nature of organisation and organising as phenomena of the social world. It is to the 'communicative constitution of organisation' area of OS research, and in particular engagements with concepts from geography, which this review now turns.

2.4.2 CCO engagements with ideas from geography

The 'communicative constitution of organisation' (hereafter 'CCO') approach builds upon the assumption that organisation is 'anchored in social practices and derived from the properties of language and action' (Vásquez and Cooren, 2013:26) such that organisation and organising are both constituted through communication (Putnam and Nicotera, 2010; Schoenborn et al, 2014). Building on this understanding that phenomena of organisation and organising arise through processes of communication are three main approaches in CCO (Schoeneborn et al, 2014). Research aligning with the 'Montreal School' in particular has concerned itself with articulating the relation of CCO and ideas from geography (Sergot and Saives, 2016), so works aligning with the Montreal School area of inquiry are reviewed below.

An early contribution on the role of space in CCO proposes the notion of 'spacing' as the achievement of organisational space through the communicative coordination of activities (Cooren and Fairhurst, 2004). Relying primarily on the work of Latour, this work develops a limited geographical grounding of space, though the idea of space as open is introduced and spacing is seen to counter the notion of 'homogeneous space' (Cooren and Fairhurst, 2004:812). While, this offers potential for further considerations of space, CCO scholars have only taken up these avenues to a limited extent. In one case, Ashcraft et al (2009) argue for the materiality of communication by drawing on existing literature (including Dale and Burrell, 2008) to demonstrate how communication is an embodied process in space and time. Additionally, Haug (2013) connects CCO to social movement studies by pointing to the importance of communication in the double role of 'meeting arenas': as an organising space and at the same time as spaces for organising other spaces (i.e. a rally or protest). However, Haug (2013) does not elaborate an understanding of space nor derive the theorisation of 'free spaces' in geography, which would have likely complicated the work's foundational argument of 'social movements as spaces' (Haug, 2013:706).

Recent efforts have elaborated the intersection of CCO and geography. In particular, several have engaged with the work of Doreen Massey, namely her notions

heterogeneity and relationality (Massey, 2005). These include a study that develops the aforementioned idea of 'spacing' to explain how organisation unfolds in heterogeneous ways across space – in this case across the country of Chile - yet 'assembles in the singularity of "we"' – the organisation (Vásquez and Cooren, 2013:42). Another explores how the making of organisations simultaneously entails communicative processes of producing a relational and material place (Crevani, 2019). Here an important contribution is made to considering CCO in relation to place, as opposed to space, and accounts for the role of power in such processes. Still, this work might be usefully extended further to consider other works in geography about place to further consider the interconnectedness of CCO and place, and to incorporate a critical perspective by articulating the political act of selecting the kinds of performances the author seeks to improve.

Another work in CCO engaging with geographical ideas argues for a performative view of communication, invoking a 'spatial imaginary' that emerges as a result of embodied and material relations of organising, which in turn reveals the boundedness of organising (Vásquez, 2016). Relatedly, Cnossen and Bencherki (2019) build an understanding of space as heterogeneous assemblage, and extend this to consider how space is active in organising and 'makes emergent organisations endure' (Cnossen and Bencherki, 2019:1060). Indeed, CCO scholars continue to engage with and give consideration to geographical concepts in their work.

Two final recent contributions are particularly relevant for this thesis. First, Wilhoit (2016) reviews OS engagements with geographical understandings of space and place, identifying two predominant lines of thought – space as context and space as construction – and proposing a 'constitutive approach to organisational space' (Wilhoit, 2016:263). Several further areas of research are proposed, including on organisational presence and boundaries, the internal and external nature of this constitutiveness, and its virtual elements. In a subsequent work developing this approach through empirical research, Wilhoit (2018:16-17) shows that space is fundamental to organisation and

organising, stating that '[s]pace is not only constituted by organisations and organising, but is also constitutive of it through its subjectivity,' bridging both material and social understandings of space, and drawing heavily on Massey (1994; 2005). This furthers her earlier understanding of the constitutive nature of space and organisation/organising, moving from the *communicative* constitution of organisation toward the fundamental *spatial* constitution of organisation, albeit one underpinned by a CCO view that 'space is fundamentally a product of communication' (Wilhoit, 2018:15). Indeed, this thesis builds upon Wilhoit's advance in this regard, but questions the assumption that the spatial constitution of organisation must rely on CCO.

In fact, a critical perspective allows Wilhoit's important starting point to be taken further. First, the utilisation primarily of space – and not other geographical concepts, such as place, scale and territory – might be extended to consider further the work of scholars in on these additional ideas in geography and their interwovenness with space. Second, while this work builds from CCO to challenges the foundational assumption of communication at the theoretical core of CCO, the political dimension of this approach is unclear. Indeed, the aim of inquiry – what performances are selected to improve through understanding space as constitutive of organisation and organising – is left unaddressed. This risks that such a novel contribution regresses into more typical OS research that furthers management and fails to adopt a critical perspective. Finally, noting increasing efforts in OS to reject the view of space as container (e.g. Ashcraft et al, 2009), Wilhoit (2018:17) challenges this rejection and points out that there is, in fact, a boundedness of space, arguing that 'one can study containers as sites of organizations without assuming that the organization is contained.' This recalls prior work on territory and OS and provokes the need to address boundaries in OS, suggesting an opportunity to incorporate not only geographical understandings of territory, but also a more dynamic emphasis on processes of organising – beyond 'the organisation' as the subject of inquiry – as geographically bounded but not contained solely therein. This thesis advances such a view.

So, this thesis extends Wilhoit's work and considers the *geographical* constitutiveness of organising, with a particular concern for how such collective activities are tied to boundaries – a concern evident in other OS work engaging with geography. At the same time, it also adopts a selective performativity that recognises the inherent political nature of research and focuses on improving particular kinds of organising. In building from Wilhoit, this thesis challenges CCO and the assumed communicative underpinning of organisation and organising for inadequately accounting for their geographical nature. To this end, the next chapter explores ideas in geography that inform a more in-depth understanding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising. First, however, I summarise the reviewed efforts in OS to engage with ideas from geography and point to a gap in the literature, then I offer a recap of the chapter.

2.4.3 Summarising OS engagements with geographical concepts

This section reviewed existing work at the intersection of OS and geography. While some early interventions move beyond space to look at place (e.g. Brown and Humphreys, 2006), scale (e.g. Taylor and Spicer, 2007) and territory (e.g. Brown et al, 2005) as they intersect with OS, the geographical concept of space is most frequently utilised in these early works, and authors have undertaken research equating space and organisation (Hernes, 2004), considering the spatial explanation of organisational phenomena (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004; Taylor and Spicer, 2007), and asserting the interactive nature of space and organisation (Dale and Burrell, 2008). These works reflexively use geographical concepts to provide substantive meaning and clarity – and thereby give conceptual weight – to the intersection of OS and geography. Though heavily reliant on a narrow set of authors, primarily Lefebvre, there are attempts to reconsider key assumptions in OS about structure and process, boundaries, materiality, and the geographical nature of organisation and organising. In this sense, these works might be seen as beginning to break down the barriers between geography and OS. Indeed, early works in OS engaging with geography adopt some elements of a critical

perspective about the assumptions underpinning OS as a discipline. By bringing geography to OS debates, a core assumption in OS is challenged: namely, the capacity of social research to understand phenomena of organisation and organising without fully acknowledging the spatial and geographical nature of the world. Engagements with geography mark a significant new direction for OS. Still, a predominant focus on organisation, insufficient articulations of the political nature of research, and a limited selection of theoretical and conceptual ideas from geography represent areas for further development.

More recently, OS literature utilising ideas from geography continues to connect OS and space, and relatively few works explore place, scale and territory. Those engaging with place begin to consider how organisation and organising are inherently tied to place, but as Sergot and Saives (2016) argue, there is scope to generate further insights at this intersection. Additionally, while scale remains underdeveloped in OS with respect to its theorisations in geography, Maréchal et al (2013) offer make innovative case for territory as significant to OS, although this has been inadequately considered in OS research to date. This thesis builds upon, but also problematising, these efforts by understanding the concepts of place, scale and territory as inherently interwoven with space. Indeed, in reviewing CCO literature (Section 2.4.2), the work of Wilhoit (2016; 2018) argues for the spatial constitutiveness of OS. Challenging this view and taking it further, this thesis argues for the geographical constitutiveness of organising. In doing so, it makes explicit a concern for how organising is constituted geographically by drawing on interwoven notions of space, place, scale and territory. The next sub-section draws this together, problematising the OS engagements with geography and motivating a review of geography literature.

2.4.4 Challenging OS to engage further with geography

This chapter has reviewed OS research on organisation and organising, critical approaches to OS, and engagements with ideas from geography. Among this literature, research aligning with the critical perspective of this thesis included works focusing on phenomena of organisation and organising, rather than management, and efforts to draw on geographical ideas. The latter, in particular, was underpinned by an assumption about the subject, and remit, of OS: inquiry ought to focus on the study of collective activities of organisation and organising, and to make connections with geographical ideas. However, this thesis challenges the notion that organisation and organising are phenomena that can be understood without accounting for their interaction with the geographies of the world. In doing so, I problematise these existing works in OS, rather than pointing out a research gap with respect to OS engagements with geographical ideas (following Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011). To this end, the limited extent of OS engagements with geography is understandable if assumptions about the remit of OS as the subject(s) of organisation and organising are accepted *fait accompli*. Relatedly, engagements with geographical ideas within the CCO approach to OS – and in particular Wilhoit's (2016; 2018) argument for space as constitutive of organisation – are understandable if the assumption holds that communication is the essential feature of organisation (and of space, in Wilhoit's formulation). However, by confronting these assumptions, I encourage in this thesis a critical rethinking of both the remit of organisational phenomena and the assumed communicative underpinning to OS by arguing that essential to understanding processes of organising is their relationship to the geographies of the world. In other words, I propose the essentially geographical – rather than communicative – constitutiveness to organisational phenomena.

Building on the above, the geographical constitutiveness of organising implies that geography is fundamental to the very existence of organising. From this perspective, geography must be accounted for in seeking to understand organisational phenomena. In order to do so, and drawing on the existing OS engagements with geography reviewed previously, I extend the study of organising by relating it to space, place,

territory *and* scale – rather than any of these concepts in isolation. This requires drawing on the ways these concepts have been developed in human geography, which are reviewed in the next chapter. Further, it is worth noting that this is not a mere semantic debate. Rather, as the next chapter shows, there are significantly different understandings of space, place, scale and territory in geography (Chapter 3) than have been utilised in OS, in particular due to their fundamental interconnectedness as concepts for making sense of the world. By implication, these differing understandings can contribute essentially different ways for making sense of organising. Implicit in this discussion is a concern with the very nature of the world – a question of ontology – that requires challenging the assumptions in OS about what can be said to exist. In other words, it is necessary to ask: can organising be said to exist without accounting for its essentially geographical nature? Such a concern is linked to the research question of this thesis (Chapter 4), and to ontological considerations, which are taken up in greater detail subsequently (Chapter 5).

Thus, this thesis serves to disrupt the area of inquiry engaging with OS and geographical notions, as well as the work that relies on a CCO approach. Rather than remaining focused on – and confined to – particular geographical concepts or the communicative underpinning of organisation, this thesis asserts the essentially geographical nature of organisational phenomena, with a specific concern for processes of organising. This coalesces in the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework. Through this, I aim to promote further interdisciplinary work between OS and geography, as well as efforts that problematise the assumptions underpinning OS (following Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011). To further develop the geographical constitutiveness of organising, the next chapter reviews how space, place territory and scale are interrelated in geography debates (Chapter 3), which is then integrated into the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework (Chapter 4). First, however, it is worth recapping the story so far.

2.5 The story so far: Setting the stage for further inquiry

This chapter contextualised the contribution of this thesis to OS debates. To do so, it established the broad contours of several debates in OS. First, two approaches to OS were presented – OS research on organisation and research on organising – which were then problematised as origin myths that obscure the complexity of OS debates. Then, critical research in OS was reviewed, with a particular focus on CMS. Building on this, the critical perspective adopted in this thesis was related to the key characteristics of CMS research (Fournier and Grey, 2000) and explained as: taking the subject of inquiry to be organisation and organising, rather than management, whilst remaining open to new contexts for inquiry; making the political nature of research explicit by adhering to a selective performativity; and reflexively questioning and making clear the assumptions upon which research builds. Then, the prior review was reconsidered from this critical perspective, which led to an appreciation that being critical means questioning the remit of OS itself. One area that this critical perspective was shown to manifest was in OS works that utilise space, place, scale and territory, concepts derived in geography, to provoke new understandings of organisation and organising. From this, it was proposed that building on, while also problematising, these existing works involves challenge OS to consider the geographical constitutiveness of organising, a contribution this thesis seeks to develop through a new conceptual framework. To do so, OS interventions at the intersection of geography and OS stand to benefit from a deeper understanding of the ways that space, place, scale and territory are understood in geography literature. Thus, the next chapter seeks to build a more thorough understanding of these key ideas in geography (Chapter 3), which will conclude the review of key literature and conceptual ideas, and will lead to the development of the geographical constitutiveness of organising as the conceptual framework of this thesis (Chapter 4). Then, I will present a methodological argument for a diffractive ethnographic approach to inquiring into the geographical constitutiveness of organising, in which own political stance as a researcher will be made clear (Chapter 5), and finally will discuss the results of empirical fieldwork (Chapter 6).

3 Literature Review II: Space, place, scale and territory in human geography

This chapter explores extant literature in human geography to show the diversity of perspectives about space, place, scale and territory therein. In doing so, the review first contextualises the emergence of human geography within the broader context of geography as a discipline (Section 3.1). Then, it considers how space and place have been conceptualised in human geography based on different philosophical perspectives drawn upon by scholars (Section 3.2). Next, it reviews existing understandings of scale and territory in human geography (Section 3.3). Finally, it summarises these human geography debates and points to enabling factors (Section 3.4) that will be utilised in developing the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework (Chapter 4). The intention of this chapter is to demonstrate that human geography presents us with ways of thinking about organisation and organising from a geographical perspective that have been underutilised in OS. Indeed, this thesis understands collective activities – the broadly defined focus of OS – as a part of the social world, and as fundamentally geographical. In doing so, space, place, scale and territory are deemed particularly relevant to OS and thinking about collective activities, though I acknowledge that other concepts from human geography may also offer insights (as discussed further in Chapter 7). Thus, this chapter sets the stage for enlivening the understanding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising.

3.1 Entering human geography debates

Whereas the review of extant OS debates (Chapter 2) made significant effort to review research both research on organisation and organising, this section offers a more concise contextualisation of human geography. In this chapter, the focus is specifically on reviewing recent efforts to understand how the geographies of the world is both the

condition for and a partial consequence of human activity – in other words, human geography (Gregory et al, 2011). Within this area of inquiry, my particular concern is how key spatially-oriented ideas with relevance to OS debates – space, place, scale and territory – have been understood and developed in the field. First, however, to enter these debates, I describe the emergence of geography and human geography as areas of inquiry (Section 3.1.1), then reflect on this in order to motivate the examination of space and place as foundational ideas in the field (Section 3.1.2). This leads to the review of how these concepts have been developed by drawing on different philosophical perspectives (Section 3.2). As with the review of OS (and drawing on Hughes, 2013), however, the consideration of the historical context illustrates that the ideas presented herein are not fleeting, but rather constitute more enduring developments in human geography.

3.1.1 Context: The emergence of human geography

Geography as the study of the physical world has occurred in some form for centuries (e.g. Hartshorne, 1939; Livingstone, 1992), and some scholars even argue it has existed for millennia by pointing to the works Eratosthenes, Ptolemy, and other ancient scholars as progenitors of the field (e.g. Sauer, 1925; Abler et al, 1971). Still, others writing about the history of geography have pointed out that such efforts seek to justify and legitimise geography as an objective scientific discipline through association with prior works that describe the physical geography of the world (Mayhew, 2011). Further, various scholars have explained that a definitive, ‘true’ narrative of the development of geography from a historical perspective is highly problematic (e.g. Smith, 1992; Livingstone, 1992; Mayhew, 2011). As with OS, such narratives can be considered ‘origin myths’ that obscure as much as they reveal about the development of the discipline over time (see Mayhew, 2011 for a genealogical history, drawing on Nietzsche). Still, it is generally agreed that early geography focused on description:

aiming to describe patterns and processes occurring in the physical world, often with a focus on different regions (e.g. Kitchin, 2015).

The emphasis on description as the mode of doing geography was the prevailing approach until the 1950's, when scholars began to move from describing the world to seeking to explain it (Kitchin, 2015). This involved asserting that geography's concern with studying and explaining the physical world did not make it an 'exceptionalist' discipline different from other social sciences, but rather constituted it a spatial science akin to the natural sciences (Schaefer, 1953). Indeed, Schaefer (1953:227) argued for geography as 'the science concerned with the formulation of the laws governing the spatial distribution of certain features on the surface of the earth.' Similarly, Abler et al (1971:88) argued that geography should draw upon the theories and methodology of the natural sciences to answer the question 'Why are spatial distributions structured the way they are?' through 'explanation and manipulation.' In other words, understanding geography entailed, for these scholars, accurately understanding locations distributed in the world and conclusively explaining these phenomena.

Such efforts grounded geography in positivism, a philosophical perspective built around the assumption that, following the natural sciences, geography could – and should – objectively explain the world through the formalisation of universal laws (Kitchin, 2015). This was part of a wider embrace of positivism in the social sciences (Hubbard et al, 2002), and was evident in some research on organisation (recall Section 2.3.3). Subsequent scholars have continued to undertake positivist geography (e.g. Hubbard et al, 2002), and efforts in this vein have been furthered by the development of computing power to conduct quantitative analysis of large datasets and build explanatory models. Indeed, this continues at present, and much of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) research reflects an underlying positivist philosophy (although see Curry, 1998; Kwan, 2002 regarding Critical GIScience). Other geographers have questioned the philosophical basis for the discipline in positivism and considered the relation between the physical geographies of the world and humans by

drawing on other philosophical traditions (e.g. Aiken and Valentine, 2015). It is such efforts to establish philosophical understandings of geography that move past a positivist perspective of the world, referred to here by the encompassing term 'human geography,' with which this thesis concerns itself.

Efforts to move geography beyond an overtly positivistic perspective argue that, when geography considers the relationship of humans to the physical world, this requires acknowledgement that humans do not merely exist passively in the world. Rather, humans are social beings, and it is therefore incumbent to consider social theories that have developed from different philosophical understandings of the fundamental sociality of humans (Hubbard et al, 2002). However, the social theories drawn upon, and their respective philosophical traditions, have varied considerably. Since the 1970's, geographers have connected their thinking about human geography to such areas of thought as humanism, Marxism, feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism and others, and each has developed substantially ways of thinking about human geography (McDowell and Sharp, 1999; Aitken and Valentine, 2015). By drawing on such diverse foundations, in recent years human geography has become one of the leading social sciences in terms of its developments of critical theory (e.g. Castree et al, 2013). To consider these conceptual developments, and in anticipation of linking them with OS, I next review literature in human geography across different traditions, first by examining how space and place have been understood in each (Section 3.2), then turning to scale and territory (Section 3.3). First, however, a reflection on the emergence of human geography motivates the need to unravel the complexity of space and place.

3.1.2 Reflecting on human geography: The importance of space and place

Several reflections demonstrate the need to explore how space and place are understood in human geography. First, the turn in human geography to engaging with

social theories and philosophical traditions articulated in the previous section is a contestable starting point for reviewing literature in the field (Jones and Munro, 2005). However, acknowledging this, shared among the different philosophical traditions reviewed below is a rethinking of the assumption in positivist geography that geography can follow the natural sciences to develop laws that objectively explain the world. Indeed, seeking to move geography beyond positivism and engage with social theories aligns with the critical perspective elaborated in the previous chapter (Section 2.3.2) because, in different ways, these efforts challenge the core assumptions of the field. Indeed, examining how space and place are understood reflects the presence of this element of a critical perspective in human geography.

Second, in addition to a range of philosophical perspectives reviewed in this thesis, human geography also contains various sub-disciplines that specify their focus on areas such as cultural, economic, and political geography (e.g. Gregory et al, 2011; Crang, 2013; Flint and Taylor, 2018; Coe et al, 2019). Notwithstanding the particular contributions of these sub-disciplines, in this chapter, however, the focus is on human geography more broadly, and in particular the distinctive traditions that have relied on social theories and their underlying philosophical perspectives to develop new understandings of the relationship of humans and the geographies of the world. Still, placing these different sub-disciplines, as much as the different philosophical perspectives reviewed here, all within the shared label of human geography obscures the fact that geography is multiple (Mayhew, 2011). In seeking to contribute to the understanding of organising as geographically constituted collective activities, this thesis looks beyond the particular focus of these sub-disciplines to consider more broadly the multiplicity of ways of thinking in human geography about space and place in the first instance. This facilitates theorising collective activities as geographically constitutive, and contributing to the understanding of how organising relates to the geographies of the world. Indeed, this thesis takes the view that novel theoretical insights are often the emergent result of new combinations of ideas (e.g. Emmet, 1992),

and aspires to make one such novel contribution by generating a new and fruitful understanding of the relationship of OS and human geography.

Finally, the idea in positivist approaches that geography is a spatial science reflects the view of space as central to geography, not least by utilising its adjectival form 'spatial.' This endeavours to construct the discipline around an implied hierarchical relationship whereby space exists 'above' or 'before' place, or any other geographical ideas, and therefore is assigned a higher importance (Escobar, 2001; Cresswell, 2004). Indeed, to the extent that positivist geographers engaged with the distinction of space and place, it was that places exist as nodes in space – as spatial location (Gregory, 1979). However, this implicit privileging of space over place has been problematised extensively (e.g. Massey, 2005; Agnew, 2011) and is one to which this thesis does not adhere. Indeed, efforts to complicate space and place, often by acknowledging their interconnectedness, are a key feature of the different philosophical traditions that have moved beyond positivism in human geography. Still, space and place are central concepts to human geography, and, indeed, Agnew (2011:746) goes so far as to describe them as the 'primordial' ideas in the field. Thus, it is beneficial to deepen the understanding of their complexity, and how they have been developed based on the different philosophical perspectives drawn upon by scholars.

With these reflections in mind, the next section reviews several philosophical traditions in human geography, with a focus on how each has developed new understandings of space and place. Then, the review turns to literature on scale and territory (Section 3.3), before summarising this review of human geography in anticipation of developing the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework (Section 3.4).

3.2 Perspectives on space and place in human geography

This section focuses on human geography debates about how space and place have been understood. To do so, it focuses on human geographers' work that has drawn upon different philosophical traditions, in particular humanistic geography (Section 3.2.1), Marxist geography (Section 3.2.2), and feminist geographies (Section 3.2.3). Finally, further traditions in human geography are considered, including structuration theory, postmodern and poststructuralist, and actor-network theory approaches (Section 3.2.4), after which a summary is provided (Section 3.2.5). In each, I draw out the key philosophical ideas underpinning each approach, and consider how space and place have been conceptualised in each. Throughout, these streams of thought are compared and the interconnections and key differences are highlighted. In doing so, I draw attention to a key divergence, not unrelated to the process-structure split in OS, that concerns the debate between emphasising human agency or structural forces in seeking to understand the world, and also consider efforts that seek to move past this debate. Thus, this section aims to show the diversity of understandings that exist in human geography, in particular with respect to space and place, and the opportunity this presents for OS to engage further with these ideas.

3.2.1 Humanistic geography: an emphasis on experience and human agency

Humanistic geography constitutes an early stream of geographical thought that sought to move beyond a positivist understanding of geography. Building on a humanist philosophy – an intellectual tradition emphasising human-centred understandings of the world (e.g. Daniels, 1985; Cosgrove, 1989) – humanistic geography critiqued positivist geography for inadequately accounting for human experiences (Entrikin, 1976). Deeming the quantitative and objective emphasis of geography as a 'spatial science' insufficient for understanding the social and experiential nature of geography (Cresswell, 2004), humanistic geographers argued for the centrality of experience in the world, and the importance of experience to understanding space and place. This, in turn, meant that humanistic geographers sought to study how space and place

acquire meanings through the personal and collective experiences of humans (e.g. Relph, 1970; Tuan, 1974; 1979).

The focus on humans and the relationship of their experiences to geography represented a remarkable shift for the discipline (e.g. Cloke et al, 1991), and was driven largely by an engagement with the philosophies of existentialism (Samuels, 1978) and phenomenology (Relph, 1970; Cloke et al, 1991). A key early contribution to humanistic geography argued for a 'spatial ontology of man' whereby 'spatiality is more than a necessary condition of human consciousness; it is the beginning of human consciousness' (Samuels, 1978:25-26). This interweaving of space with consciousness potentially suggests a view that space actually precedes consciousness, and therefore is a precondition for it. Indeed, summarising this humanistic geography view, Buttimer (1976:281-282) challenged a positivist view of space as 'a container in which physical objects and events are assigned a place,' countering that, '[i]n the phenomenological view of space, however, space is a dynamic continuum in which the experiencer lives and moves and searches for meaning.' In this way, Buttimer foregrounded the importance of meaning and experience, going so far as to emphasise the subject for geographical inquiry to be the human as 'experiencer' of already-existing space. Interestingly, by framing the search for meaning as occurring *in* the dynamic continuum of space, this builds toward the argument in humanistic geography that particular sites of meaning arise through experience – in other words, particular places.

Advancing humanistic geography further, Tuan (1979:388) explained that the humanistic understanding of space means geography is '...the study of a people's spatial feelings and ideas in the stream of experience.' He continued: '[e]xperience is the totality of means by which we come to know the world: we know the world through sensation (feeling), perception and conception' (Ibid.). In this view, space is constructed through individuals' emotional and sensory experiences of space, and is concerned with countering the positivist tendency to consider space objectively (Tuan, 1974; 1979). This turn towards emphasising subjectivity is a hallmark of humanistic geography. However, subjectivity obtains its true significance for humanistic

geographers with respect to how experiences relate to place. Indeed, even more than space, this approach argues for the centrality of place to human experience.

Humanistic geographers have made place a central concept to their understanding of the world (e.g. Tuan, 1979; Casey, 1997). These efforts emphasised that place is a way of 'being-in-the-world,' and were thus less concerned with the uniqueness of particular places than with the uniqueness of experience as fundamentally tied to place (Cresswell, 2004:20). In particular, returning to Tuan (1974:4), the particular feelings experienced by individuals acquire meaning in the specific 'affective bond between people and place,' which Tuan describes through the notion of 'topophilia.' Building on this, humanistic geographers have developed a range of concepts that seek to describe and elaborate the ways people experience place: the importance of feelings and associations people have as their 'sense of place' (e.g. Agnew, 1987); the 'place attachment' felt by individuals (e.g. Altman and Low, 1992); 'place-making' processes through which people make places meaningful (e.g. Pierce et al, 2011); the 'place identity' felt toward particular places (e.g. Smith and Bender, 2017), and, relatedly, an awareness of place and 'place-consciousness' (e.g. Grunewald, 2003), among others. Common among them are an emphasis on the individual and experiential qualities that people have in connection with place.

Relatedly, in an early contribution to the humanistic approach, Relph (1976:preface) warned of the threat posed by placelessness: 'the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardized landscapes that result in an insensitivity to the significance of place.' Here, the importance of place to humanistic geography is clear: the experiences people have of place are what make them distinctive. Indeed, Relph (1976) cautioned that the risk of 'casual eradication' is a result of the trend toward *kitsch* – the acceptance without question of mass values – and *technique* – the growing concern for efficiency (Seamon and Sowers, 2008). However, although Relph (1976) describes the risk to place from the trend toward placelessness, this creates a dichotomy whereby place either exists or is eradicated. Relatedly, humanistic

geographers have been criticised for failing to adequately account for the ways that such trends and wider societal developments influence peoples' experiences of space and place. This, in turn, highlights a broader challenge made to humanistic geography: that it placed too heavy a focus on the individual, at the expense of an understanding of wider social developments and structures that influence places (e.g. Seamon, 2015).

A further critique derives from the assumption that, though humanistic geographers highlight the importance of the individual, they also seek to generalise the geographical nature of human experience, suggesting efforts to universalise the connection of place and experience (e.g. Pile, 1996). Interestingly, Malpas (2008) associates this critique with the emphasis on place in the philosophy of Heidegger, who was seen as sympathetic to Nazism. Whatever the origin of this critique, it calls attention to the inadequate consideration given in humanistic geography to contingencies and circumstances that shape the relationships of people to place (Seamon, 2013). Finally, an implicit feature of humanistic approaches is that they prioritise the capacity for humans to exert agency in changing the world (e.g. Gregory, 1980). This critique, again, reflects the challenge geographers have made with respect to humanistic geography's capacity to account for wider social forces.

The above critiques rendered humanistic geography less popular in human geography, and few geographers now identify with a humanistic approach (Entrikin and Tepple, 2006). Indeed, this sub-section's predominant use of the past tense reflects that humanistic approaches are for the most part historical. However, it is also the case that scholars have continued to inquire into the relation of place and human experience. Interestingly, recent attempts to reinvigorate the philosophical underpinnings of humanistic geography (Casey, 2001; Malpas, 1999; 2008) have argued that place is ontologically prior to experience and therefore subsumes it. Still, it remains the case that human geography has tended to move past humanistic approaches.

To conclude, the humanistic approach broke new ground in geography by reflecting on human experience and its connectedness to the geographies of the world. Indeed,

further contributions continued to develop and elaborate the understandings of how space and place relate to human experience (Buttimer and Seamon, 1980; Sack, 1997; Buttimer, 1999; Tuan, 2012). By fundamentally challenging positivist geography and acknowledging human agency, humanistic approaches made a significant contribution to shifting the focus of human geography to a concern with human experiences of space and place as fundamental aspects of our existence in the world. In challenging the dominant approach to geography and arguing that the emphasis of the field should shift, the emergence of humanistic geography was not unrelated to other developments in the field. Indeed, critiques from other approaches to human geography brought the central emphasis on human experience into question. Particularly important in this regard was the advent of the 'cultural turn' in geography, in which postmodernist philosophy motivated multiple narratives and ways of knowing in the field (Barnett, 1998). In one such approach and narrative, Marxist geography also sought to move past positivism, but, in so doing, developed a thoroughly different emphasis: on the structural force of capitalism.

3.2.2 Marxist geography: A structural view of capitalism

While humanistic approaches to human geography critiqued positivist geography for ignoring human experience, Marxist geography – emerging around the same time – questioned the capacity for positivist geography to explain the social world without accounting for the social, economic and political structures that give rise to the conditions of the world (Cloke et al, 1991). A Marxist philosophical perspective is built around a critique of capitalist political economy, and Marxist geographers have sought to explain the geographical nature of capitalism as a structure that seeks to control people and leads to their domination (e.g. Harvey, 1973; 2004). In the following, I focus on key works and concepts that have developed in Marxist geography, in particular how space and place are understood, and note at various points significant divergences with humanistic approaches.

In an early work that influenced Marxist geography, Harvey (1973) made a significant contribution to understanding how space is intimately connected to capitalist structures of power. Interestingly, Harvey (1969) had previously developed an argument for methodological rigour in positivist geography before turning to adopt a Marxist approach. From this latter perspective, which he has maintained and has further developed to the present (see, for example, Harvey 2004; 2012; 2014), Harvey distinguished several kinds of space – absolute space as fixed and independent; relative space as relationships between objects; and relational space as relations contained *within* objects. For Harvey, each of these assists in understanding capitalism spatially. However he also argued: ‘space is neither absolute, relative or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances. The problem of the proper conceptualisation of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it’ (Harvey, 1973:13). Indeed, Marxist geographers seek to explain the dynamics of capitalism and the circulation of capital through the dialectical tension and interaction of these understandings of space, with an emphasis on the spatial influences and impacts of capitalism (e.g. Harvey, 1973; 2004). The emphasis on ‘human practice’ moves beyond the humanistic geography concern with experience to reflect a concern with how social relations are reflective of the interwovenness of capitalism and geography. Still, while human practice does influence the way space is conceptualised Marxist geography, the prevailing emphasis is on considering space and its relation to the dynamics of capitalism.

In developing this further, Harvey and others adopting a Marxist geography perspective have catalysed an influential area of inquiry into how capitalism and capitalist development occur geographically (see, for example, Hudson, 2006; Blomley, 2007). Many of these works describe and seek to explain a range of phenomena of contemporary society, such as: the changing spatial dynamics of globalisation to ‘glocalisation’ (Swyngedouw, 1997; 2004); the constant requirement of capitalism for a ‘spatial fix’ in its uneven development across space (Harvey, 1982); the geographically

varied ways that culture interacts with capitalism (e.g. Harvey, 1989); a geographical perspective on complicating the view of class in Marxist political economy (Harvey, 2000; Sheppard, 2010); the fact that capitalism simultaneously compresses time-space (Harvey, 1985) and concomitantly leads to time-space expansion (Katz, 2001); the 'depoliticisation' of particular spaces as political engagement disappears (Wilson and Swyngeodouw, 2014); and a range of others (see, for example, discussion in Henderson and Sheppard, 2015).

Another key contribution to Marxist geography has occurred more recently. In highlighting the work of Henri Lefebvre, this review focuses on *The Production of Space*, in which Lefebvre (1991) elaborated a Marxist critique of capitalism to theorise how space is socially produced. While the focus is on this key work, it is important to recognise that other elements of Lefebvre's work have influenced Marxist geography (e.g. Kipfer et al, 2012). Additionally, the influence of Lefebvre's work has not only influenced geography, but also extends to many other disciplines (e.g. Elden, 2004; Kipfer et al, 2012). In fact, Lefebvre is considered more a philosopher and social theorist (Aronowitz, 2015) than specifically a geographer. Indeed, as mentioned previously (Section 2.4.1), drawing on a Lefebvre has been the most widely utilised approach for connecting space and OS. Still, his ideas certainly contributed significantly to Marxist geography as well (Kipfer et al, 2012).

As mentioned in the previous chapter (Section 2.4.1), Lefebvre distinguishes social space from physical and mental space. Among these, his concern is primarily with social space, understood as: i) that which is distinct from the mental and the physical, but also ii) the product of social relations, and similarly iii) containing the social relations of reproduction and production (Lefebvre, 1991). These multiple explanations of social space are taken as the starting point for developing a theory of how social space is produced. Building on this, and arguing for the understanding of space as a multiplicity (Lefebvre, 1991:27), the theory on social space consider three interrelated elements that comprise social space, and how they manifest (here *italicised* in parenthesis):

conceived space (*representations of space*), perceived space (*representational space*) and lived space (*spatial practice*). These each arise through particular circumstances and, in turn, are related to each other trialectically – here, Lefebvre extends the Marxist concept of dialectics to the relations of three elements – such that the dynamics between them produce social space and, by extension, the social world (Lefebvre, 1991). However, Lefebvre also develops the idea that ‘abstract space,’ which underpins representational space, formalises and attempts to control the dynamic interplay of the other elements of social space. This, in turn, is ‘the functioning of capitalism’ (Lefebvre, 1991:49). While his theorisation is much broader, the core aspects reflect Lefebvre’s emphasis on a spatial understanding of society, which the dominating tendency of capitalism seeks to control. Some have argued that the notion of ‘social space’ is close to some understandings of ‘place’ (Pierce and Martin, 2015), yet this is not made explicit in his work, though subsequent Marxist geographers have made a similar distinction to identify space as ordered and place as lived (e.g. Merrifield, 1993). Indeed, work in Marxist geography has drawn on Lefebvre in a variety of ways to elaborate the critique of capitalist structures of power and domination (e.g. Kipfer et al, 2012). In a further influential work, Lefebvre (2004) develops a notion of ‘rhythmanalysis’ that considers how space and its inhabitation in everyday life unfolds in rhythms.

While critique of the spatial nature of capitalism is central to Marxist geography, work in this tradition has also sought to shed light on practices of resistance. Indeed, through this, efforts have been made to understand instances in which humans seek to confront or become free from capitalist domination and the injustices arising from it, described as efforts to bring about ‘spatial justice’ (e.g. Harvey, 1973; Soja, 2015). These practices of resistance are seen arise out of the contradictions of capitalism (Swyngedouw, 2000; Harvey, 2014), and comprise a range of efforts. For example, efforts to reclaim the right to the city consist of ‘claim[ing] some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization’ (Harvey, 2012:5). Similarly, Lefebvre (1991) emphasises the existence of counter-projects, though these face fundamental obstacles due to the spatial domination capitalism. Further, Harvey (1996) points to

efforts to realise difference, and later (Harvey, 2000) to the importance of utopian thinking in constructing alternatives. However, these explorations of resistance are considered limited until they generate sufficient political movement and support to ultimately dismantle and overthrow capitalism (e.g. Harvey, 2014).

Comparing Marxist geography to the humanistic approach, a striking feature is the language used. Rather than emphasising subjectivity and how place relates to concepts such as attachment, identity, meaning etc. – which are subsumed under the humanistic emphasis on ‘experience’ – Marxist geographers seek to describe a world in which capitalism dominates, and to develop this in geographic terms (GibsonGraham, 2006; 2008). This distinct discourse reflects a particular way of making sense of geography, derived in a Marxist philosophical perspective that adopts a structural view that capitalism is the underlying force in the world. Underlying this are key conceptual foundations of Marxist theory, of which an essential is dialectics. Indeed, as Harvey (1996:49) explains, ‘dialectical thinking emphasise[s] the understanding of processes, flows, fluxes, and relations over the analysis of elements, things, structures and organized systems.’ In other words, Marxist geography analyses space relationally through dialectics. Still, this relationality of dialectics is underpinned by an understanding of historical materialism – a second essential concept drawn from Marx – which posits that the world must be understood by considering the material conditions that have given rise to it (e.g. Henderson and Sheppard, 2015). This materialist view, in turn, implies a focus on the system that created and continues to create materiality, and which drives dialectical change: capitalism.

Though the language used differs, the critique of humanistic geography for attempting to develop a universal understanding of human experiences in the world applies likewise to Marxist geography. Indeed, through their efforts at explaining capitalism from a geographical perspective, Marxist geographers have been criticised for seeking to develop a universal understanding: an essentialist view that accounts for and explains all that exists in the world (e.g. Cox, 2005). One might see this in the language

used: capitalist space as 'absolute' (in Harvey) or 'abstract' (in Lefebvre). But it also emerges in the emphasis on considering spaces of resistance and emancipatory change: instances of resistance are the forbearers and vanguards of the revolution that will eventually overthrow capitalism (Harvey, 2000; 2014). Indeed, this might be seen as a determinist, universal understanding whereby change and the fall of capitalism as the inevitable – and only – future direction of society.

An additional criticism of Marxist geography stems from its limited development of the concept of place. To the extent it is engaged with at all, place is often relegated to the particular. For example, Harvey (2000) encourages a 'militant particularism' that arises in places as sites of resistance to capitalism and generators of political action for overcoming it. Additionally, place has been thought to arise as nodes of capital accumulation that occur across space (e.g. Brenner, 1998). Relatedly, Harvey (1989; see also response from Massey, 1994) has criticised place as a concept that risks closure and conservatism, or as merely a form of fixed capital that exists in tension with mobile capital (Harvey, 1996). Further, the aforementioned interpretation that considers space as ordered and place as lived fails to account for a way these are related beyond an appeal to dialectics (Merrifield, 1993). This further reflects the often-implicit view held in Marxist geography of space as above or more relevant than place, not unlike a positivist perspective. However, a significant difference is that Marxist geography nuances this with a relational understanding, and also argues emphatically that capitalism explains the hierarchical ordering of the world spatially and gives rise to domination and resistance.

Marxist geography has found receptive scholars within human geography, and research in this area continues to the present. As with humanistic geography, this tradition emerged out of a problematisation of positivistic approaches, but not for their lack of consideration for human experiences. Rather, Marxist geographers seek to unmask the underlying structure that influence and shape the geographies of the world, which remain hidden, ignored or obscured in positivistic geography. Indeed, a foundational

assumption of Marxist geography is that power is spatial and results from the structure of capitalism. In this view, thinking of capitalism as occurring spatially yields a new set of tools for explaining its structure, dynamics and outcomes. Marxist geographers do highlight opportunities for resistance through the 'contradictions' of capitalism, which may generate the political action necessary to overthrow capitalism. At the same time, however, these efforts are limited by the dominating power of capitalism. Similarly, the (lack of) development of place in Marxist geography reflects a concern understanding the structural and spatial nature of capitalism that considers space more relevant than place. Thus, while a significant divergence from humanistic approaches in some respects, Marxist geography similarly has exhibited a universalising tendency, which draws attention to the structural factors that give rise to the geographies of the world. Moreover, other streams of thought in human geography have questioned this emphasis on the structure of capitalism. Another approach, feminist geographies, emerged by questioning the Marxist focus on capitalism for failing to consider another structure: that of patriarchy.

3.2.3 Feminist geographies: complicating agency and structure

Similar to the concern in Marxist geography with a structural view of capitalism, feminist geographies first developed from a structural view of the world. But instead of capitalism, early feminist critique focussed on the structure of patriarchy in the historical and spatial oppression of women in the world (e.g. Foord and Greson, 1986). This extended to considering ways that masculinist thinking exists in the field of geography itself (e.g. Burman, 1974). Over time, further engagements with feminist philosophy (e.g. McDowell and Massey, 1984; Domosh, 1991; Massey, 1994) led to a shift in ways of thinking about geography and also influenced new areas of inquiry (see Dixon and Jones, 2015). Feminist geographies have called for turning geographical inquiry to contexts in which women play a significant role, such as the home, neighbourhood, and voluntary activities, and at the same time have also asserted a difference in that focus:

it is 'less on the objects contained within categories than on how these categories were formed in the first instance' (Dixon and Jones, 2015:52). In fact, feminist geographies aim to incorporate a plurality of voices and perspectives – hence the preferred plural reference to 'geographies' – that seek to develop a multiplicity of ways of understanding the world (Rose, 1993). To this end, developments in feminist geographies incorporate and are related to others reviewed subsequently (Section 3.2.4), and this section distinguishes between them for analytic purposes, whilst acknowledging their interrelatedness.

If a key contribution of feminist geographies has been to draw attention to the construction of economic and gendered systems of oppression and domination inherent to patriarchy, as well as the intersections of patriarchy with other structures, including capitalism (Valentine, 2007), others have taken feminist geographies in different directions. Indeed, the notion of 'intersectionality' in feminist philosophy urges scholars to consider the multiplicity of intersections of oppressive structures, finding commonalities with post-colonial, post-development and queer perspectives, among others (e.g. Blunt and Rose, 1994; Blunt and McEwan, 2003). At the same time, however, others have extended a feminist approach in critique of humanistic geography, noting a masculinist tendency in how place and experience are conceptualised (Rose, 1993). Indeed, Dixon and Jones (2015) identify several streams of thought in feminist geographies, which explore how thinking from a gendered perspective leads to new insights about: the gendered processes that lead to geographical difference; the ways gender is defined through social and spatial relations; and the social construction of gender through discursive framings. In other words, an embrace of multiplicity extends from a focus on geographies in the plural to challenging both structure and experience, and even to reframing existing ways of knowing and doing in both human geography and social relations more broadly.

The centrality afforded to multiplicity is reflected in the way feminist geographers develop a relational view of space (e.g. Massey, 1994; 2005; Laurie et al, 1997). In this

sense, ‘...both social phenomena and space [are] constituted out of social relations, that the spatial is social relations ‘stretched out’ (Massey, 1994:2). This relates to a Marxist understanding of space in acknowledging the importance of relational thinking. However, within some feminist geographies there is a greater emphasis on the capacity for social relations and phenomena to exert influence on space, and for geographies to influence and be influenced by a multiplicity of relations (e.g. Massey, 2005). This, in addition to the intersectionality of patriarchy and capitalism with other structures, contrasts with the universalising view in Marxist geography of the dominating power of capitalism’s ‘abstract space.’ Indeed, such a view of relational space has been taken forward in feminist geographies much more assertively (e.g. Massey, 2005).

An additional significant contrast with Marxist geography arises from the consideration afforded to place in feminist geographies. While, as mentioned previously, humanistic geography is critiqued for its masculinist tendency, feminist geographers have built on their efforts to develop an understanding of the different experiences of place, drawing on the notion that experiences of place are multiple and gendered (Rose, 1993). Significantly, the humanistic understanding of home as a place of comfort and nurture has been criticised for omitting the dynamics of conflict that can arise therein, and the central role of the home in historical oppressions of women (see Rose, 1993 on Tuan, 1974; Cresswell, 2004; also Chapter 7 of Massey, 1994). More generally, and seeking to avoid universalising claims that silence multiplicity, ‘places may be thought of as the open articulation of connections’ that occur through the intersection of human- and place-specific identities (Massey, 1999:288). This again makes explicit the importance of multiplicity by emphasising the intersectional nature of place and its relationality through plural connections with the world. Relatedly, and countering the warning in Marxist geography that place risks closure, Massey (1994) forcefully argues for a ‘global sense of place,’ counterposing a range of criticisms of place with a feminist way of thinking. In this view, place is not static and defined by its ‘long internalised history,’ but rather as a process of interrelations; not enclosed and bounded, but rather characterised by the ‘particularity of linkages’ to the wider world; not recognisable

through a single, stable identity, but rather internally conflicted and multiple; and, finally, as unique not due solely to history, but rather due to the particular historical setting, geographical features and social relations, and the resultant effects of their combination (Massey, 1994:155-6). Thus, in this way, feminist geographers urge understanding place as a weaving together of multiple different elements, and assert that this more plural understanding of place makes it more open.

Significantly, the understanding of place in feminist geographies is not hierarchically defined as 'below' and 'after' space. Rather, understanding the interconnectedness of these two concepts – such as the aforementioned view of place's linkages with the wider world – entails rejecting dualist claims for separating them and attributing both with characteristics of multiplicity, interrelations, and ongoing processes not devoid of conflict (Massey, 2005). Building on this latter point, feminist geographies develop the notion of difference as a fundamental feature of the world, drawing attention to diversity without a need for, and against any normative move toward, homogenisation (e.g. Gibson-Graham, 2006). Indeed, feminist geographies' intersectional focus embraces difference in gender, but also race, sexual orientation and others (e.g. Massey, 1991; Hopkins, 2018). Such efforts aim at embracing difference and diversity in directing scholarly inquiry to efforts at challenging existing hegemonic discourses (e.g. Roelvink et al, 2015). Indeed, this reflects how feminist geographies makes an explicit effort to preference and encourage certain practices and acknowledge the multiplicity and difference that exist geographically.

From this review, the plural nature of a feminist geographies approach should be clear. While it was necessarily selective and literature in geography engaging with other feminist perspectives (e.g. Butler, Kristeva) was omitted, this section drew attention to key works that develop feminist geographies' thinking and how space and place are understood in these efforts. Feminist geographies work continues to the present (e.g. Hopkins, 2018; McDowell, 2018), and several common features of this area of inquiry include: rejecting the singular focus on the structure of capitalism and acknowledging

multiple structures of oppression; extending the notion of multiplicity to individual experiences, which leads to new ways of thinking about humans' relations to space and place; developing new language for understanding the interwovenness and relationality of geography to social relations; and exploring difference that challenges the dominant ways of doing and being in the world. Through their work, feminist geographers challenge both humanistic and Marxist perspectives for their emphases on individual experience and on capitalism, respectively. Instead, feminist geographies can be seen to call for a broader change in the direction of geographical inquiry that complicates the dichotomy between agency in humanistic geography and structure in Marxist geography. Tied to the shift in geography brought about by feminist approaches are related perspectives in the discipline. I now turn to these perspectives, which further confront the agency-structure dichotomy.

3.2.4 Further approaches: Moving past agency and structure

Similar to some work in feminist geographies, human geographers have sought to move past the divide over focussing on either agency or structure by drawing on further philosophical traditions. Among these different traditions, I focus first on how human geographers have engaged with structuration theory, then on engagements with postmodernism and poststructuralism, and finally on work building upon actornetwork theory. In each, I explain key philosophical underpinnings in order to show how these inform the understandings of space and place. These are not unrelated to some feminist geographies. For example, while some scholars (e.g. Massey and Gibson-Graham) are often considered feminist geographers, their work likewise draws upon philosophical ideas highlighted below. In considering other ways human geographers have confronted the agency-structure debate, structuration theory takes this up by seeking to reconcile both.

Space and place in the structuration theory approach to human geography

The core idea of structuration theory is that order exists through the boundedness of social systems, and that this boundedness arises through the duality of agency and structure (Giddens, 1976; 1979; 1981). Whilst acknowledging both agency and structure, structuration theory argues that their duality is recursive and interactional in reproducing social order, and therefore neither is privileged (Giddens, 1981). Indeed, the specifics of how this occurs depend on the context and must be understood to occur across space and time (Thrift, 1985). The incorporation of human agency means that structuration theory leaves open the possibility for change, but it acknowledges that any change may be constrained by structures. In other words, the emphasis in structuration theory shifts from the agency-structure dichotomy to order. Further, the concern with how order and change occur emphasises the importance of time and temporality in exploring structuration processes (Giddens, 1979; 1981).

From this starting point, human geographers have applied structuration theory and developed it both theoretically (e.g. Pred, 1984) as well as empirically (see Phipps, 2001 for a review). However, in the key works developing structuration theory, no distinction is made between place and space, and as such human geographers have interpreted this in different ways. Some have argued that structuration theory involves understanding place as an unfolding process (e.g. Gregory, 1982; Pred, 1984) that results in order, which occurs in the context of tensions between structure and agency. In this view, it is these tensions and the constraints they impose that define practices (Gregson, 1987). On the other hand, Urry (1991) argues that the lack of development of the spatial aspects in structuration theory yields an understanding of place as a relatively fixed structure that influences action. In this reading, space emerges as a universal concept, and place as particular instances of fixity. Similar to Marxist

geography, this suggests an understanding of relationality and processes that relate space and place, but implies their relation is a hierarchical one (e.g. Brenner, 2001).

The emphasis in structuration theory on how action across space and time lead to order relates to human experiences is not unlike humanistic geography, but approaches experience from a different perspective. By recognising the structural constraints on action, structuration theory seeks to bridge the fundamental divide between structure and agency by turning inquiry to action and, more specifically to how order results from actions. Indeed, structuration theory is one effort in human geography in seeking to overcome the agency-structure division. Despite some subsequent work in human geography drawing on structuration theory, notably in health geography research (e.g. Dyck and Kearns, 2015), engagements have been relatively limited. Instead, other approaches to confronting the agency-structure debate have been taken up significantly more in human geography. In particular, postmodern and poststructuralist approaches have had a significant influence on human geography debates.

Space and place in postmodern and poststructuralist human geography

Unlike the effort to reconcile agency and structure in structuration theory, some human geographers have sought to move past the agency-structure debate altogether by grounding their work in the philosophical traditions of postmodernism and poststructuralism. A review of the key ideas in postmodernism and poststructuralism is challenging because, as we shall see, these ways of thinking have developed with an explicit move away from singular characterisations of the world, and instead squarely recognise the multiple processes by which the world is constructed and produced (West-Pavlov, 2009). Additionally, this thesis draws upon ideas from the postmodern and poststructuralist approach. So, significant effort is made to first review key philosophical ideas, then examine how they have been applied to understandings of space and place. Still, the challenge of such a review is clear in even seeking to describe these related areas of thought.

Some scholars distinguish postmodernism as a reframing of rationalism and the metanarratives of modernity that, in so doing, acknowledges the confusions and disorientations, but also differences and multiplicities inherent in the world (e.g. Lyotard, 1984; Clarke, 2015). Understood this way, postmodernism is reflected in ideas present in feminist geographies. However, some scholars argue that the rejection of metanarratives and embrace of difference and multiplicity is likewise a key feature of poststructuralist philosophies (Harrison, 2015). Indeed, Gibson-Graham (2000) argues that poststructuralism is a theoretical perspective within postmodernism, with the latter characterised by a broader set of social practices. However, others argue that poststructuralism is a label applied *ex post* to a group of philosophers and those that have subsequently drawn upon them, and indeed is a label with which these scholars might not identify (e.g. Harrison, 2015). The distinction between these traditions is blurry, at best. In this section, poststructuralism is treated as primarily concerned with a philosophical perspective on theories and knowledge (Howarth, 2013), whereas postmodernism is considered both a philosophical tradition and a trend in society more broadly (e.g. Soja, 1989), and they are referred to jointly throughout.

While structuration theory sought to move past the agency-structure debate with an appeal to order, postmodernism and poststructuralism take a central interest in language (e.g. Belsey, 2002). More specifically, the concern is with the relation of language to the social world: both how language relates to individual phenomena such as identity and subjectivity, and also to collective phenomena such as institutions (e.g. Foucault, 1969; Howarth, 2013). However, language is understood as a contextual phenomenon that is power-laden (Poster, 1989). Related to this fundamental importance on context, postmodernism and poststructuralism reject the possibility of explaining the world through universal theories, and are therefore explicitly anti-essentialist (Lyotard, 1984; Clarke, 2015). In this way, postmodernism and poststructuralism acknowledge the limitations of knowledge, but simultaneously embrace those limits (Williams, 2014). Building from this rejection of essentialism and universalism, rationalism and the metanarratives of modernity are likewise explicitly

rejected: postmodernism and poststructuralism emphatically do not privilege any particular vantage for seeing the world (Lyotard, 1984). This perspective has been elaborated in the works of various philosophers (see, for example, Philo, 1992; Murdoch, 2005; Woodward, 2009), and key ideas in the works of several philosophers – Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze – are introduced below, before turning to how postmodern and poststructuralist approaches have been developed in human geography.

A key contribution to the postmodern and poststructuralist stream of thought was Derrida's (1967) idea of 'deconstruction,' which breaks down binary oppositions established through language's 'logocentrism.' In so doing, deconstruction draws attention to the preferential valuation given to one side of binaries that are seen to exist in society (e.g. the way work is valued more highly than home, Gibson-Graham, 2000). Deconstructing the binary through analysis draws attention to how such binary oppositions have arisen, thereby blurring those boundaries and generating the possibility of difference (Gibson-Graham, 2000). Building on this, Derrida develops the notion of 'différance' as a key concept in deconstruction, which involves recognising that within any singular thing are repetitions that simultaneously cannot be homogenised into the singular (Lawlor, 2018). Thus, the existence of difference is an inevitable feature of the world. Relatedly, Derrida (1981) describes the relationship between things as 'spacing,' constituted by not only the existence of the interval (space) between them, but also the very movement of separation itself. Thus, this foundational approach reconsiders the fixity of meaning and how such meaning(s) arise in the world.

If Derrida contributed substantially to destabilise the view that meaning is fixed, Foucault (1979; 1981) proposed a different approach in arguing for rethinking our apprehension of the world. First, a 'discourse' analysis considers how particular meanings become accepted as true through discourse, which is understood as language but also as discourses of bodies and practices (Foucault, 1981). The acceptance of a particular discourse foregrounds the role of power in assessing how

discourse emerges as truth. An additional contribution to the postmodern and poststructuralist approach is Foucault's (1979) 'genealogical' perspective, which is an analytical means for exploring history, whilst questioning whether any singular underlying cause can be found for the present. Rather, history is problematised in order to acknowledge its multiplicity and the perpetual existence of resistances to any particular truth being imposed upon society (Caputo, 2000). Indeed, here is evident the postmodern and poststructuralist questioning of the existence of any universal truth, and its fundamental anti-essentialism.

A final philosopher whose work has been influential in postmodern and poststructuralist thought, Deleuze (1990; 1994, often writing together with Guattari, see Deleuze and Guattari, 1972; 1987), develops further ways for seeking to understand the social world. Again, a fundamental feature of his philosophical approach is a concern with difference, which is developed as an understanding that difference is a principle that can be found in all instances, even those thought to be repetitions, and thus the world is constituted through multiplicity of differences (Deleuze, 1990; see also Smith and Protevi, 2018). From this Deleuze contributes to the idea that the social world consists in 'assemblages' of heterogeneous elements (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). One way these assemblages are constituted is through processes: when activities – understood as repetitions of difference – are broken and (re)formed, respectively (Smith and Protevi, 2018). Sometimes, deterritorialising and reterritorialising assemblages reach relative stabilisations and result in 'rhizomes' – also described as 'plateaus' – that are concentrations, or relative 'intensities,' of activities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Stabilisations and the resultant rhizomes can be found in various ways everywhere in the social world, and are likewise a multiplicity, not reducible to a singular, universalist understanding. In this view, through seeking to understand moments of relative intensity, through encounters with events, the world can begin to be apprehended. This entails turning the focus of inquiry to activity, a view similar to structuration theory, as well as other postmodern and poststructuralist philosophers.

Drawing these together – although difference as fundamental to the world likewise applies to the works of Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze – it can be said that these efforts demonstrate how postmodern and poststructuralist accounts of the world explicitly move past the agency-structure dichotomy. From this perspective, an agency-structure binary in philosophy must be deconstructed for the very reason that a binary opposition implies privileging of one or the other. Rather, postmodernism and poststructuralism embrace multiplicity and difference as essential characteristics of the world. In adopting an anti-essentialist view, the impossibility of fully apprehending context is foregrounded, but can be better understood through appeals to language, discourse and action, all of which are laden with power. Engagements with works of Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze, as well as further philosophical perspectives in postmodernism and poststructuralism, abound in the social sciences (e.g. Agger, 1991; Benton and Craib, 2001; Nicholson, 2013), and have found a receptive audience in human geography.

Before turning to postmodern and poststructuralist geography, it is worth noting that, due to the multiplicity of postmodern and poststructuralist philosophical perspectives – itself reflective of the rejection of an essential idea or truth inherent to them – this review was necessarily selective. Indeed, additional perspectives were necessarily omitted (such as the works of Bourdieu, Baudrillard, Lacan, de Certeau, and others). Still, the above begins to reflect the ways of understanding the world in postmodernism and poststructuralism. These, in turn, have been taken up – and engaged with – by human geographers. Often, the philosophical perspectives and works of these – and other – social theorists are interwoven, making a discussion of postmodernism and poststructuralism as distinctly separate areas of human geography problematic. To this end, acknowledging their interrelatedness, I consider below how postmodernism and poststructuralism have together been engaged with in human geography, with a particular focus on space and place.

In an early contribution to this engagement in human geography, Dear (1988) urged scholars to consider how postmodern and poststructuralist social theories apply to

geography in aiding the rethinking of the basic ontological and epistemological assumptions about the social world. Human geographers in the postmodern and poststructuralist traditions have taken this up through extensive engagements with Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and others. Ironically, one of the most well known works about postmodernism in human geography (Harvey, 1989) is in fact a rebuke of the field's turn to postmodernism (Clark, 2015). Harvey (1989) argues that postmodern geography actually serves to mask the underlying dynamics of capitalism. Still, this does reflect how postmodern and poststructuralist geography emerged in conversation with other traditions in the field. Indeed, as with the emergence of humanistic, Marxist and feminist geographies, the articulation of postmodern and poststructuralist geography developed by building upon and critiquing prior 'modern' traditions, as well as modernity itself (Woodward, 2009).

Understandably, the application of postmodern and poststructuralist approaches to human geography are not reducible to singular, universalist characterisations. Still, building on the importance of language as mediating relations, postmodern and poststructuralist geographers likewise have emphasised the analysis of language, and how it relates to the fundamentally spatiality of power and the social world (e.g. Soja, 1980; West-Pavlov, 2009). Derrida's notion of 'spacing' begins to capture this understanding that the world unfolds spatially. While human geographers likewise utilised the prior philosophical perspectives to explore the spatial nature of phenomena of the world, postmodern and poststructuralist geographers do not seek to explain this by making recourse to agency or structure. Instead, a postmodern and poststructuralist view considers how language, power and action unfold spatially (Murdoch, 2005).

In another early work, Soja (1989) argues that the development of, specifically, postmodern geography reflects the increasing relevance of space to society, concomitant with the decreasing interest in time and history. In this work, Soja develops a theory of 'Thirdspace' by drawing on the ideas of Lefebvre and Foucault; in other words, by merging Marxist with postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives (Soja,

1989; 2000). This adoption of both Marxist and Foucaultian perspectives is indicative of the ways postmodern and poststructuralist thinkers challenge the philosophical divergences and distinctions in human geography for theorising space. Still, a common element of Soja (1989) and others is an understanding of the relationality of space, highlighting the need to understand space as relationally tied to other spaces (e.g. Massey and Thrift, 2003), a view shared by some feminist geographies. Elaborating this further, space is understood by considering the relations that constitute it, and is therefore inherently fluid (e.g. Bauman, 1992). Relatedly, a Deleuzian understanding of space is as an event, and as 'the differential element within which everything happens' (Doel, 2000:125). These understandings of space draw upon the ideas of postmodern and poststructuralist philosophy in acknowledging the un-fixedness of space, its relationality, and its connection to action and practice (Woodward, 2009). Indeed, some scholars – notably in actor-network theory – extend this emphasis on action to consider the both sociomaterial nature of relations that act and thereby constitute space, which I turn to shortly.

With regard to place, postmodern and poststructuralist geographers similarly emphasise the central importance of how individuals and practices are inherently tied to particular places, but recognise this as interwoven with space (Agnew, 2011). Indeed, from this perspective, place is already spatial (Woodward, 2009). Again, the interest in discourse and practices means performances simultaneously generate a means for understanding place and are also specific to the place itself (Murdoch, 2005). Indeed, this makes no distinctions between representation and practices (Agnew, 2011), reflecting the broader postmodern and poststructuralist rejection of any universal representability, and concomitant embrace of an anti-essentialist view of the world (Murdoch, 2005). Similarly, each place is contextual – and indeed can be different for each individuals and their practices – and therefore has an associational quality that embraces the multiplicity of place, as with space (Thrift, 1999). Indeed, the hierarchical segregation of space and place is abandoned, as in some feminist geographies, and instead place is seen as part of the weaving together of spaces and times (e.g. Thrift,

1999). The multiplicity of weavings together and performances is a core feature of postmodern and poststructuralist geographies.

By way of a summary to this section, it should be clear that any effort to establish a difference between postmodern and poststructuralist geography would adopt the kind of binary categorisation that goes against the spirit of the philosophical thinking from which they both draw. Indeed, in keeping with an interest in language, both take delight in playful, confusing or disorientating engagements with the reader (Clarke, 2015). In doing so, these approaches to geography challenge the notion that there is a 'right' way to write about geography. Indeed, an appreciation and sensitivity to the fact that some aspects of the world are unrepresentable (Farinelli et al, 1994) implies the rejection of the drive to represent all reality in modernity (Thrift, 2000; Clarke, 2015). So, having explored them in combination, for the purposes of this thesis, I consider these an interrelated trend in human geography. I leave open the possibility of their divergences and differences, but seek an assimilative understanding (following Weick, 1999, as in Chapter 2) of their contributions to human geography and how space and place are conceptualised therein. In doing so, I have chosen to emphasise their shared ideas about an anti-essentialist view of space and place, how language unfolds spatially, the (problematics of) developing truth and meaning, and a concern with discourse, performance and practice. Additionally, this approach develops an understanding of the interwovenness of the social and spatial world, without recourse to agency or structures. Indeed, the challenges to the fixity of meaning in postmodern and poststructuralist geography entail questioning how – and whether – space and place can and should be understood. Still, the plurality of perspectives and embrace of difference means that, though there is a shared concern with language and practice, a postmodern and poststructuralist approach can be developed in a range of directions. To this end, I now turn to one such area of inquiry in human geography of particular relevance to this thesis: actor-network theory.

Space and place in actor-network theory approach to human geography

Actor-network theory (ANT) draws on postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives, but extends them to incorporate both human and non-human 'actants' as part of actornetworks; these networks, in turn, comprise the social world (Latour, 2005). Law and Urry (2004:9) describe ANT as an attempt to understand 'that which slips and slides between one place and another.' Interestingly, such geographical metaphors are often utilised to explain ANT (Bosco, 2015). Relatedly, Latour (2005) argues that ANT seeks to explain the 'shifting sands' and 'shifting ties' of the social world, highlighting that change is a constant feature of an ANT perspective, in line with a postmodern and poststructuralist perspective. Additionally, by pointing to the centrality of change, ANT understands that the world cannot be seen as fixed or universally explainable and embraces an anti-essentialist view of the world, which it also shares with the postmodern and poststructuralist approach.

However, ANT centres inquiry on actants, recognising them as related to agency: actants are the effects of activity (Law, 1999). This significant shift extends the possible sources of agency to both humans and non-humans, moving away from a sole focus on human agency. Indeed, in ANT, *anything* that modifies a state of affairs has agency and constitutes an actant in an actor-network (Latour, 2005). Thus, the aim of ANT is to uncover such networks and the connections between human and non-human actants that are effects – and mark instances of agency – of the actornetwork (Bosco, 2015). Still, there are differential effects in an actor-network, which are understood to arise through the forms of power that exist in such networks (e.g. Sharp et al, 2000). The view that geography should take seriously the agency of both human and non-human actants marks a significant contribution to the field. In this thesis, this is described as 'decentred agency:' it is an explicit move away from a human-centric focus that, instead, incorporates both human as well as non-human actants as constitutive of the social.

Human geographers have recently drawn upon ANT, notably by incorporating both human and non-human actants in the analysis of spatial networks of connections (Murdoch, 2005; Bosco, 2015). The emphasis on networks in ANT derives in a flat ontology that rejects hierarchical distinctions (e.g. between humans and nonhumans), and, in one influential contribution, human geographers applied this to problematise the notion of scale (Marston et al, 2005; see also Section 3.3.1, below). Reciprocally, the engagement with ANT from human geographers has also contributed to further developing ANT (e.g. Law, 1999). Significantly, the embrace of relationality in feminist, postmodern and poststructuralist human geographies has developed alongside ANT's focus on network relations and connections (Routledge, 2008). This 'decentred agency' view suggests both human and non-human actants have agency, and requires taking materiality seriously. As with feminist, postmodern and poststructuralist approaches, this understanding of materiality takes account of the physicality of the world, which ANT understands as inherently part of the social because non-human materiality can constitute actants. Indeed, this has enabled human geographers to study the spatial effects of human-and-material networks of activity (e.g. Duff, 2012; Kayzar, 2013).

ANT has also significantly influenced human geographers' understandings of space and place (e.g. Dicken et al, 2001; Ettlinger, 2003; Ettlinger and Bosco, 2004; Massey, 2005). Indeed, drawing on an ANT perspective, Murdoch (2005) argues that space constitutes an effect of associational activity. Because such activity is comprised of an actor-network, this emphasises space as relational. Relatedly, this again resonates with feminist, postmodern and poststructuralist geographies and the notion that space is the product of interrelations, though through 'decentred agency' ANT takes this further by extending relationality to non-human (material) actants (Latour, 2005).

An additional contribution of ANT toward thinking about space and place is its understanding of power. By analysing networks as inherently imbued with power, Sharp et al (2000) develop a relational understanding of space as power-laden, which leads to an understanding of place as instances where networks of power are made solid.

Relatedly, incorporating power requires shifting focus to understanding the positioning of actants in such networks (Bosco, 2015) and, by extension, the relative and relational position in places. Indeed, the concept of 'power geometries' (Massey, 1991; 1999) can be seen to build upon this by incorporating a spatial understanding of power. This, in turn, reflects how developments in feminist geographies are tied to ANT, as well as to postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives.

In these ways, ANT and its applications in human geography confront and seek to generate ways of thinking about the spatial and social world, connecting it with postmodern and poststructuralist efforts to move past the agency-structure debate. However, in addition to developing a wholly different way for thinking about the social world, ANT urges a focus of inquiry beyond language, the focus of much postmodern and poststructuralist work, and calls for focusing attention on activity and, therefore, practices (Callon, 1986). This, in turn, connects ANT with the broader 'practice turn' of the social sciences (e.g. Schatzki et al, 2001), which is also evident in recent human geography work such as non-representational theory (e.g. McCormack, 2003; Thrift, 2000). While this turn from language to practice has occurred in other postmodern and poststructuralist approaches, particularly in works drawing on Deleuze (e.g. Legg, 2011), ANT has been particularly influential in human geography for stimulating this shift (e.g. Müller, 2015).

Some human geographers have criticised ANT for focusing on outcomes and potentially homogenising the different types of relations and connections that constitute actor-networks (Bosco, 2015). Relatedly, it has been critiqued as apolitical for not recognising that different networks might manifest spatially in different ways (Hinchliffe, 2000). However, the prior review reflects how ANT attempts to account for power, though ANT is certainly still an ongoing and evolving area of inquiry, both in human geography and other social sciences. Indeed, ANT continues to have a clear impact on human geography and has changed thinking about relationality, decentred agency and the nature of relations as sociomaterial: both social (human) and material (non-human).

Having reviewed a range of philosophical perspectives and their influence on human geography, and in particular on how space and place are conceptualised in each, I next summarise the chapter thus far. Then, additional human geography concepts of particular relevance to OS debates – scale and territory – are reviewed (Section 3.3), before the conclusion of this chapter draws together the insights from this review human geography and aspires toward an assimilative view of enabling factors within these developments (Section 3.4). In doing so, I will highlight key elements from human geography that contribute to the development of the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework (Chapter 4).

3.2.5 Recapping: Understandings of space and place in human geography

This section took up the challenge of succinctly describing a diversity of perspectives in human geography relevant to this research. Philosophical ideas underpinning humanistic, Marxist, feminist, structuration theory, postmodern and poststructuralist, and ANT approaches were introduced, and their uptake in human geography was described with a focus on space and place. Before summarising these, I acknowledge that further approaches were not considered, including critical realism (e.g. Yeung, 1997), postcolonialism and postdevelopment (e.g. Radcliffe, 2005; Sidaway, 2007), anarchism (Springer, 2012), and other perspectives in human geography, though these have often developed in relation to or building upon the approaches reviewed here. Geography indeed is multiple (Mayhew, 2011).

This review of human geography focussed on major areas of divergence in the streams of thought in human geography in order to understand the multiple understandings of space and place, with which OS has only begun to engage. The section first situated the development of human geography in the broader context of geography as a discipline. Whereas historically geography has described regional differences across

the world, the review noted a shift toward seeking to explain geography. This adopted a positivist approach modelled on the natural sciences that strived for objective and universal explanation of the geographical features of the world. However, it questioned the capacity to explain humans' relationship to the world without accounting for social theories, human geographers engaged with different philosophical perspectives in seeking to understand that relationship. Among them, humanistic geographers focus on individual experiences, particularly with regard to how humans experience place, and emphasise human agency in shaping the world. In contrast, Marxist scholars adopt a structuralist view that the world can be explained by considering the spatial dynamics of capitalism. Feminist geographies complicate the emphasis on either agency or structure by acknowledging the plurality, multiplicities and difference inherent to the world: some develop understandings of the intersection of structural forces as manifest geographically, others complicate the gendered experience and understanding of space and place, and others embrace a relational understanding that interweaves space and place with social relations. This led to the consideration of efforts to move past the agency-structure debate that build further upon the notions of multiplicity and relationality. Structuration theory approaches were shown to focus on how structure and agency manifest spatially and the tension between them generates order or change. On the other hand, postmodern and poststructuralist, and ANT approaches turn away from agency or structure to consider language, discourse and practices as spatial phenomena, which reflects a shift in thinking about the constitutiveness of the social – and spatial – world to account for difference and context, while acknowledging these as power-laden. Relatedly, ANT takes up the question of agency, but understands both human and non-human, material actants as forming spatial networks of ties that constitute the social world, a shift in thinking that this thesis terms 'decentred agency.'

While distinguishing between different traditions in human geography facilitated description of the philosophical underpinnings and on how space and place is understood in each, as mentioned previously they are significantly interrelated; ideas

have developed in critique of other approaches or through combinations of the ideas therein. This latter case is particularly evident in postmodern and poststructuralist approaches, whereby the dichotomies and barriers of social science disciplines and assumptions are brought into question (e.g. Castree, 2005). Concepts that have developed from these foundational philosophical perspectives, with their different understandings of space and place, reflect their interrelatedness. While there are numerous such concepts, the next section focuses on two deemed in this thesis as relevant to OS debates: scale and territory.

It should be clear (recalling Chapter 2) that, to date, OS has undertaken limited engagements with space and place as understood in the plural ways reviewed thus far. Indeed, there is substantial room for further development at the intersection of these two areas of inquiring into the social world. Related to this, works in human geography have developed understandings of scale and territory, which are likewise relevant to OS.

3.3 Additional concepts: scale and territory

If space and place form foundational concepts across different philosophical traditions in human geography, the previous section reflects the multiple ways these ideas have been theorised and understood in the field. Illustrative of the plurality of philosophical perspectives in human geography are further concepts that have been developed by scholars drawing on these different perspectives. In developing these concepts, authors build upon particular philosophical perspectives and either explicitly or implicitly align themselves with extant understandings of space and place, in this way contributing to the richness of human geography debates. Below, I consider how scale and territory – both considered relevant to OS – have developed in human geography and show that they generate new ways of understanding the world, anticipating how they can inform the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual

framework for OS inquiries into the geographical constitutiveness of organising (Chapter 4).

3.3.1 On scale in human geography

In human geographers' efforts to describe, conceptualise and differentiate space, place, and the geographies of the world, scale is a central concept (e.g. McMaster and Sheppard, 2004; Jonas, 2011). Multiple approaches to conceptualising scale exist, and key contours of debate about scale are reviewed in this section. As with space and place, these debates have not reached a conclusive end and are very much alive and ongoing.

A first understanding of scale relies on a cartographic understanding of geography, which considers maps a key device for representing the world (e.g. Robinson and Petchenik, 1976). In this view, maps capture distance by assigning units to the earth and to the map, with a fractional proportion – the scale – defining the relationship between them (Howitt, 1993; 2002; McMaster and Sheppard, 2004). While this is widely used in physical geography, some positivist human geographers have also taken up this understanding of scale as well. These works, often aided by GIS, choose an appropriate scale for proportionally representing distance based on the processes they seek to represent (Lam et al, 2004). For example, the scale appropriate for representing commuting patterns of city-dwellers differs from the scale for representing international migration flows. In this vein, Hudson (1992) seeks to generalise eight appropriate scales for representing human activity that rely on a logarithmic differentiation, from the home ($1:10^2$) to the entire world ($1:10^9$). However, these approaches implicitly rely on a hierarchical view that nests scales of activity within each other (Marston, 2000; McMaster and Sheppard, 2004; Marston et al, 2005). This assumption reflects that such an understanding of scale is within the positivist approach to geography that seeks to explain the world based on objective, universal rules, also seen in positivist

understandings of space and place. Indeed, a key critique human geographers have made of this understanding of scale is that it adheres to the ecological fallacy: the fallacious view that it is possible to infer relationships between individuals based on other scales of relationships (Johnston and Pattie, 2001). Building on this critique, further works in human geography have questioned the positivist and hierarchical understanding of scale. These broadly can be seen to argue for the socially constructed nature of scale, which views scale as the result of processes of activities that both influence and are influenced by a particular construction of scale (e.g. Brenner, 2019; see also Sheppard and McMaster, 2004). These efforts to move beyond a positivist, cartographic understanding of scale are of particular relevance for this thesis.

One perspective on the socially constructed view of scale again relates it to the level at which activity occurs: from the body to global, with various interceding levels such as the household, neighbourhood, city, region and nation (e.g. Herod and Wright, 2002; Howitt, 2002). While this perspective on scale appears to adopt a hierarchy similar to positivistic approaches, it differs in two significant ways. First, in order to understand these scalar levels, it is necessary to account for the political processes that give them definition, meaning and power (Smith, 1996; Leitner and Miller, 2007), which Cox (1998) describes as the 'politics of scale.' In this sense, scale is in fact a constructed outcome of social processes (e.g. Smith, 1992). Second, these scales are related as each other: processes occur at multiple scales and, indeed, any process can intersect with other processes operating at different scales (Howitt, 2002; Keil and Mahon, 2010).

Human geographers have applied this understanding of scale in diverse ways. For example, Smith (2000) describes 'scale jumping' as the process through which articulations of power at a particular scale expand to another geographical scale, such as when local practices of resistance are connected to anti-capitalist struggle. Additionally, Swyngedouw (2000; 2004) contributes to expanding the inter-relational understanding of scale by incorporating social-nature relations, and by considering the hierarchy between scales as partial and only nested in some instances. In this sense,

scale is the result of power dynamics, which enables actors to challenge scale and construct different scales to suit their needs. In a more recent work, Phelps (2017) presents the 'arena' and 'enclave' as relevant scales of activity for understanding contemporary developments of capitalism.

Such views share an understanding that scale is produced as a result of the reciprocal and dynamic relationship between on the one hand social activities that generate scale, and on the other scale's influence on those processes in leading to spatially differentiated outcomes (e.g. Swyngedouw, 1997). Importantly, this leaves open the possibility that scale and scalar hierarchy are subject to change through contestation (Brenner, 2019). This echoes the above view in Marxist geography (Section 3.2.2), in particular by using the dialectical relationship between social relations and scale to explain the latter's production, and the possibility of resistance through contestation. Indeed, this view of scale relates to a structuralist view that forces – economic, political, and others inherently tied to capitalism – drive the production of hierarchically distinguished scales, which can influence these different scales as well. In other words, scales of activity are then inherently tied to the structural forces of capitalism, and scales are produced through the constant tension between scalar constructions of activities and capitalism. Indeed, the notion of the 'production of scale' is central to this understanding (e.g. Smith, 1992; Harvey, 2000), clearly related to the Marxist understanding of the 'production of space' (e.g. Lefebvre, 1991). Such a perspective has catalysed significant further inquiry in human geography about how capitalism operates at and across different spatial scales (e.g. Cox, 1998). Still, while some such efforts acknowledge the interrelations of scales (e.g. Brenner, 2001; Swyngedouw, 2004), other human geographers have challenged the assumption of scalar hierarchy, even one that accounts for how it is socially produced and interrelated, by drawing on a postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives (e.g. DeLanda, 2002; Marston et al, 2005).

Similar to the critique of Marxist geography as reliant on a structuralist view that capitalism is the essential underlying force in the world, postmodern and poststructuralist understandings of scale have extended the concept and seek to move past a hierarchical view. To do so, these approaches draw upon the postmodern and poststructuralist view of the world as constituted by 'spaces of flows' (e.g. Castells, 1989), which suggests a horizontality of flows that constitute the social world. Relatedly, these flows are recognised to manifest differentially in particular sites and are thus the emergent result of interaction and activity (DeLanda, 2002; Jonas, 2011). In rejecting a hierarchical view, this approach to scale has been described as the 'scale-as-network' approach that understands scale as constituted through networks of relations and 'patterns of association' (Jonas, 2011:388; see also, Latham, 2002).

In a significant contribution to this perspective, Marston et al (2005) draw upon ANT, Deleuzian philosophy and practice theory (e.g. Schatzki, 2002) to argue for the elimination of scale from human geography altogether. In its stead, they favour a flat, networked and situational understanding of the social that emerges through the (de)composition of human and non-human interactions (here clearly drawing on 'actants' from ANT). This adopts an anti-essentialist view that prioritises the understanding of particular and contextual networks, variously described as 'milieux' and 'sites' that acknowledge both the tendency for repetitive patterns in the world, but also 'intensive capacities for change and newness' (Marston et al, 2005:426). Interestingly, they note the challenge of distinguishing borders of scales, but also of particular milieux and sites (see Marston et al, 2005, footnote 10). Indeed, the network understanding that questions the notion of scale in human geography faces the challenge of distinguishing the borders that establish boundaries of networks.

This work has been highly influential in spurring further postmodern and poststructuralist challenges to the concept of scale in human geography altogether (e.g. Marston et al, 2009) and engagement with a fluid networked view of social relations (Marston et al, 2005). Related to this, recent work on 'mobilities' challenges both

hierarchical understandings of scale and those that favour the pure networked view, favouring instead a concern with movement and the relative (im)mobility of people and objects (e.g. Hannam et al, 2006; McCann and Ward, 2010). Still, as others point out, there is usefulness in using scale to understand space and place, in particular how trends shared across space manifest in places (Swyngedouw, 1997; Massey, 2005), and how boundaries emerge through political processes and result from unequal power relations (e.g. Cohen, 2018). Indeed, debates in human geography continue about how the scale of activity relates to space and place (e.g. Legg, 2009; Ramiller and Schmidt, 2018; Brenner, 2019). Still, the understanding that scale can inform a geographical perspective on social processes and their spatiality underscores the fact that space and place are intrinsically related to other concepts in human geography. Indeed, a second conceptual development with significant relevance for OS debates, which makes the question of boundaries a central concern, is territory.

3.3.2 On territory in human geography

The idea of territory originates in the study of animal behaviour, but it has also been related to human behaviour applied in a range of disciplines (e.g. Lundén, 2004; MacCallum, 2009; Márechal et al, 2013). Human geographers in particular have developed the concept of territory as a way for describing particular divisions of space. A key way for thinking about territory in this regard is that a territory is a *bounded* space to which access is controlled or restricted by individuals or groups who organise and manage that territory (e.g. Elden, 2011; Agnew, 2013). While often considered specifically in relation to the territory of the state from legal and political geography perspectives (e.g. Cox, 1998; Blomley, 2016), Agnew (1994) describes such a state-centric approach as the ‘territorial trap,’ which ignores the other contexts in which territory exists. Indeed, other scholars recognise that a range of human activities can lead to territorial distinctions, and also that such activities can transgress territorial boundaries (e.g. Durand et al, 1992).

In describing different understandings of territory, Lévy (2011) similarly identifies two primary usages in human geography: the first highly specific that relates territory to the state, and the second more general that reflects a broader understanding of territory emerging through human activities. However, Lévy (2011) goes on to complicate the understandings of territory in human geography, and describes a range of uses, including: a word without substantive difference in meaning compared to space; a strategically appealing term for 'local' (in this sense, clearly related to scale); as a socially determined object inhabited and controlled by humans; a space that evokes either a sense of ownership or identification; or as an alternative to space that, tied to the notion of place, accounts for individual and social identities. Following this set of distinctions, Lévy (2011) proposes distinguishing two dimensions for classifying space based on topography or topology, of which territory is one such classification. These dimensions of topography or topology are inner metrics (territory or network) and metrics of limits (border or boundary). Building on this, Lévy (2011) understands territory – in its purest sense – as a utopia due to its 'infinity of points' (Lévy, 2011:278) in contrast with network as a fundamentally pragmatic feature of the world, leading to his conclusion that networks are the prevailing spatial form at present and, therefore, territory should not be privileged. Rather, Lévy (2011) argues that networks and territories should be understood as overlapping and intersecting phenomena, evoking the metaphor of the rhizome to demonstrate the relational nature of both (drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Here a network approach presents a challenge to understanding territory, as was the case with scale (Marston et al, 2005; see Section 3.3.1).

In fact, interwoven in Lévy's (2011) discussion of historical distinctions about territory is the concept of scale, reflecting the challenge of untangling these related concepts in human geography. Additionally, shared among these distinctions is an understanding that territory is connected to history and/or identity, and thereby to the context of past actions and/or of present meanings, highlighting the connection of social activity and spatial understandings of the world. However, Lévy's (2011) classification is somewhat

problematic for its application of clearly distinguishable metrics. This may implicitly build upon a mathematical basis, betraying an appeal to a hierarchy of the sciences – not unlike prior critiques of positivist geography (as mentioned in Section 3.1.1) – or it may establish a binary, which postmodern and poststructuralist approaches directly challenge (see Section 3.2.4). Still, this work does begin to reflect the multiple ways of understanding territory in human geography. In this thesis, understanding territory as activities both unfolding in a particular bounded space while at the same time remaining relationally networked (Massey, 2005), developed by Lévy (2011) through appeal to the notion of the rhizome, finds particular resonance (taken up in more detail in Chapter 4).

The tensions inherent in understanding the dynamic relationship of territory to social activities has led some scholars to propose related concepts for explaining the phenomenon of territory. One of these is the notion of territoriality, which explicitly links an understanding of territory with power: territoriality is the division and defence of a particular territory by actors (Sack, 1986). This links with the idea that access to territory is controlled, but the act of dividing space that leads to territory is emphasised, which makes central a focus on power relations among actors and their practices in creating territory. Indeed, Agnew (2009) identifies several different theoretical origins, as well as three distinct ways that actors assert control and engage in territoriality: the classification of a particular space as a territory in contrast to others, communication of meaningfulness of that territory, and enforcement of control over the territory. In each of these cases, the making of territory is a result of actors' practices, continuing to make patterns of activity a key way for identifying territory, but one that is explicitly power-laden. This might be seen to align with the emphasis in postmodern and poststructuralist geography on practices in relation to space and place (Section 3.2.4), as well as the understanding of scale as socially constructed through activities (Section 3.3.1).

Another related concept is territorialisation, as well as the concomitant deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation (referred to as '(de/re)territorialisation' in this

thesis). The inseparability of these reflects that (de/re)territorialisation takes the emphasis on practices and activity further by presenting the creation or dissolution of territory as a dynamic and ongoing process (Agnew, 2009). To capture this, (de/re)territorialisation can be considered from multiple perspectives, several of which relate to globalisation: the lowering of barriers to distance that lessen the importance of territory and cause deterritorialisation; and the weakening of power and identity assemblages that give rise to territory (Agnew, 2009). The notion of assemblage in the latter understanding, interestingly, connects to Lévy's (2011) utilisation of the Deleuzian rhizome. The third understanding of (de/re)territorialisation, likewise builds on Deleuze. However, it does not use this concept to describe a process, but *is* a process and can only be seen as such: territorialisation is processes of enforcing territoriality by the state, whereas deterritorialisation involves processes against and challenging these territorialisations (Deleuze, 1995). These multiple perspectives on (de/re)territorialisation might be seen to hold particular relevance in different contexts. The first two describe global trends toward interconnectedness, whereas the third seeks to understand the ongoing and dynamic processes unfolding spatially in the social world more broadly. Indeed, the notion of 'rhizome' in the latter has been developed to encompass the multiple processes of (de/re)territorialisation that, when occurring together, generate a particular intensity of different 'lines of flight' and result in a 'plateau' that constitutes an assemblage of the social (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Among these different understandings of (de/re)territorialisation, the rhizomatic understanding as it relates to (de/re)territorialisation relates to the understanding adopted in this thesis.

In the debates about territory, a key undercurrent is whether it should be understood as a given outcome, or as a process. While understanding territory as a controlled and bounded space suggests it is the outcome of activity, other perspectives on territory – most notably in the notion of (de/re)territorialisation – emphasise that territory is an ongoing activity in itself. Indeed, this process view about territory has been forcefully asserted by a contemporary social theorist, Brighenti (2010), who draws together

perspectives on territory in human geography as well as other disciplines. He argues for understanding territory as an 'act or practice' (Brighenti, 2010:53), but one that explicitly incorporates materiality: 'territories are the effect of the material inscription of social relationships' (2010:57). Here, territory is considered an effect of activity, in contrast to viewing it as a passive outcome, but one that is enacted continually through practice. Importantly, Brighenti (2010) emphasises both material and social constitutive elements of territory, imbuing it with an inherent relational understanding of activity that draws upon ANT and postmodern and poststructuralist thinking. In addition, Brighenti (2010) addresses the question of boundaries to territory at length, emphasising that boundaries are a core feature of territory, but must be considered in terms of the actors drawing boundaries, the kinds of technologies (broadly understood) used to draw them, the nature of the boundaries themselves, and the underlying motivation to establish boundaries. While a key contribution to understanding territory as social and material, relational, and inherently connected to boundaries, few human geographers have engaged with Brighenti's (2010) work to date. Indeed, this thesis considers such a view of territory and integrates this with the rhizomatic understanding of (de/re)territorialisation, hitherto underdeveloped in human geography, in contributing to the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework for OS.

3.3.3 Drawing together scale and territory

Moving seamlessly between scale and territory how they are understood in human geography is difficult because, as indicated in the previous section, they are in fact significantly interrelated (e.g. Lévy, 2011). Indeed, the different philosophical approaches to understanding space and place are evident in both concepts. While some scholars understand scale or territory as produced through capitalism and the state, others argue for their constructedness through action and practices. These find clear parallels in Marxist geography and a postmodern and poststructuralist approach, respectively. In addition to this overlap, understandings of relationality are evident to

both: social constructions of scale suggest meaning derives from social relations, which also extend to relations between scales; and conceptual developments in territory suggest the need to consider how power relationally defines territory through control, and how boundaries of territory emerge through relational practices. Finally, the notion of network – drawing on ANT – challenges both scale and territory, and scholars have problematised whether a network understanding dissolves scale and territory, or entails rethinking both concepts. Indeed, both scale and territory remain potentially insightful concepts for understanding the geographical nature of the world. This thesis asserts that, along with space and place, they are of particular relevance for interconnecting OS debates and human geography. To this end, their contributions toward geographical constitutiveness of organising are outlined in the concluding section, which points to enabling factors from this chapter and builds toward the development of the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework (Chapter 4).

3.4 Summing up: Enabling factors and looking ahead

Rather than reiterating summaries of space and place (see Section 3.2.5) and of scale and territory (see Section 3.3.3), this section brings the literature reviewed thus far together. Here, I focus both on drawing out the key enabling factors for this thesis' aim of bringing a geographical perspective to OS, and on anticipating the development of the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework in the next chapter. In other words, key elements of the reviewed geography literature are related to OS, and specifically its emphasis on collective activities of organising.

This chapter's review of geography literature has shown the diversity of ways that space, place, scale and territory have been developed in human geography, which all build from an understanding that the social world is inherently interwoven with the geographies of the world. From the review, several considerations point to factors that enable and motivate this thesis, and will contribute to the development of geographical

constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework. Additionally, I indicate how these factors inform the discussion of empirical findings throughout (see Chapter 6). First, the notions of space, place, scale and territory cannot be understood without accounting for how they are interwoven with social relations (Massey, 2005): in other words, these concepts occur in practice as unfoldings at the interface of human activities and the geographies of the world. Indeed, from this perspective, collective activities of organising *must* be understood by considering their essentially geographical nature. As we have seen, feminist, postmodern and poststructuralist geographers point to the ways language, discourse and practices unfold geographically and imbue the socio-spatial world with meaning. At the same time, activities unfold as temporal phenomena, highlighting *both* the importance of the past – in particular, a genealogical perspective challenges the attribution of any underlying cause to the present (developed in Section 6.2) – *and* the geographical unfolding(s) of activities in the present and future. Thus, a spatio-temporal lens (Massey, 2005) interrelates geography and time in informing our understanding of collective activities. Finally, these concerns are informed by the fundamentally relational nature of geographies, which are both intensive and extensive. Although, as feminist geographers importantly remind us, the relations of social phenomena are multiple as activities unfold spatially. In other words, multiplicities of relations are shaped by – and are enrolled in shaping – geographically constituted activities (developed in Section 6.3).

In addition to the above, a concern with collective activities as geographical accomplishments involves acknowledging both the scalar and territorial dimensions of such activities. Beginning with the latter – and anticipating the flow of the discussion (Chapter 6) – geographers point to the ways that boundaries of space are established in order to generate territories, again unfolding through practices (Agnew, 2009). Relatedly, such practices are imbued with power, but also relationality and materiality (Brighenti, 2010). This perspective of territory entails a focus on how particular collective activities enact territory, how boundaries are established and enforced, and how this is interwoven with the particularities of place (Massey, 1994). These point to

ways collective activities are enrolled with materiality and relations in cultivating territories, while also generating a place-based culture and community (developed in Section 6.4). Finally, geographers argue that scales of activity are subject to contestation (Brenner, 2019), highlighting how practices construct scales. Although some scholars favour dissolving scale altogether (Marston et al, 2005) and instead adopt a purely networked understanding of spaces as flows (Castells, 1989), a concern with collective activities implies decentring agency, *but not completely*. This reflects the fact that humans' agentic role in constructing scales is consequential, and that materiality is consequential in geographical unfolding. Further, understanding collective activities as constructing, delimiting and contesting scales highlights their spatiality, while also acknowledging that practices weave together history, interrelations, relationality of the world and multiplicity in places (Massey, 1994). In other words, activities unfold in places, at particular scales, and are also relationally enrolled in wider processes (developed as the 'geometabolics of organising' in Section 6.5).

To conclude, the review of space, place, scale and territory has shown how engaging with these concepts in geography *together* can inform our understanding of collective activities of organising. Indeed, OS stands to benefit from understanding how organising is essentially a geographical accomplishment: geographical notions of space, place, scale and territory can improve our understanding of how collective activities unfold geographically, and these concepts must be understood as interrelated. The considerations herein inspire the development of a framework for understanding organising as geographically constituted in the next chapter, which draws on shared factors of space, place, scale and territory; namely, their relationality and multiplicity. Further, a concern with partially decentring agency enables a focus on humans' role in activities and the integration of materiality. This is elaborated in the methodological discussion (Chapter 5). Thus, the above factors drawn together from geography debates motivate a framework that is concerned with the geographically constituted unfoldings of collective activities of organising in the social world. Building

on this, the next chapter elaborates the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework for guiding inquiry.

4 Conceptual Framework: The geographical constitutiveness of organising

Having reviewed literature in OS and human geography, this section draws the prior chapters together. In particular, having argued for extending OS engagements with geography to consider the geographical constitutiveness of organising, then having described the diverse debates in human geography about space, place, scale and territory, I now integrate OS and geography by establishing core features of the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework. Doing so, I integrate elements of OS and human geography that align with the critical perspective adopted in this thesis (Section 4.1). Then, I propose a metaphorical tool for thinking about the geographical constitutiveness of organising, namely ‘rhizomatic assemblage’ (Section 4.2) and state the research aim (Section 4.3).

4.1 Integrating OS and human geography through a critical perspective

The prior chapters contextualised OS and human geography, in particular by describing their historical development, in order to show how ideas have developed over time in both OS and human geography. As stated previously, the intention was to capture the ideas that are more enduring in each field (Hughes, 2013). It did not seek to silence perspectives and streams of thought, though some were inevitably omitted. Still, in seeking an assimilative view (Weick, 1999), this section draws together enduring concepts from both OS and human geography that contribute to understanding the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework. Indeed, this

framework seeks an assimilative view that finds common ground between OS and human geography. Of course, while a riparian metaphor might appeal – evoking two streams of thought merging and drawing together two distinct areas of inquiry in a confluence – as reviewed previously (Section 2.4) work at the intersection of OS and geography has already begun. The streams, in other words, already show signs of converging. Thus, the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework remains broad and flexible (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Jabareen, 2009), serving to sensitise inquiry regarding the relationship of OS and geography without a prescriptive focus, as well as to provoke a way of thinking about organising as geographically constituted in order to guide empirical enquiry.

In drawing together OS and human geography, let us briefly return to the debates discussed in the preceding chapters. First, Chapter 2 reviewed extant literature in OS that focuses on organisation and organising, as well as critical works in the field. This led to the articulation of the critical perspective adopted in this thesis, namely that: the subject of OS research must remain on organisation and organising; the political nature of inquiry must be made clear to make explicit the selective performativity of research; and the role of reflexivity is central to making the assumptions underpinning research clear (although see Chapter 5). Building on this, OS literature engaging with geography was reviewed, in particular works that consider space, place, scale and territory. These works were found to often limit their engagement to a particular geographical idea or scholar, and a conceptual opening emerged to more fully account for the *geographical* constitutiveness of organising. To consider further the potential for examining this opening, Chapter 3 discussed the diversity of existing debates in human geography about space, place, scale and territory. Based on that discussion, it is clear that OS has only begun to consider the diversity of ways these concepts are understood in human geography. This sub-section develops a conceptual framework for considering the relation of OS and geography by drawing on a critical perspective. In doing so, it delimits the scope of inquiry for this thesis.

Based on the prior reviews of OS and human geography, these two areas of thought first appear significantly different. On the one hand, OS focuses on either structures of organisation or processes of organising, thus giving the field a relatively clear scope. On the other hand, human geography takes as its remit the interaction of humans and the geographies of the world, which would suggest a significantly broader remit. However, a critical perspective brings to the fore that OS should not remain confined to particular constructs, such as the formal organisation, but rather its remit can be extended to new contexts and areas for inquiry. Further, from the prior review of OS, the historical cleavage between research on organisation and organising was problematised, and both were shown as myths that uphold a particular remit of the discipline. Still, shared among research on organisation and organising – and in the field of OS – is an enduring concern with collective activities. Finally, incorporating this concern with the review of human geography, it might be asked: In what cases do interactions of humans and the geographies of the world *not* entail some collective activities? This question challenges assumptions about the remit of geography, and points to the potential for fruitful engagements between OS and geography (see also Müller, 2015). But, equally as significant, a reciprocal question applies: *How do collective activities entail interactions of humans and the geographies of the world?* This question, in particular, highlights that OS stands benefit from engaging with the geographical nature of organisation and organising. Existing work at this intersection was reviewed in Chapter 2. However, there is scope to further expand upon this intersection, which forms the starting point for conceptually framing this thesis.

In seeking an assimilative view of OS and geography, a critical perspective (Section 2.3.2) enables the development of a conceptual framework for this thesis' contribution to OS by engaging with human geography. A critical perspective enables not only scope for exploring new subjects of inquiry – whilst maintaining the enduring concern in OS with collective activities – but also ensures that the underpinning assumptions of both OS and human geography be made explicit, and clearly recognises the political nature

of research. These are each developed further below in outlining the conceptual framework of this thesis.

First, a critical perspective on OS calls for focusing on organisation and organising, but whilst maintaining openness to new ways for exploring collective activities as phenomena in the world. To this end, and recalling the above question, geography is well positioned to extend OS to new contexts by considering the relationship of collective activities to the geographies of the world. Extending OS to new contexts and engaging with geography also aligns with my own interest and selective performativity as a researcher (a point taken up further in Chapter 5). In fact, while the review of human geography shows the diverse understandings of space, place, territory and scale therein, existing OS engagements have tended to narrowly focus on a particular geographical concept. So, if a critical perspective seeks new ways for exploring collective activities, then a broad concern with relating collective activities to geographies, rather than a strict delimitation to a particular geographical concept, proves a potentially fruitful area for inquiry. In other words, instead of space, place, territory *or* scale, it might be useful to consider space, place, territory *and* scale. In this sense, an opening emerges for exploring collective activities as constituted geographically, and for considering how different, yet interwoven, geographical concepts can provoke new insights about collective activities as phenomena of the world. Developing this opening further, a critical perspective also enables building from shared assumptions in both OS and geography.

In addition to calling for a focus on organisation and organising, a critical perspective also demands making explicit the assumptions guiding inquiry. To this end, recall that relational understandings were shown to be a shared underpinning in geography debates. So, a concomitant relational view would stimulate a productive engagement with OS. There are indications of such a relational perspective in process theories in OS (e.g. Hernes, 2014; Czarniawska, 2017), thus suggesting that the relation of OS and geography might be most usefully considered from the perspective of process thinking and relationality (see also Chapter 5). In particular, process thinking entails

inquiring into processes of organising, rather than a structural focus on organisation (e.g. Weick, 1979; Ahrne et al, 2007; Hernes, 2014). In other words, inquiring into the geographical constitutiveness of collective activities *of organising*, rather than a limiting focus on organisation, is amenable to linking relational thinking in both OS and geography. Additionally, in seeking to enliven our thinking of OS from a geographical perspective, the observation of Ivan Illich about the shift from 'learning' to 'education' proves prescient: 'The functional shift from verb to noun highlights the corresponding impoverishment of the social imagination' (Illich, 1973:89). In keeping with such a view, a focus on organisation impoverishes, thereby making an embrace of the verb organising of utmost importance for enlivening and enriching the social imagination about collective activities and their relation to geography. Thus, the conceptual framework of this thesis focuses inquiry on the geographical constitutiveness of organising.

Finally, a critical perspective highlights that research necessarily selects certain performances to improve. In the context of the geographical constitutiveness of organising, this builds from a relational understanding to acknowledge multiplicity (Massey, 2005) and diversity (Gibson-Graham, 2006) as inherent to the social world, which highlight that the world is comprised of the Many, and cannot be reduced to the One (Deleuze and Guittari, 1987). This understanding in OS is articulated in process thinking as 'leaving open what actually emerges from processes' (Hernes, 2014:4). From these understandings, the researcher is tasked with selecting performances to improve among the diverse multiplicity of processes inherent to the world, whilst maintaining openness to emergence and findings and taking delight in the unexpected. Significantly, this requires understanding the political nature of OS (Alcadipani and Hassard, 2010). The politics of research in this thesis are taken up subsequently (Chapter 5).

Thus, the geographical constitutiveness of organising makes several distinct conceptual moves, namely: extending OS into new areas of inquiry that broadly explore

collective activities in relation to geographies; bridging assumptions in OS and geography by focusing on collective activities as processes of organising; and introducing an explicitly political dimension to research. These are taken up further in the methodological argument developed subsequently (Chapter 5). However, there is a final element of the conceptual framework that warrants scrutiny: namely, the question of agency in realising collective activities.

Building on the above, a processual, relational approach and embrace of multiplicity in the geographical constitutiveness of organising resonate with feminist, postmodern and poststructuralist philosophical perspectives. Among these, ANT in particular extends relationality further by assigning agency to non-human, material actants (Latour, 2005). However, in the geographical constitutiveness of organising, such a view must be tempered by the fact that a focus on organising entails a concern for collective activities and, drawing upon the emphasis on language and practice in a postmodern and poststructuralist approach to geography, considers human bodies and practices as consequential in generating collective activities of organising (Schatzki, 2002) due to an underpinning assumption that intentionality is inherent to collective activities (Merleau-Ponty, 1963; Küpers, 2002; Strati, 2006). Further, this finds resonance with agential realism (Barad, 2007), in which the role afforded to human activities is consequential due to the enactment of agential cuts that enable the world – and the geographical constitutiveness of organising – to be understood. So, in considering the geographical constitutiveness of organising, whilst still recognising that humans, social relations and materiality together constitute the sociomaterial world (Orlikowski, 2007), agency is decentred, but not decentred *completely* from humans. This relates to the political nature of research, and is taken up further subsequently (Chapter 5).

To summarise, the geographical constitutiveness of organising incorporates a critical perspective to make central a concern for collective activities of organising, which are broadly considered geographically constituted. These activities are relational, multiple and the result of both human and non-human agencies, but human agency as

particularly consequential in leading to organising. This, in turn, is underpinned by a view of the political nature of research in which certain performances are selected and which research seeks to improve. To develop this conceptual framework further, the next sub-section offers 'rhizomatic assemblage' as a framing device for thinking about the geographical constitutiveness of organising.

4.2 Proposing a metaphor: Rhizomatic assemblage

The previous section provides a conceptual framework for inquiry into collective activities of organising as geographically constituted. Developing our understanding of this framework, in this section I draw on the Deleuzian notions of 'assemblage' and 'rhizome' to propose 'rhizomatic assemblage' as a metaphorical tool for thinking about the geographical constitutiveness of organising. Building upon recent work (e.g. Müller and Schurr, 2016), I integrate ANT with assemblage thinking and the Deleuzian notion of the rhizome. This is shown to facilitate thinking about the prior conceptual framework, and leads to the research question and aim of this thesis (Section 4.3).

In beginning to develop the metaphor of rhizomatic assemblage, let us begin with the latter idea: assemblage. While a complex concept, an assemblage can be understood as 'a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987:69). Already, the relationality and multiplicity underpinning the geographical constitutiveness of organising are evident. However, assemblages are also seen as fluid and ephemeral (Müller and Schurr, 2016), reflecting their interwovenness with temporality. This, in turn, highlights a potentiality assigned to assemblages: they are multiplicities of connections that have the potential for change and for becoming other than they are, which echoes process theories of organising that highlight the importance of remaining open to the emergent and unexpected (Hernes, 2004). Building on this, Cnossen and Bencherki (2019) explore the comings together

of assemblages as a way for thinking about the role of 'space as assemblage' in the emergence and endurance of organising. Indeed, further conceptual tools in assemblage thinking that build from multiplicity and relationality to develop such ideas as intensive and extensive properties (DeLanda, 2006), the tension between stabilisation and change (Anderson et al, 2012) and others.

While the above points to how assemblage thinking integrates potentialities for change, this presents a challenge to identifying the connections that constitute assemblages in the present. Here, ANT proves instructive. In particular, the notion of actor-networks shifts focus to the *effects* of associations (Latour, 2005) or, it might be said, the effects of assemblages. In this sense, only the *consequential* relations of an assemblage are relatively stabilized and thus identifiable effects of geographical networks (Murdoch, 1998). So, ANT can usefully distinguish the geographically constituted associations that give rise to consequential effects, such as collective activities of organising. Still, conceiving assemblages this way faces the converse challenge: how to account for the potentialities that *might* exist, but are not perceptible as effects at any given moment. To reconcile this, and drawing from recent insights in biology, I argue for thinking about the already-existing potentiality and consequentiality of geographically constituted collective activities as rhizomatic assemblages.

While for Deleuze and Guattari (1987) assemblage evokes potentiality, and efforts drawing on ANT illustrate the consequentiality of assemblages, I propose integrating 'assemblage' with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) 'rhizome' to evoke *both* potentiality and consequentiality. In doing so, first consider that the rhizome concept was developed from thinking about root networks in soil as connecting through a 'subterranean stem' in contrast to the prevailing hierarchical structure of a tree-root (Deleuze and Guittari, 1987), although rhizomes are complementary to such tree-root structures (Lawley, 2005). From this, Deleuze and Guittari (1987) argue that a rhizome has various characteristics – including connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography and decalcomania. These features of rhizomes find

resonance with theorisations of assemblage, which has led some to describe rhizome as ‘a conceptual precursor to the assemblage’ (Müller and Schurr, 2016:219).

However, the rhizome concept excels in capturing both potentiality and consequentiality due to a key differentiation from assemblage. Namely, while assemblage discursively suggests a gathering or collection, the strength of rhizome lies in its evocation of botanical clusters of roots that come together in subterranean stems. In other words, the rhizome possesses a *materiality* of roots, soil and biology from the physical world, which afford it an evocative power that assemblage lacks. Through clusters and connections of roots, *consequential* comings-together constitute rhizomes, which are imbued with heterogeneity, multiplicity and so on. At the same time, while the consequential connections of a rhizome are discernable, there is also a *potentiality* of further relational connections being established within a rhizomatic network itself or with other rhizomes in the world. To this end, recent studies in biology have shown that ‘mycorrhizal networks’ of fungi are intricately connected to root networks and plants (e.g. Simard et al, 2012), which are imperceptible to humans but nonetheless exist; form integral parts of biological soil ecosystems; and support – and are supported by – rhizomatic root networks. These strengthen the material features of rhizomes: mycorrhizal networks may possess further consequential rhizomatic connections, though not discernable to the researcher; and, additional mycorrhizal networks have the as-yet-unrealised potential to emerge both within and between rhizomes. So, rhizomes are comprised of root connections and mycorrhizal networks that afford them a palpable materiality, which imbues the rhizome with both potentiality and consequentiality in ways that the assemblage is not.

In seeking to invoke the notion of rhizome, a further point warrants scrutiny. Rhizome has been used as a metaphor in OS previously (see Lawley, 2005), and these efforts tend to use rhizomes to describe constantly moving organisational phenomena. So, in seeking to understand and represent rhizomes as phenomena of the social world, there is a risk of ‘trapping’ the rhizome and reproducing the tree-root structure to which rhizomes are complementary, but positioned against (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987). From

this emerges a conundrum: how to apprehend rhizomes, which assigns them fixity, when they are inapprehendable, moving and in-flux? To address this, it should be acknowledged that ‘the rhizome...always has multiple entryways’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:12). So, while assemblages can be understood by identifying the consequential effects of associations, rhizomes must be probed from multiple perspectives in seeking to understand their consequentiality – and potentiality – empirically. Further, because they are constantly moving, rhizomes can only be discerned partially; efforts at understanding rhizomes risk tracing and therefore transforming the rhizome into something else, something *less* multiple and lively, rather rendering it more orderly and structured. So, to capture the consequentiality and potentiality of rhizomes, afforded by their vivid material link to the physical world, while still appreciating the limitation of ever apprehending them fully, I propose ‘plugging in’ (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) rhizome to assemblage to yield ‘rhizomatic assemblage’ and, in doing so, draw together key characteristics of both.

The notion of rhizomatic assemblage as a metaphor for the geographical constitutiveness of organising captures the multiplicity and relationality of geographically constituted activities of organising. Further, to account for both the consequentiality inherent to assemblages of collective activities and their rhizomatic potentiality, it is necessary to approach rhizomatic assemblages from multiple perspectives, while recognising the inability to apprehend them fully. Finally, building on the understanding of agency in the geographical constitutiveness of organising – as well as this partiality to apprehension – the next chapter discusses how rhizomatic assemblages can be better understood through ‘agential cuts’ that are enacted by the researcher (Barad, 2007). Through these, multiple perspectives can be developed on the shared becomings-together – and their enrolment in collective activities – that comprise rhizomatic assemblages (see Chapter 5). Metaphorically, the soil of the sociomaterial world is alive with a fecundity of both potential-and-consequential rhizomatic assemblages, as well as further imperceptible mycorrhizal networks. Thus, as a device for thinking about this thesis’ conceptual framework, rhizomatic assemblage

attunes inquiry into the multiplicity, relationality, consequentiality and potentiality inherent to collective activities, and imbues them with intensities, extensities, magnitudes and stabilisations arising through their geographical constitutiveness.

Having described the conceptual framework for this thesis, and developed rhizomatic assemblages as a metaphor for thinking about the geographical constitutiveness of organising, the next section states the aim and research question of this thesis.

4.3 Research aim and question

Based on the prior conceptual framing, and moving beyond selective engagements of OS with geography (Section 2.4), the purpose of this thesis is to contribute to understanding the geographical constitutiveness of organising. The research question is thus:

How can collective activities of organising be understood as geographically constituted?

In seeking to contribute theoretically at the intersection of OS and geography by considering the geographical constitutiveness of organising, it was proposed that rhizomatic assemblage serves as a metaphorical tool for thinking about and exploring collective activities as geographically constituted. This suggests a broad scope of potential routes for empirical inquiry, which the next chapter elaborates further in discussing the methodology and diffractive ethnographic approach adopted, and by making the politics of this thesis – and the collective activities of focus – clear.

5 Methodology: Agential realism and a diffractive ethnography

The previous chapter described the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework for this thesis and foregrounded certain ideas therein. It is worth briefly recalling them, as they inform this chapter's methodological discussion. First, drawing on the critical perspective of this thesis, it was shown that drawing together human geography and OS entails adopting a relational view and expanding the focus of inquiry to processes of organising, rather than a limiting focus on organisation. Then, the embrace of multiplicity in human geography and openness to emergence in OS process thinking both suggest the importance of acknowledging the inherent political dimension of research in which, as part of a critical perspective, certain performances are selected to improve. Finally, the question of agency was broached by arguing that human actions are particularly consequential in thinking about the geographical constitutiveness of organising. These dimensions of the geographical constitutiveness of organising are guided by philosophical assumptions, which in turn have methodological implications, that this chapter seeks to address.

In this chapter, I first take up philosophical considerations (Section 5.1) that consider ontological assumptions about the nature of the social world in OS and human geography, before seeking to address the tensions between them by considering the 'ontological turn' of new materialism and, in particular, agential realism (Barad, 2007; 2014). Core concepts from agential realism guide the chapter's argument for a diffractive ethnographic approach and different aspects of this approach (Section 5.2). Finally, I explore the unfolding of the fieldwork and offer diffractions of my own experiences as a researcher through this process.

Before proceeding, I note that this chapter makes a methodological argument in responding to the research question of how collective activities can be understood as geographically constituted. The methodology guides discussion of my findings in the next chapter, and indeed guided the methods used in empirical research. However, any implication of a logical progression from theory to methodology to empirical inquiry is false. Rather, I fully acknowledge and – importantly – take no issue with the circuitous route taken to generate this text as a completed doctoral thesis. The guiding research question (recall Section 4.3) was not evident at the start; rather, I faced a foreshadowed problem (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) that I sought to address before beginning fieldwork. This problem was an interest in the relationship of alternative organising and geographical notions of space and place. Gradually, this evolved during the course of empirical research, and multiple returnings to extant literature provoked my understanding that the geographical constitutiveness of organising both enabled me to make sense of the phenomenon I studied through my fieldwork, and contributed a new and fruitful perspective to OS debates engaging with geography. Indeed, it remains true that the methodological arguments presented here were not decided beforehand. Rather, I began with a research question and sought appropriate methods – and a methodological argument for them – in order to address it (Gullion, 2018). I reflect on this process throughout this chapter.

5.1 Philosophical considerations: from ontology to new materialist approaches

Ontology asks fundamental questions about the nature of reality, and in particular what can be said to exist (Pascale, 2010; Epstein, 2018). Some scholars specify that ontology is a concern both with ‘what there is and the study of what there is’ (Aspers, 2013:452), and argue that the latter is the domain of philosophy. Still, scholars engaged with the ontological turn (e.g. Koro-Ljungberg, 2015; Heywood, 2018; Holbraad and Pedersen, 2015; Gullion, 2018) question such a distinction, an argument this chapter takes up. In either case, it is increasingly expected that researchers in the social

sciences build an argument about the ontological assumptions underpinning inquiry (Law, 2004; Gullion, 2018); in other words, to make explicit their claims about ‘what there is.’ To this end, this section considers how the geographical constitutiveness of organising can be informed by ontological debates in OS (Section 5.1.1) and human geography (Section 5.1.2), and engages with new materialism (Section 5.1.3) as a means to address ontological tensions between them. In particular, I consider ANT and agential realism (Section 5.1.4), arguing that the latter more aligns with the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework. This leads to a (re)consideration of rhizomatic assemblage based on the insights derived in an agential realist view of the world (Section 5.1.5).

5.1.1 Process and relational ontologies in OS

In the prior review of OS (Chapter 2), differing approaches to research on in the field were discussed, which are underpinned by different philosophical assumptions. The review identified this as a key split in the field, which was discussed in terms of research on structures of organisation and processes of organising. In addition, some OS literature was deemed positivist in seeking to improve managerial performance, whereas others – in particular CMS – were placed under a broad umbrella of critical. However, as indicated previously (Chapter 4), the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework for this thesis integrates a critical perspective, OS and human geography. One element of this is a broad focus on organising, rather than a specific concern with organisation. This is an ontological argument about the social world, and forms a starting point for the discussion of this thesis’ methodology.

Discussions in OS about philosophical assumptions that guide different understandings of the social world are not new: Burrell and Morgan (1979) made a key early contribution that identified four distinct paradigms in the field, each with differing fundamental assumptions. While there are various other efforts to explore the philosophical

underpinnings of OS (e.g. Jones and Bos, 2007; Nayak and Chia, 2011; Tsoukas and Chia, 2011; Helin et al, 2014), the enduring cleavage in OS indicated in the review (Chapter 2) – a divergence in focus on either organisation or organising – reflects a fundamentally ontological debate. Consider Boal et al's (2003) argument that organisation is ontologically real, whereas Chia (2003) asserts that organisation emerges as the result of ontologically existent ordering processes. While the former makes an ontological claim about a structure (i.e. organisation) that can be said to exist, the latter makes a different ontological claim about a range of 'microordering processes' (i.e. organising) that 'serve to shape our identities and aspirations and to orient us towards ourselves and our environment' (Chia, 2003:98). The latter emphasis on processes of organising aligns this thesis' interest in the geographical constitutiveness of organising, and therefore forms the focus of this discussion on ontology. Still, while making explicit these differing ontological assumptions appears to align with a critical perspective, recall that this cleavage itself was problematised as a myth. Indeed, the assumptions that guide process research on organising can be problematised further.

Efforts to develop a process perspective in OS argue that process ontology underpins research on organising, but also that this must be tempered with a delimited focus. Indeed, Hernes (2014:4) warns of the 'tendency to fall for the temptation of liquefying the notion of process' such that it leads to a 'romanticize[d] view according to which everything flows,' to which he counters: 'to say that everything flows is first and foremost an ontological stance that challenges us to look for how flows are stabilized, bent or deflected.' These stabilisations, in his argument, are organisation(s). This, however, sits in tension with the subsequent argument, quoted in the previous chapter, that process thinking entails 'leaving open what actually emerges from processes' (Hernes, 2014:4). Here, an ontological quandary emerges: for Hernes (2014), understanding the world as processes and flows is resolved with respect to OS through an appeal to instances in which flows are 'stabilized, bent or deflected' – in other words through an appeal to organisation. The title of Hernes' (2014) book – *A Process Theory of Organization* – reflects his foremost concern with organisation.

Others in OS have aligned with process ontology (e.g. Chia, 1999; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Czarniawska, 2008), but, like Hernes, these scholars typically unquestioningly apply a process perspective to the specific context of organisation(s) (see, for example, Hernes and Maitlis, 2011).

The critical perspective in this thesis challenges this ontological argument that flows and processes stabilise in organisation(s) and therefore delimit OS to that specific context. Instead, this thesis asks: how might stabilisations occur in new ways and other contexts of the social world? And how do these stabilisations relate to the geographies of the world? Some OS research reviewed previously considers these questions, including research on heterotopias, Christmas, temporary organising and others (Section 2.2.2). Similarly, and more relevant to this thesis, other works (re)consider stabilisations and collective activities through engagements with geography (Section 2.4), and these engagements motivated the review of human geography. So, whilst finding sympathy with an ontological argument about organising as process, this thesis seeks to extend process ontology beyond the particular case(s) of organisation(s) and explore it in the context of organising and the geographies of the world. Rather than exploring particular processes and flows that isolate inquiry in OS to organisation, challenging the assumption that flows are solely stabilised as organisation(s) involves retaining an openness to new contexts that are amenable to a process ontology.

It is worth noting that, while some OS research on organising is underpinned by process ontology, scholars also approach OS from other perspectives. One area of such efforts considers the relations between people (social) and/or objects (materiality) as the underlying reality of the world, focusing on the interactions and interrelations that constitute organisation or organising. Due to the consideration that the world consists of social, but also material, relations, this view in OS has been developed as sociomateriality (Orlikowski, 2007). The focus on relations reflects that such efforts are underpinned by a relational ontology (Bouwen, 1998; Kyriakidou and Ezbilgin, 2006; Özbilgin, 2006). These make the ontological claim that human and non-human relations

can be said to exist, and that reality consists of such sociomaterial relations. Still, relationality is, like process ontology, often considered in the particular context of organisation, rather than organising (see, for example, Bradbury and Lichtenstein, 2000).

So, from the above, it is clear that in discussing the ontological foundations of OS research on organising – and the geographical constitutiveness of organising – there are disagreements over process or relational ontological perspectives. These often remain focused on the particular case of organisation, rather than exploring new contexts. Leaving open the ontological question of process or relational ontologies in OS for a moment, I now examine ontological debates in human geography in seeking to extend OS inquiries into organising to new contexts.

5.1.2 Ontology in human geography

Among different philosophical perspectives in human geography (Chapter 3), a shared understanding of the world as relational was evident, though this relational understanding was subsequently directed in differing ways. Humanistic geography emphasised the ways relations and experience give rise to meaning, while Marxist geographers sought to explain relations as the result of capitalist structures. The several approaches to feminist geographies were concerned with examining relations as they relate to the intersection of patriarchy and other structures, to the home and experiences as gendered, to an understanding of geographies as multiplicities of relations, and so on. Similarly, the further approaches expanded this consideration of relationality to: how order emerges from the relation of individual agency and structures in structuration theory; the relations arising through language and practice in postmodern and poststructuralist geography; and a new understanding of agency by consider human and non-human relations. Among these approaches, an understanding that the world is relational, underpinned by a relational ontology, constitutes an

enduring concern for the discipline. This is considered in more detail subsequently, before turning to efforts that challenge this shared relational understanding.

The relational perspective in human geography is derived in an ontological argument that social reality is constituted through relations (Massey, 2005; Castree, 2005). This underpinning assumption suggests that reality does not exist as discrete entities, but rather can only be understood by considering the relational connections that give meaning to the world (Castree et al, 2013). Building on this, fundamental concepts that human geographers have developed – including space, place, territory and scale reviewed previously (Chapter 3) – can be said to exist, but they are understood as socially constructed through relations (Castree et al, 2013). Still, some ‘postdualist’ scholars argue that the relationality underpinning human geography must expand beyond just human relations to incorporate nonhumans as well (Castree, 2005; Marston et al, 2005). Among these, the ANT, postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives reviewed previously (Section 3.2.4) are particularly relevant. This is taken up further in the next section. Still, in seeking to draw together OS and human geography, it is also worth counterposing a relational ontology to how process thinking is discussed in human geography debates.

Human geographers have critiqued process ontology for placing a primary concern on time and temporality at the expense of space and geography (e.g. Massey, 2005). Scholars have sought to overcome the juxtaposition of time with space by proposing that relationality extends through an interwoven time-space (Harvey, 1989) or spatiotemporality (Massey, 2005). In this sense, human geography has sought to supersede a process orientation by incorporating it into a relational ontology. In another critique, MacFarlane (2017) argues that process and relational ontologies fail to account for the structure, endurance and influence of capitalism, interestingly pointing to the particular uptake of process and relational thinking in OS. Underlying these critiques is an apparent ontological tension: whether processes exist prior to relationality or whether relations are ontologically prior to processes, and the implications these have for understanding reality. It might be said that the ontological

tension, then, is between arguments that reality is relational and therefore spatial, or reality is processual and therefore temporal. Still, it is worth acknowledging that these ontological positions are differing, but not fundamentally opposed (see, for example, Braidotti, 2006). Still, in seeking an assimilative view of OS and human geography, the next section explores efforts to integrate them together.

5.1.3 The ontological turn and new materialism

Returning to the open question of ontology for OS research on organising, and for the conceptual framework of this thesis, recent developments in social philosophy offer a means for incorporating process and relational perspectives. Indeed, the 'ontological turn' in the social sciences (Escobar, 2007; Holbraad and Pedersen, 2015; Gullion, 2018) stresses that questions of ontology must be made explicit in research. As Pascale (2010:3) makes clear, 'all research is anchored to basic beliefs about how the world exists.' Indeed, this thesis' critical perspective means that those basic beliefs and assumptions must be made explicit. Scholars involved in the ontological turn, largely tied to postmodern and poststructuralist thinking, consider reality not constituted by structures, but rather by processes or relations (Murdoch, 1998). However, these have been tempered by a recent shift in thinking that argues the turn in postmodern and poststructuralist philosophy to language has gone too far. Instead, these approaches have sought to take materialism and materiality seriously (Braidotti, 2006). As a result, these efforts have been called new materialism (Dolphijn and Tuin, 2012), material sociality (Chandler and Neimanis, 2013), vibrant materialism (Gullion, 2018), and others. In this thesis, I will refer to this group of approaches as 'new materialism,' and in the following section I draw in particular on the new materialist works of Barad (2003; 2007; 2014) and Gullion (2018).

New materialist approaches are responding to contradictions in the prevailing interpretivist paradigm in the qualitative social sciences, which Gullion (2018) argues

signal a paradigm change. By turning to ontology, new materialism makes particular efforts to acknowledge the sociomaterial nature of reality without privileging humans (Barad, 2007). However, as mentioned previously, new materialism is not a uniform philosophical approach. Still, new materialism offers a means for reconciling process and relational ontologies, and in ways that align with the critical perspective of this thesis.

In drawing together both OS and human geography in the geographical constitutiveness of organising and engaging both process and relational ontologies, new materialism aligns with the critical perspective in this thesis, first by making explicit assumptions about the nature of reality. Further, as this thesis extends research on organising to new contexts by drawing together insights from human geography, it might be seen as part of the ‘intellectual promiscuity’ of new materialism, engaging in an ontological project that endeavours to dismantle rigid silos of academic knowledge (Gullion, 2018). Finally, a critical perspective argues for the political nature of research, an argument borne out in new materialist debates about decentred agency, though this is problematised to an extent in this thesis. So, in seeking to develop an assimilative view and develop an ontological argument for the geographical constitutiveness of organising, let us look further at how new materialism reconciles process and relational ontologies. In particular, I explore relatively recent philosophical developments in ANT and agential realism.

5.1.4 Ontology in ANT and ethico-onto-epistemology in agential realism

The review in Chapter 3 highlighted significant recent engagements with ANT in human geography; there have likewise been efforts to integrate ANT thinking in OS. In particular, some process-oriented OS scholars have sought to show that ANT can be amenable to the study of organisation (e.g. Chia and King, 1998; Hernes, 2004). These works argue that, given ANT’s focus on the relatively stable *effects* of networks of

associations, associations can be seen as continuous *processes* of (un)associating and (dis)connecting, and effects can be thought of as *organisation* and *organising* (Law, 1994; Czarniawska, 2009; Law and Hassard, 2009). Interestingly, Hallin et al (2013) emphasise the shift from organisation to organising as a shift toward performativity, which they link to process ontology. Still, ANT works have themselves aligned more with the notion that associations are relational (e.g. Latour, 2005). In fact, this relational thinking is only one element of ANT, which also includes heterogeneity and multiplicity (e.g. Law and Singleton, 2015). These appear amenable to the key elements of the geographical constitutiveness of organising. In fact, the view in ANT is more that human and non-human actants form networks of associations, and that these networks are 'what there is' in the world, mean that ANT can itself be viewed as an ontology (Latour, 1996). In this sense, ANT presents an appealing alternative to process or relational ontologies for shifting the focus on 'what there is' in the world to networks of associations. In line with ANT, one group of approaches has emphasised practices and practice-based studies, which understand the social and enacted through bodies, materiality and meaning (Gherardi, 2009; Nicolini, 2013).

Despite its appeal, ANT has been met with significant criticism in OS (Whittle and Spicer, 2008; McLean and Hassard, 2004), human geography (Lee and Brown, 1994; Bosco, 2015) and further afield (e.g. Walsham, 1997). Among these, a significant critique has been that ANT is amoral (Winner, 1993). ANT scholars have addressed this critique by pointing to the need for researchers to themselves adopt a moral stance (Bijker, 1993; Boland and Schultze, 1996). A second criticism involves the obscuring of differences (Lee and Brown, 1994), whereas Law and Hassard (1999) argues that ANT can provoke an understanding of the inclusions and exclusions of networks. Finally, the critique of ANT as apolitical (Haraway, 1992; Ausch, 2000) has been rigorously countered by pointing to the enactment of realities through practices (Mol, 2002), as well as how research politicises reality: 'every time we make reality claims in science we are helping to make some social reality more or less real' (Law and Urry, 2004:396).

In this sense, far from apolitical, scholars have argued that ANT can be seen as ontologically political (Alcadipani and Hassard, 2010).

From the critical perspective in this thesis, these ontological claims in ANT and the defence of their criticisms appear to align with the geographical constitutiveness of organising. First, the ontological claim that networks exist, and are constantly 'assembling,' highlights the many ways that organising can occur, beyond an ontological appeal to either process or relationality. Second, seeing ANT as ontologically political points to a means for incorporating 'selective performativity' in thinking about ontology in the context of the geographical constitutiveness of organising. However, for the geographical constitutiveness of organising, the concept of 'decentred agency' emphasises that agency is decentred (i.e. to networks), but not completely. This is somewhat problematic from an ANT perspective, in which agency is distributed among human and non-human networks. In addressing this, a further new materialist approach offers a fruitful means for reconciling ANT and decentred agency: agential realism.

Barad's (2003; 2007) notion of 'agential realism' turns ANT around, and in doing so offers insights that offer scope for incorporating a decentred agency perspective into the geographical constitutiveness of organising. Much like ANT, which makes an ontological claim to the existence of networks, agential realism relies on an ontology that argues for 'phenomena' as the primary ontological unit. Whereas ANT emphasises networks, agential realism argues that 'phenomena are ontologically primitive relations' and are the result of 'apparatuses' that are related to phenomena through 'intra-action' (Barad, 2003:814). In other words, phenomena 'are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components' (Barad, 2003:815). In this sense, 'intra-action' is a fundamental concept in agential realism.

Gemignani and Hernández-Albújar (2019:138) describe 'intra-action' as 'entanglements of realities, concerns, and people which come to exist in their necessary

relation to each other.’ And, as Barad’s (2007:33) states, ‘distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action.’ In other words, from the perspective of agential realism, relations and processes of intra-action are entangled in apparatuses that constitute phenomena. In contrast to ANT, agency is not an effect, but rather phenomena are ontologically imbued with agency because they are constituted through the apparatuses that agential intra-actions produce (Barad, 2003). This still suggests a relational ontology, but one reconciled with process thinking through a view that phenomena, which include both relations and processes, are the fundamental ontological element of the social. Finally, and in a further contrast to ANT, agential realism argues that phenomena are *not* solely ontological (Barad, 2007:33). In fact, agential realism is inherently tied to epistemology: how the ontologically assumed social world can be understood (Steup, 2005).

The intermingling of ontology and epistemology for agential realism is tied to its derivation in feminist philosophy. In particular, feminist thinking emphasises the standpoint of the researcher, and takes the view that ‘all inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer’ (Denzin, 2010:24). Building on this, agential realism claims that ‘intra-actions enact agential separability – the local condition of exteriority-withinphenomenon,’ and this can be seen through an ‘agential cut...effecting separation from subject and object’ (Barad, 2003:815). This implies, then, that particular agential cuts are a *part* of phenomena, but also that cuts can enable apprehension of phenomena: a subject enacts a cut, thereby separating a phenomenon into both subject and object. In other words, it is through agency and a particular intra-action (actions within a phenomenon) that phenomena can be epistemologically understood.

As Barad (2003; 2007) argues, this makes agential realism an ‘onto-epistemology.’

Returning to the question of decentred agency, while agency is decentred and relations, processes and other constitutive elements of phenomena can possess agency, it is not decentred completely *because the researcher enacts an agential cut* that enables the phenomenon to be understood. Importantly, though, ‘phenomena are produced through

agential intra-actions of multiple apparatuses of bodily production' (Barad, 2003:817). In other words, a human agent (such as myself as researcher) is a part of multiple apparatuses, enacts agential cuts through a phenomenon, and thereby denotes an object of inquiry, but *with a preferential and particular emphasis*, which is interwoven with the apparatuses of which the agent is part. In this way, agential realism provides a way for understanding the interwovenness of a researcher with phenomena. At the same time, it points to the role of the researcher in enacting selective performativity: the decision(s) to make particular agential cuts of phenomena entails selecting particular performances-within-phenomena to improve. Finally, this points to the way(s) agential realism is also imbued with an ethical perspective because researchers – as part of phenomena – have a responsibility for considering the effects of their inquiry (Barad, 2003; 2007). In this way, ethics is made inherent to agential realism in a way it is not in ANT. Extending it from an ontoepistemology, Barad (2007) argues agential realism constitutes an ethico-ontoepistemology.

To conclude, the above illustrates how both ANT and agential realism can reconcile the ontological bases for process and relational perspectives in the geographical constitutiveness of organising. Further, both ANT and agential realism were shown to take up political and ethical concerns in inquiry. However, it was argued that Barad's (2007) agential realism privileges human agency – through the researcher's own apparatus and agential cut in phenomena – and therefore incorporates an understanding of decentred agency *but not completely* that aligns with the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework.

Calling into question the boundedness of ontology, epistemology and ethics, an agential realist perspective focuses attention on phenomena and researchers' coimplication in phenomena under study. This has profound consequences for social inquiry, which are taken up in the next section. First, however, the ontological discussion and emphasis on agential realism is related to rhizomatic assemblage as a metaphorical tool for understanding the geographical constitutiveness of organising, in particular by

developing the notion of ‘diffraction’ as the methodological perspective of agential realism (Haraway, 1991; Barad, 2007; 2014; Gullion, 2018).

5.1.5 Diffraction and rhizomatic assemblages

Recalling that rhizomatic assemblage was previously developed as a metaphorical tool (Section 4.2), agential realism provides a means for elaborating this further. First, the understanding of assemblages as imbued with multiplicity is reflected in the notion that phenomena are comprised of many apparatuses and intra-actions, though not all are known or know-able (Barad, 2007). In thinking about rhizomatic assemblages, such latent or imperceptible or potential intra-actions can be thought of as the mycorrhizal networks mentioned previously (Section 4.3). On the other hand, through agential cuts, the rhizomatic shapings of assemblages can be discerned by the agent effecting such a cut through – and from within – phenomena. In fact, the methodological argument in agential realism for ‘diffraction,’ which implies both ‘cutting together-apart’ in a single move, reflects the way that an agential cut ‘(re)configur[es] patterns of differentiating-entangling’ (Barad, 2014:168). In other words, diffraction is a methodological and agential (re)configuring of a particular rhizomatic assemblage by cutting a phenomenon together-apart and selecting certain consequential elements of an assemblage’s multiplicity – as well as its rhizomatic potentialities – upon which to focus attention.

Diffraction reflects the melding of ontology into epistemology in agential realism: a phenomenon (i.e. an assemblage) is asserted to exist, but simultaneously can only be understood *rhizomatically* due to the agential cutting together-apart single act of diffraction – which itself is an intra-action from within a phenomenon. In developing this, agential realism is positioned at length against other methodological approaches that rely on representation (Barad, 2007), a point that is taken up further subsequently (Section 5.2.2). However, let us consider the enlivening of rhizomatic assemblages that an agential realist perspective enables.

Perhaps most significantly, an agential realist view highlights that an agential cut only enables a particular perspective on rhizomatic assemblages, their sociomateriality and relationality, how relational processes of collective activities unfold geographically, and so on. In this sense, an individual both possesses agency in becoming imbricated with phenomena, but only to an extent: there is a certain uncertainty to the phenomena with which an individual will intra-act. Still, there is an inherent ethical orientation implied in by diffraction: agential cuttings are at once both together-apart, and reality is not cut solely to be de(con)structed but rather to be (re)configured as well. Rhizomatic assemblages can be explored diffractively (Section 5.2), but there will always be a bringing together because an agent is a part of the coming together of the rhizomatic assemblage itself.

A further implication of agential realism is that rhizomatic assemblages, while imbued with multiplicity and potentiality, are only grasped when agential cuts are enacted. As such, they can be approached from different perspectives – ‘each moment is an endless multiplicity’ (Barad, 2014:169) – and therefore, hypothetically, endless cuttings together-apart of rhizomatic assemblages are possible. Practically, however, such agential cuts and diffractions – and perspectives on rhizomatic assemblages – are limited both by agential intra-action(s) with phenomena, and by the hard work of tracing and doing diffraction itself (Barad, 2010; 2014). This relates to the prior point that, in making agential cuts, an agent enacts and privileges certain practices: a rhizomatic assemblage could be otherwise, and surely is so. However, by selecting certain performances of rhizomatic assemblages for inquiry, the agent performs ethics, which is fused with the ontological phenomena itself (Barad, 2007). This reiterates the political nature of inquiry, and requirement for selective performativity inherent to a critical perspective because, by seeking to understand rhizomatic assemblages, the researcher makes ontologically ethical and political interventions in the world.

The above may appear to sit in tension with the posthumanism that Barad (2003) and others (e.g. Badmington, 2000; Braidotti, 2006; Ferrando, 2013) articulate. I argue for privileging particular *rhizomatic* assemblages through the researcher's agential cuts. However, as Barad (2003:808) claims, her 'posthumanist account calls into question the givenness of the differential categories of "human" and "nonhuman," examining the practices through which these differential boundaries are stabilized and destabilized.' This echoes a critical perspective in making explicit fundamental assumptions (i.e. about the categories of human and nonhuman); however, in calling these into question it does not reject them completely, but rather acknowledges that agential cuts in apprehending phenomena and rhizomatic assemblages are necessarily enacted from a *particular* agent. Further, bringing boundaries into question suggests that not only human-nonhuman categories should be called into question. On the contrary, the enactment of agential cuts create exclusions and boundaries not only subject-object and human-nonhuman, but also here-there and inside-outside and rhizomatic-mycorrhizal. So, through inquiry and agential cuts, many different boundaries are stabilised. In the context of this thesis, an effort is made to challenge these boundaries by approaching the phenomenon of focus from different perspectives (i.e. through several agential cuts) and acknowledging the agency of the reader in (re)enacting a rhizomatic assemblage (Chapter 6).

Finally, developing rhizomatic assemblage as a metaphorical tool through reference to agential realism involves a particular phenomenon, and the geographical constitutiveness of organising interweaves sociomateriality, geography, and temporality, what Barad (2010) calls 'spacetime-mattering.' Importantly in this regard, a diffractive perspective considers collective activities of organising in terms of rhizomatic assemblages as particular agglomerations of sociomateriality, particular relative intensities and extensities of connections (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), and particular comings together of 'spacetime-mattering.' Doing so entails moving beyond reflexivity about the research process and the particular choices of the researcher to make a diffractive account of them. To this end, and diffractively cutting together apart Barad's

own work, it might be said that Barad's utilisation of 'space' should be extended to consider other ideas in geography. Seen this way, the interrelatedness of geographies, time and matter would form a more lively understanding of the interwoven phenomena that constitutes reality. It is in this sense that this thesis metaphorically deploys rhizomatic assemblages to think about sociomaterial collective activities as geographically constituted. The next section elaborates the methodological discussion further by drawing out insights from diffractive methodology that informed the empirical inquiry of this thesis.

5.2 Methodological considerations and a diffractive ethnography

This section demonstrates some of the means by which my own positionality was integrated into the agential realism and diffractive thinking that guided my empirical fieldwork. The previous section discussed process and relational ontologies in OS, as well as human geography, outlining tensions between them and considering how to reconcile those tensions by drawing on ANT and agential realism. The philosophical and conceptual developments of Barad's (2003; 2007; 2010; 2014) agential realism provided a means for not only reconciling process and relational ontologies, but also for incorporating a critical perspective into the geographical constitutiveness of organising. Agential realism takes phenomena as the primary ontological unit, acknowledges the apparatuses, agential cuts and ethics of the researcher, and utilises diffraction to understand the cutting together-apart of phenomena. The latter concept further developed rhizomatic assemblage as a metaphorical tool to think about organising as geographically constituted, and this section develops these methodological arguments by considering the implications of agential realism and diffraction for research practice from several perspectives, and focuses attention on the 'diffractive ethnography' (Gullion, 2018) undertaken in this thesis' empirical inquiry. I begin by describing the research site where the diffractive ethnography was undertaken.

5.2.1 Multiple apparatuses and a suitable research site

Adopting agential realism as an underpinning philosophical approach means that it is incumbent that I, as a researcher, acknowledge the apparatuses within which I am enrolled, and which generated my interest in how collective activities of organising are geographically constituted. This thesis is a product – and continuing part – of multiple apparatuses, including: a Master's and interest in environmental sustainability; continuing research interests in alternative organising and degrowth, including presentations at a CMS conference and a degrowth conference; my situatedness in Manchester and at a business school, which together provoked a desire to focus my research in Manchester and to contribute to OS and business school debates; existing publications on degrowth (Vandeventer et al, 2019) and its relation to OS (Vandeventer and Lloveras, forthcoming); and other apparatuses that stretch further into my past (see also Section 5.2.2). These come together in myself as researcher, and were supplemented by a chance encounter (see vignette, Section 6.1) with residents of what became the site of empirical inquiry: a housing estate in Hulme, Manchester, UK. Through these apparatuses and others, I began to develop an interest – or an interest enrolled me – in thinking about how shared areas of the housing estate were organised. Thus, through an agential realist lens, the multiple apparatuses I am enrolled in informed the agential cuts I enacted through phenomena of organising on the estate, and must be understood as *part of* those phenomena.

I describe the research site in greater detail subsequently (Section 6.1.2), but in line with an agential realist perspective, I note that the aforementioned apparatuses informed my enrolment in the phenomena of organising the estate, that these influenced my encounters in the field, and that these apparatuses were deeply implicated in the selection of this research site. Indeed, the residents I spent time with during fieldwork – and who are involved in organising shared areas of the estate –

generally included more educated, left-leaning activists, and many shared an interest in sustainability. For example, the Green Zone project on the estate several years ago (see Section 6.2) sought to enact sustainability projects, and the large gardens are maintained to provide green space for residents and wildlife. Of course, other residents of the estate are less concerned with such political issues, but seek to get involved in their local community (see Section 6.4). And further residents are only peripherally active, and many are not at all (see Section 6.4.2). Still, the particular demographic groups who were – and are – involved in organising were ones I felt comfortable engaging with. Their involvement is part of a culture and legacy of political activism among residents on the estate, which is also tied to the legacy of the part of Manchester within which it is a part. And importantly, these individuals are entangled with my own apparatuses, as well as my values and politics, such as my membership of a Manchester-based collective advocating sustainability issues. This political alignment was influential in developing rapport and trust with residents (see Section 5.2.5), and also speaks to the way my interests informed the research process – and the selection of this as a suitable research site in the first place. Indeed, by becoming enrolled in this research site, and by writing this thesis about it, I have sought to improve practices of organising the shared areas of the housing estate. I have sought to advance the practices of residents, such as by developing an estate guide (see Sections 5.2.5 and Section 6.3). At the same time I have pursued and furthered my interests in alternative organising, degrowth, sustainability, OS and business school debates – all of which I find interwoven with the estate as a research site and my fieldwork there.

Still, it is worth noting that those uninvolved on the estate are a significant majority. While other sites were considered where one might expect more resident involvement in the organising as a geographically constituted phenomenon – such as a nearby housing co-operative – the range of residents' involvement on the estate is reflective of their diversity. Residents come from very different demographic groups, and also range from leaseholders to private renters to many social housing tenants. In this way, the housing estate parallels or might more accurately mirror the diverse approaches to

everyday life in Manchester. So, by selecting this research site, I sought to challenge my own thinking about being a resident of Manchester, but also about the way(s) that degrowth and sustainability might manifest – and potentially be conflictual – in a site where such interweaving of diverse lives occurs. Indeed, others have also found the estate a relevant site for empirical research (Barry and Doherty, 2001; Doherty et al, 2007; Gaved, 2011), albeit in the past. Related to this, an early comment made to me conveyed a sense of lament for this past (see Section 6.1.1 and Section 6.2.3). Still, organising the shared areas of the estate continues in the present through a range of projects and activities (Section 6.3), whilst remaining interwoven with the diversity of everyday life. Finally, and related to this, such concerns with the everyday have longstanding traditions in the social sciences (e.g. de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 2000). For these reasons, the housing estate appears suitable as a research site for inquiry into the geographical constitutiveness of organising.

To conclude, the focus of this thesis on the housing estate as a research site emerged through – and influenced – my own ‘multiple apparatuses of bodily production’ (Barad, 2003:817). The initial description of the estate has reflected its suitability to this thesis based on my politics-as-researcher, due to my aim to enact a critical perspective that involves selective performativity, and its interwovenness with the fabric of everyday life in Manchester. I return to and elaborate its relevance subsequently (Section 5.2.5). Further, while several of the apparatuses with which I am implicated have been indicated in this sub-section, these extend further into the past and into my identity, including my own position as a politicised academic, but also as a citizen of the United States, a white male, and so on. These are taken up further in the next section, which builds from the critique of representation in agential realism to account for the ways that my own positionality forms a focal point of fieldwork in a diffractive ethnographic approach.

5.2.2 Against representation: Agential realism, diffraction and positionality

Agential realism develops from a critique of a range of existing philosophical traditions in the sciences, in particular the naturalism of natural science inquiry – and the related positivism in the social sciences, as well as a diverse range of social constructivist approaches (Barad, 2007; Gullion, 2018). While indebted to these traditions, agential realism problematises their reliance on representation and the assumption that *something* in the world can be represented through research, whether an objective reality (naturalism, positivism) or a shared construction of reality (social constructivist approaches). These representations reflect an *a priori* ontological assumption about the existence of material or social constructs, which agential realism questions by arguing for non-essentialism due to the performativity of research (Barad, 2007; Mauthner, 2018). In other words, agential realism acknowledges that reality is performed into being: in the case of research, the act of researching phenomena makes them sociomaterially real, which is an ongoing process of materialisation (Barad, 2003). In this way, research – and the researcher – can and must account for itself as a part of the research process (Mauthner, 2018). Thus, from an agential realist perspective, the epistemic grounds for interacting with and seeking to understand the social as researchers are inextricably linked with the ontological and ethical grounds of research itself.

Incorporating Barad's notion of performativity requires acknowledging the 'diffraction apparatuses' (Barad, 2011:449) that constitute inquiry: the cuttings together-apart that researchers enact through practices. The emphasis on enactment through practices finds resonance with ANT inquiries (Mol, 2002; Latour, 2005) as well as the broader practice theory approaches (Nicolini, 2013). However, as indicated previously (Section 5.1.4), agential realism takes this further by making explicit ethical and therefore political concerns with inquiry: the researcher is an agent in enacting diffractive cuttings together-apart through research. So, foregrounding practices is part of the turn away from representation, though practice theories include a broad range of approaches

(Nicolini, 2013). Indeed, as Schmid (2018) argues, in the context of OS, an emphasis on practice turns toward possibilities, becomings and events – but, agential realism makes explicit that this emphasis should account for the researcher's own diffractive lens on possibilities, becomings, events and, indeed, on reality itself.

In seeking to take a stance against epistemic privilege (Gullion, 2015), to invoke an understanding of the diffractive lens used in this thesis, and to further elaborate the apparatuses through which this thesis emerged (see also Section 5.2.1), I acknowledge my own positionality as a researcher, but also as a human. I was born in the United States, a land of incredible privilege, but also a cultural hegemony (Artz and Murphy, 2000), the heart of contemporary empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000), the centre of global carbon capitalism (Di Muzio, 2015) and much more. In 2015, I moved to the United Kingdom for a Master's in Environmental Sustainability, and these perspectives on my home country came into view both slowly and in sudden realisations. As such, the move afforded me a further privilege: the chance to critically (re)appraise my own country and its (precarious) status as the most powerful country on the planet. This privilege and my positionality ultimately informed my research interests. Indeed, I seek not only to ameliorate the worst effects of capitalism, but to explore alternatives to it. This led to research on degrowth and alternative organising, in particular, though ultimately, the specific focus on 'alternatives' was rejected in seeking to acknowledge the diversity of the world and to avoid the possible inadvertent reification of some ideal-type capitalist organising (following GibsonGraham, 2006). All of these considerations – and surely more – inform the diffractive lens I have developed. By presenting my own epistemic positionality, I aim to foreground that my own perspective – and my own agential cuts – informed this thesis' fieldwork: I do not claim to represent some conflict-less and coherent social construction, nor to represent some objective reality. Rather, my own perspective is presented and interwoven throughout.

To integrate a diffractive lens into this thesis, to challenge representational biases of the social sciences and to enact the metaphor of rhizomatic assemblage, several

different perspectives are presented in the empirical discussion of the geographical constitutiveness of organising. In addition, the reader is encouraged to engage with each section in the order of their own choosing, in this way enacting agential cuts that perform their own understanding(s) of the empirical findings. These different sections each acknowledge the interwovenness of myself as researcher in the particular reality of each section by first presenting a vignette told from the first person. Further, a research strategy was developed that involved cascading involvement and various ethnographic methods. I treated these methods as 'data generation' – rather than data collection – to account for my own agential cuts and my implication in generating the data (Madden, 2010). The diffractive ethnographic approach to fieldwork and the methods I used are considered later in this section. First, however, the notion of decentred agency is broached once more in order to explore how agential cuts and a diffractive ethnography entails privileging certain practices and selecting certain performances to improve.

5.2.3 On decentred agency and ethics

The argument that decentred agency constitutes a core element of the geographical constitutiveness of organising recognises that decentred agency is not about negating the human, but about interrogating the conceptual apparatus of the nature/culture divide (Kirby, 2013, cited in Gullion, 2018). Indeed, the question of agency in agential realism involves acknowledging that there is a paradox at the heart of contemporary new materialist debates about ontology. On the one hand, human agency is decentred as part of the multiplicity of apparatuses and intra-actions that compromise phenomena. On the other, by recognising the researcher's capacity to enact agential cuts that separate subject and object in phenomena, agency is recentred, momentarily, in the researcher. Thus, new materialism faces a paradox with respect to agency and the nature of reality, though it is a paradox that need not be reconciled. Rather this sits in fruitful tension throughout new materialist work, including Barad's agential realism.

In illustrating this fruitful tension, consider that Gullion (2018) makes the ethical concern for justice in the context of the Anthropocene central to her argument that humans' hierarchy over the rest of the world should be ended. Yet, this relies on acknowledging the Anthropocene itself – and its human-centredness. Or, consider how Barad (2003) argues that ethics must be *performed* – implicitly by the (human) researcher. In both cases, the call for decentred agency must be reconciled with an empathic recentering of agency to humans. Yes we do not have a hierarchical privilege. And yes, we have a responsibility that privileges our diffractive, agentic cuttings together-apart.

Extending the above to the context of the geographical constitutiveness of organising, decentred agency and agential realism imply that the nonhuman, material world does not exist merely for us, and that we have an ethical obligation to acknowledge the agency of the multiplicities and rhizomatic assemblages that constitute reality. However, if organising entails collective activities, if the collective is both human and non-human, and if we have the agential capacity to enact change, then collective activities of organising are undertaken *for us* and *by us* to a greater or lesser degree. Thus, organising – seen as geographically constituted or otherwise – implies a political stance (Reedy et al, 2016) and, possibly, an affirmative stance (Braidotti, 2013; Parker and Parker, 2017). Taking up a concern for the geographical constitutiveness of organising does not lessen these ethical, political and affirmative dimensions; rather, it heightens them for more fully capturing the geographical, relational interconnectedness of processes of organising. Agency decentred means we must acknowledge our spatial interdependence with the material world and, to the extent our agency enables, enact changes that respect the multiplicity of other agencies that constitute rhizomatic assemblages and reality itself.

5.2.4 A diffractive ethnographic strategy for guiding fieldwork

In incorporating the above philosophical and methodological concerns derived from agential realism, I adopted a diffractive ethnographic strategy in conducting fieldwork (Gullion, 2018), which sits within a broader ethnographic tradition of empirical social science inquiry (e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Madden, 2010). Ethnography is an established empirical approach in both OS (e.g. Van Maanen, 2006; Neyland, 2008; Ybema et al, 2009) and human geography (Herbert, 2000; Cloke et al, 2004; Gregory and Walford, 2016). And efforts to empirically engage with new materialism and Barad's agential realism have specifically developed diffractive ethnography as an appropriate means for guiding inquiry (e.g. Gullion, 2018). A diffractive ethnographic approach is not a cookbook of methods to be used, but rather demands that the research question guide the methodology and a philosophically thick discussion, in addition to echoing calls in ethnographic approaches for the rejection of positivistic objectivity, reliability, replicability and generalisation (Gullion, 2018). Further, in diffractive ethnography the researcher 'maps the contours and flows of the assemblage in which they are embedded' (Gullion, 2018:96). This involves reading empirical data through each other (Barad, 2007), a process akin to Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) notion of 'plugging in' different data to each other and creating something new as a result. Finally, a diffractive ethnographic approach takes seriously the sociomaterial nature of the world, as well as the researcher's implication in assemblages and entanglements (Gullion, 2018). To this end, the apparatus(es) in which the researcher is implicated and the agential cuts they enact must be acknowledged in diffractive ethnography, and are concomitant with core concepts in agential realism (see Section 5.2.1 and Section 5.2.2, above).

The diffractive ethnographic approach of this thesis was chosen instead of other qualitative research approaches, including action research, grounded theory, and case study (e.g. Meyers, 2009). Each of these presented problems that were fundamentally at odds with the aims of this project. In particular, while action research involves the researcher aiming to solve a problem and influence change in the research subject (Meyers, 2009), this thesis more humbly seeks to address a research question that aims to improve our understanding of how collective activities of organising are

geographically constituted. Additionally, the grounded theory approach suggests that discarding or suspending a focus the theories – in this thesis, this includes those derived from OS and geography – upon which this inquiry builds. Instead, this thesis seeks to challenge theoretical work at the intersection of OS and geography, and extend theory in a new empirical context. Further, while a case study is a versatile approach that can be adapted to meet the needs of the project and researcher (Yin, 2017), and endeavours to produce reliable research that builds directly from the strength of the underlying philosophical and theoretical argument (Myers, 2009), often this approach seeks to develop generalisable findings that can hinder the depth of insight into everyday, mundane practices of organising and their geographical constitutiveness demand. Also, a case study risks devolving into an instrumental or, even worse, exploitative approach that fails to generate an authenticity of connections and trusts with research participants – which was noted in research about the housing estate previously (Gaved, 2011). In contrast, to these approaches, in ethnography it is incumbent for the researcher to acknowledge the coconstitutive role they play in generating data and, as such, to commit to adhering to ethical data generation throughout (Madden, 2010). In this way, imbuing research with ethics aligns with agential realism's concern for enacting justice through researchers' intra-actions with the social world, and favours a diffractive ethnography in particular (Gullion, 2018). Finally, due to a rejection of objectivity and aim to understand the lived experiences of the social world, a researcher can still generate valid and reliable findings by firmly linking ethnographic findings to theoretical ideas (Myers, 2009). For these reasons, the choice to adopt a diffractive ethnographic approach was made in contrast to other qualitative techniques. Such an approach, however, is not without challenges, including those discussed subsequently.

Ethnography offers a means to get close to the social world in order to develop new insights about it (e.g. Denzin, 2010), though it is not without its own critiques and challenges. While outside the remit of this thesis to recount them all, it must be acknowledged that the criticism of ethnography's origin in colonisation and imperialism

looms large (Gullion, 2016), as does its tendency to emphasise representation (Lather, 2001). There are indeed other critiques. Still, a diffractive ethnography acknowledges these concerns and, without seeking to fully reconcile them, leaves room for creativity in how insights are developed, including in the ways in which disciplinary boundaries are challenged (Barad, 2007; Hughes, 2013). The interweaving of OS and human geography in this thesis is one such effort to challenge the silos of knowledge separating academic disciplines, and to enact such a challenge by discussing the diffractive ethnographic fieldwork through a ‘plugging in’ of human geography with OS to see what happens (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012; Gullion, 2018).

A diffractive ethnography acknowledges that the researcher becomes the research tool, which – as mentioned previously – imbues the research with an ethical backdrop throughout (Gullion, 2018). However, while Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that ethics entail a commitment to reflexivity, Barad (2007) rightly notes the anthropocentric bias implied by reflexivity. To address this, a performative ethics must be adopted (Barad, 2003), which acknowledges the researcher’s agency and participation in performing reality, while also giving due recognition to the human and nonhuman processes and relations constituting it (Barad, 2007; Gullion, 2018). Further, and as mentioned previously with respect to a critical perspective, ethnographic research drawing on agential realism should account for the assumptions underpinning inquiry and develop new lines of inquiry (Mauthner, 2018). The prior philosophical considerations (Section 5.1) sought to make explicit the assumptions underpinning the geographical constitutiveness of organising, and the discussion in the following chapter is ‘philosophically thick’ (Gullion, 2018:3), in particular through engagements with theory and the periodic evocations of rhizomatic assemblage as a metaphorical tool, but a tool imbued with philosophical concepts of assemblage, multiplicity, agential cuts, and so on.

I now turn to approaching the field, and several challenges therein, then to the methods used for performing diffractive ethnographic research into the geographical

constitutiveness of organising. This leads to a more in depth discussion of the unfolding and performing of fieldwork (Section 5.3).

5.2.5 Approaching the field diffractively: access and exclusions

Attaining sufficient access to develop meaningful insights about a particular context is a core challenge of ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In particular, the ethnographic aim of providing detailed, in-depth accounts and thick description (Geertz, 1983) requires a closeness of access and trust. This is all the more important if, as in this thesis, research seeks to move beyond ‘Geertzian cloaking/uncloaking process’ and to more ambitiously tell stories about the world (Maréchal et al, 2013:197). From the perspective of diffraction, this aligns with the critique of representation (Section 5.2.2) and requires looking for the ‘iterative (re)configuring of patterns of differentiating-entangling’ (Barad, 2014:168) *without* relying on a representational correspondence between those patterns and the written text about them, but also *while* seeking to tell stories about those patterns. In fact, this is further complicated by the ontological argument that materiality is implicated in phenomena: (how) can intra-actions that are both sociomaterial be (re)presented in a thesis, and (how) can access be negotiated?

The above question highlights that both diffractive stories of a research site and access therein is never complete (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), and that always present in ethnographic research are the researcher’s own perspectives, opinions and history: a researcher enacts agential cuts that enable a diffractive lens on phenomena (Barad, 2007; 2014), but this also means that the researcher becomes entangled in an assemblage (Gullion, 2018). I indicated these entanglements in acknowledging the apparatuses within which this thesis emerges (see Section 5.2.1 and Section 5.2.2) and which generated the housing estate as a research site. In my fieldwork, I became entangled in this housing estate, and the particular rhizomatic assemblage therein upon which my research focussed. Thus, from an agential realist and diffractive perspective,

gaining access might be more accurately thought of as becoming interwoven, entangled or embedded in the phenomenon of focus. For me, doing so required sensitivity toward the particular uniqueness of context(s), persistence and the development of trust.

In my fieldwork, embeddedness relied on understanding the importance historical and sociomaterial relations of the phenomenon, what I refer to subsequently (Section 6.4.2) as spatial knowledge. Developing spatial knowledge about the estate allowed me to participate in context-specific humour (Section 6.4.2), to appreciate particularly important objects (Section 6.4.1) to recognise cultural territories (Section 6.4.3), and much more discussed in the next chapter. However, because the particular context of empirical inquiry was a housing estate, it was necessary to navigate everyday life of the residents, and to be persistent in seeking to become entangled in activities on the estate. Indeed, despite my hope – and indeed expectation – there was not an immediate ‘complete’ immersion in the field (see vignette, Section 6.2). Rather, I gradually became exposed to more groups on the estate, getting to know those involved, developing spatial knowledge and assigning meaning to materiality. Still, becoming interwoven and embedded in the estate was not a seamless process. On the contrary, throughout my fieldwork, I worked through the challenges that arose as I sought to embed myself in the groups organising the shared areas of the housing estate. My fieldnotes reflect one such challenge:

Having done some background reading, I’ve come across some prior research about the estate that describes ‘research fatigue’ among residents. Will I face this same obstacle, or how can I overcome and contribute something new to the estate?

The research I came across was a thesis project (Gaved, 2011) from several years ago, and points to fatigue amongst residents, as prior academic research had already been conducted about the estate (Barry and Doherty, 2001; Doherty et al, 2007). Still, because Gaved (2011) treated the estate as one of various cases that have developed grassroots internet and intranet systems to address the digital divide in the UK, it might be said that this work actually worsened the fatigue of residents by approaching the

estate as an exploitable site for instrumental ends, rather than the development of enduring relationships and trust. I held the risk of this fatigue in mind during my fieldwork, and actively sought to address it:

In the meeting, I brought up not wanting to deceive/mislead anyone, and my hope of volunteering on the estate. But, I need to consider how I might make the case for my presence in ways that aren't a burden.

In line with this aim, and in seeking to avoid becoming a burden while also maintaining a presence on the estate, I pursued an opportunity to help update a guide to groups on the Redbricks, which enabled me to both present myself as a contributor and embed myself further (see vignette, Section 6.3).

My presence was palpable in shaping the dynamics of meetings, and led residents to share and divulge estate-specific knowledge with me:

My presence is still clear, as at times one person will stop – almost as an aside – and explain to me a reference to a group or person that they know I wouldn't understand.

While this shaped my experiences during fieldwork, and informed the kinds of data I was exposed to, this was not problematic: I took the efforts to share information with me to signal that I was not an onerous burden, but rather a 'participant observer' (Kawulich, 2005) that residents trusted and felt comfortable around. Of course, this was not always the case. I record one particularly poignant encounter:

He said 'I didn't catch your name.' I told him, and he replied 'Ok James the gardener' and I told him that, 'Actually, I'm also doing some research on the Redbricks'. This led him to turn away and prepare to leave, saying that I'd turned him off already. I told him I'm learning how to garden. The other gardener chimed in, saying something about how I've been helping out, before he headed off.

Despite such reservations from some, over time, a reciprocal feeling of comfort and trust deepened meaningful relationships with residents. This was aided by my capacity to contribute to the groups on the estate, including the estate guide and in other

instances. During gardening, which I engaged in regularly, I wrote in my notes about sharing bits of my past with residents:

I felt a bit more casual during the gardening today, and opened up about gardening when I was a kid, and how my dad's approach was to remove any possible weeds. The other gardeners laughed at this, and one described her approach as 'interfering with the weeds' rather than removing them completely.

Through sharing of experiences, both common and differing to residents', further trust emerged throughout the course of my fieldwork. These might be thought of as 'war stories' that built rapport between myself and residents (Orr, 1996). Still, I had to face the reality that volunteering for some groups on the estate was outside my capacity. For the estate's intranet system – the same system Gaved (2011) studied – I wrote in my fieldnotes about a tour that I received from a resident:

As we walk over, he asks about my technical skills, and I explain that I can't really code but am happy to help with any other labour tasks or things that require help.

Despite a lack of technical skills, the tour of the intranet continued and the resident happily described the system and its material components. My status as a nonresident – no doubt supported by the fact I am not from the UK – but one with genuine curiosity about the particular uniqueness of the estate led to a depth of connections. This is not to imply that I was an 'outsider' seeking some myth of 'insider' status (Merton, 1972; Kusow, 2003), but rather that, through various efforts during my fieldwork, I developed trust with those involved in organising shared areas of the estate. However, a further consideration was relevant, as well: my politics.

As a researcher making agential cuts through the phenomenon of the housing estate, and becoming entangled with it, my political views proved influential in developing trust with different residents. In particular, there were several memorable moments when I described my research interest in degrowth to individuals that might be seen as 'gatekeepers' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Having previously written about degrowth as a challenge to the capitalist-growth paradigm (Vandeventer et al, 2019),

my own critical perspective on the status quo found resonance with individuals on the estate, some of who identified as anarchists, punks and so on. Indeed, the political alignment between myself and residents involved in organising on the estate brought with it a further deepening of trust. Opinions I shared with residents in conversations furthered this sense of alignment, including disparaging the developments in city centre (Section 6.5), as well as the landlord and Council, and their ongoing conflictual relationships with the estate. Further, I shared a view with residents that the estate is an 'alternative' – whilst acknowledging that this term itself is problematic (see Section 5.2.2, and also Section 2.3.1) – to other housing estates. The description the information sheet I provided to residents of my interest in 'how urban space is organised in alternative ways' reflects a recognition and respect for the efforts of residents to create such an 'alternative.' In this sense, my ethical obligation as a researcher enacting particular agential cuts through the phenomenon of the estate was furthered by shared political values.

Having highlighted the access challenge inherent to ethnographic fieldwork, I pointed to the ways that access and trust were developed, in particular due to shared politics. Throughout, I drew on experiences recorded in my fieldnotes, which in turn reflects that I often relied on them as a significant data source. Indeed, I consciously chose to avoid using a recording device during meetings in order to not disrupt their flow. Instead, I made jottings throughout meetings – and immediately after volunteering – that were subsequently written up in my fieldnotes (Emerson et al, 1995; Madden, 2010). In introducing me to others, a resident noted this, joking that: 'He's alright. Doesn't talk much, just takes notes as he studies us.' The humorous framing of my involvement aside, in drawing attention to my note-taking, this resident acknowledges and legitimises it as a core data gathering method. In fact, fieldnotes enabled me to become enrolled in the unfoldings of the estate: over time, I began to recall prior conversations amongst residents that informed present discussion in meetings. Further, the fieldnotes allowed me to develop different perspectives on the issues the estate faces. Building from a practice theory perspective, this allowed zooming in and zooming out (Nicolini,

2013) in order to trace the routes and roots of the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage, and its connections to others. In the context of agential realism and diffraction, the agential cuts of my fieldwork might be seen as taking larger and narrower slices of the estate as a phenomenon. And those cuts were informed by my politics. Still, fieldnotes were not the only method I utilised, and the next section describes the different methods I used during my fieldwork.

Before describing the multiple methods used, I acknowledge that, although my approach to fieldwork meant seeking access to the housing estate, this also led me to understand how relations extend to groups beyond the estate. These groups included: the estate's landlord, the City Council, local retailers, property developers, a nearby theatre and cultural venue, various maintenance and service sub-contractors for the estate, and others. However, it is important to note that these groups were not the focus on empirical inquiry; I made choices to largely exclude these groups from the research. Instead, the sociomaterial relations and collective activities unfolding in the shared areas of the housing estate – and how these reflect organising as geographically constituted – were my main concern during the fieldwork. I sought access to the field by generating rapport, building trust and sharing political views with particular unfoldings – a rhizomatic assemblage – within the context of the estate. Drawing on the conceptual framework of this thesis, it might be said that, by focusing on a particular space and appreciating its boundedness from a territorial perspective, I have sought to improve the practices of organising the shared areas within the boundaries of the estate – in line with the selective performativity that is essential to this thesis' critical perspective (Section 2.3.2). This necessarily meant excluding certain actors, groups and relations – or at least making them less central to the research. If, for example, I sought to improve the practice of maintenance subcontracting, this would have served as the focus of my inquiry. Or, more closely related to my fieldwork, if I had sought to understand how maintenance subcontractors organised the shared areas of the housing estate, this particular group would have been more central. Still, having acknowledged exclusions to my research, I do not discount the relational connections

that other groups have with the housing estate, nor their influence therein. If place is an 'open articulation of connections' (Massey, 1999:288), such relations must be accounted for in fieldwork. Indeed, these and other relational connections became particularly relevant when considering the scalar unfolding of activities and their relationality to the estate through 'geometabolic' processes of organising that influence the estate's material use (Section 6.5). However, the focus of inquiry was explicitly directed on – and inherently tied to – the housing estate itself. In this sense, I could have included other groups, but developing a place-based approach to understanding organising involved excluding those less centrally enrolled in the phenomena of collective activities on the housing estate.

Thus, while the exclusion of different groups off the estate occurred, this was not incidental but rather the result of my explicit choices as a researcher. These groups were not central to the agential cuts I enacted. As the fieldwork unfolded, I developed an understanding of these relational ties, such as by attending meetings between residents and the landlord, by interviewing several of the landlord's employees, and also by interviewing a local councillor (also mentioned in Section 5.2.6). But, through this thesis I have sought to understand how a particular group of residents – and a particular sociomaterial rhizomatic assemblage – are involved in organising the shared areas of the estate, and how these activities of organising are geographical accomplishments. It is these practices I aim to improve through this thesis. Having explained my approach to the field, how access to the research site was negotiated, and choices regarding groups that were excluded, I now describe the different methods used to generate data.

5.2.6 On methods and multiple agential cuts

Recognising the entanglement of researchers and the objects of research (Woolgar, 1991; Barad, 2003; 2007) is a requisite for a diffractive understanding of the enactment

of particular realities. To realise this diffractive approach, and in seeking to empirically explore the geographical constitutiveness of organising, I utilised multiple ethnographic methods during my fieldwork. These facilitated enacting multiple agential cuts that provoked different understandings of the research site. Through these, I sought to get close to those residents of the housing estate involved in collective activities, but *desired* to get close to them as well. In a sense, I was a 'desiring-machine' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972) that sought to see the geographical constitutiveness of organising more fully and, ultimately, embodied a desire to encourage the practices on the estate to continue and flourish. Throughout my fieldwork, I attended many meetings and events, and volunteered to help during activities. These efforts were guided by a flexible and opportunistic approach to fieldwork that did not rely on a prescriptive set of methods (Gullion, 2018). Still, they might be seen to align with existing practices in qualitative fieldwork of the social sciences, and I outline the key practices I engaged in through fieldwork below. Finally, before describing the methods, I briefly note that these data were stored on a password-protected computer to ensure confidentiality. And, in order to render them amenable to analysis, the data were uploaded into the NVivo qualitative data analysis software, in which codes could be assigned to portions of text, areas of photographs, et cetera (see also Section 5.3.4). I now briefly describe each method in turn.

Participant observation – Through entanglement with the research site over an extended period of time, totalling over a year (see also Section 5.3.2), I endeavoured to become a participant in activities on the estate, whilst remaining attentive to the happenings around me through acts of observation that were later recorded in fieldnotes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Madden, 2010). Throughout my fieldwork, I engaged in different activities as a volunteer, including: setting up and taking down with other volunteers for events (vignette, Section 6.2); gardening both with smaller groups and on larger gardening days; attending meetings; volunteering to assist in updating a guide to groups on the estate (see vignette, Section 6.3); and attending

meetings of various groups. *Table 1* summarises the different participant observation activities that I engaged in, broken down by each month of fieldwork.

| Month | Description of Participant Observation Activities |
|---------------|---|
| November 2017 | -Attending meeting of tenants' and residents' association -Helping set-up and take-down of 'give-and-take' stall -Volunteering at finale event of 70th anniversary celebrations |
| December 2017 | -Attending meeting of tenants' and residents' association -Attending quarterly tenants' and residents' association meeting with landlord |
| February 2018 | -Attending meeting of tenants' and residents' association -Helping set-up and take-down of 'give-and-take' stall - Participating in gardening day on estate (1) |
| March 2018 | -Attending meeting of tenants' and residents' association -Attending quarterly tenants' and residents' association meeting with landlord -Participating in gardening day on estate (1) |
| April 2018 | -Attending meeting of tenants' and residents' association -Helping set-up and take-down of 'give-and-take' stall -Participating in gardening days on estate (2) -Attending walkabout with residents and landlord -Attending tenants' and residents' association AGM, which was open to all residents, and explained my research to attendees |
| May 2018 | -Attending meeting of tenants' and residents' association -Participating in gardening days on estate (4) |
| | -Attending Manchester Day Parade planning meeting -Organising meeting to discuss estate guide |
| June 2018 | -Attending meeting of tenants' and residents' association -Helping set-up and take-down of 'give-and-take' stall -Organising second meeting to discuss estate guide -Helping build estate's float and make costumes for Manchester Day Parade - Participating in gardening days on estate (4) |
| July 2018 | -Attending meeting of tenants' and residents' association -Participating in gardening days on the estate (6) -Participating in community gardening day on estate -Helping set-up and take-down of 'give-and-take' stall -Attending gig of residents' band at nearby pub -Tour of estate's intranet system -Attending meeting of housing co-op on estate -Informal meeting with employees of landlord |
| August 2018 | -Attending meeting of tenants' and residents' association -Participating in gardening days on the estate (7) -Living on estate in a resident's flat while watching their cats (2 weeks) -Informal conversations and chat with residents while living on estate -Attending meeting of housing co-op on estate |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| September 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participating in gardening days on the estate (4) -Attending meeting of tenants' and residents' association -Attending councillor drop-in and meeting with local councillor -Attending quarterly tenants' and residents' association meeting with landlord -Attending meeting of housing co-op on estate -Tour of new housing development next to the estate -Tour of estate as part of annual Permaculture Convergence meeting -Organising third meeting to discuss estate guide |
| October 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participating in gardening days on the estate (1) |

Table 1: Description of participant observation by month

From *Table 1*, it is clear that gardening was a central activity I was involved in during participation. This highlights the significant role of leisure, of care for the landscape of the housing estate, and specifically of gardening as a practice that entails (re)thinking about the relationship of individuals to nature, and the divide therein (Crouch, 2009; 2010). This perspective is developed subsequently (see in particular Section 6.3.3).

Fieldnotes – during my time in the field, jottings in a small notebook that fitted in my jacket were made, and more in-depth written fieldnotes were subsequently written up (Madden, 2010). The former enabled quick notes to be taken throughout events or meetings, and occasionally during volunteering, which then served as a stimulus – along with my own memory – for the latter, more thorough, writing of my experiences in the field (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Ethnographic interviews – Although from a new materialist perspective interviews are a 'failed practice' for centring on the human, 'that does not mean that we give up on the interview as method' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012:viii). Rather, it is necessary to make clear assumptions that go in to interviewing (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). To this end, I assumed that, in conducting interviews were that these would be a complementary source of data and I would not solely rely on them. Further, understanding interviews as a sort of performance (Denzin, 2001) and series of events (Spradley, 1979), I sought to account for the fact that both myself and the interviewee were performing. In this sense, I generally led with a directive question about how the resident started living on

the estate, before asking clarifying questions and asking non-directive questions to guide the conversation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Still, the interviews were also guided by a desire to learn about what the residents are involved in currently and where they see the estate going into the future. In this sense, the interviews were not purely unstructured – and this is perhaps a naïve notion in the first place (Allmark et al, 2009) – but rather had an overarching direction to the discussion, which was subsequently ‘plugged in’ to theory in relating them back to geographical constitutiveness of organising (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). Further, the material presence of a voice recorder influenced the interview process, and the conversations often took a more formal tone that was a noticeable switch from casual conversation before and after the interview itself. However, many times, the interviews became conversations, and residents said things like ‘I’m on a tangent...’ or ‘Not sure how I ended up on that...’ For me, these signalled that the interview was following their genuine narrative, rather than any carefully circumscribed points. Still, as mentioned above, the interviews were themselves a performance (Barad, 2007) and therefore served as only one source for data. In total, 20 interviews were conducted, 14 with residents (two of these were with the same resident, and one interview included two residents), five with employees of the landlord, and one with a Councillor. *Table 2* includes a list of all interviews conducted, a description of the interviewee, as well as the date and length of each interview.

| ID Code | Description | Date | Length |
|---------|---|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Resident | 28 March 2017 | 30 min |
| 2 | Resident; past participant in grant-funded projects; member of intranet group | 02 December 2018 | 95 min |
| 3 | Employee of estate’s landlord | 12 November 2018 | 53 min |
| 4 | Resident; member of TARA committee | 14 August 2018 | 85 min |
| 5 | Resident; photo elicitation participant; member of TARA committee | <i>13 September 2018</i> | <i>64 min</i> |
| 6 | Resident; coordinator of Redbrickers project | 25 July 2018 | 72 min |
| 7 | Occasional resident; member of intranet group | 19 September 2018 | 98 min |
| 8 | Employee of estate’s landlord | 11 October 2018 | 57 min |
| 9 | Resident; photo elicitation participant; member of TARA committee | <i>17 November 2018</i> | <i>62 min</i> |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--------------------------|
| 10 | Resident; member of TARA committee | 11 August 2018 | 82 min |
| 11 | Resident; member of housing co-op | 17 October 2018 | 86 min |
| 12 | Resident; past participant in grant-funded projects | 23 July 2018 | 99 min |
| 13 | Resident; member of TARA committee | 29 September 2018 | 120 min |
| 14 | Resident; member of TARA committee; regular gardener | 12 March 2018 31 July 2018 | 47 min 40 min |
| 15 | Resident; regular gardener | 15 August 2018 <i>24 September 2018</i> | 107 min <i>95 min</i> |
| 16 | Resident | 10 September 2018 | 79 min |
| 17 | Local Councillor | 18 September 2018 | 52 min |
| 18 | Employee of estate's landlord | 20 September 2018 | 57 min |
| 19 | Resident; occasional gardener | 19 November 2018 | 104 min |
| 20 | Employee of estate's landlord | 13 August 2018 | 80 min |
| 21 | Employee of estate's landlord | 18 October 2018 | 70 min |
| <p>Key: <i>italics</i> = indicates a photo elicitation participant/interview</p> <p>two dates = two interviews conducted</p> <p><i>Note: In seeking to protect interviewees' anonymity, interviews are listed in a random order and numbering is not organised in any way.</i></p> | | | |

Table 2: Description of interviewees, date and length of interviews

Documents, photos and archival materials – a range of documents have been produced about the estate, including published academic work, reports for funding bodies, blogs and newspaper reports. Further, the estate has an online presence (see vignette, Section 6.3) that includes Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. These provided contextual descriptions and backgrounds of the estate and the collective activities of residents, as well as non-textual (i.e. visual) data sources. In this sense, these served as both written and photographic data contributed to understanding the estate from different perspectives. The documents, photos, archival materials as well as social media data sources are included in *Table 3*.

| Document type | Description |
|---------------|-------------|
|---------------|-------------|

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tenants' and Residents' association meeting minutes (13 documents) -Housing co-op meeting minutes (3 documents) -Landlord's financial statements (2017-2018 FY) -City Council Eastlands Regeneration Framework -‘Celebrate!’ Final Report (sent to funders, provided by author) |
| Photographs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Photos of give-and-take stall (sent by resident, 6 photos) -Gardening on Rockdove Avenue (sent by resident, 4 photos) -Photo of gradens (sent by resident, 1 photo) -Manchester Day brainstorm meeting notes (1 photo) -Manchester Day float (1 photo) -Aerial views of gardens and estate (Google Earth, 8 photos) -Self-taken photographs during fieldwork (124 photos) |
| Archival materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hulme Community Garden Centre: Letsby Avenue proposal (2012) -Green Zone toolkit (58 pages, https://greenzonetoolkit.co.uk/) -exhulme photos (3 photos, https://www.exhulme.co.uk/) -Estate's website captures from TheWaybackMachine (records dating to 1999) -Return to the Redbricks CD (2 discs) -Packet of documents: Bentley Bugles, Hulme PIG, Hulme Alliance, People's Kitchen notices (provided by resident, late 1990's to present) -Rebuilding the City: A Guide to Development in Hulme (Hulme City Challenge plan, Hulme Regeneration Limited, 1994) -Environmental Action and Community Cohesion, Taster Pack 14 (Federation for Community Development Learning, 2008) -Community-led urban regeneration on the Redbricks Estate, Hulme, Manchester (Sostenga Case Study, 2010) |
| Social media and online materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Facebook group 'Leafy Street Bentley House Estate' (100+ posts from November 2017 to October 2018) -Twitter account @redbricksonline (200+ tweets from November 2017 to October 2018) -Instagram account @redbricksgardens (30+ posts from November 2017 to |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2018) -Redbricks website (blog posts, history summary, events, groups, www.redbricks.org) -Shout emails on internal listserv (100+ total sent) |

Table 3: Documents, photos, archival materials and social media data

While other documents and materials – in particular websites – were read and consulted throughout the course of the fieldwork, these served as background materials and were not analysed and coded during the research process. Inevitably, their contents inform the insights presented in this thesis, although they are not listed in *Table 3*. As such, they might be seen as mycorrhizal networks that are enrolled in the

becoming-together of the researcher, the thesis, the housing estate, the reader, and so on.

Photo elicitation project – In seeking to acknowledge the legitimacy of views and perspectives other than my own (Rose, 2016), three residents were asked to participate in a photo elicitation project (one also participated in an ethnographic interview). These three residents were asked to take photographs of ‘what is meaningful’ to them about the housing estate, and then were subsequently interviewed about a selection of photographs. This added three further interviews to the 20 ethnographic interviews conducted, which are indicated in *Table 2* in italics (in the date and time columns). This visual data gathering method was used to complement those of talk and written text (Pink, 2013), but also to provide a different perspective and make an effort at understanding the agential cuts enacted by residents themselves. While the visual should still be viewed critically from a new materialist perspective, in particular the fact that the camera reflects the humancentric gaze of the photographer (Rose, 2016), this project highlighted unexpected, surprising, and omitted aspects of the phenomena of the estate. The photos gathered were all taken from various vantages on the housing estate by the participants, and some of them were used in the thesis to acknowledge legitimacy of residents’ own voices in constructing the rhizomatic assemblage of this thesis. In particular, the following images were from the photo elicitation project: *Image 4*, *Image 15*, *Image 16*, and *Image 23*.

With respect to this final method, from the agential realist perspective of this thesis, the materials depicted in the photographs at once both speak ‘for themselves’ and informed my own thinking. For example, *Image 23* in the next chapter was taken by a resident and shows a new building near the estate. This photograph was analogous to the view that greeted me every time I arrived on the estate. In the interview – and in others – the tower looming over the estate was a frequent subject of conversation. In this way, the materials spoke through the photograph, but also through interviews and throughout my fieldwork. In fact, the presence of this phenomenal build-up of materials both in that

tower and across Manchester spurred the conceptual development of the 'geometabolics of organising' (Section 6.5).

This sub-section's descriptions of the methods used could be mapped on to the description in the next section of four phases to fieldwork (Section 5.3.2). In this sense, these sub-sections – and indeed the methodological chapter as a whole – can be read together to develop complementary views of how fieldwork unfolded. In addition, interwoven throughout the next chapter's discussion are images, references to digital media, excerpts from interviews and fieldnotes, as well as descriptions that are meant to evoke a narrative and story of the events encountered during my fieldwork. In these ways, the different methods utilised might be thought of as offering a kaleidoscope on practices (similar to the notion of territory as a kaleidoscope in Cheetham et al, 2018), whilst diffraction also involves acknowledging that the agent peering through a kaleidoscopic lens – myself as researcher – also creates the object. In other words, through the kaleidoscopic viewing of reality – the housing estate – an agential cut is enacted that enrolls the researcher-as-subject in the estate-as-object. Furthermore, in aiming to provoke an understanding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising and the housing estate as a rhizomatic assemblage, I sought to make multiple agential cuts through different ethnographic methods and by developing different perspectives. Still, while I present four of them in the next chapter, my fieldwork was in a sense a single cut: a diffraction that temporarily exposed some of the multiplicity of a phenomenon. Only a partial view of this phenomenon is presented in the next chapter. Other views remain as potentialities: some constitute areas for further inquiry, others will inevitably dissipate. Others may be found in the methods outlined here, while others will only exist through further agential cuts. I now turn to how I enacted a diffractive ethnographic inquiry on the housing estate and research site of this thesis' fieldwork.

5.3 (Un)folding and performing diffractive ethnography

The methodological discussion thus far has incorporated philosophical considerations (Section 5.1) with respect to ontology in OS (Section 5.1.1) and human geography (Section 5.1.2); established the ethico-onto-epistemological grounding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising in new materialism (Section 5.1.3) and, in particular agential realism (Section 5.1.4); and illustrated how diffraction points to a way of understanding rhizomatic assemblages (5.1.5). Then, different elements of a diffractive methodological approach were outlined. This section continues the methodological discussion by focusing on the unfolding of fieldwork (Section 5.3.2), how diffraction provokes a rethinking of reflexivity (Section 5.3.3), and a consideration of data analysis, interpretation and writing up (Section 5.3.5). First, however, as an aside to the methodological discussion – or is it a part of it? – there is a consideration that warrants scrutiny: namely, the multiple enrolments in rhizomatic assemblages, and in this thesis (Section 5.3.1). It is to this, a warning issued to the reader, that I now turn.

5.3.1 An aside: a diffractive warning

This thesis emerges through multiple enrolments and entanglement, including my own. These are returned to in detail subsequently (Section 5.3.3). But one, in particular, stands out: the reader of the text of this thesis. As a text, the meaning of this thesis emerges in conjunction with the reader. In fact, while a (relatively) clear and consecutive narrative is performed herein, the reader's own trajectory and entanglements inform the meaning(s) they take from the text of this thesis, including the arguments here written. Of course, being written in the hegemonic language of academia – English – the meaning would, presumably, be to a greater or lesser extent shared between the reader and myself as author. Still, understanding this thesis as a performance brings any shared understanding into question.

A logical progression is presented in this thesis, this chapter, this section, and this sentence. Adhering to norms of social science research, a methodological argument follows a literature review and precedes the discussion of findings. Still, do not be fooled, dear reader. Things could be otherwise, and indeed they likely are otherwise. Entangled the reader enfolding, unfolding.

This thesis emerged as an entanglement with my own life, and can be read any number of ways. The next chapter, as you shall see, suggests a way the reader could read the findings otherwise. Perhaps the above warning might risk dissolution of any meaning to the words, sentences and arguments both previous and subsequent. Or, more likely, the dissolution will only be partial, and the reader will forever be scarred from unfolding this thesis in search of its real meaning(s). I certainly bear the scars. Still, any search for understanding performs this thesis into existence, despite the dangers. I trust, dear reader, you feel adequately warned of such dangers.

Perhaps, before moving on, it is worth taking a step back. As Mol (2002:44) advises: '[d]on't attend to what is loudest, the fight, but shift your attention a little, widen it, and try to see what all this noise is part of.' This noise is in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. But also it is the noise of a burgeoning academic career, a past, a life, a journey, a becoming. And you, dear reader, are already entangled in a becomingtogether. In a rhizomatic assemblage.

5.3.2 The (un)folding of fieldwork

The performance of this thesis' fieldwork unfolded over the course of twelve months. The period of empirical research on the housing estate started with my first encounters in November 2017 (Section 6.1), proceeded to a deepening involvement and,

ultimately, to leaving the field in October 2018. These can be thought of in terms of four phases:

- **Initial foyers: Encountering the field** (November 2017 to February 2018)

After several attempts to contact groups on the housing estate, I finally succeeded in attending a meeting where several individuals, who might be thought of gatekeepers (Walsh, 1998) were in attendance (see Section 6.1). Then, after volunteering at several events, there was a period of relative inactivity, during which I conducted research online, compiling news articles, documents and archives, as well as photographs (see vignette, Section 6.2). This initial agential cut was a surprise to myself, not least for the discomfort I felt in entering other peoples' lives. I was also uncertain as to how best to approach different groups, and learned the importance of being sensitive to the internal dynamics of relationships among residents, as well as their views of the landlord, Council, city and so on.

- **Entangling: Building rapport and trust** (March to May 2018):

As the Spring arrived, there were more opportunities for involvement in collective activities on the estate. Through these, I got to know the different people involved in different projects and groups. I also volunteered to contribute to a guide of groups on the estate (see vignette, Section 6.3), and volunteered to help construct a float for a parade that involved residents from the estate. These deepened my rapport with regularly active residents, and a level of trust developed among us. My perspective was becoming interwoven with that of residents, and I wrote a blog criticising the changes in housing in the city (<http://www.gmhousingaction.com/housingfinancialisation-deliver-viable-economy-greater-manchester/>) that was influenced by views I had heard from residents.

- **Culminating: Intensifying connections** (June to August 2018):

Over the summer, my fieldwork reached an intensity of connections with different residents; I was on the estate nearly every day, volunteering or attending meetings or

casually chatting with residents. This culminated in an opportunity to watch someone's flat and live on the estate for two weeks (see vignette, Section 6.4). I felt a bond to the estate and the residents there, and my ethical commitment became clear: I would seek to improve the performance of organising the shared areas on the estate, and critique would serve to further that aim. I also sought out participants in the photo elicitation project during this phase.

- **Disentangling: Stepping back** (September to November 2018)

Many of my interviews were conducted toward the end of my fieldwork, and I engaged in less volunteering and participant observation. As I was wrapping up my fieldwork, and feeling the desire to turn experience and agential cuts into text. I disentangled myself from the field, and situated my fieldwork in the context(s) in which it occurred by writing about it. I began to think about walking to and from the estate (see vignette, Section 6.5) as my experiences that contextualised the estate and diffracted its relation to changes happening more widely.

While four stages of fieldwork are presented above, there was not a clear-cut progression between stages during my fieldwork. Rather, the research unfolded in fits and starts, with a few opportunities for fieldwork some weeks, while during others there were more opportunities than I was able to attend. While at first I was disappointed whenever a conflicting commitment meant I could not engage in fieldwork, I gradually became aware that the effort to understand the geographical constitutiveness of organising on the estate was already under way. I came to think of my fieldwork as what I termed 'cascading involvement' in the field. This finds resonance with 'snowball sampling' (Morgan, 2008) but without the representationalist notion that the social world exists 'out there' and can be sampled. Rather, as water builds up kinetic energy in a river before cascading down a waterfall, encountering the expected pool at the bottom but also the unexpected along the journey, my fieldwork unfolded through cascading involvement. In this sense, there were folds that became unfolded in cascading waves, and inevitably new folds that were closed in the wake of these unfoldings. The different

methods sought to account for these different (un)foldings by making multiple agential cuts and approaching the phenomenon of the housing estate from different perspectives.

In seeking to capture the agential cuts, the discussion interweaves the first person I/eye of the ethnographer (Schneider, 2002), most notably in the vignettes, with descriptions of activities, stories and discussions that show the collective activities on the estate as geographically constituted. In this sense, and as mentioned previously (Section 5.2.6), the methods served as a kaleidoscopic lens (Cheetham et al, 2018) both for thinking about my diffractive approaches to understanding the estate, and for diffracting the estate itself.

5.3.3 Thinking diffractively: from reflexivity to selective performativity

As mentioned previously, many ethnography texts argue for the centrality of reflexivity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Alvesson and Skölberg, 2009; Davies, 2012). Whereas a reflexive approach acknowledges the researcher's own background – often through reflections on their race and gender (Gullion, 2018), Barad (2007) critiques reflexivity for its anthropocentrism from the perspective of agential realism, and other new materialists likewise question whether reflexivity is the most appropriate means for approaching social science inquiry (Haraway, 1991; Barad, 2003). Gullion (2018) suggests reflexivity faces several challenges: what boundaries of the self to reflexively consider; the potential for self-absorption at the expense of the research; and researchers not being attuned to entanglements of themselves with the 'researched' (in this latter sense echoing critiques made by Haraway, 1991 and Barad, 2007). To resolve these issues with reflexivity, these authors propose diffraction as a way for thinking about the material entanglement of researchers in ongoing, dynamic phenomena of the social world.

Developing the notion of diffraction with respect to materiality, Lather (2012:358; cited in Gullion, 2018:122) likens this to fracking, despite the destructive act itself, because the ‘fractal sort of splitting and then splitting again, not unlike the splitting of the self under conditions of trauma.’ As Gullion (2018:122) notes, while this visually captures the researcher’s ‘...intra-action with matter – perhaps the research is not the water, but is the shale rock, being fractured and split by the research. Lather doesn’t specify.’ In this sense, the experience of research and fieldwork involves a twofold, diffractive cutting together-apart: it enacts an agential cut that separates the world into subject-object, but also inflicts trauma on the body of the researcher itself, splitting the self asunder. The materiality of these splits can be lost in reflexive research accounts, and the emphasis on diffraction in this thesis indicates the need to account for the violence of the research act. I make an effort to do so below, but recognise that there are many areas that could be diffractively explored further.

In diffracting this thesis and its fieldwork, several aspects proved particularly visible. First, tension between representation and its critiques from the perspective of agential realism (Section 5.2.2) led me to feel unwilling to record in my fieldnotes and in photographs certain activities. More than the challenge of writing notes while in the field, I felt that jotting down notes or taking photos would ruin some elusive ‘authenticity’ of the events with which I was entangled. In an interview describing the annual Halloween event on the estate, this view was echoed by a resident:

You sort of have this idea of the world where the direct experience is more important, but then for somebody just to go around to photograph their kids as a lot of parents do these days -- and I do sometimes when we go somewhere. But I wouldn't do it here, cuz it's more like we are creating a spooky evening and we want the kids to really believe it. If the parents start taking pictures, it takes that spookiness away. They can start seeing that, that it's not, yeah, a real experience, it's something we created. (Interviewee 16)

Like the resident, I felt that taking photographs or indicating my role as researcher by taking fieldnotes would mediate – and seek to represent – an otherwise direct

experience, inflicting violence both on the research act by drawing attention to it and also on my own consciousness for destroying what I perceived as authentic experience. Growing up in the era of social media, Facebook and Instagram, this concern had been stirring for some time, but facing the task of studying the social world brought it to the surface. Suspended between the research task and authenticity, I sought to navigate the two by taking notes in formal settings and meetings, in which others often had notebooks, and taking photographs when alone on the estate. Still, this meant that my fieldnotes often relied heavily on my inevitably partial recollection of events, and my photographs did not capture others involved. To ameliorate these issues, I sought to write up fieldnotes right away and to gather photographs from online sources. Somewhat ironically, one of those sources was the Instagram account maintained by a resident of the estate, where several photos of individuals gardening are present. Further, through the photo elicitation project (Section 5.2.6), I sought out others to take photographs, which showed the estate from their – also partial – perspective. Interestingly, in interviews about the photos, several of the participants in the project reflected on their discomfort with taking photographs of other people as well. Still, these photographs could be seen as agential cuts enacted by residents in their understanding of the phenomenon of the estate – and, indeed, of their ethical concern for others' privacy.

The issue of photographs – themselves materials intra-acting with a phenomenon every time a viewer's gaze falls on them – as representations loomed large in my mind throughout the project. For example, a resident sent me several photos they had taken of me whilst gardening. In one, I am in the midst of randomly tossing bulbs into the garden bed so as to spread the different plant species out (*Image 1*).



Image 1: Spreading bulbs whilst gardening (Interviewee 15)

In another that the resident sent me, I am posing for the photograph. The latter, in which I am in virtually the same spot but smiling and posing, was posted to Instagram (*Image 10*, in Section 6.3.1), creating the perception that I routinely give thumbs up whilst gardening. I do not. But in *Image 1*, what might be seen as a more ‘natural’ gardening practice, does not show the pain that my knees feel – the product of an adolescence spent on baseball fields, soccer pitches, and basketball courts – when bent next to a bed, nor does it hint at the ache in my back that often settles in after gardening. And yet, I found gardening is a profoundly relaxing activity, despite the pains to my body, that led me to unearth the roots that spurred my thinking about the estate as rhizomatic (Section 6.3.3), and gave me a new appreciation for the smells of soil, sounds of birds and cars, and materiality of the world. A photograph cannot represent this, and I do not do it justice in recalling it.

Returning to the writing up of fieldnotes, although I aimed to write them up at the end of each encounter with the field, this was not always possible. When gardening or events occurred during the day, I had time and energy to do so. But most meetings were held in the evening, and I often returned home to record fieldnotes, but could not get through them all. It was often nearing midnight when I would stop writing, jot down

a few thoughts to spur my memory in the morning, and go to bed. While not unexpected in writing notes about ethnographic fieldwork (e.g. Madden, 2010), diffracting this further, I note the different strategies I attempted to address this. Several times I stayed up until the notes were completed, only to be exhausted the next day. Other times, I typed notes into my phone on the bus home, but these still required a period of writing up. And, of course, socialising with friends and my work commitments as an Associate Lecturer pulled my attention from more fully recording each of my experiences in the field.

As time went on, I began to focus my attention in meetings, whilst volunteering and at events, and make more specific notes – mentally or physically – of concerns relevant for my interest in the geographical constitutiveness of organising. Still, this interest was, as mentioned previously (Section 5.3.1), iterative throughout the research. It most closely resembled an abductive approach to analysis, in that I moved iteratively between literature, data analysis and writing up (Dubois and Gadde, 2002; see also Section 5.3.4). But exploring diffractive patterns through the different perspectives afforded by concepts in human geography was often an emergent process and I more fully began to develop this in analysis after the fieldwork concluded. Thus, while the vignettes make explicit my role in fieldwork, my transformation to ‘thinking with theory’ (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) took more work. An example of this is the role that objects play in the discussion of cultural territories (Section 6.4.3). Here, the materiality of phenomena became more evident as I read and re-read data in seeking to make sense of these objects’ role on the estate; but also as I began to engage with methodological arguments, including agential realism. To this end, while different agential intra-actions and the agential cuts they enact are considered in the discussion, this could meaningfully be extended more fully to account for how nonhuman materiality enacts agential cuts. While the material interactions with humans are consequential, and point to the incomplete decentring of agency in the geographical constitutiveness of organising, the interplay of materiality and sociality in phenomena *from the perspective of materiality* deserves further scrutiny.

A final diffractive consideration with respect to the fieldwork itself relates to the scope of empirical study. In particular, the various groups on the housing estate (see Section 6.3) represent a small portion of estate's residents. Many individuals are not active in collective activities, or their involvement was not apparent during my fieldwork. Still, the different groups served to offer multiple perspectives on the phenomenon of focus – namely organising on the estate as a geographically constituted phenomenon. My involvement in these different groups during fieldwork enabled my own research to enact agential cuts that enrolled different residents and multiple material objects that intra-acted differently. Finally, an appreciation of relationality led me to consider and interview several individuals working for the landlord and one working for the Council. However, my selective focus sought to improve the performances on the estate, and as a result these interviews were only included to a limited extent. The agential cuts enacted by these others, who occupy relative positions of power with respect to the estate, entail different apprehensions of the phenomenon on the estate, and would stand to benefit from further scrutiny.

Diffracting the theoretical dimensions of this thesis, I seek to draw together OS and human geography and theorise the geographical constitutiveness of organising. But, in its stead, I might well have focused on the well-worn ground of organising's sociological constitutiveness, or its informational constitutiveness or, recalling CCO (Section 2.4.2) the communicative constitutiveness of organising, or its historical constitutiveness and so on. Still, it might be said that an agential realist account of the geographical constitutiveness of organising incorporates sociomateriality and relationality, which underpin these other approaches. However, it is through my own perspective as a researcher interested in the intersection of OS and geography that this particular theoretical contribution is enacted and performed into existence.

Further, by proposing rhizomatic assemblage as a metaphorical tool, I am suggesting a method for thinking about an entangled world. It might – more ambitiously – be seen

as a metaphysical tool for thinking about reality, though this warrants further consideration beyond the remit of this thesis.

These perspectives did not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, the concept of rhizomatic assemblage emerged after a mentor recommended I read Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. As I worked and reworked through the text, I began to diffractively 'plug in' Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome with their – and others' – notion of assemblage (e.g. Latour, 2005; McFarlane, 2009; Müller and Schurr, 2016). From a diffractive perspective, this is not problematic. Instead, it enabled something new to emerge: an understanding that the rhizomatic shapings of assemblages can be discernable by an inquirer enacting an agential cut (recall Section 4.2). Further, different concepts and theories integrated throughout, as the discussion unfolds from multiple perspectives.

Countless further influences led to the enactment of this thesis, but I will here I will only diffract one. Seeking to understand the world and its interwovenness with ethics – or a lack thereof – has been an enduring interest of mine. I vividly remember my fury when the BP Deepwater Horizon drilling well exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, and waves of anger washing over me as ocean waves brought oil to the shores of an entire region of the United States for weeks. What ethically defensible stance could the company take for this act of violence, and how were they allowed to continue drilling in waters far too deep for any meaningful mitigating response? In a fascinating – and unrelated – sociological inquiry, Hochschild (2016) went to the same region affected by this ecocidal event to explore individuals supporting Donald Trump. She depicts their lives as entangled with the oil industry, as well as countless other factors, hinting at the challenge of enacting ethics in a world facing 'carbon lock in' (Unruh, 2000) to industries that enact environmental violence (Osofsky et al, 2012), to ecocide and to what I have previously described with others as the 'intertwined environmental, social and economic crisis' (Vandeventer et al, 2019:272). Bearing this recognition in mind and recalling the ethico-onto-epistemology of agential realism, far from an irrelevant tangent, the

influence of Deepwater Horizon in my own life points to the ethical duty of researchers and social scientists to focus inquiry on the entangled performances in the world, diffractively analyse them, and select those performances we seek to improve – and, by extension, those we seek to discourage. In the next chapter's discussion, collective activities on the housing estate are shown as geographically constituted, with the aim of understanding some of the multiplicity of ways a rhizomatic assemblage is enacted – and to encourage those enactments.

In other words, the discussion performs selective performativity.

Drawing on agential realism, I fully recognise that I influenced the research process through my entanglement in it. And I intend to make an effort to further the geographically constituted collective activities on the housing estate in the future. For one, I plan to present my thesis to interested residents, and consider ways to take its findings forward and their implications. For another, I am considering moving on to the estate. Rather than 'going native' (Walsh, 1998), this is an emphatic recognition of my affinity toward the estate and its residents, and my desire to remain involved in the doings and events therein.

Building on the above, the next chapter points to four ways of thinking about the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage, and theorises the geographical constitutiveness of organising. Each offers a means for understanding the collective activities and their relation to geography, and for seeing them as phenomena entangled with myself as researcher. To this end, each section aside from the first begins with a vignette, which is referred back to in the ensuing discussion. Each can be read independently, although the interconnections of the discussion are noted throughout. I briefly describe them here, then summarise my approach to data analysis.

By genealogising rhizomatic assemblage (Section 6.2), I take a critical view of the past and question whether any underlying cause can be attributed to generating the present. By shaping rhizomatic assemblage (Section 6.3), I seek to understand how the

collective activities give shape to the present and interrogate them from multiple perspectives. In cultivating rhizomatic assemblage (Section 6.4), I explore the culture and community that have been generative of collective activities. And in geometabolising rhizomatic assemblage (Section 6.5), I conceptualise the 'geometabolics of organising' to explore the geographical relationality of changes to the social metabolism (Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl, 2007). Throughout I consider decentred and sociomaterial agencies as entangled and relational, and the political nature of this research imbues the discussion with an overarching aim to improve the geographically constituted performances of organising the estate.

5.3.4 Data analysis, diffraction, writing and back again

The gathering of data, its analysis, a diffractive approach to understanding those data and the writing up of findings were interconnected, ongoing, and iterative processes. Throughout, I drew inspiration from an abductive approach (Dubois and Gadde, 2002), but took this in a new direction. In particular, I applied the work of Jackson and Mazzei (2012; 2013) in 'thinking with theory' and 'plugging in' different concepts and data with each other to see what new emerges. This sub-section summarises the approach primarily to data analysis – whilst recognising it as a not-readily-demarcated part of research – and diffractively points to the ways this process led to the emergence of something new.

In one sense, the analysis of data could be seen as proceeding in a fairly standard manner: fieldnotes were written up and interviews transcribed using word processing software; these and other data were uploaded into the NVivo qualitative data analysis software and organised; and a process not unlike coding occurred. The data were assigned words, sometimes *in vivo* words from the particular interview transcript, fieldnote, document, photograph, etc. Other times, a word or phrase was assigned based on my understanding of what was happening. This latter case could be seen as

moving to the interpretive stage of coding (Hay, 2005), although I do not claim that some ‘truth’ or representation exists to be interpreted (recalling Section 5.2.2). Still, when words or phrases were attached to data, these were the beginnings of diffractively thinking *with* the data and linking data to concepts and to theories. Reworking the data, I considered and reconsidered coded categories, and eventually combined and intermingled them into a set of condensed codes that moved in a more conceptual direction. Each condensed code, as well as its cognate abbreviation used in NVivo, is listed in *Table 4*.

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| A | accessibility | MAT | materiality |
| B | behaviour | NA | nature’s agency |
| BL | blame | METH | methodological (reflections) |
| C | care | NEC | necessity |
| CE | community engagement | POL | police |
| CH | change | POW | power |
| COMP | comparison | PT | personal ties |
| COM | communication/ing | Q | questioning |
| COMM | community | R | relational(ity) |
| CU | culture | REF | reflection |
| CR | cultural reference | RR | rhetoric/reality |
| D | discussion/debate/discourse | RY | rhythms |
| EMO | emotion(al) | SK | spatial knowledge |
| F | future | SEC | security |
| H | history | SC | scepticism |
| HES | hesitance | U | unexpected |
| HU | humour | V | values |
| ID | identity | WC | wider context |
| INC | inclusive/inclusion | WK | wider knowledge (funding) |
| JU | judging | TER | territory |
| M | multiplicity | | |

Table 4: List of condensed codes and abbreviation

While the condensed codes in *Table 4* may appear clear or direct, they did *not* emerge from a mechanistic coding process that reached a final end point. Rather, as Jackson and Mazzei (2013:267) warn us, ‘coding takes us back to what is known, not only to the experience of our participants but also to our own experience as well.’ In seeking to

escape the known, the data were also diffractively read with a focus on continually 'plugging in' different theoretical concepts together in the context of the data and the empirical setting. When these condensed codes were emerging, so too were broader thematic categories. Eventually, the codes in *Table 4* were condensed further into four themes, which comprise the sections discussion chapter: genealogising (Section 6.2), shaping (Section 6.3), cultivating (Section 6.4), and geometabolising (Section 6.5). Thus, the condensing and moving toward thematic concepts sought a 'dense and multi-layered treatment of data' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012:vii) in the becoming-together of theory, data and researcher.

The move from data to theory might be seen as similar to grounded theory (e.g. Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, just as diffractive ethnography is not a cookbook (Section 5.2.4), a significant strand of grounded theory has been criticised as overly prescriptive (e.g. Alvesson and Skölberg, 2009). Further, even in its less prescriptive approach, grounded theory asks the researcher to discard their theoretical interest – articulated in this thesis's conceptual framework and the intersection of OS and human geography – or at least suspend it. The approach I took did not do so. Rather, I recognised that 'to think with theory is not only useful, *but essential*, for without theory we have no way to think otherwise. We continue this maddening, frustrating, exhilarating practice so as not to reproduce what we already think, know, and experience.' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013:269, emphasis in original). In the pursuit of thinking otherwise, I sought to generate a new understanding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising. Doing so, however, not only relied on thinking with theory and plugging in, but also a diffractive approach. I now turn to several diffractions regarding the data analysis process.

As a researcher, diffractions constituted an integral part of the process of engaging with the data generated during my fieldwork, during the analysis, the writing, and even now. For example, prior to this thesis, I had limited understanding of qualitative research methods and analysis. I struggled with my quantitative background, only with great

effort positioning myself against any prescriptiveness in analysis, gradually reaching an understanding that I was plugging in different geographical concepts with OS and a focus on organising, and thinking with these concepts about the data in order to see what new emerged that furthered my understanding of the phenomena on the housing estate. In fact, while I reached a condensed set of codes and then thematic concepts, not all of these were integrated into the discussion. While, in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I enact a productive desire for the next chapter's discussion to provoke a compelling understanding, equally as compelling are those themes with which I did not engage. For example, 'humour' emerged as a recurrent theme throughout my fieldwork. While the relation of organising and humour has been discussed (e.g. Westwood et al, 2013), as have its geographies (e.g. Ridanpää, 2014), to what extent does the geographical constitutiveness of organising relate to humour? I broach this topic in the discussion (Section 6.4.2), but it deserves further scrutiny. Similarly, the theme of 'power' was prevalent, often in considering the relationality of the estate with the landlord, Council and wider world. This is integrated into the 'geometabolics of organising' (Section 6.5), but would benefit from a more full consideration. In this and other ways, I was necessarily selective in the thematic discussion.

The frequency of occurrences of humour and power does not suggest they are somehow better themes. Rather, they suggest my own diffractive lens brought these into focus as I interrogated the data. These diffractions extend to the proposal for thinking about the housing estate as a rhizomatic assemblage. This concept, spurred by an epiphany whilst gardening (Section 6.3.3), became interwoven with the writing process, and with ongoing (re)readings of Deleuze and Guattari's work. It constitutes, in fact, the 'irruptive emergence of a new concept' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012:12) that came about during the unfoldings of this thesis and iterative engagements with theory, data, analysis, and writing.

A further diffraction in the writing relates to the decision, taken late in the writing-up of this thesis, to anonymise and thereby obscure those residents involved. Whilst the

housing estate must be understood for its particularities, my ethical obligation as researcher enacting agential cuts of the estate is first and foremost to the rhizomatic assemblage of the estate. This includes shielding the residents from critique by other residents based on the opinions shared in confidence with me, but I also seek to protect them from potential repercussions through the unequal power relations inherent to both the research process and the practice of everyday life, including the landlord and Council. Still, I recognise that, in drawing attention to this particular housing estate, I create the possibility that this research will be used toward ends other than those I intent, and bear a responsibility for what becomes of this thesis.

This weighs heavily upon me.

As a final diffraction, I note that Mazzei and Jackson (2009:4) urge us to 'seek the voice that escapes easy classification and that does not make easy sense' and call for 'thinking at the limit.' Indeed, in pushing the limits of this thesis, I could have discussed further themes, or organised the data differently, or engaged with a different housing estate. But in the next chapter, I acknowledge that this thesis enacts a temporarily stabilised middle, one in which we will enter shortly – or have entered already. And yet, rhizomatic assemblage serves as metaphorical tool not for thinking about this temporarily stabilised middle, but it rather *is* the middle. It is the ongoing, dynamic process of assemblages forming, unforming and re-forming and reforming and enacting rhizomatic consequentialities *and* potentialities discernable through agential cuts that diffractively cut together-apart phenomena. Indeed, as Braidotti, (2002:1 cited in Jackson and Mazzei, 2013:262) reminds us, 'the challenge lies in thinking about processes, rather than concepts.' Rhizomatic assemblage – and thinking of organising as geographically constituted, sociomaterial, multiple and relational processes – means that each of the discussion sections reflect processes: of 'genealogising,' 'shaping,' 'cultivating' and 'geometabolising.' It is to these we now turn.

6 Rhizomatic Assemblage: A diffractive ethnography on the Redbricks

It is not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes.

-Deleuze and Guattari (1987:24)

This chapter discusses the geographical constitutiveness of organising in the context of an empirical inquiry undertaken at the Bentley House Estate, known as 'the Redbricks.' In doing so, I take neither a view exclusively from above or below, but rather from a 'middle' because, as this chapter's epigraph indicates, from this vantage everything changes.

In exploring the geographical constitutiveness of organising in the context of the Redbricks, I utilise the metaphor of the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage, which I entered in a 'middle.' The reader is likewise invited to enter in a middle, to engage with the different sections in any order and to thereby construct their understanding of the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage as they so choose. To contextualise the thematic findings – though the reader may choose to contextualise at another time – the next section starts with my first encounters in the 'middle' of the Redbricks, then provides a description of the estate (Section 6.1). Following this, the results of analysis are discussed in four themes.

- *Genealogising rhizomatic assemblage* further contextualises the estate from a historical perspective and genealogises the histories told of the Redbricks (Section 6.2);

- *Shaping rhizomatic assemblage* considers the entangled digital-physical assemblage of collective activities on the estate, their fluctuating intensities, and the relational agencies giving rise to them (Section 6.3);
- *Cultivating rhizomatic assemblage* explores the doings on the estate and builds and understanding of the culture that has developed on the Redbricks that give it distinctiveness as a place (Section 6.4); and
- *Geometabolising rhizomatic assemblage* examines the relational connections extending beyond the Redbricks and changing it through the conceptual lens of the 'geometabolics of organising' (Section 6.5).

Aside from the following section, the discussion of each theme commences with a vignette drawing upon my own experiences, which illustrates key ideas that are further developed and interwoven into each section's discussion.

6.1 Entering rhizomatic assemblage: A middle and a description

This section describes my entry into the field and the unexpected way I first encountered the site of empirical inquiry (Section 6.1.1). In this way, we enter in the rhizomatic assemblage of inquiry in a 'middle,' as I did, before a more detailed description of the housing estate (Section 6.1.2). Thus, this section contextualises the remainder of the chapter by detailing key characteristics of the research site, before each theme is discussed. Again, however, the reader is invited to (re)enter this chapter at any point and (re)turn to any page in generating their understanding of the rhizomatic assemblage discussed herein. In the following, I recount the chance conversation that led me to the housing estate – described previously (Chapter 5) where the fieldwork for this thesis was conducted.

6.1.1 In a middle: a chance conversation

The Bentley House Estate, known to many as ‘the Redbricks’ (and referred to in this thesis as ‘the estate’ or ‘the Redbricks’; see also discussion of its name in Section 6.4.3), is a housing estate in Hulme, a ward and neighbourhood in Manchester, a city in northwest England. The estate is situated immediately to the southwest of Manchester’s city centre, just west along Stretford Road from the institution sponsoring my doctoral studies, the Manchester Metropolitan University Business School. As my research degree commenced, little did I know that, on my daily commute from my home in Old Trafford to university on the number 86 bus, I was passing within a stone’s throw of the Redbricks (*Image 2*).



Image 2: Route to university, the estate and Manchester city centre (Google Earth)

My first experiences with the Redbricks serve as a dynamic and evolving middle – yet simultaneously a middle stabilised through this thesis – from which this chapter opens its discussion for developing an understanding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising. However, identifying the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage was not a self-evident process. Instead, my first encounter with the Redbricks began in a chance conversation around a year before my fieldwork began.

I first became aware of the estate after joining my housemate's friend at a table in our local pub in October 2016. Over pints and handfuls of wasabi peas, I conversed with others gathered around the table, sharing my still-nascent research interests in degrowth. One of them mentioned to me that they were about to move to a housing estate in Hulme, which sounded like it aligned with some of my interests. I made a mental note of the conversation, filing it away in the back of my mind, but left it there. Through the first year of my studies, I continued to explore a range of theories, philosophical perspectives, entering into the throes of a nascent academic career. Gradually, I began to consider potential avenues for undertaking empirical research, and my mind returned the Redbricks.

My first step on the Redbricks came in the spring of 2017. I had gotten in touch with the now-resident I met six months previously, and asked to meet in hopes of learning a bit more about the estate. We met at the flat they shared with their partner. During this conversation, one of them described to me a feeling that 'the Redbricks were something' (Interviewee 1). I took this, then, to imply a feeling that, while the Redbricks were something unique or special, they were not anymore. This evocation of a feeling of loss in describing the estate unsettled me, and I wondered whether the estate might not be the right place for my research. Ironically, this comment and my initial impression took place in the middle of a year-long series of events called 'Celebrate!', supported by a Big Lottery grant, that 'celebrated' the 70th anniversary of the estate. At the time, I was only vaguely aware of these events from my occasional browsings of the estate's website (www.redbricks.org). Based on the initial conversation, for a period of months I did not pursue further any contacts on the estate, and continued to consider other potential sites for undertaking fieldwork that related to my research interests, which at this point had developed toward intersection of organising and geography. Still, the Redbricks lingered in the back of my mind.

As the summer of 2017 began, I sent an email to the Bentley House Tenants and Residents' Association (hereafter 'TARA'), the contact details for which I had found on

their website, in hopes of attending one of their meetings and explaining my research interests in organising and geography, in essence to explore whether the Redbricks might be of relevance. I heard nothing in response. As summer neared its end, and a feeling of urgency to start ‘collecting data’ – as I thought of it then (recalling Chapter 5) – began to come over me, while at the same time my continued research into the history and current situation of the Redbricks was leading me to view it as an interesting example of the intersection of OS, organising and geography. The many historical and contemporary activities I uncovered, both on the estate and in the surrounding area, drove me to make one final attempt before looking elsewhere. I send another email asking to meet with TARA and offering to volunteer on the estate. This time, the response was swift and several: a TARA member invited me to a meeting in November, and another resident – copied in to the TARA reply – offered a preemptive elaboration:

[t]his year has been an exception, with lots of events organised in advance with dates to boot – for the 70th anniversary. That’s not to say that there won’t be events you can volunteer at – Easter, Halloween, winter feast and every month Bentley Exchange for sure; gardening and other People’s Kitchen community meals almost certainly; and who knows what else. There might even be new projects that we try and start, such as a community laundrette. (personal correspondence, 2018)

Indeed, through my fieldwork it became clear that, due to the ‘Celebrate!’ 70th anniversary events, a range of events on the estate had been organised in advance. But this was not always the case and, as I would learn, the pulse and intensity of activities fluctuates over time (Section 6.3.2). To this effect, the reply continued: ‘[h]owever, beyond that, we don’t always organise things with lots of advance notice, and most of it is sorted out in the monthly TARA committee meetings’ (personal correspondence, 2018). I thanked them and expressed my interest in volunteering both with ‘Celebrate!’ and with TARA. Thus, my fieldwork was set to commence in a middle: of the ‘Celebrate!’ events, of the monthly TARA meetings, of a host of collective activities, of ‘who knows what else’, and of everyday life for residents of the Redbricks. From this middle, I began to develop my knowledge and understanding of the estate. In the next sub-section, I offer a description of the Redbricks (Section

6.1.2).

6.1.2 A description of the Redbricks

This section offers a detailed description of the Redbricks, with particular attention to the shared areas of the estate. It does so not solely in adhering to the oft-cited ‘thick description’ of ethnographic research (Geertz, 1983), but also to move beyond a view that the social world can be ‘uncloaked’ by detailed description (Maréchal et al, 2013). Instead, it describes the Redbricks in anticipation of the stories and discussions of the estate presented thematically in the subsequent sections.

The Redbricks consists of six parallel, three-story buildings. Between the buildings are three streets – Humberstone Avenue, Hunmanby Avenue, and Rockdove Avenue – that alternate with two large garden areas, all visible in *Image 3*. Additionally, a narrow garden runs between the eastern-most building of the estate and Princess Parkway, a major thoroughfare that separates the estate from the surrounding area to the east. The estate is further bounded along the north of the estate by Mancunian Way, a motorway running through Manchester’s city centre. Between the estate and the motorway lies Hulme Street, which is fully pedestrianised, and leads to an underpass for foot and bicycle traffic under Mancunian Way. Finally, Jackson Crescent to the west and Clarendon Street to the south similarly separate the estate from the surrounding area.



Image 3: Aerial view of the Redbricks and surrounding area (Google Earth)

Each building of the six on the estate includes a number of ‘blocks’ of six flats, though several blocks contain fewer flats based on the architectural demands of the buildings. For example, passages under several of the buildings have been integrated in such a way that there are fewer flats in the adjacent blocks. The blocks at either end of each building are designed differently than the others – identifiable in *Image 3* by their clear cubic shape. The buildings are constructed primarily from concrete frames and red brick exteriors; the estate’s name derives from the latter. However, many flats and buildings across Manchester likewise have been constructed using the same material. So, the reason the estate acquired this name is not entirely clear (see also Section 6.4.3).

In total, there are approximately 50 blocks and around 250 individual flats on the estate. Each block shares a common entrance, with access restricted by an electronic key fob. Additionally, the blocks have a binshed near the entrance, and permit parking is available along the roads. Inside each communal hallway, secure internal doors provide access to the flats, with stairwells enabling walk-up access to the first and second floor flats. Nearly all of the entrances to the blocks are on the three streets within the area of

the estate: Humberstone, Hunmanby, and Rockdove (This thesis will refer to the streets and gardens using the names assigned to them by residents – ‘Hunmanby’ instead of ‘Hunmanby Avenue’ etc.). The remaining few blocks are accessed from Clarendon Street and Hulme Street.

The multiple areas on the Redbricks shared among the residents were of particular interest for exploring collective activities as geographically constituted. On the estate, the communal stairwells in each block, as well as the roads and pathways along the roads and in gardens are all shared. There also is a small tenants’ office, used by various groups, as well as by the estate’s caretaker, who is an employee of the landlord, One Manchester. This office is likely the result of a conversion of an adjacent two-bedroom flat to a one-bedroom. In the buildings, there are also basements accessed through doors in the communal entrances, though these are not presently accessible because One Manchester has restricted access to them.

A further shared area is the pedestrianised Hulme Street to the north. The pedestrianisation of the street was the result of residents’ protest that it was serving as a commuter car park for individuals working in Manchester’s city centre (e.g. MEN, 2011). Following the protests, a grant-funded conversion project led to the introduction of bollards to block car access to the street, and also to the installation of several planter beds and potted trees. This project – one of many activities that has occurred on the estate in the recent past (Section 6.2.3) – also blocked any through traffic from Humberstone, Hunmanby and Rockdove onto Hulme Street, making them cul-de-sacs.

Finally, the most significant shared areas on the estate are the large communal gardens. The two main gardens are unofficially known by residents as ‘Leaf Street’ and ‘Letsbe Avenue’ (both labelled in *Image 3*). Additionally, there is a narrow garden running between the eastern-most building and Princess Parkway, which functions as a green screen from the heavy traffic to and from Manchester city centre.

The two main gardens can be accessed from the north via Hulme Street and the south from Clarendon Street. In addition, the passages under several buildings mentioned previously, known by residents as ‘ginnels’, ‘subways’ or ‘pass-throughs’, connect Humberstone to Hunmanby through Letsbe Avenue, creating four additional access paths to this communal garden area. While there are iron fences at both ends of the gardens and along the ginnel pathways, these were never closed during my fieldwork. As a result, they can be accessed both by residents and others walking to or through the estate without a key.



Image 4: View through ginnel from Letsbe Avenue to Humberstone (Interviewee 5)

Image 4 captures the view from Letsbe through a ginnel to Humberstone, which is also the site a monthly give-and-take stall held by residents (the Bentley Exchange, described further in Section 6.3). In contrast, there are no ginnels connecting Hunmanby and Rockdove to Leaf Street, and the eastern-most garden is accessible only from a gate off Clarendon. Together, the stairwells in the blocks, roads and paths, a tenants’ office, and pedestrianised Hulme Street, and large gardens constitute the

shared areas of the Redbricks. For this section's descriptive purposes, these are understood as 'shared areas,' though this chapter develops our understanding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising unfolding in these shared areas by drawing on OS and geography.

In addition to the shared areas, each block on the western side of Letsbe Avenue and Leaf Street contains a rear door in the communal stairwell that provides access to the gardens. Through these doors are small semi-private areas for the flats in the block, through which residents can access Letsbe and Leaf Street. These also are surrounded by iron fencing, though these are generally not locked and can be accessed by anyone.

These shared areas and semi-private areas on the Redbricks were the main focus of my fieldwork. There are also the private flats themselves, and ground floor flats also have private gardens along the west of each building. As a resident explained to me, these private gardens face west as this orientation receives more afternoon sun. These are used both as gardens and private car parking, though the latter case is only possible for those facing onto a street, and fencing separates all gardens from each other.

Image 5 shows another aerial view of the estate, and the various shared areas of the estate are again evident. While *Image 2* and *Image 3* shows the Redbricks and the surrounding area, this image shows the estate in more detail. The Leaf Street and Letsbe gardens communal gardens are again evident, as is the smaller green area between the building furthest east and Princess Parkway. The substantial proportion of the estate comprised by the shared areas of gardens and Hulme Street is clear, though Hulme Street was not pedestrianised at the time the aerial photo was taken. The private gardens along the eastern side of the buildings and their use as both gardens and parking along the three main roads are also visible. In contrast with *Image 3*, this aerial photograph was taken during winter. Less vegetation is present, particularly on Leaf Street and Letsbe, rendering more clearly visible these areas of the estate.



Image 5: Closer aerial view of the Redbricks (Google Earth)

Given there are around 250 mostly 2-bedroom flats, and assuming a minimum average occupancy of two people, this would suggest there are at least around 500 people living on the Redbricks. However, the individuals that are involved in collective activities comprise a much smaller group than all residents on the estate. It is this group with which my fieldwork mostly was concerned, given their active role in engaging in collective activities. Indeed, recalling the critical perspective adopted in this thesis (Section 2.3.2), those individuals that are involved in such collective activities are implicated in the geographically constituted organising that occurs on the Redbricks. And it is these involvements that this thesis selects and investigates, with the aim of improving such performances, in keeping with a critical perspective that favours selective performativity.

While this section provides an initial description of the Redbricks, further descriptive elements of the estate are incorporated throughout this chapter. This section begins to demonstrate that the estate is characterised by substantial shared areas in addition to the private areas of the flats themselves. From a geographical constitutiveness of

organising perspective, these shared areas make the Redbricks a compelling potential site for considering how collective activities of organising occur in the shared areas of the estate and constitute a rhizomatic assemblage. Turning now to the thematic discussion, the next section begins to explore the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage by engaging with the history of the estate and change over time, which I problematise through a genealogical perspective.

6.2 Genealogising rhizomatic assemblage: Histories, continuity, and change

Central to understanding the geographical constitutiveness of organising on the Redbricks is that collective activities are subject to change and, by implication, to change *over time*. Indeed, time and temporality are key features to the relational and process elements of the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework (Chapter 4) and the philosophical arguments of agential realism (Barad, 2007; see Chapter 5). So, seeking to understand how collective activities unfold on the Redbricks and reflect the geographical constitutiveness of organising, and in seeking to develop an understanding of the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage in the present, histories and change over time are a central concern. In this section, I first discuss the Redbricks' situatedness within Hulme and Manchester to genealogise and (de)contextualise the Redbricks within its historical context (Section 6.2.1). Then, I discuss 'histories' of the estate told by residents in relation to this context and genealogise these as constructions of continuity in tension with changes on the estate (Section 6.2.2). Finally, I consider more recent collective activities on the estate, which are considered de/reterritorialisations that begin to show the Redbricks as a relational place (Section 6.2.3). First, however, the vignette describes my experience volunteering at a procession on the estate and early fieldwork afterwards.

Vignette: ‘Celebrate!’ and after (and before)

After attending my first TARA meeting in November, explaining my research to them and receiving agreement to carry on, an opportunity almost immediately emerges to volunteer on the Redbricks. During the 70th anniversary ‘Celebrate!’ finale, I am asked to help guide a procession of around 100 residents bearing lit torches around the estate and led by a brass band (*Image 6*). Clad in a yellow reflective vest and fireproof gloves, I help the procession turn on the correct streets and in the correct direction, remaining vigilant for any errant torch flames.



Image 6: ‘Celebrate!’ finale procession (author)

The procession ends on arrival to Hulme Street, where a stage has been erected. After helping collect and extinguish the torches, I stand among the crowd as the brass band – made up of, I learn later, several former residents of the estate – continues to perform, playing covers of 90’s club music. Their set concludes with an eruption of fireworks (*Image 7*), and I mingle with those in attendance for a meal, mulled wine, and conversation.



Image 7: 'Celebrate!' finale performance (author)

Eventually, I feel that in my volunteer role I should be helping instead of chatting with residents, despite wanting to get to know them. So, I head inside and start helping with the dishes. As I prepare to leave, my mind brimming with thoughts about this experience, a poster by the door causes me to pause. It is an 'evaluation dartboard' where people can use stickers to provide feedback about the different 'Celebrate!' events. A resident notices me looking at it, and comments, 'It's nice, isn't it? Not much analysis needed!' I smile and agree, then take a quick photo (*Image 8*). Gazing at it a moment longer, I make note of the Lottery logo in the corner. I bid farewell to those I've met that are still around, and head home.

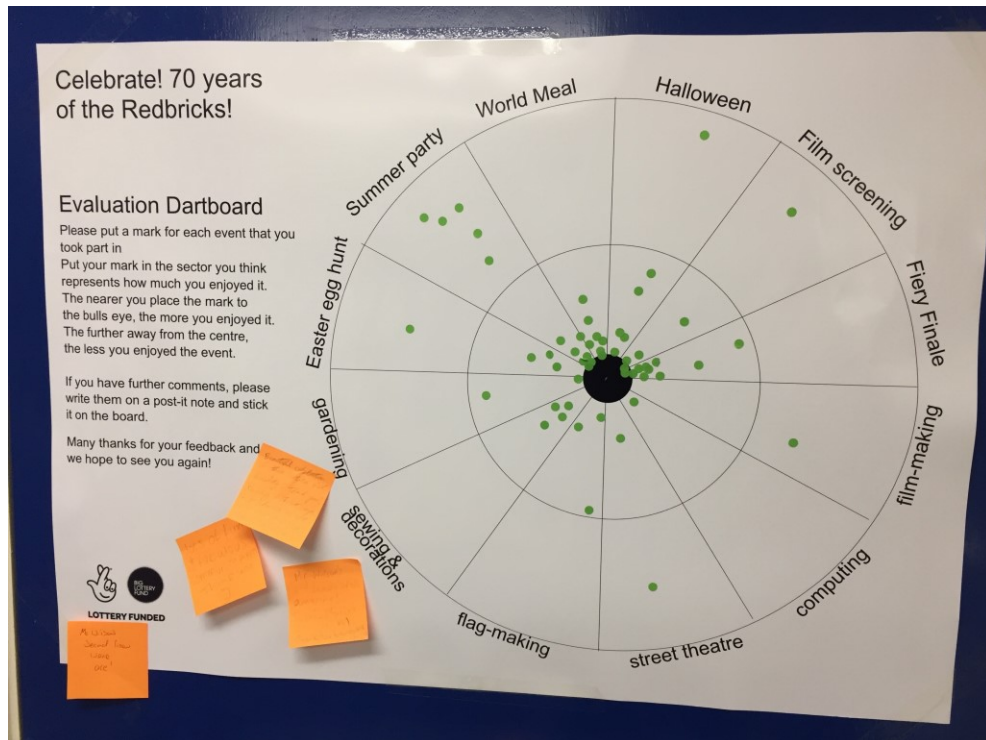


Image 8: 'Celebrate!' evaluation dartboard (author)

After the big street party, my hope for opportunities to immediately emerge for further fieldwork is unmet. I had been warned that after Christmas there is generally a period of relative inactivity on the estate and things quiet down for much of January. The TARA meeting is usually not held. The monthly 'Bentley Exchange' give-and-take stall, where residents can bring items they don't want and take those they do, also does not usually occur in January. There is little to be done in the gardens. This is understandable, given Manchester's typical winter weather, but I begin to feel as though precious time for conducting fieldwork is being lost. So, I dig in to online research about the Redbricks, Hulme and Manchester.

I uncover an impressive amount of relevant information about the Redbricks online, given its relatively small population within Manchester. Of particular interest to me are the many past projects on the estate. Among them, I find: a 3-part video documenting the conversion of Leaf Street into a permaculture garden (part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYO51rST5vg>), and read that this conversion

occurred after Manchester City Council turfed over the tarmac of Leaf Street (www.redbricks.org.uk, accessed via The Wayback Machine); a report about the Green Zone sustainability project; and a website for the Redbricks Intranet Collective, which provides low-cost internet on the estate; and an old television news story describing how Manchester City Council tried to shut the project down in 2000 but subsequently allowed the residents to proceed (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_BbA9bWIC78). In addition, I read through the Redbricks' website itself, with a whole range of information about projects, a history of the estate, and periodic announcements about events going on. As the winter begins to turn, my sense redoubles not only that the estate is an interesting case for my fieldwork, but also that the Redbricks is full of history, which undoubtedly holds significance to those living there.

6.2.1 (De)contextualising the Redbricks: a historical perspective

Situating the Redbricks within Hulme and Manchester begins to show how collective activities therein are constituted geographically. Specifically, understanding the past locates the present, and proves necessary in making sense of *how* activities unfold. Still, a genealogical perspective on *why* organising occurs in the present highlights that phenomena of organising cannot be attributable to a single underlying cause (Foucault, 1979). Rather, both local circumstances and wider trends unfolding on (and off) the Redbricks are constitutive of the estate as an assemblage with both intensive and extensive ties (DeLanda, 2006), which also exhibits rhizomatic consequential and potential unfoldings (see Section 4.2); in other words, as a rhizomatic assemblage. Developing a genealogical perspective on the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage involves (de)contextualising the historical and geographical context of the estate and understanding that how the estate unfolds in the present can only be imperfectly explained by this context. Throughout, there is a concern with and emphasis on time,

given the interwovenness of geography, organising and temporality (Hernes, 2004; Massey, 2005).

As mentioned previously (Section 6.1.2), the Redbricks is situated within Manchester, and lies just to the southwest of central Manchester across Mancunian Way (recall *Image 2*). Central Manchester combines with adjacent areas of central Salford and Salford Quays to form the urban core of the Greater Manchester city-region (Silver, 2018). Manchester lies to the west of the Pennine mountain range along the River Irwell, which is joined by the River Medlock in the centre of the city. Both rivers originate in natural springs in the Pennines and gather water on their way to the Mersey basin and Irish Sea. Although settled for several millennia, Manchester's population increased rapidly as it became a significant site of cotton production during the Industrial Revolution as mills harnessed the power of rivers, particularly the more powerful Irwell (Hylton, 2003). Many of the factories and workers whose labour went into cotton production were located in Hulme, and the neighbourhood's population expanded significantly from the mid-1800's onwards (Hylton, 2003).

Many homes were built during the Victorian era to accommodate this increased population, leading to a high density of homes and people across Hulme. These homes became overcrowded and some observers deemed Hulme a slum or 'sunk in filth' (Engels, 1845:64). *Image 9* shows the highly dense housing of Hulme in the 1930's. Seeking to address the deteriorating quality of homes and overcrowded living conditions, from the early 20th century, plans were developed to demolish and reconstruct homes across the neighbourhood and Manchester more broadly. This would unfold in roughly three phases over the next century, although two world wars slowed the realisation of the planned regeneration.



Image 9: Hulme in the 1930's (www.exHulme.co.uk)

The Second World War saw Manchester's industrial capacity converted to the assembly of war machinery and, after the war, a boom in construction occurred, as the English government began to rebuild the country and finally acted on pre-war plans to address the country's chronically inadequate housing provision (Bullock, 1987). Indeed, in 1945, the local authority in Manchester commissioned the City of Manchester Plan, which aimed to 'enable every inhabitant of [the] city to enjoy real health of body and health of mind' (Nicholas, 1945:1). To do so, one of the plan's key aims was residential development, with Hulme specified as an area of particular concern due to the structural unsoundness of homes and high density of residential inhabitants – as well as significant bombing damaging during the Second World War, which made the redevelopment of Hulme a particularly pressing concern. For the planner who wrote the report described at the time, 'the question is not whether complete redevelopment is necessary, but in what form and at what standards of density it should take place' (Nicholas, 1945:4). This sense of inevitability to the necessity of change in Manchester, as well as in Hulme, has been criticised extensively (e.g. Peck and Ward, 2002).

The City of Manchester Plan called, among many changes to the city, for Hulme's Victorian homes to be demolished in order to make way for new home construction (Nicholas, 1945). This constitutes the first phase of Hulme's regeneration: clearances

of Hulme residents, demolition of existing homes and rebuilding of new housing. Interestingly, although the local authority and planners viewed Hulme unfavourably and sought its complete regeneration, residents of Hulme's Victorian homes had maintained a vibrant community identity and culture, which was due to be demolished along with the homes as residents were compelled to disperse to other parts of the city and wider region. This counter-narrative of how Hulme's vibrancy was destroyed through the first phase of regeneration has only recently been made more widely known in publications commemorating that past (e.g. Jordan, 1989; Scott, 2003a). It was during this first phase that the Redbricks was built.

With assistance in financing reconstruction from the national government, the local authority continued to redevelop Manchester and provide new homes for its expanding population (Nicholas, 1945). In Hulme, the first phase of regeneration continued through to the 1960's, with a gradual process of clearance, demolition and rebuilding of homes. In 1962, a central government-funded programme was launched that sought a permanent fix to the housing shortage. This second phase of regeneration again meant clearances of residents and the near-complete demolition of Hulme, followed by reconstruction of flats and maisonettes across Hulme, as well as and four large curved buildings, known as The Crescents (Moobela, 2005). After their completion in 1971, however, structural problems of The Crescents quickly emerged. These problems were so significant that The Crescents were deemed unsafe for families, making these buildings a now-infamous symbol of government failure (Moobela, 2005). In addition, The Crescents continued to be categorised as having high levels of deprivation, like the Hulme they sought to replace. Still, this categorisation masks a subculture that emerged through a combination of squatters, anarchists, activists, artists, criminals and others, alongside residents housed there by the local authority. This bred a subculture of resistance, alongside the crime and deprivation, that led to a range of collective activities among residents of The Crescents. Indeed, the vibrancy of Hulme's culture continued to exist, albeit in a different form.

Over this same period of time, Manchester's industrial economy had begun a slow decline, causing persistent high rates of unemployment and leading to increasing social deprivation across the city (e.g. Mason, 1980). With the election of a Conservative government in 1979 led by Margaret Thatcher, a shift toward private enterprise and a more market-based, competitive approach had significant impacts on housing and regeneration in Manchester, as well as across England more broadly. Perhaps most famously, the Thatcher government's Right to Buy policy allowed longterm residents of government-built housing to purchase their home at a discount (e.g. Jones and Murie, 2006). At the same time, this new approach also required local governments to enter into competitive bids for national government funding (Peck and Ward, 2002). In one such instance, consequential for the future of Hulme, the national government announced in 1990 the City Challenge initiative, a competition among cities to secure funding for undertaking urban regeneration (Peck and Ward, 2002). The local authority – now called Manchester City Council after a national reorganisation of local governments – saw this as an opportunity to regenerate Hulme once again, and to demolish the 'failed' housing and subculture(s) on The Crescents (Moobela, 2005).

Manchester's City Challenge bid was successful, and Hulme Regeneration Limited began to implement a £37 million plan to, once more, demolish and rebuilt Hulme. This was the third wave of Hulme's regeneration. In 1994, The Crescents were demolished. However, many former residents of The Crescents demanded to be rehoused in other parts of Hulme, reflecting how those involved in the subculture of resistance refused to remain passive as the Council rehoused residents and identified with Hulme. Some of these residents arrived on the Redbricks, which was on the periphery of the site demarcated to be regenerated with City Challenge funding. Those who arrived on the estate did so either by squatting a flat there or by requesting a flat from the Council. They brought The Crescents' subculture with them. However, while there were many empty flats on the Redbricks for this influx of resident, some flats had remained occupied since before the third phase of regeneration. Thus, several different kinds of residents coexisted on the estate. In the late 1990's and early 2000's, artists, activists

and others drawn to the culture of Hulme came together on the estate. This generated a relative intensity of collective activities, which have continued in various ways to the present.

Thus, from after the Second World War to the end of the 20th century, Hulme was nearly completely redeveloped to its present state in three waves. Almost no buildings remain from before this, and most homes constructed in each wave were demolished during the successive ones. And yet, the Redbricks remains. Its persistence in the face of these changes is not reducible to a single explanation. What is clear, however, is that the phases of regeneration have led to a layout of Hulme that is substantially different from the Victorian homes of the early 20th century (*Image 9*, above). Indeed, most of the flats constructed in the third phase of regeneration form small central courtyards or squares that each building is built around and to which access is made private for residents. In contrast, the Redbricks remains open at either end, allowing walking access from not only residents but also pedestrians. This is only one case in which past of the Redbricks ties to the present. In fact, the history of Hulme, of Manchester, of regeneration, of the cultural and historical change, and so on all echo and reverberate on the estate, whether through materiality, through social relations or interwoven sociomateriality. Still, history cannot be neatly contained within a single narrative of the Redbricks' past: for example, many residents of the estate did not emerge from the culture of Hulme, which itself was rife with crime, drug dealing and danger. Thus, it is important to genealogise the past in making sense of the present, which is developed further subsequently. However, before turning to residents' perspective on the history of the estate, this sub-section's historical contextualisation can also be decontextualised by considering how the trends that gave rise to the Redbricks are not unique to Hulme or Manchester.

While this sub-section contextualises the Redbricks as a research site, what is also clear is that the trends identified above – housing, deprivation, Thatcherite government policies, etc. – have likewise occurred across Manchester, and in other industrial cities

across England. For example, 11 cities won the first round of City Challenge bids, and a further 17 in the second round (Dalgleish, 1996). Other estates on the periphery of large regeneration projects surely saw the arrival of individuals whose homes were being demolished, and they doubtless brought their own subcultures and attitudes with them, which may have generated relative intensities of collective activities. These trends are likewise spatially manifest outside of England in cities that have undergone or are undergoing processes of regeneration not tied to City Challenge. In this sense, the geographical constitutiveness of organising might be identified in other housing and regeneration contexts, as societal trends do not exist in isolation or in singular instances.

To conclude, a genealogical perspective on contextualising the Redbricks, which begins to shape our understanding of the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage, must also be subject to decontextualizing: it is necessary to recognise that the trends giving rise to the present are not unique to the Redbricks. And yet, the question – not definitively answered in this thesis – of why the Redbricks was not demolished despite these successive waves of Hulme's regeneration suggests a certain serendipity to its existence in the present, and to the relative intensity of collective activities there. The serendipitous nature of the Redbricks likewise extends to my first encounters there, elaborated previously (recall Section 6.1.1). I next turn to the different histories told by residents about the estate.

6.2.2 Histories: 'Celebrate!' and constructing continuity

Having shown how the past of the Redbricks can be genealogised, which reveals wider trends and multiple influences giving rise to its present, I now extend this discussion to the histories told by residents. Doing so reflects the ways that narratives about the past – and activities therein – are asserted to construct continuity about the Redbricks, often by developing a relational narrative of the estate. This highlights the analytical purchase

of extensive ties constituting the assemblage of the estate, while also pointing to ways that such histories assign the assemblage a rhizomatic potentiality and retroactively give its history a potential. Namely, they suggest the Redbricks was always destined to become what it has in the present. To illustrate this, I begin with the 'Celebrate!' finale in the vignette, and interweave this with the historical context of the estate (Section 6.2.1) and narratives conveyed by residents in interviews.

The festive 'Celebrate!' finale concluded a year of events celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Redbricks. While implying the estate was built in 1948, residents relayed to me that it built in two phases: in 1946, the four buildings along Hunmanby Avenue and Humberstone Avenue were completed, and the final two on Rockdove Avenue were completed in 1948. So, the 'Celebrate!' anniversary functioned to construct a coherent narrative of continuity on the estate, asserting a beginning point from which the present emerged. Still, in interviews, residents contrasted these celebrations with the 60th anniversary celebration. As one resident involved in organising several events noted:

because 10 years prior to that, when we did the 60th anniversary, we didn't have any funding, it was all much less formal. But it meant that there was no one person responsible for kind of managing the whole thing and it went on all night and all day, and I think into the next evening? At some point I went to bed and left everybody to it. But obviously, for some residents that weren't in the mood for partying or had to go to work or, you know...uh, maybe you were, were unwell, it was quite full-on. So we agreed that we would try and be grown up and responsible and so we did what we said, which was at 12 o'clock we turned everything off. (Interviewee 6)

Indeed, while there is a decadal continuity to these two celebrations, the differences might be considered more striking than the similarities. For example, securing grant funding carries with it a range of obligations, particularly with respect to providing evidence to grant-makers in order to ensure they can demonstrate the effectiveness of their funding arrangements (Aiken, 2016). This formalisation through funding of the celebration, attributed by the interviewee to organisers agreeing to be 'grown up and

responsible' reflects that ten years have past since the last decadal celebration. Indeed, others express a sense that the changes evident in 'Celebrate!' relate to people growing older. As part of the photo elicitation project, one resident reflected on a photo of the 'Celebrate!' finale they had sent me, pointing to the difference between this and parties on the estate in years past.

We used to have a lot of parties like that. But I think the estate has changed now, and it is more mixed. Because it went from being a very family estate, to being quite a scary estate, to having loads of us re-housed here out of the deck access when they were knocked down. So any of us that were squatting got re-housed here...The estate was awful when we came in like '95/'96, it was in a -- it was really dodgy, really dodgy. But a lot of us came over at the same time and the estate has sort of grown up from that, really, which is what made it become more activist, more sort of left field, and it's mixed it. And I think now it's flipping back, not into -- it is still very mixed, but we've got more families and more -- So I don't think we would we get away with that sort of all night rave anymore. But that's okay, you know, because it's just different and things change and I change. You know, I don't want an all-night rave anymore. I'm quite pleased we had all of these, all of these things. So, yeah. It was nice, but it was a really good feeling, that event. And a lot of Mr. Wilsons's Second Liners used to used live on the estate. So there's that connection as well. You know, there's the sort of Hulme connection through all of it. (Interviewee 9)

Placing the 'Celebrate!' finale to the wider historical context, in which squatters, activists and 'lefties' moved to the estate in the late 90's, emphasises the role of history in giving rise to the present. Still, the notion that the 'estate has grown up,' while certainly true in the sense that some residents having grown up and older, also gives the estate itself a personality (Ibrahim and Ong, 2004). If the buildings and shared areas are a person, then they continue to be the same person, albeit one that have changed and 'grown up' with time. Invoking personification suggests a particular connection the resident feels to the estate, and also the reciprocal identification of their own personality in the estate. While this has been considered with respect to commercial brands (Siguaw et al, 1999), it has been less considered in the context of a housing estate, in which the materiality of the buildings is entangled with social relations. Still, the idea of place identity (e.g.

Haugh and Jenkins, 2005) does draw out this interwovenness of the emergence of an identity for a place that emerges in conjunction with the social relations in the place. Additionally, this is personification and identity is relationally constituted, as the image of the 'Celebrate!' finale reminds the interviewee of the 'Hulme connection' and ties the particular to the wider changes that they and Hulme have experienced.

The identification of the late 90's as the start of changes on the Redbricks provokes a sense that the catalyst for giving rise to the present was the re housings in Hulme during the third phase of regeneration (Section 6.1.2). Often, residents I met described this as the period when they moved onto the estate, suggesting the demolition of deck access flats and subsequent rehousing was a significant driver in bringing people to the Redbricks. However, others point to the repeal of Section 6 that criminalised squatting as a catalyst for moving on the Redbricks. Indeed, other current residents have lived on the estate since before the late 90's when, as one resident describes, it was known as the 'forgotten corner' of Hulme (Interviewee 4). Others have arrived by applying for housing through the landlord, One Manchester. And others still rent privately from former residents who have bought their flat through Right to Buy and no longer live on the estate. So, rather than a single narrative of how the estate came to exist, a multiplicity of trajectories have brought residents to the confluence of the Redbricks.

Genealogising the estate's present would certainly recognise that it was built in two phases in 1946 and 1948, when an art-deco style architecture design, government financing, and concrete and red bricks combined to form the Bentley House Estate. But before that, Hulme had been deemed a slum of high density, overcrowded housing, complete with outdoor toilets. Its proximity to the urban core of Manchester meant that the situatedness of Hulme so close to the River Medlock – an engine of kinetic energy driving the region's industry – would invariably bring a different groups of individuals together in Hulme, providing a workforce for the mills of Manchester while also partaking in activities in and around their homes in Hulme.

But a genealogical perspective looks even further back: the Roman fort near the present city centre was named *Mancunium* or *Mamucium*, likely from Old Brittonic, Hulme derives from the Norse word for small island (Ekwall, 1922). An island, of course, is separated on all sides – as is the Redbricks. So, perhaps, Manchester, Hulme, and the present site of the Redbricks have been echoing the river as a confluence of trajectories since humans settled this area, finding its proximity to flowing water useful for protection, food, transport, and so on. But, the collective activities occurring on this island have likewise been subject to changes as, over time, the region changed from Roman-era Mancunium, to medieval, industrial and now to post-industrial Manchester (e.g. Peck and Ward, 2002). Perhaps it is the geological formation of this area of Northwest England? Ultimately, a genealogical perspective questions whether the particular present state of the Redbricks can be explained by any underlying cause. Despite the functioning of ‘Celebrate!’ to assert continuity of the estate, genealogising the history of the Redbricks suggests that seismic changes have reverberated on the Redbricks and in the surrounding area across millenia.

Clearly, the construction of continuity as to why the estate has emerged develops an identity for the Redbricks, interwoven with that of residents, which draws upon certain, temporally delimited histories. Upending this assumed continuity entails understanding the changes on the Redbricks and Hulme are part of wider changes in society. Indeed, for the estate itself, a multiplicity of histories exist. So, too, does each resident have their own history as to how they arrived on the Redbricks, as well as their own relational identity developed over time with respect to the estate. Some private renters may have no identification to the Redbricks, whereas long-time residents connect it deeply with their identity. This challenges Kaplan and Orlikowski’s (2013) argument that ‘temporal work’ entails (re)constructing connections between understandings of the past, present and future helps explain inertia or change. Instead, a multiplicity of understandings of histories and change on the estate construct continuity, but are not faced with urgency toward reconciliation. Because they are bound together with the materiality of the estate itself, these histories rather coexist, often without explicit discussion, in the present.

Despite the coexistence of plural histories, reminders such as ‘Celebrate!’ occasionally surface to reinforce the continuity of the estate. These comings together can be considered temporary assertion of the estate as an assemblage (McFarlane, 2009). However, unlike McFarlane’s (2009) notion of ‘translocal assemblages,’ these – as with the histories – are tied to the estate, and in particular to its materiality. Indeed, after witnessing the ‘Celebrate!’ finale on Hulme Street, each time I walked that street the blare of trumpets, thudding trombone baseline of 90’s rave music, smell of fireworks and so on echoed in my mind. These affective dimensions and legacy of the estate’s materiality reflect the rhizomatic consequentiality-andpotentiality of the estate. Further, while the role of shared spaces as an assemblage is seen to influence the endurance of organising (Cnossen and Bencherki, 2019), the next sub-section considers the Redbricks as not merely a space, but as how the historical temporary formation of assemblages on the estate can be considered de/reterritorialisations that generated a territory and relational place. While it is through an assemblage of individuals and other relational agencies that the estate is shaped as a rhizomatic assemblage (Section 6.3.3), this must be understood by engaging with multiple geographical concepts, rather than space alone.

Through a genealogical perspective, this sub-section illustrates the Redbricks as characterised by an interwovenness of histories of the estate, the individuals there, and its relationality to Hulme, Manchester and wider social changes. This interwovenness extends potentiality to the past through narratives constructing continuity therein, but also by (re)asserting the estate as an assemblage through periodic events, such as the ‘Celebrate!’ finale. It is an assemblage with rhizomatic consequential and potential ties that stretch across time. Returning to the opening vignette, the ‘Celebrate!’ finale reflects the relational ties between the Redbricks and a multiplicity of individuals and histories. At the same time, recalling that the finale was supported by a competitive application for grant funding, there is also an extension of the neoliberal governance principle of competition (Harvey, 2005) into Hulme, and into the assemblage of the Redbricks. This might be considered the ‘prosaic geographies of stateness’ (Painter,

2006), whereby the state reaches further into everyday life, including through grant funding (Aiken, 2015), a phenomenon that has become interwoven with the histories of the estate over time. This might be seen to assert a *different* rhizomatic potentiality to the Redbricks, one that is dependent on state funding, competition and so on. In fact, this is not the only case of the Redbricks receiving a significant grant to support activities on the estate. Still, the relation of collective activities on the Redbricks to the state, competition or neoliberalism is not solely one of dependence. Rather, a range of activities occur on the estate, with multiple relational connections both within the estate and more widely. In the next section, I will describe how an opportunity to assist updating an estate guide for residents brought into view the collective activities on the estate and their multiple relationalities, which I discuss as a digital-physical assemblage, as characterised by ‘fluctuating intensities’ and as the result of relational agencies involved in shaping the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage. First, however, I discuss further past collective activities on the estate.

6.2.3 Past activities: Territory, de/reterritorialisations and a relational place

Past activities on the Redbricks were frequently mentioned in online fora, and were also regularly brought up in both casual conversations and interviews during my fieldwork. This highlights the importance of past organising in generating a legacy upon which current activities are based that, by extension, establishes the estate as a territory (Brighenti, 2010). At the same time, past activities were not static; rather, they have been inscribed on the Redbricks, but also on other places as social relations – and materiality – have undergone change(s). Those places, in turn, have become relationally tied to the estate. Together, this further demonstrates the role of the past in giving rise to the present, while continuing to draw on a genealogical perspective that questions any singular cause generating the present.

The activities frequently invoked in describing the past of the Redbricks include: setting up and maintaining the estate-wide RIC intranet despite efforts to shut it down from Manchester City Council; transforming Leaf Street into a permaculture garden; holding a cinema in a basement on the estate, which was eventually shut down by the Council; the protests over commuters parking on Hulme Street that led to its grantfunded pedestrianisation; the grant-funded Green Zone sustainability project that led to the creation of a toolkit (<https://greenzonetoolkit.co.uk/>); and regular People's Kitchen meals that were low-cost, cooked by volunteers and held for a time at a nowshut pub across the street from the estate. Additional past projects and historical confrontations between residents of the Redbricks and the Council, as well as the landlord, were mentioned to me as well. But these few were consistently brought up as memorable collective activities in the recent past on the estate. Significantly, the involvement of people from the estate – sometimes named to me, sometimes not – were consistently described as playing important roles in these making these projects happen. Some of them continue to live on the estate, though others have moved away.

Residents pointing to these projects recall particular past activities on the estate that align with their vision of what the Redbricks *was* and *ought* to be. These visions are inherently normative and, as the frequent involvement of grant funding indicates, entail cognitive planning by those involved. Further, these are materially tied to the estate as the site of such activities. In these ways, such past activities create a legacy of the Redbricks as a territory (Brighenti, 2010). That territoriality, though, is interwoven with – and emerges from – acts of individuals on the estate, the Council, grant-funding bodies, and the estate itself. For example, the Hulme Street pedestrianisation involved protesting the presence of cars near the landlord-owned estate on a Council-owned road, then securing funding through the state (i.e. Big Lottery Funding), which was match-funded by the landlord. Some residents remember its success, but other new residents might not understand this past, and instead accept the pedestrianised street as a permanent part of the estate's territory. Interestingly, these prior efforts to establish

the Redbricks as a territory are often related to confrontations with other groups: particularly the Council.

Recalling these past projects, current residents recall that many of those involved have left the estate. A brief except from an interview reflects this:

Interviewee 19: If you want to know what happened to Hulme – go to Hebden Bridge.

JSV: Go to Hebden Bridge [*laughter*]

Interviewee 19: Go Hebden Bridge. Go to Todmorden. Yeah, cuz, um, for example at the weekend, there's a thing called Lamplighter...

After watching a video of a past Lamplighter festival (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H_h_K-mYgs), I am struck by how similar it feels to the 'Celebrate!' finale, but taking place for an entire town to enjoy. I take several trips to Todmorden, noting the many public 'Incredible Edible' gardens across the town – a project that started there – and cementing my feeling of familiarity between the town and the Redbricks. Interestingly, Interviewee 19 attributes this to residents of the estate, as well as those of Hulme more widely, having moved there. Brighenti (2010:54) captures this dynamic: 'a deterritorialization of some actors or some relations...coupled with a subsequent reterritorialization of those actors and relationships onto some other type of territory.' Indeed, some of the relations within Hulme have deterritorialized from the area and reterritorialized in Todmorden through activities such as Lamplighter, Incredible Edible and others.

Other interviewees mention further towns where former residents involved in past activities have settled, such as Chorlton, Glossop, North Wales, and Merseyside, establishing a relational tie between the historical activities and changes to the estate with other territories in the present. There are surely others. For example, in two chance encounters unrelated to my fieldwork, I met a former resident of the Redbricks who lives in the south Manchester neighbourhood of Levenshulme, and another who has relocated to rural Portugal. It would seem, then, that multiplicities of such

de/reterritorialisation processes have taken place. Indeed, those involved in past projects de/reterritorialised, but the same remains true for all other former residents of the Redbricks. These deterritorialisations might be seen as having changed the rhizomatic nature of the Redbricks, inserted new potentialities into the estate, and also reconstituted as new rhizomatic assemblages in other places (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). However, at the same time, a genealogical perspective and the construction of continuity (Section 6.2.2) about the past that brought residents engaged in collective activities to the Redbricks reflect that these individuals came together on the estate as part of their own trajectories, which entailed even earlier de/reterritorialisations. Likewise, the past dynamics that led multiple processes of de/reterritorialisation to generate the Redbricks as a distinct territory have continued from these earlier processes and, indeed, exist in the present as well. Thus, while some ruptures to the rhizomatic nature of the estate occurred, they were not total.

The estate endures.

Still, for those that remain, the sense of loss described to me in my first conversation with two residents (Section 6.1.1) evokes a feeling that the individuals and collective activities on the estate have changed. In describing their own historical involvements, several interviewees described this loss by pointing to a 'critical mass' of people on the estate that used to be active. In the context of this section's discussion, this might be seen as a temporarily stabilised, rhizomatic 'critical intensity' of collective activities. In other words, a critical intensity of reterritorialisations occurred for a period of time, geographically located on the estate. In this sense, the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage emerged as a critical intensity of activities that occurred on the estate in the past. However, despite the feeling of loss, a *relative* intensity of collective activities continues, and is connected to different individuals and activities both on and off the estate (Section 6.3). Thus, a genealogical perspective on collective activities in the past suggests how the Redbricks emerged relationally through de/reterritorialisations that continue to occur. It is a relational place that exists through the interweaving of a multiplicity of relations on the estate with the geographical context of Hulme and

Manchester and other reterritorialised, relational places (Massey, 2005). Peering from the present into the past and genealogising the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage suggests that past collective activities on the estate created a relational place that was – and is – constituted by linkages to the wider world (Massey, 1994). Additionally, these activities might be seen to have created an ‘alternative space where a de-totalization of the dominant forms of organisation comes about’ (Dale and Burrell, 2008:278). So, and keeping with the caveat that the dominant processes of organising are also de-totalised in such an alternative space (Chapter 2), it becomes clear that if the Redbricks is an alternative space, it is so because it is a relational place that is connected to other alternative spaces, where reterritorialisations of residents have occurred that enact new collective activities. While these places would be relevant for further inquiry, such an analysis is outside the remit of this thesis. Rather, the next section looks at current activities on the Redbricks in greater detail.

Before proceeding, it is again possible to move from contextualising my findings and the Redbricks to decontextualizing them. A genealogical perspective asks how the historical changes in Hulme and Manchester played out in many other parts of the world. So too does it acknowledge that there undoubtedly other histories of the estate than those that construct continuity from the past (Section 6.2.2). And similarly, the past de/reterritorialisations suggest that a multiplicity of relational places exist as rhizomatic assemblages, both those reterritorialised places mentioned by interviewees as well as others. Taking this further, while the Redbricks is a relational place (and collective activities occur therein) in the context of a housing estate, such relational places exist in many other contexts: town squares, high streets and malls, parks and gardens, waterfronts and so on. Even offices and universities, more within the traditional remit of OS and CMS, are relational places. All of these are sites of collective activities, and subject to dynamic processes of de/reterritorialisation. While it is a housing estate that this thesis primarily concerns itself, a geographical constitutiveness of organising lens is open to new possibilities of exploring the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a part of the social world. Indeed, genealogising the past illustrates that the relational

connections on the estate giving shape to the Redbricks *must* be accounted for in seeking to understand the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage. This is elaborated in the next section.

6.3 Shaping rhizomatic assemblage: Activities, intensities and agencies

In the last section, genealogising histories of the Redbricks highlights the tension between continuity and change over time, as well as how the historical de/reterritorialisations on the Redbricks reflect the ways in which past activities generated a territory and relational place in the past. This section moves to discussing the relative intensity of collective activities in the present, and how the Redbricks is shaped as a rhizomatic assemblage. First, I discuss the entanglement of different digital and physical groups and activities as a digital-physical assemblage (Section 6.3.1). After that, the collective activities are considered to exhibit ‘fluctuating intensities’ that unfold as pulses of both rhythmic and sporadic activity (Section 6.3.2). Finally, I discuss these activities as unfolding through multiple relational agencies, which are enrolled in influencing and shaping collective activities of organising on the Redbricks (Section 6.3.3). In discussing activities on the estate in the present, the following vignette illustrates how I was exposed to different groups on the Redbricks when an opportunity arose to assist in creating an estate guide.

Vignette: Volunteering to update the estate guide

By April 2018, I have attended several TARA meetings and am starting to feel comfortable at the table with the committee members. Partway through this meeting, the recurring topic of an information and advice pamphlet for One Manchester to distribute to new residents leads a committee member to rattle off a list of topics.

Another committee member objects, speaking from the landlord's perspective, he rhetorically asks the group, 'What's so special about Bentley House?', telling the group that 'They [One Manchester] won't do it unless it's for all of their properties!' In my fieldnotes after the meeting, I describe how this 'causes quite a stir' in the meeting and the committee member who spoke up 'gets somewhat flustered taking the devil's advocate stance,' agreeing that the estate is special, 'but not that One Manchester will make a leaflet/info sheet and proactively work on it.'

The discussion drops there and the meeting is about to continue going over last meetings' minutes. However, sensing an opportunity, I take a chance and jump in. My subsequent notes reflect on the implications of this:

I volunteered to help with the welcome pamphlet, and told the group I could announce that at the AGM. [A resident] said 'maybe with someone at the AGM?' suggesting I could appeal for help from someone else in attendance. I have an immediate palpable sense that I am not merely sitting in on the meetings, but am now actively contributing to something at the estate. I hope this will lead to a new depth of trust not only with those I know but also with others on the estate, and will enable me more access. I stepped back from any expectation of producing something immediately (i.e. at the AGM) and the reply from the group was that maybe I could have something by the next quarterly TARA-One Manchester meeting in June.

Although my hope of gaining trust and access unveils my researcher stance, and my deployment of the term 'at the estate' reflects my still nascent understanding of the local discourse in which residents describe activities as being 'on the Redbricks,' this initial opportunity indeed provides me the chance to become more actively involved.

Over the next few months, I arrange several meetings for discussing the new pamphlet – although attendance is limited – and adapt a previous version to produce an A5 size pamphlet, which is subsequently referred to by the group as the 'estate guide.' This exercise enables me to ask questions, generate a working list of groups on the estate, as well as regular events on the estate. In the first meeting to discuss the guide, one

TARA member comments how so many of the activities listed on the prior version are no longer present on the estate. Interestingly, however, most of them are, and the group decides to include all of them in the current guide, with the caveat that those not currently happening are labelled ‘Occasional.’

Table 5 lists and summarises the groups included in the new estate guide, separated based on the heading they are placed under in the guide.

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bentley House TARA: the Tenants and Residents Association for the estate that organises events and liaises with the landlord, One Manchester. • Community Gardening: Gardening in the shared gardens, with tools available for residents to use. A few times a year there are ‘gardening days’ with food and tea, announced by flyers on notice boards and around the estate. • Bentley Exchange: a monthly give-and-take stall with clothes, books and other household items that is set up in one of the ginnels. Run by volunteers, it usually does not occur in January or August. A ‘Shout’ email reminds list subscribers it is upcoming. • Redbricks Intranet Collective: A volunteer-run project that provides intranet and internet for flats on the estate. It is available for £5 per month, and most flats are wired to provide the service. • Sew-In-A-Circle: a project that allows residents to meet, sew together and socialise. Machines, an overlocker and materials are provided, and residents can bring their own. • Rockdove Rising: An anti-gentrification housing co-operative that owns 2 flats and rents a third on the estate, with hopes of purchasing additional flats. • The Redbrickers: An occasional opportunity for residents to receive £1 discounted tickets to theatre shows at HOME, a nearby theatre and cultural venue. Opportunities are announced on ‘Shouts’ |
| Annual Events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springtime Family Fun: an egg-hunt for children around Easter • Halloween: a walkabout on the estate for children, which includes food and drinks. • Winter Feast: A gathering in December that includes a festive meal, Mother Christmas and socialising. • AGM: An annual general meeting open to all residents for groups and TARA to report on their activities, and elect a new TARA committee. |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Occasional Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People's Kitchen: low-cost meals cooked by volunteers, who pick a community cause for any profits from the meal. • Greening the Redbricks: a sustainability group seeking to improve green spaces, composting, recycling, and the environment. • Bentley Bike Club: a club that refurbishes bicycles, shares skills for repairing them, and also provides tools for others to use. |
|-------------------|--|

Table 5: Summary of estate guide

In addition, there are several digital fora related to the estate that the group agrees should be included. I am already aware of them, as I have encountered each in prior online research. They are:

- the *Redbricks website* (www.redbricks.org) - a Wordpress style site, whose landing page consists of a blog with posts updating about events and activities on the estate, as well as tabs with sub-pages of further information, which include: Projects, Events, the TARA, Stay in touch, Media, and History.
- *Shout* – a subscription-only Google Group email list for residents of the estate to post and share updates, news articles and other information they consider relevant to the estate. Email requests to join must be approved by the administrators, and the email list's use fluctuates significantly based on current events on the estate and in Manchester, and is dependent on when subscribers' send emails.
- *Leafy Street Bentley House Estate Facebook page* – a group page, created in April 2008, it currently has 3 administrators and more than 200 members, consisting of both current and former residents, as well as friends of those involved on the estate (including myself). It is regularly used for discussing topics relevant to the estate and surrounding area.
- *Twitter (@redbricksonline)* - this account, started in June 2013, currently has over 800 followers and follows around 650 other Twitter users. The account is very active and has posted over 7500 tweets, which touch on a range of local issues both on and off the estate. Use of the account is currently shared by several residents.

- *Instagram (@redbricksgardens)* - maintained by one resident, this account was created recently, in April 2018. Though the account currently has made less than 100 posts mostly of gardens on the estate, it has almost 8000 followers and follows around 4500 other Instagram users.

Over the next months of fieldwork, I get involved with many of the groups listed in the estate guide, and continue to regularly check the different digital fora. Eventually, I am granted access to the Shout email list and Facebook group, though during my fieldwork access setting were changed from 'Secret' to make it a 'Public' group.

Several months after my fieldwork has concluded, I finally produce a version of the estate guide with the changes agreed in the meetings. It contains the various digital fora, as well as the different activities on the estate (*Table 5*). I send it off to the TARA committee to make any design and wording changes, and they arrange to have the final version printed by One Manchester, and TARA committee members deliver the guides to each flat on the estate.

6.3.1 Digital and physical activities: a digital-physical assemblage

As described in the prior section, several residents point to a 'critical intensity' of activities on the Redbricks in the late 1990's. This was around the same time that access to the internet was becoming less expensive and more widely available, and an early project established a digital footprint for the Redbricks. From this project, and in parallel with physical activities, an online presence for the estate has been maintained and, in fact, has multiplied. This sub-section discusses the intertwined nature of multiple digital-and-physical activities and their mutual relational dependences – as well as material ties to the Redbricks – as a digital-physical assemblage.

Before the turn of the millennium, a group of residents started Redbricks Online (RBOL): according to The Wayback Machine (www.web.archive.org), the estate's website has been active since at least 1999, when it had the UK-specific top-level domain (www.redbricks.org.uk). This project was a very early intranet – a private network only open to residents – while also providing access to the global internet through a system installed by volunteers. The wiring running between buildings led the City Council to intervene, though the residents persisted and the Council eventually agreed to work with them. Moving to the present, the intranet project continues: it has been renamed Rebricks Intranet Collective (RIC), and is one of several digital fora included in the estate guide. The system has been retrofitted to incorporate contemporary technology, namely a wireless fiber optic (wifi) network. Most flats on the estate are wired for the system, and a RIC volunteer relayed to me that approximately 50 flats currently paying the £5 per month subscription, which pays for ongoing maintenance and upkeep. The evolution of this intranet, as well as the advent of the internet and digital communications, is inherently connected to the physical collective activities that occur.

During my fieldwork, the connections between digital and physical collective activities became clear. It is certainly true that the digital fora exist as distinct arenas for activities among residents with access to the internet, and it is widely acknowledged that the internet is playing an ever-larger role in everyday life (Wellman and Haythornthwaite, 2008; Hine, 2015). However, while participation in digital fora constitute activities themselves, these activities overwhelmingly facilitate and spur doings in the physical world: the internet has indeed created 'new ways of doing old things' (Tyler, 2002:195). For the Redbricks, discussions on the Facebook group frequently include: upcoming events and gardening days; muggings, drug dealing and police activity; wildlife spotted on the estate; items being offered for free; requests for household repair items; and an ongoing thread about cats on the estate. The Twitter account is often used to 'retweet' local and national issues, projects, funding opportunities, and events with relevance to

the estate. On Instagram, photographs of plants, fruit and animals on the estate abound, and some images of people gardening are also posted, including one of myself (*Image 10*).



Image 10: Gardening on the estate (@redbricksgardens Instagram account)

The digital fora are not a separate area of activity from the physical world. Rather, digital and physical collective activities can be seen as entanglements (Daskalaki, 2014) that come together in organising the Redbricks. Daskalaki (2014:229) describes such entanglements as ‘virtual-corporeal assemblages’ in the context of urban social events that are seen as temporary and inherently mobile. On the Redbricks, in contrast, digital fora and physical activities likewise share a common discursive code – ‘the Redbricks’ – that entangles them together but, at the same time, interweaves them with the six buildings and shared areas – and relative fixity – of the estate. Gardening is at once both a digital and physical activity: digital fora inform residents of upcoming activities to

maintain the communal gardens and share the outcomes of this activity. Announcements about the Bentley Exchange (also known, and referred to in this thesis, as 'the Exchange') or TARA meetings reach the estate's residents active on digital fora, who might otherwise remain unaware of them, and thus entangle the physical with the digital. This complementarity suggests that entanglements of digital and physical collective activities on the Redbricks can be seen as a 'digital-physical assemblage,' which are coded to the relative fixity of a particular assemblage: the Redbricks (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). These activities, in turn, give shape to the Redbricks as they intersect with the estate in multiple ways. Further, as we shall see subsequently, they form connections beyond the estate itself (Section 6.5). Through these connections, the Redbricks is imbued with possibilities – the physical can be tied to global social movements, or to neighbours next door. In other words, the estate is assigned a rhizomatic potential for future unfoldings, while continuing to possess a relational fixity through the material connection to the estate. Thus, the assemblage is both shaped by the digital-physical assemblage and is assigned a potentiality – which itself shapes the assemblage as *rhizomatic* – through collective activities.

There are copious additional examples of the entanglement of digital activities with the physical: posts on digital fora about the wildlife on the estate, residents sharing concerns about security and anti-social behaviour, tweets drawing attention to new government policies that might impact residents, and so on. Thus, the entanglements of digital and physical activities, coded to the Redbricks, incorporate phenomena that inform residents' understandings of the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage that might otherwise escape notice and give it shape (i.e. changes to gardens, butterflies, cats, drug dealing). Further, building on the above, by drawing into view the wider context in which the estate exists, the digital-physical assemblage relationally extends beyond the estate itself. The collective activities, discussed further in the next subsection, likewise form such relational connections. Finally, the interwovenness of the digital and physical emerges from way in which digital activities are underpinned by a particular kind of materiality (Leonardi, 2010): the RIC system and internet hosting

other digital fora are all underpinned by physical infrastructure, deemed here ‘physical materiality.’ Touring the estate with a RIC volunteer, I received a crash course in this.

I describe the tour in my fieldnotes:

Turning to how the system works, he explains the ISP (internet service provider) that provides internet to the modem is a company in Stockport. I comment that the box looks like a normal modem I have in my houseshare, and he agrees but notes that they have been modified to have a higher capacity. From the modem, he explains how there is wiring that runs to each flat in the entire building, going between blocks through the attic.

Not only are wires between buildings necessary, but the Stockport ISP company serves as a conduit to the internet, which is comprised of a global network of cables and computer server farms. In the next few years, more and more of these cables will be owned by private companies, including Amazon, Facebook and Google (New York Times, 2019; *Image 11*).

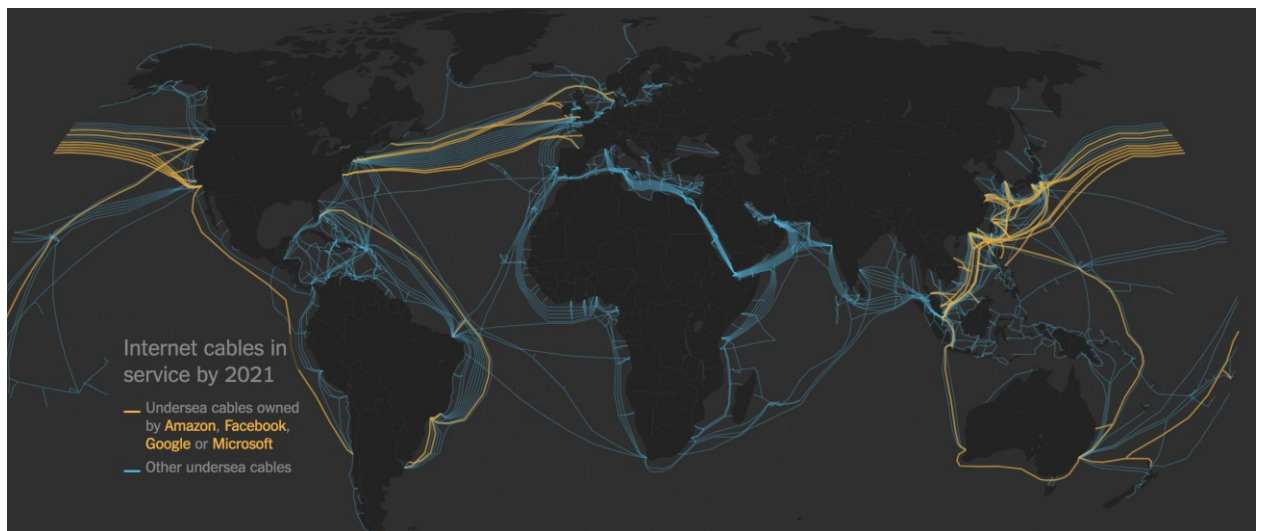


Image 11: Global internet cable connections (New York Times, 2019)

Thus, the digital-physical assemblage of collective activities on the Redbricks is, through its materiality, relationally tied to global internet cable network whose materiality spans oceans (*Image 11*), to technology corporations that build, own and maintain this infrastructure, to server farms which provide internet processing capacity,

and so on. Still, this particular entanglement shows an endurance unlike urban social events, derived from its interwovenness with the discursive code and materiality of the Redbricks itself. However, while digital fora potentially augment activities, engagement in physical activities does not *depend* on this entanglement.

As one resident involved in gardening describes:

People just kind of join in because they happen to see us out the window, or they were walking through anyway, that's often – its just really that casual, it's like 'Oh! Oh, you're doin' it now! Oh ok, yeah I'm doing that then' whereas 'If I'd had to know about it yesterday and planned to be here I wouldnt've managed it.' But it's quite ad hoc. That's all good. (Interviewee 14)

In other words, while the digital depends on materiality, there is a relative *independence* of the physical from the digital. This assemblage stands in contrast to virtual-corporeal social movements such as Occupy or Extinction Rebellion, which are heavily dependent on digital fora to organise physical activities such as protests (Agarwal et al, 2014). Rather, the collective activities on the Redbricks are coded to the estate as an assemblage and its materiality as a place (Massey, 2005). And, through multiple processes of organising the estate is imbued with a rhizomatic potentiality, which to an extent is entangled with the digital – though it does not necessarily *depend* on such an entanglement. Thus, the digital-physical assemblage is differentiated from the Redbricks as an assemblage: the former coordinates and is enrolled in generating a potentiality that shapes the *rhizomatic* assemblage of the estate. Further, this reflects how digital-and-physical organising is place-based on the estate, which I turn to subsequently (Section 6.3.3, see also Section 6.4.4). The next sub-section explores this in further detail, pointing to the fluctuating intensities of these entangled collective activities.

6.3.2 Fluctuating intensities of collective activities: rhythmic and sporadic

Despite the feeling by some residents that the ‘critical intensity’ of past activities no longer exists (Section 6.2.3), the last sub-section showed that the digital-physical assemblage of collective activities on the Redbricks continue, and are interwoven with physical materiality. Producing the estate guide in collaboration with TARA (recalling this section’s vignette) allowed me to build an understanding of these activities at the particular temporal moments of my fieldwork, and I became variously involved with them. At the same time, the estate guide also exhibited another type of materiality: it made this entangled digital-physical assemblage significant (material) (Leonardi, 2010), labelled in this thesis ‘consequential materiality.’ In this sense, classifying the collective activities as ‘Groups,’ ‘Events’ and ‘Dormant Groups’ – as well as incorporating the various digital fora – stabilised a dynamic and ongoing entanglement process and asserting a particular shape to the rhizomatic assemblage of the Redbricks. Acknowledging such a stabilising consequential materiality, this sub-section discusses these current activities as far from stable, and in fact characterised by ‘fluctuating intensities.’ The fluctuating intensities of entangled collective activities – of the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage – are multiple and exhibit differing temporal rhythms, and at the same time are constituted and made durable through relational geographies. In other words, they reflect the geographical constitutiveness of organising.

The range of activities highlighted in the estate guide is notable for their sheer quantity on an estate the size of the Redbricks. However, none of these activities are a constant occurrence; instead, drawing on Lefebvre (2004), they are characterised by different rhythmic fluctuations over time in the shared spaces of the estate. The TARA meetings are held monthly, with the exception of January and August due to Manchester’s winter weather and summer travel, respectively. The RIC meetings are approximately every month, and Rockdove Rising meetings occur every two weeks, though during my fieldwork both were moved or cancelled based on members’ other obligations. Of course, all of these meetings are points of decision-making and discussion, where additional activities are organised and agreed upon. TARA meetings typically involve

running through past minutes, sharing updates on the host of issues brought to committee members' attention, agreeing on dates for further activities, and periodically preparing for the quarterly meetings with One Manchester. Rockdove Rising meetings also usually run through past minutes and discussing the range of activities – frequently off the estate – that members are engaged in, including fundraisers to help finance the co-operative; future planning for the cooperative; maintaining their ongoing relationship with Radical Routes, a network of co-operatives that provided the loan Rockdove Rising used to buy two flats on the Redbricks; and other ongoing topics. For both TARA and Rockdove Rising, meetings are objective-driven in serving to catalyse subsequent activities, not unlike the role of meetings in a more formal work organisation (e.g. Batt, 1999). During my fieldwork, I was not able to attend any RIC meetings, perhaps indicative of the fact that, once the physical materiality of the estate's intranet has been set up, there are only occasional problem-related tasks to undertake.

Because each of these groups typically meets in the tenants' office, the rhythms of their activities necessarily differ. Indeed, they exhibit multiple temporal rhythms, but shared among them is the agential role played by individuals on the estate in realising them. Additionally, many of these meetings are coordinated through email or text message, reflecting that the digital-physical entanglement of activities extends to the planning of them as well. However, these communications typically do not extend beyond the individuals already involved in the groups, thus limiting the participation in such meetings in which decisions about shaping the rhizomatic assemblage are made. Interestingly, the estate guide includes email addresses for each group, and thus might affect a consequential materiality by altering participation in these groups – though it should be noted the prior version of the guide also included contact details.

The aforementioned groups showed regular rhythms of meetings, with additional actions and activities following on from them. On the other hand, other groups – namely, Bentley Exchange, Sew-In-a-Circle and the Redbrickers – have a less objective-driven remit. Instead, the activities of both Bentley Exchange and Sew-In-aCircle occur on

previously agreed dates, while the Redbrickers only attend theatre shows based on the availability of tickets. Thus, meetings to catalyse activity are not required. Still, for each of the groups a 'Shout' email as well as posters around the estate serve to inform residents of upcoming events. Additionally, Sew-In-a-Circle likewise utilises the tenants' office for activities, and thus its rhythm depends on other groups' activities. Thus, the activity of groups using a particular space (the office) necessarily fluctuates in response to the others. The multiple rhythms of each group enact a particular *pulse* of activities on the estate. While Bunzel (2002) makes a similar observation about a hotel in describing the rhythm of the organisation as a pulse, on the Redbricks the pulse of activities is not defined by a building or formal organisation. Rather, the pulse of activities is geographically defined by the space of the estate itself, similar to how assigning the digital-physical assemblage a code of 'the Redbricks' ties it to the relative fixity of the estate (Section 6.3.1). So, the rhythmic pulse of activities (re)iterates over time the tie between these activities and the space of the estate, affirming and delimiting the geographical constitutiveness of organising, and thus contributing to shaping the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage. This builds upon and extends Lefebvre's (2004) notion of rhythmanalysis by considering the particular perspective of collective activities of organising, which are consequential in generating such rhythms.

At the same time, coexistent with the rhythmic is another, more sporadic pulse of activities that emerges from other agencies with consequential materiality for collective activities on the estate. The more sporadic rhythm of activities on the estate is influenced by other factors. Of particular importance during my fieldwork was the legacy of historical activities. In particular, several interviewees reflected on the 'Celebrate!' events:

I knew from the start there was gonna be a lot of mopping up to do. And of course you get to know your neighbours. You know who overcommits, and doesn't deliver. Or overcommits so badly that they will collapse halfway through. And then other people have to pick up the pieces. You know. That's just, unfortunately, the way it is. (Interviewee 12)

I think we have a, we're havin' a quiet year now. Since the 'Celebrate!' stuff finished and we used up all our Lottery money. Which is good, cuz that went really well but that was loads and loads of work. So, we're gonna have a quiet couple of years, not having big funding bids and stuff, I think. To just get on with the day to day stuff. (Interviewee 10)

In both cases, residents point to the amount of effort involved in making the year of event happen. In addition, the first resident points to the significance of personal ties on the estate, and of knowing the different individuals involved. The latter sees the result of the work that went into 'Celebrate!' as leading to a quieter period of time. Thus, the relations among residents, while certainly generating an intensity of activities during 'Celebrate!', also meant 'picking up the pieces' in response to failures to 'deliver' – to organise adequately. And the relative intensity is predicted to lead to more sporadic activities for a few years. So, while rhythmic, 'day to day' activities continue, the pulse of activities is also sporadic, responding to failures and a period of relative intensity of activities. Here, again, the pulse of collective activities emerges, which exhibits a fluctuating intensity within the space of the estate.

While relations among residents can cause a sporadic intensity of activities, nonhuman agencies also play a role. Indeed, while the last sub-section illustrated that participation in gardening is somewhat independent of the digital element of the digital-physical assemblage, gardening is clearly relationally connected to weather. The changes to weather influence both the focus of gardening and whether individuals engage in it. While weather is an accepted feature of everyday life, it nonetheless has significant impact on the fluctuating intensity of gardening on the Redbricks. Excerpts from my fieldnotes after gardening days describe this:

As we walk over, the other gardener explains the plan for the day, which will mostly be about watering the plants as the heat has made them very dry.

I arrive and another gardener is outside doing some watering. We greet each other with a smile and hearty hello, and she comments about the warm weather and how the plants are suffering because of it.

We do a bit of weeding around the patch at the entrance to Letsby, and chat while we work. She says that we've learned a lot about how removing plants will kill them in a drought, laughing as she says this.

The summer of 2018 saw a heatwave and drought across much of the UK, to the point that United Utilities – the water supplier for the region – announced a ‘temporary use ban’ on hosepipes from 5 August, though this was cancelled days before taking effect when rains returned (The Guardian, 2018). Nonetheless, the heat wave and weather during the summer of my fieldwork made it necessary to water plants, and caused many of them to suffer or die. It, in effect, determined the kinds of gardening activities undertaken. Equally, multiple gardening days earlier in the year were cancelled before the drought took hold due to rain and/or cold, meaning that it influenced the occurrence of planned activities. Indeed, the agential role of weather extends beyond gardening itself. When the temperature dipped below freezing at the start of March, I record in my fieldnotes:

Toward the end of the meeting, the group decided we should cancel Bentley Exchange for this weekend due to the extreme cold and wind.

Weather can influence the kinds and frequency of activities occurring on the Redbricks, and can make even a rhythmic activity such as the monthly Bentley Exchange more sporadic. In this sense, weather is an agent in the activities that exert influence on the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage. Further, its shape is not stable, but rather is (re/de)constituted as weather and other agencies continuously contribute to (un)making the potentiality of the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage. In this way, weather acts in the network of relations that generate the Redbricks (Latour, 2005). So, along with social relations, weather demonstrates that decentred agencies give rise to fluctuating intensities of activities on the Redbricks. Indeed, one wonders how the geographical impacts of climate change on Manchester and North West England will change gardening, the Bentley Exchange, and other activities affected by weather. The continuing influence of weather, and its probable change mean that the pulse of

collective activities will continue to be at once both rhythmic and sporadic: organising will exhibit fluctuating intensities as weather, and the different groups and individuals involved invariably change as well. At the same time, other relations both on the Redbricks and extending beyond it contribute toward (re)shaping the rhizomatic assemblage. Indeed, these relations are geographical as well, and influence the organising of collective activities on the estate. The next sub-section further elaborates this by considering how the enrolment of other relational agencies on the Redbricks, geographically tied to the estate itself, further contribute to collective activities and to shaping the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage. The extensive ties and agencies extending beyond the estate are explored later (Section 6.5).

6.3.3 Relational agencies on the Redbricks

The prior discussion pointed to an entangled digital-physical assemblage of collective activities on the Redbricks (Section 6.3.1), characterised by fluctuating intensities that are both rhythmic and sporadic (Section 6.3.2). In the latter, weather was identified as a key influence on the pulse of activities on the estate. Other influences come together to shape collective activities on the Redbricks, and understanding them involves recognising that their consequentiality lies in the networks of connections constituting the Redbricks as an assemblage. To this end, this sub-section builds on the notion of 'relational agencies' (Cloke and Jones, 2004) to consider how multiple active, relational networks of connections – underpinned by the notion of decentred agency (Chapter 4) – contribute to shaping the Redbricks as a site of potentiality and newness. In other words, intensive ties (DeLanda, 2006) are enrolled in shaping the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage by imbuing it with capacities for unexpected unfoldings, while also informing our understanding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising on the Redbricks.

Before illustrating the relational agencies unfolding on the estate, a third type of materiality proves instructive: an idea is made material when it moves from abstract to practical, or from the theoretical realm to an actual manifestation, labelled in this thesis 'applied materiality' (Leonardi, 2010). Indeed, such a materiality is at play in this thesis' engagement with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'rhizome' and its relation to shaping(s). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) build from a biological understanding of how roots are interconnected toward a theorisation of rhizomes in the social world (recall Chapter 4). During my research, I encountered rhizomes whilst helping clear a patch to make it fit for planting, and recorded in my fieldnotes:

I feel that I am unearthing Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome while digging through the garden and the seemingly endless roots that have pervaded it.

The root networks I unearthed shocked me: I felt I was seeing the material manifestation of a concept I had only read about, and one literally manifesting in my very hands. I began to gain a sense of profundity in this otherwise very mundane – and often maddening – gardening task. Later, when helping another resident clear their garden:

The same weeds as in [another resident's] patch – the rhizome – are here, and I can already tell the roots are similarly complex.

Encountering them again, these literal rhizomes began to penetrate my thoughts. From this applied materiality, I returned to the theoretical and conceptualised the estate as rhizomatic:

I am recalling when we found clusters of bulbs while gardening. These are another kind of rhizome, which we unearthed and redistributed around the estate. The estate itself is a rhizome, but not only natural, it is one with many human elements of which I constitute merely one part.

Unearthing rhizomes in the garden made a theoretical concept into an applied, practical materiality that I could touch and feel. By (re)turning back to the theoretical, I began to understand the estate itself as rhizomatic and noticed that rhizomes have discernable shapes in the networks of interconnected roots. A total view of these shapes is impossible; rhizomatic roots are simultaneously intensively woven together and

extensively far reaching, and inherently imbued with a potentiality due to their multiplicity of relational connections (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Still, some relations can be identified. And, just as rhizomes can be unearthed while gardening, among the assemblage of the Redbricks some elements of the rhizomatic connections constituting the Redbricks assemblage are identifiable. Entering these rhizomatic shapings in a middle, as I did through my fieldwork on the Redbricks, provides a way to navigate through *some* of these networks of connections – and relational agencies – that constitute both a relative intensity on the estate and extend beyond it. Further, rhizomes and the connections of roots that comprise them are geographically constituted: networks are geographical accomplishments (Murdoch, 2005). And, simultaneously, roots, rhizomes and networks are material. Seen this way, the collective activities of organising generating rhizomatic shapings are likewise geographically constituted from the assemblage of the social (Latour, 2005). Thus, geographically constituted organising on the Redbricks emerges as a rhizomatic assemblage, imbued with sociomaterial relational agencies.

Unearthing the multiple networks of connections that make collective activities on the Redbricks happen entails considering the relational agencies that exert influence. Among these, the layout of the estate itself is consequential. Recalling the description of the estate (Section 6.1.2), the open ends of the estate on Leaf Street and Letsbe Avenue enable multiple access points onto the estate. Further, entrances to nearly all of the blocks in each building face the three streets – Humberstone, Hunmanby and Rockdove – bringing residents into regular contact with each other, as do the ginnels. And the large shared gardens provide ample opportunities for collective activities. As one TARA committee member recalls:

I mean, a couple of years ago, we just did a really random September thing because there hadn't been a social for ages and we just did it, we did it in the office and out here on this bit [*indicating outside the office*] in September. Loads of people came. It was just like 'Yay! Let's just have a little random social,' so...you know. (Interviewee 14)

Though she does not attribute it to the estate's layout, the geographical flows of movement around and through the buildings on the Redbricks act as facilitators for the 'random social' outside the tenants' office. While people flow through the estate, the fixity of the buildings, and the estate's layout, are generative forces in creating connections and facilitating collective activities (*Image 12*). Indeed, these activities are partly the emergent result of the estate's layout and physical materiality, as well as the lack of closed and secured gates on the gardens, the 3 floor density of the blocks, and more.



Image 12: Potential people flows on the estate (Google Earth, lines drawn by author)

The availability of a shared tenants' office and other shared areas on the estate means that flows of people intersect in different parts of the estate without requiring substantial coordination. Similarly, the estate's and layout facilitates coincidental encounters during other activities. While gardening or during the monthly Bentley Exchange, residents regularly stopped while passing by to chat. And the layout is not unrelated to other agencies: the Bentley Exchange remains sheltered from the weather's influence on activities by virtue of cover provided by the ginnel in which it occurs. This ginnel, in turn, is a product of the buildings' architectural design. Indeed, the influence of weather combines with the buildings' design to produce a particular shared space for activities.

Returning to the tenants' office, the multiple agencies coming together on the Redbricks are further reflected therein. The proximity of the office to the surrounding flats – and its relatively uninsulated walls – means that sound carries to other flats easily. Indeed, the flats across the estate are densely built, and sound travels easily between them. While living on the estate, I note this:

Later, there seems to be someone in the block or adjacent flats that is running their washing machine. It is half 11, so not exactly early, but I guess that is the reality of living so close together with so many people in proximity. There are 3 or 4 flats with walls to mine, and if I lived in a middle flat in the middle of a building, that would increase to 8.

My experience indicates that, while not the principal focus of my fieldwork, the apprehension of sound is a fundamental facet of life on the Redbricks. Additionally, the movement of sound between flats is interwoven with the spatial layout of the estate, and also the architecture of the buildings themselves. It points to the capacity for sounds to influence the spaces of the estate, and to exhibit sonic agency (Revill, 2016). Further, the 'Celebrate!' finale, with a brass band and fireworks (vignette in Section 6.2), more directly points to a way that sonic agency is enrolled as part of the relational network of connections that organising and give shape to the rhizomatic assemblage of the Redbricks.

Still further relational agencies exert influence collective activities on the Redbricks. Among these, another is nature. Cloke and Jones (2004) discuss relational agency with respect to trees, and geographers have explored nature-human relations to a great extent (e.g. Castree, 2005; Castree et al, 2013). On the Redbricks, it can be said that a multiplicity of nature's agencies exist in the gardens of the estate. Indeed, residents often acknowledged nature's agencies during my fieldwork. For example, one explained their gardening approach as 'interfering with the weeds,' and another described plants as 'thirsty' or 'going a bit wild.' In one particularly memorable moment, while clearing nettles back, both of us were stung multiple times. She commented to me, 'They're fighting back!', then pointed to a 'dock weed' nearby and explained how

crushing dock leaves and rubbing them on the sting calms the nettle rash. She added that the plants often can be found together, turning nettle stings into a surprisingly fun hunt for the nearest dock weed. In these ways, nature exhibits agential roles in becoming implicated in the practice of gardening on the Redbricks. Just as unearthing rhizomes made a theoretical idea into an applied materiality, nettle stings and dock weed turn the idea of relational agency into a practical reality that shapes gardening practice, and inevitably is shaped by it. After all, we were cutting back nettles when they fought back.

Finally, another relational agency shaping the collective activities on the estate is the Redbricks itself. Indeed, it brings a history and character that comes together with other agencies in generating collective activities. As a resident describes:

The soil's really poor, it's like mostly rubble. So, like, when they knocked down what was in the Redbricks, there's spots of soil all over the Redbricks that're full of rubble. Like some people's gardens actually, ones that I have spoken to on Clarendon, have been full of rubble. I found a like a coping, not coping stone, like a lintel, looks like a gravestone, that I dug out of my lawn. And my mum thinks that that will have been the lintel that hangs over the old outdoor toilets. So she thinks that it's like from what was here before, she's convinced of that. I've made it into a bench. (Interviewee 15)

The history of the Redricks, as a relational place linked to outdoor toilets from the Victorian homes of Hulme, makes itself known by inserting physical materiality into gardening practice. By describing 'what was *in* the Redbricks,' the interviewee acknowledges the estate's consumption of that which came before it. Similarly, whilst gardening, alongside countless rhizomes of roots, I unearthed a wrapper of cola bottles with a 'best by' date of February 1999 (*Image 13*).



Image 13: Cola bottles wrapper unearthed while gardening (author)

The Redbricks' historical relationality as a place manifests the estate's capacity to consume materials. In both cases, the Redbricks emerges as one generative force of the multiplicity of relational networks of connections that constitutes the estate.

To conclude, this sub-section began by demonstrating how relational agencies are sociomaterial, with the unearthing of root rhizomes serving as a particularly poignant materiality during my fieldwork. Multiplicities of agencies (be)come together as generative forces in a particular relational place – the Redbricks – to produce collective activities and processes of organising. While OS engagements with geography have incorporated architecture in pointing to the ways buildings produce certain organisational effects (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004; Berti et al, 2017), on the Redbricks in addition to the architecture of individual buildings, these relational agencies include the spatial layout of buildings, the shared areas between them, sonic agency, nature and buildings' history, and surely others as well. There are echoes of this in OS research examining public space in the context of playgrounds (Vermeulen, 2011), as well as literature on planning (e.g. Gehl, 2011) and place management (e.g. Parker, 2011; see also review in Ntounis, 2018). However, this thesis contributes to OS by illustrating that multiple relational agencies, in the context of the shared areas of a housing estate, are enrolled in generating geographically constituted collective

activities of organising. Still, the political nature of this inquiry – and its aim to select certain performances to improve – means that the human role in organising remains a particular focus. Doing so involves decentring agency, but not completely (recall Chapter 4). As such, the next section explores the culture of the Redbricks and how its geographies contribute to collective activities of organising on the estate (Section 6.4). Then, the final discussion section again explores how collective activities on the Redbricks are co-implicated with other relational agencies that extend beyond the estate itself, and how these materially change the estate, through the concept of the ‘geometabolics of organising’ (Section 6.5).

6.4 Cultivating rhizomatic assemblage: Culture, territory, community and place

So far, a genealogical perspective has reconsidered the histories of the Redbricks (Section 6.2); then, the way(s) current activities are geographically constituted was shown to contribute to shaping the estate in the present (Section 6.3). In this section, I discuss how organising is geographically constituted on the Redbricks through the lens of culture, which reveals the ongoing processes of cultivating the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage. To do so, I approach culture from several perspectives, interwoven with discussion of the geographically constituted collective activities of the Redbricks. This section first considers culture as enacted through values and objects (Section 6.4.1). Then, it examines the limits to culture on the estate and (un)involvement by residents (Section 6.4.2). Next, it develops an understanding of the different cultural territories that are enacted on the estate as temporary, alternating and permanent (Section 6.4.3). Finally, it discusses the communities on the Redbricks and how this involves a reconsideration of the estate as a place (Section 6.4.4). The following vignette demonstrates how I felt a sense of belonging to a particular culture of the Redbricks, which emerged through my participation in collective activities on the estate, and a deepening of connection with residents there, as well as with the estate itself.

While the perspectives on culture are separated for the purposes of discussion, they are all connected in bringing into view a particular culture on the Redbricks that cultivates a particular rhizomatic assemblage. Relatedly, as Weber and Dacin (2011) note, while earlier conceptualisations of culture in the social sciences emphasised its relative coherence and stability, OS scholars have been problematised this view as failing to acknowledge the plurality that makes culture a complex phenomenon, and one that is interwoven with other processes (Smircich, 1983). Such a view aligns with a feminist perspective, as well as the openness to multiple understandings inherent to the geographical constitutiveness of organising (Chapter 4). Thus, this section presents a partial accounting of various aspects of culture encountered on the Redbricks, without claiming its unicity or coherence or, indeed, its persistence.

Vignette – Living on the Redbricks

The garden of the flat I have been watching for about a week faces west toward Jackson Crescent and Hulme Street, and the last embers of the setting sun glow on the horizon as I sit down for dinner. I've spent the last few hours putting the gardening skills acquired during my fieldwork to use: cutting back overgrown weeds, identifying and uprooting seedling trees, and trimming trees and pruning bushes to open the garden up for use. Tucking in to a homemade noodle stir-fry, I relax and enjoy the meal, basking in the warm August weather. Afterwards, I record in my fieldnotes:

I ate dinner in the garden, enjoying looking at all the work I've done. A feeling of belonging came over me, sitting in the garden, like I don't need to make an excuse for being around the estate. I feel at home here.

Sitting in that garden, my sense of belonging has gradually built from many moments over the prior months. For one, living in this flat and watching the two cats while their owner was away would not have been possible unless, at a Rockdove Rising meeting, a member shared with me their neighbour was looking for someone to watch their cats.

And the neighbour, who I had met during a float-building day (see Section 6.5.4), could very well have declined my offer to watch her flat and cats. For another, I have only gotten a sense of what the Redbricks is about, and only participated in myriad collective activities, as a result of the sheer amount of time, stories and experiences, knowledge and access that various residents have shared with me. One gave me a packet of old Hulme newspapers, flyers and memorabilia. Another patiently explained – and re-explained – different plant names, how to identify weeds, the best pruning procedures to ensure abundant fruitings, and countless other gardening tips. Others granted approval to me joining the estate’s Facebook group and Shout email list. And others still welcomed me, sharing their lives and experiences, inviting me to activities on and off the estate, and joking and opining more and more freely as I spent longer on the Redbricks. All of these have given rise to the feeling sitting in the garden that I belong – alongside a healthy dose of gratitude. It is not only that I feel I belong among these people, it is that I belong to the estate itself – that I am intimately connected to its culture. And I recognise the effort, both from myself and residents, it has taken to cultivate such a connection to this rhizomatic assemblage. Indeed, there are limits to its cultivation, just as there are limits to the discernable intensities of rhizomatic assemblages. So, too, do I recognise the limits of my exposures to residents: I’ve encountered a thin slice of the hundreds of residents on the estate. Among this slice, however, I have gained a palpable sense of belonging to a culture and indeed a community, both intimately interwoven with the estate itself.

6.4.1 Enacting culture on the Redbricks: Values and objects

In beginning to discuss culture, I begin from an understanding that a single culture on the Redbricks does not exist. Rather, the particular shared culture I focussed on was enacted through collective activities and their geographies; further, this culture plays a

crucial role in cultivating – in preparing for continuance and propagation – the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage. The distinctive culture of the geographically constituted collective activities of focus in this thesis manifested in the set of values enacted through organising on the estate and the association(s) tied to material objects practices of residents. Each of these is now considered in turn.

Early in my fieldwork the ‘Celebrate!’ finale, in casual conversation a woman mentioned to me the ongoing presence of ‘smackheads’ taking drugs on the estate. And during nearly all the subsequent TARA meetings I attended, drugs-related topics were discussed. But the concern expressed was not simply that drug taking occurred, nor were discussions aimed at moving them and getting them off the estate. Rather, it appeared to be much more than an acceptance that this happens, and my initial reflection was that this constitutes a radical acceptance toward other peoples’ behaviour and decisions and values. In my fieldnotes, I described it as ‘axiological openness:’ whereby other value (i.e. axiological) systems – such as those of people that take drugs – are acknowledged as legitimate and therefore reflective of openness to all types of values and behaviours. Still, further exposure to the articulation and expression of values during my fieldwork challenged this initial conclusion of the estate’s axiological openness. For example, after an interview with a resident who contrasted the Redbricks to a nearby housing co-operative that makes decisions by consensus, I reflected:

I am wondering about the extent to which cooperation can be a hindrance to organising. Perhaps the Redbricks is less about actively getting together, cooperating and coming to a consensus about every issue on the estate, and more about letting things happen as they may while expressing opposition to those that clash with one’s own values. Is it, then, not quite axiological openness and closer to tolerance?

It began to appear that openness to others’ values is permitted until some perceived line is crossed and axiological limits are articulated, implying more tolerance than radical acceptance. Increasingly, I found that distinguishing attitudes toward other value systems, such as drug use on the estate, was quite blurred and the boundary of

axiological openness and tolerated activity unclear. It gradually became clearer that there are limits to residents' toleration of difference. During an interview, a member of a housing co-operative on the Redbricks talked through the prospective challenge of people joining the co-op with conflicting values:

Interviewee 11: And I wonder whether, how happy we would be of people taking up residency within the, kind of, co-op who have not just conflicting moral codes but sort of like opposing moral codes. What rules you kind of are laying down as to what you want -- the anti-gentrification crew, what is it that we're trying to, to build in Hulme? Is it just a selection of like-minded, educated white people to come in with their, like this is what we want our thing to look like -- or should it be all together more open to somethin' else?

JSV: Yeah, because when you mentioned that about TARA, I was kind of thinking of well, actually the co-op is also white, more educated, similar --

Interviewee 11: Hugely, but like we've like -- it has been, throughout. Like, and how much are we open to alternatives to that? I hope a lot. I mean sort of like -- but there was always the discussions about, then what is it that we can provide, kind of thing. You kind of need people to buy into the same principles so that we can all be working towards the same goal.

From the perspective of the co-operative, despite the hope of realising an axiological openness to other demographics and views, achieving their aim of 'anti-gentrification' means there are limits to tolerance of alternative values. Rather, there must be a degree of alignment to principles enabling them to pursue their stated end goal. Thus, the co-op enacts their cultural values by only accepting those that align with them.

The housing co-op stands in stark contrast to the estate as a whole. Shared values – of axiological openness, tolerance or otherwise – do not exist uniformly on the Redbricks. In fact, they cannot exist: the necessary discussions and negotiations do not occur among the hundreds of residents on the estate. Still, those involved in collective activities on the estate, particularly entangled in the digital-physical assemblage (Section 6.3.1), do negotiate particular cultural values in response to

issues. Regarding concern with drugs, discussions on the Facebook group oscillate between sympathetic comments about drug use being part of a wider problem and more critical views that drug paraphernalia are a risk to gardeners and children. In contrast, drug dealing is the subject of complaints and consternation, such as when a known dealer, whose flat is known to residents and regularly raided by police, returned to the estate following arrest. Here, an axiological boundary – albeit a fuzzy one – is visible between two practices: on the one hand, drug users themselves; on the other, selling drugs to users. Assigning the latter unfavourable worth requires judging that such a practice exploits addiction, while the former is deemed more tolerable as users are seen to lack culpability for their addiction. Similarly, the Shout email list involves periodic discussions of drugs, local politics and other issues on the estate. Thus, tolerance and cultural values are enacted through digital fora.

While digital activities enable ongoing negotiations of values, other activities on the estate confront the physical materialisation of the estate's values. For example, again with respect to tolerance toward drug use, one gardener told me she regularly finds injection needles thrown into bushes. Likewise, while clearing weeds on Hulme Street, I encountered a needle myself and another gardener gave it to the estate's caretaker for disposal. And at the Bentley Exchange, a volunteer found a needle on their walk over, and placed it in plain sight as a reminder that it needed safe disposal. These needles are objects that manifest the cultural value of tolerance on the estate. This is not the only case; the manifestation of cultural values in material objects can be identified in many other instances. The gates at either end of Leaf Street and Letsbe that are never locked reflect the accessibility of the estate for both residents and others. As a result, the gardens can be enjoyed by anyone, whether the pergola on Leaf Street (*Image 14*) and play area on Leaf Street, herb spiral (*Image 15*), or abundant plant life on Letsbe (*Image 16*).



Image 14: Pergola on estate (author)



Image 15: Herb spiral (Interviewee 5)



Image 16: Plant life on Letsbe (Interviewee 15)

Cultivating these gardens creates convivial places that might be seen to reflect values of environmentalism fused with a sense of justice (Milbourne, 2012). So, too, does a row of sticks to demarcate a small garden area (*Image 17*) or espaliered apple trees (*Image 18*) reflect care for ensuring plants are protected and encouraged to flourish.



Image 17: Sticks demarcating small garden area (author)



Image 18: Espaliered apple trees (author)

Similarly, noticeboards across the estate and posters in the communal stairwells highlight the culture of transparency about ongoing events, projects and activities. However, these objects are not merely the result of enacting cultural values. Instead, they also shape *how* people use in the gardens, *where* people walk through the estate, *when* people pause in stairwells, *why* people take particular paths, and so on. Indeed, accessibility through open gates to the gardens means the estate offers relative shelter for drug taking. In this sense, objects and physical features of the estate are at once both material manifestations of values and agents in enacting culture on the estate. They become enrolled in the network of relational agencies on the estate, not only shaping collective activities but also becoming implicated in the (re)enactment of a particular shared culture on the Redbricks. They are, thus, sociomaterial themselves.

The above discussion illustrates that culture is enacted through collective activities, as well as the agential role of materiality in shaping activities of organising. This extends thinking in OS – mentioned in the prior section – about materiality as generative beyond only the materiality of buildings (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004). Similarly, while the interwovenness of social relations with physical materiality contributes to enacting culture through organising (Dale and Burrell, 2008), viewing space as an assemblage

in contributing to the endurance of organising (Cnossen and Bencherki, 2019) fails to account for the fact that enacting culture – thereby cultivating the assemblage and ensuring its rhizomatic unfoldings continue – *requires* collective activities as well as materiality. Consider that, on the Redbricks, the material objects are manifestations of values and inherently linked with collective activities: the herb spiral, stick row or espalier were all built by gardeners; the notices in the communal stairwells were placed by volunteers; the open gates were the result of TARA advocating the landlord; and so on. In this sense, there is an ongoing process of enrolment of both activities and objects that together enact and cultivate a shared culture for the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage. So, from a cultural perspective, material objects are relationally tied to organising, and contribute to enacting a culture on the Redbricks. In other words, those people and objects enrolled in collective activities are *cultivators* that protect the continuity of the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage.

Despite the particular rhizomatic assemblage cultivated by activities and objects that together enact culture, objects' materiality means that others can likewise enjoy them as well. It might be said that those only enjoying the results of collective activities are engaged in a form of cultural consumption (Rössel et al, 2017), consuming cultural values manifested in objects without contributing toward producing them. Interestingly, drug users, in contrast, are consuming the tolerance and accessibility of the estate; but, in leaving needles, they are also cultivators that (re)materialise these cultural values. Such an understanding extends and challenges OS to conceptualise organising in terms of how (re)assertions of cultural values manifest in materiality, particularly in objects and activities that might be seen as outside the remit of organising research (i.e. not just in a herb spiral and gardening, but also in needles and drug use).

Additionally, this sub-section reflects how materiality is relational, interweaving the sociomaterial nature of organising with the space of the Redbricks (Dale and Burrell, 2008). However, discussing the *geographical* relation of collective activities and culture on the Redbricks entails moving past the view of space as assemblage in leading to

the endurance of organising (Cnossen and Bencherki, 2019) by extending it to consider how, through a lens of culture, organising is also constituted in a culturally-demarcated place and, as we shall see subsequently, in cultural territories (Section 6.4.3). However, the question remains as to *why* individuals become involved in collective activities, contributing to a shared culture on the estate and cultivating the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage, whereas others do not. This is taken up in the next sub-section (Section 6.4.2).

6.4.2 Limits to culture: (un)involvement and (un)cultivation

While the last section pointed to the role of values and objects in generating a particular culture on the Redbricks, there are limits to the capacity for collective activities to generate a shared culture on the estate and to cultivate a rhizomatic assemblage. Several different barriers to involvement that emerged during my fieldwork are discussed in this section.

Among the residents I encountered during my fieldwork, it was clear that knowing others who were already involved was a key prerequisite for engaging in collective activities. On the Redbricks, many longer-term residents know each other, and one – who has lived there since 1999 – described to me that walking across the estate often means running into people they know and inevitably leads to conversations that make journeys longer. Another mentioned that they enjoy maintaining a garden along Hunmanby because it allows them to see people and have a chat, but also an excuse to end conversations with, ‘Well, I better get back to the gardening.’ In other words, temporal longevity of residence on the Redbricks has led to enduring social relations, and these are reinforced through periodic – but not necessarily desirable – interactions. Still, residents also reflect that such relations on the Redbricks have led to obstructions, animosity and indeed disengagement. This complicates the view that housing in close proximity has concomitant effects of building networks of support and engagement (e.g. Jarvis, 2015). Still, it remains the case that the particular culture of focus here is largely

driven and (re)produced by those that have lived longer on the estate. Other factors influence involvement in collective activities, such as one resident who described a feeling that they ought to 'give back' (Interviewee 13) following the 'Celebrate!' events, or another who explained it as a 'certain political proclivity...focused on working collectively' (Interviewee 6). However, equally as relevant is that many residents remain *uninvolved* in collective activities and cultivating a shared culture on the Redbricks.

Just as the cultural value of tolerance has limits to a more full axiological openness, other limits to a shared culture on the Redbricks exist. Indeed, while negotiations of tolerance toward drugs unfold through digital discussions, other discussions regarding cultural values are often much more insular and fragmented. For example, during my fieldwork, observations about the limits to participation in collective activities were made during meetings where attendees had intimate familiarity, while at more public events and activities residents left such concerns behind to enjoy the atmosphere. Still, several did engage with the question of participation during interviews. Among the barriers limiting participation in collective activities and developing a shared culture, residents identified the changing demographics of the estate as a key driver. Many noted an increase in transient residents, whether short-term lets such as Airbnbs or private renters such as students. As a result, these newer residents do not develop an understanding of the collective activities on the Redbricks before moving.

One resident reflects:

There's less and less, sort of, duration of tenancy and tenure, so, actually getting people to go, 'Oh yeah, I can help run that, rather than just...Oh, what is that that's going on there? Oh right, it's the Exchange. Oh well, I'm moving next week, dump all my stuff' [*laughs*]. Which has its uses, but... (Interviewee 14)

The humorous framing of transience as helping supply new 'stuff' to the Bentley Exchange masks an underlying frustration that if people do engage in activities, then it comes from an instrumental perspective, rather than from a view of their intrinsic cultural meaning. Here, lack of a *depth* of participation is lamented, whilst humour is used simultaneously downplay the uninvolvedness of transient residents and affirm a

limited, instrumental participation among them. Interestingly, humour was often deployed among residents engaged in collective activities to various ends, perhaps suggesting it has a resistive effect against the narrowing of a shared culture on the Redbricks (Westwood and Johnson, 2013). Additionally, the use of humour about transients reflects that a degree of situated knowledge – what I refer to as ‘spatial knowledge’ – is necessary to understand the joke: it can only be understood by knowing what the Bentley Exchange is, and that people often leave large amounts of things there before moving off the estate. Requiring spatial knowledge to understand humour might be seen as a further barrier to developing shared cultural values. At the same time, this is perhaps inevitable, as spatial knowledge can only develop over time. This was certainly the case during my fieldwork: early on, I did not apprehend many jokes, though gradually understood spatial references and eventually made humorous references myself. This interconnection of spatial knowledge and humour as they relate to culture, geography and organising is underscrutinised in OS literature to date, and presents an area for further inquiry.

The limits to a shared culture on the Redbricks are reflected in other respects. Just as the housing co-op member described the co-op and TARA as ‘like-minded, educated white people’ (Section 6.4.1), other residents recognise the estate is becoming more demographically diverse. In an interview, a resident reflected about demographic changes on the estate:

So you’ve got a lot more refugee, uh, asylum seeker background people, you’ve got more...I don’t know, postworking class people. White, black, Asian...maybe people who are not particularly politicised, who would be, um, suspicious of white middle class hippies talkin’ about herbicides and...sustainable light bulbs, as if that was the most important things on the planet. (Interviewee 12)

In this case, the ‘politicised’ group of residents engaged in collective activities is associated with concerns about herbicides and energy use – which were predominantly the residents with which I engaged in my fieldwork. These politicised collective activities on the Redbricks could be seen as prefigurative practices that enact political outcomes in the present, rather than projecting desired future political directions (Gautney, 2009;

Reedy et al, 2016), generating a shared culture around shared political aims. In contrast, newer residents on the estate are not seen as interested in these, or to place importance on other political issues. This lack of value alignment limits the potential for developing a shared culture with new demographic groups. Another resident, looking forward to the future, elaborated on the demographic changes:

The future of the estate is, is weird because it's this legacy as a place and a time. It will – there is, um, the people who are having children here and growing up here are not of here. Okay? They are immigrant communities. They are like, you know, Southeast Asian, they are East African, they are you know Afro-Caribbean, they're black, you know. There is a white community here that is not, you know, that is more over that side. Again, like, it's, it's – this estate is gunna become part of the community again in a way that is much more grounded and much more original. (Interviewee 19)

In both cases, the demographic changes on the estate are accepted, in keeping with the value of tolerance on the estate. Still, the latter's description of the estate's future as 'this legacy as a place and a time' and subsequent elaboration implies that there will be a loss of some aspects of this legacy, and that culture that exists – or existed – there is constrained by these changes into the future. In other interviews, residents' comment about the younger people moving to the estate likewise indicated that they have less spatial awareness of the collective activities on the Redbricks, and often do not share the same cultural values.

The demographic changes and resultant limits to a shared culture do reflect the Redbricks as a place comprised of the 'open articulation of connections' (Massey, 1999:288), including connections to the places from where immigrants come, as well as to the wider 'community' that the estate will once again join, and likewise coming together with identities of the estate and residents. Though the buildings will remain, the Redbricks as a place where difference is tolerated means that, paradoxically, the value of tolerance may eventually change. Because of the multiplicity of other demographic groups and individuals existing there, new cultural values may eventually

emerge as the Redbricks endures: it will continue as a place where a confluence of social and spatial relations collide (Massey, 2005).

Thus, the culture of the Redbricks faces limits, and the culture enacted through collective activities will change as residents involved in them change, itself the result of demographic changes on the estate. Still, though the cultural values influence and are influenced by social relations, the estate and its materiality endures. In this sense, organising the estate is a geographical process of cultivating a rhizomatic assemblage, but one that is partial and unfinished: those involved and the cultural values that are realised on the estate are never fixed. Even in the particular shared culture that has emerged among those engaged in collective activities, there remain potentialities for further cultivation. Still, though few actively de-cultivate the rhizomatic assemblage, it forever remains partly *uncultivated*, awaiting new individuals and materialities – now or in the future – to come together and negotiate values that (re)constitute the culture of the Redbricks. Still, the collective activities and the cultural values they embody continue to interweave themselves with the estate's materiality, sometimes temporarily and sometimes more permanently, and thus make material the culture of the Redbricks. Building on this, the next section considers how collective activities are territorialisations that create territories and symbols of culture on the estate.

6.4.3 Cultural territories: temporary, alternating and permanent

The culture of the Redbricks discussed thus far draws attention to a *particular* shared culture, one in which cultural values are enacted through collective activities and material objects (Section 6.4.1), and which faces limits to participation by residents on the estate but nonetheless continues to evolve with the Redbricks as a relational place (Section 6.4.2). I now elaborate how this culture unfolds geographically as territories. To this end, having discussed previously how collective activities exhibit fluctuating intensities on the estate, with some rhythmic and some sporadic (Section 6.3.2),

activities also generate cultural territories that are likewise uneven, both in their inclusion of residents and in their spatio-temporal distribution on the estate. These related aspects of the cultural territories on the estate manifest in the spatial, temporal and affective dimensions of how cultural territories are drawn and redrawn (Cheetham et al, 2018).

All of the collective activities on the Redbricks involve generating particular, but often overlapping and connected, cultural territories. For example, during my participation in the 'Celebrate!' finale (vignette, Section 6.2), a mobile territory was temporarily created along the route of the procession: torches drew luminary boundaries and bodies filled paths and roads that demarcated the spaces we moved through as collectively ours, at least momentarily. This was a continuously enacted, spatial process(ion) that moved along a predetermined route through the estate. It also relationally connected to a prior march to 'reclaim the estate' in response to a series of muggings. In an interview, a resident recalled this activity from over a decade ago: ...it was amazing, it was really, really empowering, there were flaming torches and music and placards and, and visiting all the places people felt unsafe, so people could be together and feel safe and like, yeah, just walk on our estate...(Interviewee 2)

As with the 'Celebrate!' finale, in this past instance a mobile territory was asserted and a spatial claim to ownership made through walking, music and fire-based luminescence. Indeed, the 'Celebrate!' finale procession can be viewed as a reterritorialisation of this past activity, projecting a past cultural act in response to a safety threat into the present. The cultural meaning of the 'Celebrate!' procession, however, is different: by invoking a past action – that some of those present might be aware of – it remoulds the sense of empowerment in the face of danger into a sense of pride in the estate itself. This relation to the procession after the muggings suggests a repetition with difference, a feature to urban placemaking unfoldings (Platt and Medway, 2020). The procession proved a memorable experience, not only for myself, but also for other residents, many of whom recalled the 'Celebrate!' finale fondly in

conversations throughout my fieldwork. In this sense, the temporary nature of the territory created by the procession retains significance for its affective capacity to embed a strong emotion in participants.

The 'Celebrate!' procession concluded by enacting another cultural territory on Hulme Street. Music, fireworks and a communal meal created a temporary territory that was 'the effect of the material inscription of social relationships' (Brighenti, 2010:57). These relationships were inscribed in the Indian curry and mulled wine, for which donations were solicited but was also ostensibly free; in the band and its historical ties to the Redbricks; in the fireworks and stage, provided at a discount by Walk the Plank, an arts organisation for whom multiple past and present residents have worked; and in the hundred or so bodies gathered on Hulme Street. In contrast to the procession, though, this territory was overlaid upon a more permanent territory: Hulme Street as a pedestrianised space. Its permanence likewise derives from material inscriptions: the bollards blocking car access, the planters running down the middle, and the small gardens along the side all inscribe past activities onto the street – both activism against commuters parking there (MEN, 2011) and the grant-funded conversion process – mark it as a territory. While a requirement of some degree of spatial knowledge was necessary to appreciate the history of this space, it was not needed to enjoy the 'Celebrate!' finale and enact this cultural territory. In this sense, the overlapping territories are not mutually exclusive, but rather are determined by differing temporalities.

Still, participating in the enactment of the 'Celebrate!' finale and a temporary cultural territory on Hulme Street is also subject to limits. As the brass band played and fireworks flashed, this became apparent: a young woman passing by stopped to ask me what was happening. I told her it was an event celebrating the 70th anniversary of the estate, and asked if she lived nearby. She motioned to one of the Redbricks buildings, telling me she lives there. We spoke briefly, and she explained she is a student before heading inside. Clearly, she was not aware of the finale, and I did not

come across her again during my year of fieldwork. This brief interaction brought to the fore that spatial knowledge about the Redbricks was prerequisite to participating in the creation of a temporary cultural territory for 'Celebrate!'. As one might expect, just as enacting culture on the Redbricks through collective activities is limited by a certain requirement of spatial knowledge (recall Section 6.4.2), so too is territorialising that culture. That the young woman was a student reinforces the fact that the increasing transience of residents is tied to the (lack of) participation in creating cultural territories (Section 6.4.1). For her, the material inscriptions on Hulme Street were compelling enough to inquire about, but this was due to the spectacle and not because of any underlying affective bond to the Redbricks as a place, or any sense of 'place attachment' (e.g. Altman and Low, 1992; Seamon, 2013). The (dis)engagement in creating a cultural territory on Hulme Street, resulting from the (lack of) affective bond to the Redbricks, suggests that territorialising culture is a political act in which affect is manipulated – refraining from adopting the nefarious connotation this word – toward achieving certain ends (Sharp, 2009). Indeed, the political nature of collective activities means cultural territories are embraced to a greater or lesser extent depending on an individual's existing views, values and attitude. Other examples of this abound on the Redbricks.

Another collective activity reflects how cultural territories are political acts, though similarly with constraints. On the first full weekend of each month, a few volunteers set up and take down the Bentley Exchange, which becomes a temporary cultural territory in one of the estate's ginnels that enables the informal and free exchange of books, clothes and other household items (*Image 19*).



Image 19: Bentley Exchange (Interviewee 10)

Though the volunteers catalyse this territorialisation, it is enacted continuously through the material presence of ‘tat,’ as the various items are known, and through residents’ giving, taking and looking through the tat. Whether searching for something particular or just perusing, individuals – as well as objects – make the Bentley Exchange a territory that functions as an alternative market. When I volunteered at the Exchange, residents explained how it encourages reuse of items and helps prevent them from going to landfill. In this way, it enacts a culture of intervening in the dominant use-then-dispose consumer practice, and thus acts to address the material throughput on the estate. From this perspective, it might be seen as the temporary performance of an alternative provisioning system that subverts capitalist markets (Lloveras and Quinn, 2016), constituting a cultural territory in which political and normative views about society are enacted. Still, as a regular volunteer mentioned in a passing comment, there ‘isn’t a huge amount of turnover’ at the Exchange. However, as a cultural territory, its effectiveness at intervening in material throughput is secondary to its functioning as an enactment of particular cultural values on the estate. Further, the exchange occurs every month: it maintains a rhythmic intensity of activity (Section 6.3.2) that, through regular reterritorialisations, (re)inscribes the cultural practice of reuse and makes the cultural value more durable. It seems likely that, for residents with different political views, taking part in the Bentley Exchange would be limited or non-existent. Of course, during my fieldwork, such individuals were not present. Predictably, it is not their

performances this thesis seeks to improve. Rather, by directing empirical inquiry toward such activities as the Bentley Exchange, I hope to improve these collective activities, as well as the culture and the cultural territories they enact, which cultivate the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage.

Similar to the 'Celebrate!' finale, the Bentley Exchange likewise faces constraints to involvement. First, while the Exchange is usually announced by posters around the estate and a regular message sent to the Shout email list, as one attendee at the estate's annual general meeting reminded those present: 'A whole generation of people are not on Shout. They don't know of its existence' (Interviewee 6). Second, entering the territory of the Exchange requires a degree of comfort, and some people do not remain for very long. During my fieldwork, I encountered many people that stopped merely to have a quick look before moving on. Indeed, I felt uncomfortable loitering around the Exchange for an extended period of time despite hoping to run into people, and to watch the encounters of others there. This partly reflects the norm of 'civil inattention' in public settings (Goffman, 1971), but also the fact that there are almost no publically available areas to sit or socialise on the estate, apart from one bench on Clarendon. Still, despite these constraints, the Bentley Exchange is remarkably persistent as a cultural territory. I learned how it has evolved over time from a tat table and shelves permanently installed in one ginnel, to a territory enacted one weekend a month in another. Further, its temporary territorialisation has lasting effects. The Exchange utilises a cupboard to store tat between reterritorisations, and it encourages social interaction among residents. As one resident reflected in an interview:

I think that the Exchange was kind of like my gateway, if you like, because from doin' that, from doin' the Exchange, I got to know people. (Interviewee 5)

This resident eventually joined TARA after several years volunteering to help with the Bentley Exchange. In this way, the creation of a cultural territory spurred further

engagement in the collective activities on the estate, and a deepening of social relations among residents that enact the territory.

An additional temporary cultural territory enacted on the Redbricks through collective activities is the tenants' office. This room (*Image 20*) is the site of regular meetings for multiple groups. TARA meets there monthly, reviewing topics of relevance to the estate, planning events, preparing for meetings with the landlord, sharing issues residents have raised with members, and inevitably airing grievances. Rockdove Rising and RIC also meet there regularly, sharing updates, planning activities, and so on.



Image 20: Tenants' office (author)

For the duration of these meetings, the office is key a site of planning, communicating and decision-making. In other words, it the estate's culture of participation, and involvement in social life, become a territory in the office, which enables organising to occur. The office contains material objects that mark its territorialisation. Temporarily, it is filled with bodies – including myself as researcher, papers with minutes from the last meeting, cups of tea for those in attendance, bags and coats, and other objects that leave when the office is deterritorialised. More permanent objects are visible in *Image 20*: computers installed by RIC line the back wall, and there are multiple shelves and cabinets filled with years worth of papers, tools, information sheets, and forgotten

objects left by the groups. The central table remains, a reminder that individuals gather around it with tea or other hot drinks, which are brewed at the kitchenette (*Image 21*).



Image 21: Kitchenette in tenants' office (author)

Posters above the sink betray another territory that is enacted in the tenants' office: it is used by the landlord, One Manchester, whose employees share access to it with the residents. Indeed, the estate's caretaker uses this as their office, eating lunch and having meetings with supervisors or other contractors there. The professional posters are a material reminder of this use, and stand in contrast to another poster, handwritten, which explains how to operate the computers (*Image 22*).

Nature acts to maintain this *perma(nent)* cultural feature of the estate, though collective activities intervene to shape various features of the gardens, such as by cutting back certain plants and encouraging others. Plants are one type of symbolic object that reinforces the cultural territory on Leaf Street and others abound, including stencils on lamp posts, the pergola (*Image 14*) and herb spiral (*Image 15*), and many others. These are symbolic reminders of the cultural practices and collective activities that, alongside nature and other relational agencies, organise the gardens. Additionally, woodcarvings throughout the estate are symbols – though their meaning varies among individuals. Some might see them as creative uses of tree stumps, others might see the animals – an owl, wolf, snake, totem pole and others – as reflecting Native American culture, and those with certain spatial knowledge of how they were created might recall the arguments among residents about how and why someone came onto the estate with a chainsaw and carved them in the first place.

Interestingly, *absence* also functions symbolically. Explaining an image they took of a sign intended to ban dogs from the play area on Leaf Street that is no longer there, a resident describes this:

Interviewee 15: I wanted to catch -- there's some posts that I wanted to catch, that were just in the foreground that I didn't - I thought I had got them in there and it was, um, uh -- City South put up a notice saying, it was really, had like really poor spelling on it, like a massive, uh, metal enamel sign so, and it said, 'No dogs allowed.' And it was up for 12 hours before it was taken down.

JSV: 12 full hours?

Interviewee 15: Yeah. So, um, they were very displeased but the posts are still there cuz they're cemented in, so they need to be angle grinded out.

The absence of the notice board reflects a resistance to authority on the estate, while the interviewee's recognition that the posts need to be angle grinded – which they later describe that several residents on the estate could do – indicates the do-it-yourself (DIY) culture on the estate. As a brief aside, the absence of a sign holds symbolic value for

the interviewee, but at the same time the absence of the sign in the photo suggests the way that photographs can inspire further sharing of information, and thereby deepened my spatial knowledge (see Chapter 5). There were many times where people drew upon the DIY culture, explaining that ‘a bit of DIY’ or ‘doing a DIY fix’ might solve an issue, telling me another resident has ‘a real Hulme DIY spirit,’ or describing the estate-wide RIC system as ‘DIY.’ Just as the sign’s absence holds symbolic meaning to residents in marking Leaf Street as a cultural territory, so too does invoking an acronym that articulates the cultural value of action without deference to authority. And, more than mere resistance, describing actions as DIY imbues them with meaning. For example, the RIC intranet being DIY makes the estate a territory in which cultural values of access to technology and equity are enacted.

Regarding the other garden, though Letsbe Avenue is not designed as a permaculture garden and requires more interventions from gardeners, the abundance of plants are symbols that enact it. Further, Letsbe Avenue reflects a unique cultural territory in its own way. Whereas Leaf Street is named for the road that it aligns with – and on which the Leaf Street Public Baths were constructed in the 19th century – Letsbe Avenue appears to have been named by residents of the Redbricks. As was explained to me, it comes from a common phrase police use when arresting someone: ‘Let’s be havin’ you.’ Through a clever bit of wordplay and omission of the ‘h’ as is typical of Mancunian accents, this became ‘Letbe Avenue.’ Naming the garden in this way serves as a symbolic taunt, thus reflecting a particular anarchic culture on the Redbricks that challenges authority. This even found its way into Google Maps (see *Image 3*, Section 6.1.1) for a time, though it was misspelled as ‘Letsby Avenue’ there. As of writing, it is no longer labelled on Google Maps, but it is clear that the symbolic naming of this garden helps to make it a permanent cultural territory of resistance.

In the gardens, it is through collective activities, as well as material and symbolic enactments, that cultural territories emerge. During my fieldwork, I encountered further material objects and activities that enact cultural territories on the estate. Gardening practices are interwoven with trees and plants on Hulme Street, Clarendon, and in the

small garden area between the estate and Princess Road. Fungus infected a few apple trees, which led to a call for advice from a Hulme Community Garden Centre employee. The iron fences at either end of the gardens remain open throughout the estate and establish it as a territory accessible to nonresidents – and therefore unclear boundaries. Notice boards and posters in communal stairwells remind residents of the estate's activities and groups. And a plethora of animals, particularly cats, literally patrol their respective territories throughout the estate, occasionally fighting to defend them. These are cats, for the most part, who have homes in flats and are cared for by residents, but are also animals with agency. The affective bonds with them and connection to the culture of the estate was made clear when I watched two cats on the estate for several weeks in August 2018, and was reinforced by ongoing conversations on the Facebook group about the different animals, including multiple cases of residents asking if newly spotted cats have homes.

Cats create mobile territories, just as humans did for the 'Celebrate!' procession. At the same time, other activities such as the gardens and Bentley Exchange enact cultural territories that are spatially relatively fixed. Often, naming accompanies this, as with Letsbe Avenue or Bentley Exchange or Hulme Street, and named territories exist in many parts of the estate. Sometimes, however, fixed cultural territories are not assigned a unique signifier that identifies them, but these nonetheless function as territories. For example, various residents maintain the gardens, referring to small areas as 'my patch' on the estate. Here, naming is not necessary to establish a territory, though it does still imply a spatial claim over parts of the gardens. It shows a subtle, but persistent affective relation between cultural territories and activities. Often, only those that know of them, however, will appreciate the territory. In this sense, cultural territories are inherently affective, attaining deeper meaning only through interpersonal sharing of spatial knowledge. Still while most cultural territories have an affective dimension, this sub-section demonstrates how they also are enacted spatially and temporally (following Brighenti, 2010). And it is through their inherent interwovenness with collective activities

that these become recognisable as cultural territories: organising, in other words, cultivates a rhizomatic assemblage.

While naming is not requisite to marking cultural territories, there is one territory for which naming plays a key role in (re)enacting it: the name given to the estate itself. The Bentley House Estate has had other names in the past (see Section 6.2.2), and there is no agreed upon narrative as to its current nomination as ‘the Redbricks.’ The www.redbricks.org.uk website has existed since at least 1999, and makes references to efforts going back even earlier. One resident recalls the estate’s name as arising from when a Spanish anarchist visited the estate and commented ‘that’s a lot of red bricks!’, after which the name stuck. Others tell differing stories, though the name’s relation to the material from which the buildings were constructed is clear. However, regardless of the origin of the name, it has become synonymous with the estate among the residents I encountered during my fieldwork. In addition, others I met off the Redbricks knew it by that name, including when I presented my research progress at a public event, at an art show held in an activist squat, and seemingly countless other times. The identifiable connection people have of the estate with the name ‘the Redbricks’ reflects the strength of the cultural territory first enacted by those who used the name, and re-enacted many times since. The name assigned to many digital activities (Section 6.3.1), as well as many of the projects on the estate use ‘the Redbricks’ as an identifier, reinforcing the association of this name with an estatewide cultural territory. At the same time, multiple interviewees, in particular employees of the landlord, One Manchester, described the Redbricks as ‘unique’ and ‘special’ when they walk onto it. For residents, feelings such as ‘love’ were often called upon in describing how they feel about the estate. By walking on the estate or associating particular feelings with it, and recalling those feeling in conversations and interviews, residents and others highlight and make explicit the affective dimension of the Redbricks’ cultural territory, which is intimately interwoven with its name. This also shows how the other, smaller cultural territories discussed previously reinforce the estate-wide territory that is the Redbricks. Here, then, the combination of a digitalphysical assemblage (Section

6.3.1), collective activities, as well as symbols, objects and materiality – which come together to make the whole of the Redbricks a cultural territory – also is generative of it by discursively rearticulating the name ‘the Redbricks.’ This research is no exception: during my fieldwork, I participated in activities on the Redbricks, and likewise contribute to the longevity of its name by helping compile the estate guide, and by solidifying its name in a published academic thesis. Of course, just as places are multiple (Massey, 2005) and subject to multiple, often conflicting, interpretations (Gibson-Graham, 1996), so too are cultural territories. While those residents I encountered and which constituted the focus of my fieldwork understand and (re)enact a set of cultural territories on the estate, there are inevitably others (re)enacted by other residents of the Redbricks.

This sub-section has discussed the Redbricks and the collective activities therein as multiple cultural territories, pointing to the ways that individuals create territories temporarily or more permanently, the objects that serve as territorial markers, the importance that spatial knowledge can play in grasping these cultural territories, the interwovenness of the spatial and affective dimensions in generating territory, and the different functions naming can play in contributing to them. In addition to the multiple relational agencies enacting cultural territories, it became clear both that the multiplicity of overlapping territories come together to generate the named territory of the Redbricks and that it is relationally constituted as objects and residents on the estate, but also others in Manchester and further away, come together in cultivating the estate as a cultural territory, and one which is named. Indeed, it is ‘*in the image of the territory...that members of the collectivity participate*’ (Grosby, 1995:147, cited in Maréchal et al, 2013). This suggests that clear boundaries of both spatial knowledge and collective activities are problematic. Still, it is also worth noting that the cultural territories on the Redbricks are implicated in cultivating a rhizomatic assemblage through collective activities and objects, and thus depend on both. There is a possibility, never fully eliminated, that the estate is uncultivated if there is insufficient engagement or if objects are lost to spatial knowledge. Similarly, if agencies conspire to de-cultivate the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage, then activities, objects or both might become

targets because doing so would challenge the rhizomatic assemblage and the cultural territories cultivated therein. Residents should remain wary of such acts of violence, confronting them and retaining the spatial knowledge of the estate. In part, by solidifying the Redbricks in this thesis, I aim to avert such a possibility of destruction.

To summarise, the discussion in this sub-section has shown how territory and culture intersect through collective activities, provoking an understanding that organising is not solely spatially constituted (e.g. Cnossen and Gencherki, 2019), nor does it only manifest in the Redbricks as a place (Section 6.4.2; see also Section 6.4.4, below). Rather, the concept of cultural territory, and an engagement with territory from a geographical perspective, provides a further way for understanding the geographical constitutiveness of organising on the Redbricks. Through cultural territories, collective activities propagate the estate's culture, and are implicated in cultivating the rhizomatic assemblage that is the Redbricks. The next sub-section continues to build an understanding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising from the perspective of culture by discussing the Redbricks from the perspective of community and place.

6.4.4 Communities, place and cultivating rhizomatic assemblage

Through my fieldwork on the Redbricks, participating in the cultural territories deepened my connections with residents and helped lead to the sense of belonging I felt sitting in the garden (recalling this section's vignette). This sense of belonging also derived from the fact that, through my fieldwork, I became enmeshed with – and felt a sense of belonging to – a particular community on the Redbricks. Just as collective activities generate cultural territories that are connected to a particular shared culture (Section 6.4.3), so too does the culture and symbolic practices comprising it connect to a community on the Redbricks (Blokland, 2017). This section discusses the relationship of culture and community on the Redbricks by further developing our understanding of the estate as a relational place (see Section 6.2.3 and Section 6.4.2).

Helping update the estate guide with TARA (see vignette, Section 6.3) gave me knowledge of the different groups on the estate. And I was exposed to the cultural territories these groups generate through my fieldwork. But this process also implicated me in the construction of a particular narrative about community on the Redbricks. This became clear during a meeting to revise the guide from a prior version upon which it was based. The first line in the prior version was: ‘You help make the Redbricks a community. How do you want it to be?’ After some conversation, it was agreed that this sounded patronising, and the new wording should be: ‘Help make the Redbricks a community. How do you want it to be?’ (underlined emphasis in original). Framing the estate guide this way and anticipating its reception by readers shows both a concern with how the guide reflects on TARA, and a desire to convey the estate guide’s message as one appealing for support – asking for ‘help’ in making community – rather than indicating that, and possibly being perceived as accusing, those who remain uninvolved are *not* making community. Indeed, appealing to residents to help make community reflects the recognition by those at the meeting that ongoing engagement in collective activities is necessary for community. It also suggests that there is a desire for doing so on the Redbricks. In this sense, the estate guide constitutes an effort at enrolling others in the work of making community: it lists groups, events and other activities on the estate, signposting how residents can get involved in each.

Behind the opening line of the estate guide, of course, is an assumption that a community exists on the Redbricks in the first place. This view of the estate as a community was reiterated in documents, my observations recorded in my fieldnotes, interviews and emails:

TARA exists for the benefit of the whole of the Redbricks community. (2017 AGM minutes)

He explains to me that he thinks it’s also important for his son, who is running around us at this point, to live in a community. He contrasts this with moving out of the city to have kids, which doesn’t make sense to him. (fieldnotes)

And I think, yeah, actually, if you're not out and about and making the effort, some...you can be a bit forgotten about, which is really sad, actually, in our so-called community that cares. (Interviewee 10)

Everybody from our community is welcome! We've got plenty of tickets but not much time to sign up for this one... Please pass this message on to folks not on Shout. (Shout email about Redbrickers)

In each of these cases, residents discursively (re)construct a view of the estate as a community. In other words, the Redbricks is *asserted* as a single, coherent community, which here finds resonance with the construction of continuity about the estate and its history (Section 6.2.2). While there are many individuals and changing demographics on the estate (Section 6.4.2), appealing to community suggests an effort to draw together the multiplicity of individuals on the estate, perhaps at the expense of recognising differences between them. In this sense, just as the estate is seen as requiring practices of collective activities to 'make' it a community, so too do others 'make' the Redbricks a community by discursively identifying it as such.

However, others do not see the estate this way. During an interview, I asked one resident what she meant when she had previously described herself as a 'community activist' in conversation with a contractor for the landlord. She replied:

I would say that comes again and again in lots of stuff that I'm reading that...you can tinker all you like with, um, you know, energy supplies, or how food's grown, or what kind of fabric people make or any of these other things that are allegedly about sustainability. But unless you've actually got people in functioning communities, and with a voice, then there's... there's no point, really. I duno, that's just, that's what I keep coming back to. And that's the basic thing that needs, needs, um, energy put into helping it work, and I know we're in a very unusual case here cuz some of the people are here because they really want to be here, and then lots of other people are here because they've got nowhere else to go and they're at the bottom of the pile and it's a real mixture of, kind of, intentional community and totally unintentional noncommunity. (Interviewee 14)

Drawing on the concept of intentional community (e.g. Brown, 2002; Shenker, 2011), Interviewee 14 identifies a particular group on the estate whose efforts – and intentions – result in coming together as a community, while others that live on the estate do not, and comprise a ‘non-community.’ Another resident, an academic, described to me that, in her view, multiple communities exist on the Redbricks. She listed some she has knowledge of – such as the activists and punks – but emphasised that there are surely others of which she is unaware. These views challenge the notion of the Redbricks as a community, or problematise discursive assertions of the estate as a *single* community. Others articulate a similar view when reflecting on the estate’s past:

[People’s Kitchen] was every week and it had a real role in bringing people together. Really important role in bringing people together, like having lots of, kind of, just informal conversations and building community through it.
(Interviewee 2)

And do you know what’s really funny, it’s the first time I’ve ever, actually ever thought about it like that, again. It’s was jus’-- you know, what happened to this, that community is a reflection of the nature of a lot of the people who were involved with it and how they approached everything they did, maybe. You know, it was temporary. (Interviewee 19)

The former quote highlights the weekly People’s Kitchen communal meal as a particularly important activity in contributing to building community, and the latter considers the community associated with People’s Kitchen and other past activities was inevitably temporary because of the nature of those involved. This, again, highlights that effort is required for community to exist, but points to involvement in these practices as prerequisite to becoming part of the community. Blokland’s (2017:45) recent work argues for linking these through the concept of culture: ‘If community is culture, it needs to be understood as a relational figuration in constant change and movement.’ She goes on: ‘seeing community as a cultural concept, then, means seeing it as a set of repertoires of public practices – or performances – that are above all symbolic’ (Ibid.). In this sense, community or communities on the Redbricks are comprised of ongoing practices – collective activities – that are symbolic and perform community, and make

a community and a culture. However, whilst acknowledging that multiple communities and cultures – and a range of cultural territories (Section 6.4.3) – may exist on the Redbricks, it is the efforts of those cultivating the particular rhizomatic assemblage of focus in this thesis that I selectively aim to improve (recalling selective performativity, Section 2.3.2). While the connection of community and culture on the Redbricks through practices can be seen to exist, the last sub-section (Section 6.4.3) argued that the collective activities on the Redbricks generate cultural territories that are interwoven with objects. In this sense, community emerges through cultural practices, but it is also inherently tied to materiality.

To understand the relationship of community and culture to practices and collective activities on the Redbricks, consider that place can be seen as the product of both social relations and materiality (Massey, 2005). Seen this way, practices of enrolling residents on the estate in collective activities give rise to a community and a culture therein, but these collective activities entail an understanding of symbolic objects and namings that generate cultural territories on the estate, including of the estate as ‘the Redbricks’ (Section 6.4.3); in other words, collective activities make the Redbricks a place. However, the sociomaterial relations making the Redbricks a place – with the culture and community of focus in this thesis – are not isolated or closed off to the world. Rather, they are relationally constituted (Massey, 2005; see also, Chapter 4). Indeed, during my fieldwork, multiple encounters highlighted the relationality of the Redbricks. After the ‘Celebrate!’ finale, I was reminded in subsequent conversations that the band who performed has ties to the Redbricks: ‘some of [the band] used to live on the estate, have a connection...’ (Interviewee 6), and some now live in Todmorden. On a walk around the estate held during the 2018 National Permaculture Convergence, I met a former resident who currently lives in Wales, but was involved in building the RIC intranet system and in the Leaf Street transformation. As we walked through the estate, he told me stories from those projects, pointing to the herb spiral as one result that continues to exist, and shared other memories of his time on the Redbricks. And, finally, at a local pub, during the performance of a band made up of several current residents,

I met a woman who I recognised from online videos documenting the transformation of Leaf Street. We talked briefly about that project and how she has moved to Chorlton. In each of these cases, residents living in other places have clear connections to the Redbricks, despite no longer living there. It can be said that their past involvements in collective activities have enrolled them in a community and culture that continues to exist on the Redbricks, and their understanding of the symbolic objects and namings of cultural territories (i.e. Leaf Street, the Redbricks) reflect an affective bond to the Redbricks, despite temporal and spatial separation from it. Additionally, they feel belonging to that community through the relational ties they have to the Redbricks (Blokland, 2017). So, there is a placebased nature of belonging to a culture and community on the Redbricks, even for those who are no longer residents, which can be seen as a sense of belonging to a relationally constituted place. It is this sense of belonging to a culture, community and place – brought about through my enrolment in collective activities – that I felt sitting in a garden on the Redbricks one warm evening in August 2018, and continue to feel today.

This sub-section has discussed one *particular* community and culture that exists on the Redbricks, and how it is constituted as a place from a geographical lens. I explored how social relations, materiality and sociomaterial collective activities generate community and culture, and the relational ties that exist on the Redbricks and that extend beyond the estate make it a relational place (Massey, 2005). This relational nature of the Redbricks is taken up further in the next section (Section 6.5). Before concluding, it is worth expanding on the implications of what the Redbricks as a place means for collective activities of organising therein. Consider Escobar's (2001:161) widely cited argument that culture is place-specific, and that 'subaltern strategies of localization' can be accomplished through 'place-based strategies that rely on the attachment to territory and culture.' From this perspective, the collective activities on the Redbricks can be seen to rely on attachment to the estate as a place. However while Escobar's notion of 'place-based strategies' is developed through specific consideration of social movements resisting globalisation, this thesis extends it to the more mundane activities

of everyday life. The culture and community existing in the everyday life of a housing estate, which through collective activities generate cultural territories, constitute place-based efforts that, rather than a set of strategies for a single, cohesive culture in a place, are fragmented in that they only exist for those enrolled in the culture and community existing on the Redbricks. Rather than strategies, they might rather be viewed as tactics. This follows de Certeau (1984:xix), who argues that '[t]he place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance.' Indeed, when considered from the perspective of everyday life, such a place-based – and therefore relational – culture entails tactics and collective activities of resistance, but also the cultivation of different social values, that give rise to a sense of belonging to a community (Blokland, 2017). In this sense, the collective activities on the Redbricks are tactics for enacting the continuance of the estate and cultivating a particular rhizomatic assemblage therein.

To conclude, a geographical lens on the Redbricks as a relational place enables an understanding of how collective activities are interconnected to a culture and community on the estate. That the Redbricks as a place is relational implies it is open, and indeed porous. Considering the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage, place might be considered the porous soil in which rhizomatic connections form, where cultural territories, objects, values and practices are propagated, and through which an assemblage (re)emerges. Indeed, just as rhizomes form differently depending on the soil – and on the place – in which they are cultivated, so too does the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage form differently as it relies on, influences and absorbs place, just as places relies on, influences and absorbs the Redbricks. The multiplicity of agencies and sociomaterial relations that come together in shaping and cultivating this rhizomatic assemblage are linked by a shared sense of culture and community. But any vantage, especially one from a middle as in this thesis, can only be partial. Some features of the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage remain imperceptible. And, indeed, the evidence that soil is comprised of minute, mycorrhizal networks (Simard et

al, 2012) reflects the fact that places, too, are comprised of multiplicities, connections and myriad relations. I do not claim to fully depict the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage, nor to completely capture the mycorrhizal networks therein. Rather, from my vantage as researcher, this section has shown how a geographical perspective on collective activities of organising enables a discussion of the Redbricks as characterised by a set of cultural values and objects (Section 6.4.1) and (un)involvements (Section 6.4.2), generating cultural territories (Section 6.4.3) and a relational place (Section 6.4.4). This thesis' efforts to improve the particular efforts at cultivating the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage, then, can thus be seen as selecting a particular cultivar for propagation both on the Redbricks and other places.

In addition to genealogising (Section 6.2), shaping (Section 6.3) and cultivating (Section 6.4) the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage, through my fieldwork I observed another set of processes unfolding, which occurred on the estate but were imbricated with the surrounding area, and with places and activities much further afield. These processes involved the ways processes change geographies; collective activities of organising that result in both building-up and breaking-down of materiality, and unfold in myriad ways. I elaborate this as the 'geometabolics of organising' in the next section.

6.5 Geometabolising rhizomatic assemblage: The geometabolics of organising

The first thematic discussion in this chapter involved a genealogical perspective on the Redbricks (Section 6.2), which (de)contextualised its history, problematised the construction of continuity on the estate, pointed to past de/reterritorialisations on the estate, and developed an understanding of the Redbricks as a relational place. Then, sections discussed shaping and cultivating the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage by demonstrating from several perspectives how collective activities are geographically constituted on the Redbricks. First, I highlighted the digital-physical assemblage, fluctuating intensities of activities, and relational agencies implicated in shaping

collective activities on the estate (Section 6.3). Then, I turned to the way(s) that a particular culture manifests in values, objects, cultural territories and a relational place, which is interwoven with community; together, these cultivate a rhizomatic assemblage on the estate (Section 6.4). During these discussions, I began to consider the plurality of relational connections that are implicated in understanding the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage, and how these connections exist both on and off the estate. This section makes a discussion of these connections central, seeking to understand the extensive ties constituting the estate through a new conceptual perspective: the 'geometabolics of organising.'

Beginning to unravel the relational ties constituting the Redbricks, this section's vignette describes the immediate surroundings of the estate in Hulme and Manchester, then other consequential ties between the estate with the world. Then, I discuss the connections illustrated in the vignette in order to understand the relation of wider contexts to the Redbricks. The first sub-section begins to discuss this relation by reconsidering the Redbricks from the perspective of scale, which leads to a conceptualisation of the 'geometabolics of organising:' actions that change the social metabolism (Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl, 2007) and are geographically constituted through organising (Section 6.5.1). Building the notion of the geometabolics of organising, I next consider the collective activities on the estate from a geometabolics of organising lens as intensively and relationally connected to the contexts illustrated in the vignette (Section 6.5.2). Then, the geometabolics of organising is further developed by considering the extensive relational ties between collective activities on the Redbricks and its contexts, which are shown to both build-up (geoanabolics) and break-down (geocatabolics) materiality (Section 6.5.3). This leads to a discussion of how the geometabolics of organising is catalysed and different routes to activation (Section 6.5.4). Finally, an effort is made to provide an energetic view of geometabolics, in which the Redbricks serves as the locus for a discussion of the processes that are geometabolising the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage, including how entropy

facilitates our understanding of the relative impact of geomatabolic processes and their normative implications (Section 6.5.5).

Vignette: Walking the Redbricks and its contexts

I have walked to and from the Redbricks countless times, particularly when I was living on the estate in August 2018. Through this, and aided by conversations with residents, I developed a deep understanding of the area around the Redbricks as well as the wider contexts in which it exists. What continues to strike me about getting to and from the Redbricks is how easy it is. The ease of movement between the estate to the surrounding areas of Hulme and Manchester are paramountly made possible by the footpaths and roads. These provide walking, biking and car accessibility between the estate and the surrounding areas in almost every direction. It takes seconds to get from the estate to Stretford Road, two blocks to the south, which is a significant east-west route into Manchester city centre. From there, it is only a several minute walk and even shorter drive or cycle across Princess Parkway, over the Hulme Arch Bridge, to Oxford Road and the universities. Also on Stretford Road, there are bus stops that provide public transit toward the city centre and outlying areas, including the Trafford Centre, Chorlton and Altrincham. Although the recent construction and expansion of the Metrolink light rail network only resulted in the Cornbrook stop in Hulme, quite far from the Redbricks, the Deansgate-Castlefield stop is just to the north of the estate, accessible via a pedestrian crossing under Mancunian Way.

Leaving the Redbricks, I will pass Procter's, a former youth club on Hulme Street that was converted in 2012 to the Procter Learning Centre, a pupil referral unit for schoolchildren with difficulty in mainstream school. Opposite the estate to the west, across Jackson Crescent, is Hulme Park, a public park owned and managed by Manchester City Council. This large, open park forms a western buffer for the estate.

Beyond that, apart from the Saint Wilfred's Enterprise Centre and a school, the area is comprised almost entirely of housing, including both 3 or 4 story apartment buildings, several tall multi-story housing blocks, and various townhouses, characterised by a mix of both social and private housing.

Walking to the south, I encounter a diversity of groups, organisations and sites. I note them as:

- the Aaben, a recent housing development of 105 market rent flats that recently opened on Leaf Street, across Clarendon Street from the Redbricks, which was financed by One Manchester;
- retail locations along Stretford Road, including McColl's, a Co-operative grocery store, Hulme Post Office, an estate agent, various fast food shops, the Grano café, and the Z-Arts cultural venue;
- Manchester Metropolitan University's Birley Campus and several hundred units of student accommodations;
- an office park that includes Lovell House, the main offices of One Manchester, landlord of the Redbricks;
- the Hulme Community Garden Centre, which sells plants, hosts volunteers, holds regular events and offers training sessions, and is located down Old Birley Street, a thoroughfare connecting Hulme to Moss Side;
- Homes for Change, also known as the 'Yellowbricks,' a housing co-operative of several dozen flats located across from the Hulme Community Garden Centre and with an affiliated and co-operatively managed workplace, Work for Change. The businesses therein include Kim By the Sea, a 'quirky restaurant, bar and café' (Kim by the Sea, Facebook); Ethical Consumer, 'the alternative consumer organisation' (<https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/>), and several others;
- the Hippodrome and Nia Centre, previously two music venues. Recently, a group that includes several individuals with ties to the Redbricks secured a lease of the Nia Centre and is seeking to make it into Niamos, a 'radical arts/music/culture' centre (from group's Facebook page); and

- the 'Hulme High Street' retail corridor that comprises Asda, Argos, KFC, McDonald's, B&Q, a daily market and a variety of independent retailers.

The pedestrian crossing under Mancunian Way makes reaching the city centre from the Redbricks easy. In contrast to Hulme, the story there is radically different. The edge of the city centre proximal to the Redbricks has recently seen major financial investment with significant residential and commercial developments under development or recently completed. Walking through this area, I spot a completed student accommodation built by Unite Students, various apartment and office buildings, a Premier Inn hotel, and HOME, a venues for performances, a cinema and art gallery, as well as several cafés. I later learn this was built by Patrizia, a German property developer. Much more noticeable are the ongoing developments looming overhead and filling the sky, namely: First Street, commercial and residential complex owned and being built by Patrizia; Deansgate Square, a complex of four buildings, the tallest of which will be 64 floors and become the tallest building in Manchester, of which Renaker is the principal developer; and Axis Tower, originally meant to be offices but, following the recession of 2008, was cancelled and is now being developed into private flats.

Walking past these high rises a bit further into the city centre, I pass countless retail, commercial and residential buildings. I easily reach the Oxford Road train station, the Bridgewater Hall, Midland Hotel, and Manchester Central convention centre. Beyond these, it is a quick walk to Saint Peter's Square, where the Manchester Central Library and Town Hall of Manchester City Council, the latter of which is currently undergoing extensive renovation. It is clear to me that the estate is on the verge of Manchester's city centre.

To the east, when I leave the Redbricks and travel to university, I cross Princess Parkway, pass a substantial residential and student housing developments, a small number of retailers, and reach the All Saints campus of Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and the Oxford Road corridor. Or, I can veer south to the Manchester Science Park, where – right in the middle – I can get to The Old Abbey Taphouse, one

of the few remaining pubs in Hulme, which is co-owned by a resident of the Redbricks and a frequent site for gatherings with Redbricks residents, MSP staff, and university staff and students.

On the routine walks over to MMU during my fieldwork, I note of the changes in that area. While there haven't been many noticeable changes since I began my fieldwork, I recall that a resident described to me that the area between the Redbricks and Oxford Road has 'been a building site for 20 years' (Interviewee 19). The Business School, where I am based, was surely one of those building sites, and there are undoubtedly others I don't know about. I do note, however, that ground has recently broken on a major development on the former site of the BBC across Oxford Road from MMU. This project, called Circle Square, is branded as a 'new neighbourhood' and totalling 12 residential, office, hotel and parking buildings, the tallest of which is 37 stories high. It is being developed by the Manchester-based Bruntwood company in partnership with the Select Property Group – a consortium of investors – and receives financial backing from both the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Greater Manchester Pension Fund. Affiliated with this development, though the tie is not publicly communicated, is Hatch, an area of retail and café shops beneath Mancunian Way.

Another walking route I regularly take during my fieldwork is from the Redbricks to Lovell House, the offices of the estate's landlord, One Manchester. I make this journey for interviews with senior staff, and for the quarterly meetings between TARA and One Manchester representatives. Often, during my fieldwork, I am reminded of One Manchester's role on the estate: the caretaker employed by One Manchester, who is responsible for maintaining the stairwells and paths, shares use of the tenants' office with various groups on the estate; and the gardens are co-managed by a team responsible for the green areas on One Manchester's properties. During interviews after the short walk to their offices, I learn that One Manchester owns and is landlord for over 12,000 properties across Manchester.

But One Manchester does not operate in a vacuum. Another institution whose presence is felt on the Redbricks is Manchester City Council: they maintain the roads and handle services such as rubbish collection. The Council, I learn, also holds several seats on One Manchester's board. Further, One Manchester is tied to Homes England via financing arrangements and also through government priorities about social housing. Additionally, the long-standing national government's Right to Buy policy means that the ownership mix of flats on the Redbricks is not purely social housing, forcing One Manchester to contend with both leaseholders, some of whom have private renters in their flats, social housing tenants. Thus, walking to and from the Redbricks with an eye trained the world around me, I become intimately aware of the Redbricks' interwovenness with the fabric of Hulme and the city centre, and with institutions both in the area and further afield.

6.5.1 From scale and social metabolism to the geometabolics of organising

Through my fieldwork, it became clear that collective activities on the Redbricks, and indeed the geographical constitutiveness of organising, are intimately interwoven with the contexts in which the estate exists. Percolating throughout the prior sections have been discussions of this relationality, though they were not the main focus of discussion. That changes here: this sub-section examines the collective activities on the Redbricks as inherently relational to its contexts, as geographical in nature, and as interwoven with changes to society's material and energy use, known as the social metabolism (Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl, 2007). Doing so involves drawing together several theoretical streams of thought to conceptualise 'the geometabolics of organising,' which is elaborated in the empirical context of the Redbricks.

To develop a conceptualisation of the geometabolics of organising, recall that, previously, collective activities on the Redbricks were shown to demonstrate fluctuating intensities (Section 6.3.2), and the relationality of past activities enabled conceptualisation of the Redbricks as a relational place (Section 6.2.3). However, the relational ties of collective activities on the estate also exhibit ‘extensities’ (Deleuze, 1994) that constitute the geographically extensive relations between the estate and the world. Building from this starting point, let us consider these extensities in further detail.

Beginning to make sense of the extensive relationality of the Redbricks and its contexts, and drawing on this section’s vignette, the changes occurring both on Redbricks and in its contexts come into focus. Indeed, among residents, there is a palpable sense that both the estate and Manchester are changing. One described this to me:

But the Redbricks are gentrifying and it takes therefore a reach out to all the people who are sort of radically minded within a proximity to just kind of keep that Hulme spirit alive, isn’t it. And to keep on making things like gardens and, uh, relevant to and sort of part of the community. (Interviewee 11)

While this recalls the prior argument that the community (Section 6.4.4) on the Redbricks is comprised of collective activities, such as maintaining the gardens, which cultivate a sense of belonging to a place, it also highlights the view that the estate is changing and gentrifying. Indeed, other residents echoed this view. For example, at a TARA meeting, a proposal for a grant-funded mural to be painted on the estate was brought up, and one committee member posed the rhetorical question: ‘Is this the first step of gentrification?’ Several others pointed to the many murals in the Northern Quarter, a trendy neighbourhood to the north east of the city centre, as evidence that the Northern Quarter had already undergone gentrification. As the prior quote reflects, while activities on the estate are seen to have value, gentrification means that residents must ‘reach out’ to other radically minded people off the estate and ‘within a proximity’ of the Redbricks to ‘keep that Hulme spirit alive.’ Thus, efforts to counter what is seen as the gentrifying change entail building extensive relations with activities near the Redbricks in Hulme.

Many of the groups and organisations in Hulme, many of which are highlighted in this section's vignette, have ties to the Redbricks, which became abundantly clear during my fieldwork. For example, residents volunteer at the Hulme Community Garden Centre (HCGC), and staff there routinely donate struggling plants for the Redbricks' communal gardens. Niamos is run by a group that includes former residents on the Redbricks, including several that grew up on the estate. Kim by the Sea in the Yellowbricks, where I met residents of the Redbricks for drinks many times, is a frequented café and pub near to the estate. These relations to Hulme extend in other ways, as well. As one resident describes, 'many of the people who are of the Redbricks, and many people of the Yellowbricks, you know, sort of like, are those people who reflect on, and feel like they came of the Crescents.' (Interviewee 11). Here, the relationality of collective activities not only links the Redbricks to Hulme, but also establishes extensive ties over time to the history of Hulme and the Crescents (Section 6.2.2). Interestingly, the notion of described as being 'of the Redbricks' interweaves the histories of individuals with the estate itself, a history which is marked by a whole range of geographically constituted collective activities: de/reterritorialisations (Section 6.2.3), material objects designating cultural territories (Section 6.4.3), fluctuating intensities (Section 6.3.2) and others discussed in prior sections.

The extensities of collective activities on the Redbricks also emerged in how individuals characterised the estate. One resident recalled how, after years of involvement in animal rights activism, she became involved with TARA:

So yeah, so it's kinda happened cuz it suits me to give something back. And it's a bit more local and accessible for me. And I'm in a better place to do it. I wouldn't have done it in my 20s when I first moved here. Cuz I was too busy fighting fires in the world, you know, rather than locally. (Interviewee 10)

This resident links her activism with 'fires in the world,' whereas the collective activities such as TARA are seen to occur 'locally.' In this sense, the estate is deemed to constitute a 'local' scale, in contrast to the 'the world.' Many residents characterised the

estate this way: activities on the estate are seen as ‘doing things local’ (Interviewee 7) among and those living on the estate are considered ‘local residents’ (Interviewee 13). Further adhering to this view of scale were One Manchester staff. In interviews, they utilised ‘local’ with great frequency, often in describing the organisation’s recent strategic shift toward ‘place,’ to describe the constituent elements therein: ‘local business,’ ‘local community,’ ‘local partnerships,’ ‘local projects,’ and so on.

The prior view of scale is consequential for thinking about the Redbricks, and in particular the estate’s extensive relations. From this perspective, as Swyngedouw (2004:129) describes, contemporary issues on the Redbricks ‘fuse physicalenvironmental metabolisms with socio-cultural and political-economic relations,’ and this fusion points to the ways that issues unfold through multiple, contested (i.e. political) scalar processes. From this perspective, the mural on the Redbricks is a change at the ‘local’ scale, but is fused with other processes such as gentrification, and the material change of a mural on the estate is tied to this gentrification process – albeit with a view of this process that skews more negative and perhaps lacks some nuance (see, for example, Butler, 2007; Lees, 2012). Similarly, from this perspective, the historically constituted relations that tie the Redbricks to the Crescents and Hulme, the global issues such as animal rights activism as contrasting with the estate, the contemporary radical activities, or the organisational strategies of One Manchester all demarcate the estate as the ‘local.’

Still, this view could be challenged. For example, Marston et al (2005) critique the vertical and hierarchical assumption of scalar arguments such as Swyngedouw’s (2004), favouring instead a networked view, in which sites and milieus are seen as interconnected, challenging the view of borders and boundaries between scales and pointing to ‘intensive capacities for newness’ (Marston et al, 2005:426). From this view, the intensive collective activities on the estate are extensively connected with those proximal to it, but can also extend much more widely. In this view, efforts at consigning the Redbricks as a housing estate to ‘the local’ ignores the inherent relationality therein.

Thus, this perspective foregrounds both relations that are proximal and those that extend further geographically. From this perspective, for example, the Redbricks is relationally tied to Hulme through extensive activities, or to animal rights by the very presence of the animal rights activist in TARA – even if her days ‘fighting fires’ are over. But the estate further tied to Vietnam (a resident backpacked there during my fieldwork) or Portugal (a leaseholder who I met lives there and rents out his flat on the estate) or California (as a researcher, my own past is implicated in the present) or elsewhere. And the prospect of a mural is the result of a particular network of connections that have come together on the Redbricks. In other words, this view implicates extensive relations in an ‘intensive capacity for newness’ on the estate.

This alternative to a scalar perspective favours tracing networks of connections has also been challenged. In particular, some argue that a network perspective is unable to capture the materiality of connections and processes of change (e.g. Barad, 2007). In other words, it is critiqued for failing to account for how the material world is ‘metabolised,’ to use Swyngedouw’s (2004) term. Both the scalar and network views seek to confront the challenge of making sense of how particular processes relate to others from a geographical perspective. But they face challenges from the assumed scalar hierarchy on the one hand, and for the insufficient understanding of materiality on the other. This provokes the question: how can more networked understandings account for the ways that the world is metabolised and materially *changed*?

To address the above question, let us first consider the idea of ‘social metabolism’ (e.g. Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl, 2007). This concept entails analysing society’s material and energy use, understood as its metabolism, and generating models of energy and material use and flows that present dynamic, system-wide views of the social metabolism (Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl, 2007). This facilitates conceptualising the changes to material and energy use. However, it can be nuanced further, in particular by incorporating an understanding that material and energy use are the result of collective activities of organising, and are therefore relational. The relationality of

activities can be both intensive and extensive, and therefore changes to the social metabolism through collective activities are geographical in nature. Thus, I propose extending the notion of social metabolism by incorporating a sensitivity toward the geographically constituted collective activities that change the social metabolism, which I term the ‘geometabolics of organising.’

The geometabolics of organising builds on extant understandings in geography about the relationality of the social world (Massey, 2005), and in OS about the relationality of organising (Hernes, 2004). It further challenges the hierarchical view of scale in favour of a more networked understanding of both intensive and extensive relations, whilst remaining sensitive to the ways social metabolism entail material and energy use. Finally, by focusing on organising, it considers how geographically constituted collective activities are interventions that *change* the social metabolism.

The geometabolics of organising is elaborated in the following sub-sections by considering the collective activities on the Redbricks and in its contexts. In particular, I apply a geometabolics of organising perspective to collective activities on the estate (Section 6.5.2); show how the geometabolics of organising implies processes of both building up and breaking down materiality, including with respect to relational connections off the estate (Section 6.5.3); consider the different routes in which the geometabolics of organising is catalysed (Section 6.5.4); and discuss the implications of the geometabolics of organising by incorporating the notion of entropy (Section 6.5.5). While the next sub-section demonstrates the purchase of the geometabolics of organising, the latter three sub-sections develop the concept further by drawing together insights about ‘metabolics’ from other disciplinary perspectives. By developing the geometabolics of organising, I propose a way of making sense of the changes to Redbricks and its contexts, and of further reflecting the geographical constitutiveness of organising. To begin, the next sub-section opens by reconsidering how a geometabolics of organising perspective informs our understanding of the prospect of a mural on the Redbricks.

6.5.2 Applying a geometabolics of organising: intensities and relationalities

This sub-section applies a geometabolics of organising perspective to the Redbricks and its contexts, drawing on this section's vignette and my fieldwork. In particular, it focuses on the intensities of collective activities on the Redbricks, which are shown through a geometabolics of organising lens to be relational in leading to material changes on the estate. Further, this lens is applied in various ways to illustrate the insights it can offer. First, let us return to the case of the mural and gentrification from the prior sub-section.

A geometabolics of organising perspective might begin by considering that the project is tied to grant funding to fund the mural: so, a grant-making body is implicated in making a material change on the estate. Further, the group proposing to paint the mural, Cities of Hope, is a Manchester-based organisation that uses street art to 'raise awareness of social issues' (<https://www.citiesofhope.net/>). And TARA members were correct: Cities of Hope murals appear across the Northern Quarter. Thus, the potential mural would involve a network of connections that come together to make a change on the estate, which is tied to material changes in the Northern Quarter. Still, from a geometabolics of organising perspective, it is necessary to understand that the scepticism voiced by TARA members that the prospect of a mural implies gentrification on the estate is one particular view. Indeed, a criticism I heard repeatedly on the Redbricks was some variation of: 'TARA doesn't represent all of the estate.' This is rooted in the fact that most of the TARA committee members are leaseholders, which make up only half of the estate's ownership mix. This criticism, then, argues that TARA does not advocate for the other half: private renters and social housing tenants. However, TARA members and other residents routinely pointed to the increasing transience on the estate as a barrier to involvement in collective activities (recall Section 6.4.2). A geometabolics of organising lens asks us to dig deeper. First, many

leaseholders on the estate acquired their flats through Right to Buy, and before housing prices on the estate increased significantly. These residents had sufficient access to bank loans or cash to purchase flats, which occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s, during a territorialisation and relative intensity of collective activities on the Redbricks (Section 6.2.2). Through their involvement in past activities, many leaseholders have chosen to remain on the Redbricks, deepening their connection to the estate, to other residents and to its materiality – such as the symbolic objects that mark cultural territories (Section 6.4.3). Due to these connections, leaseholders have joined TARA in greater numbers than more transient, private rented or social housing residents. So, given the intensity of TARA's connections on the estate, they also extensively are enrolled in potential changes to the estate, such as the mural. Thus, a geometabolics of organising perspective begins to show a multiplicity of activities have come together in the particular case of the mural and its prospective change to the Redbricks, which is an accomplishment of the geographically intensive and extensive, as well as historical, relationality of the estate.

In fact, the role of TARA in the geometabolics of organising extends further. For example, they also advocate for the estate with the landlord, One Manchester, including: how new national government policies, namely Universal Credit, will impact residents; upcoming or existing building or renovation works, including the Aaben development; garden and estate maintenance, such as where One Manchester's grounds maintenance team should cut back weeds; and other relevant concerns. TARA are implicated in these changes to the estate, which extend from concerns on the estate to national policies. So, too, does challenging the impact of the Cities of Hope mural enrol TARA in the geometabolics of the Redbricks. And TARA's advocacy and, in some cases, resistance to material changes is the emergent result of a historical government policy (Right to Buy) access to financial resources (loans or cash), a relative stability and duration of certain individuals living on the Redbricks, which resulted in intensive ties to other residents. Thus, TARA can be seen as one group implicated in the geometabolics of organising on the Redbricks.

The above begins to reflect how the geometabolics of organising offers a way to conceptualise the geographically constituted activities that change the social metabolism of the Redbricks. However, TARA's activities are not distinctly separate from other groups and activities on the estate. Rather, they are co-implicated in the geometabolics of organising, which is both intensive on the Redbricks and extensive beyond it. *Table 6* summarises the relational connections of groups and geometabolic processes in which they are implicated that were identified during my fieldwork, whilst recognising that there are further processes (i.e. historically, such as Right to Buy) that are not captured in this contemporary perspective.

| Groups | Relational connections | Geometabolic processes |
|---------------------|---|---|
| TARA | Advocates with the landlord, One Manchester, about residents' concerns and ongoing estate issues. Also occasionally applies for external funding bids, and rents nearby venues for events. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocates and intervenes with the landlord and other organisations that seek to make changes on the estate • Occasional recipient of grants, which are administered nationally, for activities • Receives small amounts of funding from One Manchester for operations and events • Funds used to rent venues, including St Wilfred's and Proctor's Youth Centre. |
| Community Gardening | Volunteers maintain the gardens on the estate, along with One Manchester team responsible for green areas. The HCGC sometimes donates struggling plants that residents plant on the estate. Funds to purchase a set of tools for gardening were provided by One Manchester, and a small cupboard on the estate was also provided to hold the tools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardens support abundant plant life communal gardens, which are also a biodiverse micro-ecosystem of many animals • One garden was designed on permaculture principles, so is relatively self-sustaining • Negotiate with One Manchester the maintenance of communal gardens • Receipt of grant for tools from One Manchester and given access to storage cupboard by them • Ongoing relationship with HCGC involves sharing expertise and assisting with small projects in the gardens |
| Bentley Exchange | Volunteers help with set up and take down of tables in a ginnel, and 'tat' can be exchanged the first weekend of the month. Items that are leftover are stored in a cupboard, to which | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers take tat via car to charity or Asda when clearings occur • Given access to storage cupboard by One Manchester, who do not restrict use of ginnel for the exchange |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| | One Manchester provides access, although there are periodic clearings of tat. Some items are donated to charity or taken to the nearby Asda, which has an on-site recycling facility. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange involves re-use of books, clothes and household items, and is accessible to anyone on the estate or visiting it |
| Redbricks Intranet Collective (RIC) | The intranet's internet service provider is in Stockport, and website is hosted by network23. Some residents involved have moved off the estate, and one regularly involved resident is only an occasional resident on the estate. A system upgrade was coordinated with One Manchester, who hired a subcontractor to perform the work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet access provided to residents that subscribe, cheaper than commercial • Stockport company provides connectivity to global internet cable infrastructure • Website hosted by network23, a 'blogging platform committed to <i>freedom of expression, decentralisation of online content</i>, and an <i>open web</i>' (network23.org, 2019, emphasis in original). • Coordination of system upgrade was through One Manchester, who used a subcontractor to install wiring |
| Sew-In-A-Circle | Residents meet for sewing, with access to machines and materials provided. Project received grant funding from the Postcode Community Trust, and meets in the estate's tenants' office. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received a national grant for the project • Seeks to support re-use of old clothes and household items (i.e. curtains) by providing access to sewing equipment • Provides a chance to meet neighbours and socialise via a shared activity |
| Rockdove Rising | Co-operatively owns two flats on the estate, and is a member of Radical Routes, a network of co-ops. Many of the residents are involved in projects off the estate, including The Old Abbey Taphouse, a pub in Hulme, and a gardening project in Manchester that furthers the welfare of refugees. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operative ownership of flats removes them from the housing market • Tied to Radical Roots, a national network, which engages in activism and is comprised of independent co-operatives • The pub occupies a historical building, and aims to be a 'community pub' and promote STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths); the gardening project supports well-being of refugees and asylum seekers from abroad by growing food, holding pay-as-you-feel meals, providing legal aid and more; and the members are engaged in other activities, such as activism and sharing co-op practices |
| The Redbrickers | Provides low-cost tickets for residents to attend theatre shows at HOME, and emerged out of a programme run by One Manchester. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theatre is across Mancunian Way near Deansgate, and is a significant cultural venue in Manchester • Developed through the existing relationship between One Manchester and HOME, as a part of both of their community engagement |

Table 6: Relational connections and geometabolic processes of groups

Each of the different groups in *Table 6* consists of geographically constituted collective activities that have material impacts. In other words, the groups are implicated in the geometabolics of organising. As an aside, these activities also have energetic impacts, though measuring these was beyond the remit of this thesis (but see also Section 6.5.5, below). Equally as significant, their geographical nature means that these activities are constituted through both intensive and extensive relational connections. For example, Rockdove Rising is tied to Radical Routes, which ties the co-operative with a national movement housing and worker cooperatives. But they are also linked with a pub in Hulme and a refugee project, as well as with the intensive geometabolic processes of removing flats on the estate from the housing market, indicated in *Table 6*. The co-operative, as with TARA, is not so much a separate, definable group, as it is a set of relations: the activities of the co-op on the Redbricks are relationally interwoven with Radical Routes, the pub and the refugee project. Thus, its geographical constitutiveness implicates these relations in the coop's removal of flats from the housing market.

Similarly, the Bentley Exchange comes together through intensive relations of volunteers on the Redbricks, leading to a reuse of materials. But just as implicated in the Exchange are the estate's proximity to an Asda donation point and charity shops. As one resident described, even if materials aren't re-used on the estate, 'there's at least a chance they will be reused' when donated to Asda or charities. These extensive ties are, again, implicated in the activities of the Exchange that impact the Redbricks' metabolism of materials.

Additionally, consider that multiple groups in *Table 6* rely on external funding, typically through grants, to facilitate their activities. Philanthropic giving, typically at a national scale, is thus implicated in the geometabolics of the estate. Finally, *Table 6* indicates that TARA, RIC, the Community Gardening group, and the Redbrickers have ongoing or prior engagements with One Manchester. This reflects how the landlord and their nearby offices are a further extensive relation that is interwoven with the activities on

the Redbricks and implicated in their material changes. In each of these, a geometabolics of organising perspective draws together the fact that activities on the estate are geographically constituted, co-implicating a multiplicity of extensive relations in changing the estate's social metabolism.

While separated in *Table 6* for analytic purposes, the collective activities on the Redbricks are themselves interwoven. Indeed, considering them together reflects their intensive relationality on the estate, and their geographical constitutiveness from a geometabolics of organising perspective. There are multiplicities of entry points to considering how these activities come together and are co-implicated in the geometabolics of organising on the Redbricks. Take, for instance, the TARA: gardening activities and the Bentley Exchange are often coordinated at TARA meetings, held in the tenants' office. Recently, a member of the housing co-operative joined the TARA committee during the course of my fieldwork, and both the cooperative and TARA meet in the office. Indeed, other groups share use of the tenants' office with TARA, as well. Thus, the office, in addition to being a cultural territory (Section 6.4.3), is a particular site in which the geometabolics of organising the Redbricks is negotiated, and a site that links these activities and their material impacts.

As another example, consider the Redbrickers: a resident who coordinates this had a prior relationship with One Manchester that enabled her to arrange tickets at HOME, and she also helped organise the 'Celebrate!' finale by securing a stage and fireworks through her job. The discounted tickets lower a barrier for residents to attend theatre near the estate, but also strengthens ties among them. The tickets are circulated on Shout, where reminders about Bentley Exchange are also circulated. Thus, the Redbrickers is relationally implicated in the Exchange's activities through their shared involvement in the digital-physical assemblage of Shout (Section 6.3.1), but also with 'Celebrate!' through this resident's work. In this sense, while groups are separately involved in geometabolic processes, their connections mean they must be understood together in exploring the geometabolics of organising on the Redbricks. There are such

connections between the other groups on the estate listed in *Table 6*, reflecting the interwovenness of collective activities of organising in the estate's geometabolics.

Thus far, we have seen how both extensive and intensive relations, as well as the interconnectedness of activities, contribute to the geometabolics of organising on the Redbricks. However, the relationality of activities their interwovenness on the estate has a further implication: any group's relationality can be assigned to the others as well, even if a direct connection does not exist. Thus, a Rockdove Rising member who joined TARA means that TARA is implicated in the activities of the co-op, whether the pub or refugee project or others. Reflective of this, I attended a show at the pub, in which a TARA member's band (not the co-op member) performed. Similar relational ties can be traced between the other groups and activities on the estate, as well. This discussion of both the intensive and extensive ties on the Redbricks chimes with a less hierarchical view of scale and more networked understanding, but it also explicitly reflects that collective activities change materiality and material use – the social metabolism – while at the same time their impacts reflect geographically constituted, sociomaterial processes.

Aside from the groups and collective activities on the estate, a geometabolics of organising can also provoke new understandings in other contexts. Take, for instance, an object, and not a particular symbolic object associated with a cultural territory (Section 6.4.1), but rather a more mundane one. After picking and tasting jostaberries while gardening on the Redbricks gardening, later that day I noticed the word 'jostaberry' woven into a bag's fabric at Unicorn, a co-operatively owned, ethical grocery store in Chorlton. Such berries are not found in most supermarkets, and are a cross-breed of three species of berry bush. I learned that its presence on the estate resulted from HCGC's donation of the bushes, and my recognition of the berry in a store reflects its limited commercial cultivation, but also its particular appeal to a coop that favours organic and local produce. Jostaberries were originally cross-bred in Germany, though many of the hybrids were destroyed in the Second World War. And the berry I ate was

propagated by taking cuttings from another jostaberry bush on the estate, which is typical practice for this plant species. Thus, this single, mundane object and my consumption of it is interwoven with the activities of a co-op store, the Hulme garden centre, German botanists and the propagation knowledge they developed, and even the rise of Nazism in the 1930's and a global war. My own metabolism of the berry is connected with the bush's metabolism of the estate's soil, and both are enmeshed with not only gardening activities on the estate but also the extensive ties that are co-implicated in the existence of jostaberry bushes on the estate. Such an analysis could be made for every object on the estate, reflecting how material objects are co-implicated in the relations that contribute to the geometabolics of organising. Though each could be traced, let us move from the groups and objects and use a geometabolics of organising lens to explore the estate in other ways.

Similar to the above, consider a severe plumbing issue that occurred in a resident's flat. One Manchester sent out a team several times, then eventually hired a subcontractor to address the overflowing water in the resident's kitchen. Still, the problem remained unresolved for an extended period of time, until it was finally fixed. One of the biggest issues was that utilities plans for where the water mains on the estate are not readily available, an issue – I later learned – which also exists for the gas utility plans. Here, an individual resident's water use is tied to the history of the estate and its construction, as well as the water and gas infrastructure of Manchester. Further, the multiple teams sent by One Manchester and subcontractor they hired indicate that the landlord's approach is to hire external companies through competitive bids for resolving such issues as plumbing. This reliance on subcontracting is the case in many public services: in a similar way, Manchester City Council subcontracts bins removal and rubbish disposal on the Redbricks – and across the city – to Biffa, a waste management company. In this sense, a blocked drain is tied not only to the estate's history and water infrastructure, but also to the marketisation of the public sector, an approach not unlike the City Challenge fund that led to the demolition of much of Hulme (Section 6.2.1). This approach is often associated with a neoliberal approach to governance (Aiken,

2016). Thus, from a single issue on the Redbricks, relational ties can be identified that mean the landlord, the Council, subcontractors and a wide-ranging socioeconomic change toward neoliberalism and the marketisation of services are co-implicated in plumbing on the estate.

In addition to the groups, objects and issues on the Redbricks, a geometabolics of organising also provokes new understandings of such basic concerns as rubbish on the street. The persistent and casual discarding of waste on the Redbricks led TARA to inquire about having a bin installed on Hulme Street. After multiple efforts, it emerged that One Manchester couldn't provide the service, as it was the Council's remit. And the Council emphasised that they could only install one if another bin was removed, which one resident jokingly referred to as 'peak bin.' A TARA member asked dog walkers to keep an eye out for underused bins, but in a meeting there was indignation that One Manchester were not handling this for the residents. The conversation contrasted it with the Aaben, the market rent property built by One Manchester just down the road: a committee member noted that Aaben's caretaker empties the multiple bins on that land. However, a One Manchester employee explained to TARA that, compared to Redbricks residents, the Aaben residents pay significantly more in service charges, given they are market-rate properties. So, the concern with rubbish on the Redbricks is linked to the limits the Council faces in their capacity to empty bins and take waste to landfill, meaning 'peak bin' reflects the fiscal constraints of government. But equally, One Manchester's entry into the commercial housing market is the result of a need to maintain profitability, and results in an income stream, as well as higher service charges that allow a caretaker to empty bins. So, from the concern with rubbish, the geometabolics of organising links the estate with the ways profit and the accumulative drive of capitalist organisation are enacted.

The above discussion highlights that new insights about particular activities, objects, issues and concerns can be gleaned from a geometabolics of organising perspective. It shows how intensive and extensive relational activities, which are constituted

geographically, are interwoven together in changing the material use and social metabolism of the Redbricks. The remainder of this chapter shows further insights that a geomeabolics of organising lens can yield. First, however, let us reflect on the discussion of the geometabolics of organising thus far.

Prior sections have shown that the shared areas of the estate, involvement of residents in activities and their residence on the Redbricks connect them, as do their creation of cultural territories (Section 6.4.3), de/reterritorialisations and a relational place (Section 6.2.3), and so on. The geometabolics of organising provides a lens for considering how the activities on the estate, as well as objects and issues and concerns, are relationally connected both intensively on the estate and extensively further afield. In particular, this sub-section considered the ways that activities on the estate that change its material use are geographically constituted, though a geometabolics of organising perspective entails exploring activities both on and off the Redbricks as co-implicated in changing the estate's social metabolism. The geometabolics of organising provides an alternative to thinking of collective activities of organising as occurring at a particular scale, and incorporates materiality into a networked understanding. As such, it illustrates that the boundaries of the Redbricks are blurred, as the estate is interwoven with the complexity of both the social world and material use. In this sense, the Redbricks can not simply be labelled and confined to 'the local.' Instead, the geometabolics of organising draws attention to the ways that activities, objects, issues and concerns on the Redbricks are geographical accomplishments that rely on a multiplicity of relational connections. It has shown, in other words, that the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage is implicated in geographical processes that are consequential in changing its material use and metabolism, while retaining a relational potentiality for further changes to unfold; it is a geometabolising rhizomatic assemblage. At the same time, the estate is enmeshed with other rhizomatic assemblages that extend beyond the estate and themselves are engaging in geometabolic processes. In this way, the geometabolics of organising continues to develop our understanding of

the geographical constitutiveness of organising, and its metaphorical linkage to rhizomatic assemblage.

The following sub-sections extend this discussion to further explore the geometabolics of organising by moving between the Redbricks to its contexts, outlined in the vignette. Each sub-section shows additional insights that the geometabolics of organising can offer for considering the relationship of organising and geography.

6.5.3 Different kinds of change: Geoanabolics and geocatabolics

Expanding on the prior conceptualisation of geometabolics, this sub-section considers some of its implications, developing further the idea that geographically constituted collective activities change the social metabolism. It first builds upon the understanding of 'metabolics' in biochemistry, then examines the Redbricks and its contexts, highlighted in the vignette. In particular, it develops the idea that the estate and its contexts are characterised by both geoanabolic and geocatabolic processes of organising. This enables an understanding of the *kinds* of change to the social metabolism that occur through geographically constituted collective activities.

In biochemistry, the chemical reactions in a cell follow metabolic pathways, of which there are two types: anabolic and catabolic pathways. The former involves building up molecules by expending energy, while the latter entails breaking down molecules and releasing energy for use in subsequent anabolic processes (Rose and Mileusnic, 1999). Applying this understanding to the geometabolics of organising, we can identify two analogous processes of how collective activities change material use and the social metabolism: the geoanabolic building-up of materials and the geocatabolic break-down of materials, both of which rely on activities that are geographically constituted. While the energetic element of this is different in an extra-cellular context, and relates to the idea that social metabolism entails material *and energy* use, as previously I focus here on understanding material use in the geometabolics of organising (but see Section

6.5.5, below). This material use is nuanced by incorporating geoanabolics and geocatabolics: in addition to being intensively and extensively relational through collective activities (Section 6.5.2), the geometabolics of organising also involves particular *kinds* of change that either build-up or breakdown materiality.

This section's vignette unearthed a host of processes occurring on the Redbricks and in its contexts that exhibit the geometabolics of organising. The prior sub-section discussed activities on the estate from a geometabolics of organising perspective. But more specifically, we can also consider activities as both geoanabolic and geocatabolic in nature. To explore this, let us begin with the contexts of the Redbricks, and specifically the multiple major development projects occurring in Manchester's city centre. These projects – including First Street, Deansgate Square, Axis Tower, Circle Square, and others across Manchester – necessarily require the demolition of old buildings before construction can commence. For example, where Circle Square is being built, the demolition of the old BBC headquarters, New Broadcasting House, occurred some years previously. This significant geocatabolic event broke down the prior building, which was necessary prior to the current geoanabolic development of Circle Square. In this sense, geocatabolics must precede geoanabolics. At the same time, though, any geoanabolic build-up will be followed by a further geocatabolic break-down. In other words, at some point in the future, Circle Square will be demolished, as will the other high-rise developments in Manchester – or elsewhere. Indeed, so too will the Redbricks one day be subject to geocatabolic break-down.

Still, the geoanabolics of these new developments vastly outstrips the geocatabolic break-down of prior materials. Many developments are occurring on the sites of former mills, which for more than a century existed in Manchester and recall its industrial past (recall Section 6.2.1). In a similar way, the Redbricks was built on former Victorian housing in Hulme in the late 1940's (Section 6.1.2). However, while the mills were significant build-ups of materials at the time, they are vastly outmatched by the current geoanabolic build-up of new developments. Indicative of this, one of the Deansgate

Square buildings is set to become the tallest building in the UK outside of London (Image 23).



Image 23: View of Deansgate Square tower from the Redbricks (Interviewee 15)

While the geonabolic construction of the Redbricks was driven by government's desire to improve living conditions, the phenomenal geonabolic build-up of materials in Manchester and near to the estate has multiple drivers, including a housing shortage and shifting national government priorities, as well as local government's desire to increase future tax income from the forthcoming properties (Silver, 2018). But arguably the most significant is financial investment. In particular, the financing for the major development projects across the Greater Manchester urban core is coming increasingly from international investors, both institutions and individuals (Silver, 2018). These efforts to secure profitable returns extend the particular geonabolic build-up of Manchester to the accumulative requirement of finance capitalism (Schmid, 2019), similar to the Aaben as a market development discussed previously (Section 6.5.2).

So, yeah I quite like them. I like our proximity to town, to cities, it makes -- I think there's a lot of diversity in us being this -- feeling like this little oasis surrounded by these monster, futuristic buildings and we're a green oasis but also this really beautiful sort of, I know it's a lot later, but it's sort of Art Deco style buildings. They're very sort of '30s style, especially at the end and the, the round curves and round windows and I think aesthetically, it's an interesting estate that is nestled in amongst this noise of the city (Interviewee 15)

While residents of the Redbricks expressed differing views on the new developments, this resident takes a liking of them for the very fact that they are different from the estate. The smattering of significant geonabolic events are generating 'monster, futuristic buildings,' and the estate stands in stark contrast as their opposite. No significant geonabolic events has occurred on the Redbricks since it was built in an Art Deco style in the late 1940's. Of course, the surrounding area of Hulme underwent a massive geocatabolic process as a result of the City Challenge (recall Section 6.2.1), but the Redbricks remains, bearing witness to the geonabolic changes to Hulme, and to Manchester. Despite the changes to Manchester, the geonabolic build-up of materiality, and their extensive relationality to the estate, the Redbricks reflects that efforts to inflict total geocatabolic break-down and geonabolic build-up are never complete. The estate might be seen as a 'haunting of the past' (Edensor, 2008) in the geonabolic build-up and, more generally, in the geometabolics of organising in Manchester.

In the prior reflection on their photo, the resident captures the proximity of the Deansgate Square geocatabolic event and its striking visual reminder on the estate. However, she also notes the auditory relationality of the estate to 'the noise of the city.' I encountered this as well: the clang of steel from the Deansgate Square building works was audible almost daily throughout my fieldwork, a sensory reminder of the geonabolic changes to Manchester. Such sensory impacts implicate the geometabolics of organising off the estate in activities on the estate. For example, during a gardening day, a resident showed around a photo of his backyard, asking us

to spot what made it unusual. Another gardener quickly pointed out that the shadows are cast the wrong direction. He nodded in agreement, explained that Deansgate Square is reflecting the sun's rays and, laughing, suggested he could plant vegetables in a formerly shady, now-lit corner of his backyard. Here, the geonabolics of Deansgate Square have a luminary and material impact that changes behaviour on the estate.

A further instance of the way the Redbricks is impacted by its contexts became clear at TARA meetings with One Manchester. In these meetings, the Aaben development was brought several times – in addition to the aforementioned 'peak bin' controversy (Section 6.5.2) – because dust from the construction had settled on the estate. They were seeking a window cleaning service to, in effect, respond to the geonabolics of the Aaben and its material impact on the Redbricks. In fact, the Aaben illustrates the relationality of a geonabolic event to the estate in other ways. The land on which it was built was formerly known as 'Spider Park,' the site of frequent bonfires, parties, drinking and casual interaction by Hulme and Redbricks residents. And before that it was the site of the Leaf Street Public Baths (recall Section 6.4.3), which were demolished in the 1970's.

The dust on the Redbricks, then, is relationally tied through time to Spider Park and the baths that preceded it, both of which underwent geocatabolic change. Interestingly, during the construction of the Aaben, the baths were unearthed again before the foundation was built (*Image 24*), another haunting of the past in Hulme.



Image 24: Leaf Street baths during construction (Wilson, 2016)

But the relationality of the geonabolic build-up of the Aaben extends further still. In an interview, the Chief Executive of One Manchester mentioned in passing that, to finance the Aaben development, One Manchester took out a loan from Barclays Bank. While Barclays has Manchester branches, their UK headquarters is in London's Canary Wharf. While visiting a friend in London, I saw this building from a clipper boat on the Thames, taking a quick photograph as we sped past (*Image 25*).



Image 25: Barclays Bank headquarters in London (author)

The Aaben and its geonabolic material build-up, then is connected through the Barclay's financing that supported it to Canary Wharf, itself a process of geonabolics that was preceded by a geocatabolic break-down of the West India docks, which had served as one of the busiest docks where goods were imported from and exported to the British colonies. As the types of ships used for trade changed, and as the colonies became independent, the West India docks fell into disuse and were redeveloped as Canary Wharf. So, seen through a geometabolics of organising lens, the geonabolic build-up of the Aaben led to dust on the Redbricks, which is extensively and temporally connected to the Leaf Street Baths, Spider Park, banks in London, changes in naval transportation technology and the decline of British Empire.

Canary Wharf, along with the City of London, constitutes a major financial centre of the UK, and a global financial hub. So, the geonabolics of the Aaben major developments across Manchester are tied to global financial markets. Still, while international financial capital is a key driver in geonabolic and geocatabolic processes, it is more than just something 'out there' in Deansgate Square or the Aaben or Canary Wharf. Rather, it resides within the estate as well. Consider that, in contrast with recent developments near the estate, the Redbricks flats were built by government. But, as a result of Right to Buy, many of the flats have been purchased. In interviews and conversations, the estimate was repeated to me that around half of the flats on the estate are owned by private leaseholders. This indicates that past or current residents' sufficient access to financial capital enabled them to utilise the government's Right to Buy scheme. Further, while some leaseholders continue to live on the estate, others are now renting their flats on the private rental market, and others still have bought and subsequently sold their flat to new owners. So, as a result of Right to Buy, around half of flats on the estate are owned and some have entered into the housing market, with the remaining half still owned by One Manchester. Indeed, the present ownership mix means a significant portion of flats are enrolled in the housing market. This has led to TARA and other

activities implicated in the geometabolics of organising on the estate (Section 6.5.2). But, also as a result, residents have renovated their flats, often through loans from banks, and flats on the Redbricks are in a range of conditions, from fully renovated to relatively dilapidated. At the same time, One Manchester also has taken out loans to renovate the flats on the Redbricks – and across the stock in their ownership – to meet EU home standards, such as energy efficient windows and boilers. Indeed, from a geometabolics of organising perspective, access to financial capital led to the transfer into ownership, but also to the geocatabolic break-downs of old interiors, and then subsequently to geoanabolic renovations by *both* leasehold residents and the landlord. In addition to a link to EU regulations, this financing through bank loans ties the estate to financial markets and Canary Wharf. Indeed, both the housing and financial markets are both extensively ‘out there’ and intensively ‘in here’ on the estate, many times over.

Interestingly, a housing co-operative on the estate was started to explicitly counter the trend of flats entering the housing and financial markets. A founding member describes the co-op’s original motivation:

I mean it was certainly what we were driven by when we started, being against the housing ma-- the housing market in particular out of all of the markets is ridiculous, you commodify a, a, an expense. Beyond comprehension. What is just our very essence should in some ways be -- I mean almost a right. I mean it is a right, a right to a reasonable place to live should be -- somewhere. (Interviewee 11)

The co-op’s efforts to remove flats bought through Right to Buy from the housing market are tied to a concern for providing affordable housing near Manchester’s city centre. Relatedly, the co-op’s removal of flats from the housing market is supported by loans from Radical Routes, rather than a traditional bank. These efforts thus are implicated in the geometabolics of organising: both by seeking to counter – or at least mitigate – the geoanabolic build-up of housing development around the Redbricks and by severing a potential extensive relation between the co-op and financial markets. These are indicative of a normative concern about housing justice that calls into question the interests that geoanabolics serves, and who stands to benefit.

Resistance to the geonabolic build-up of Manchester is also evident in a former squat near the Redbricks. Located in the former Adventure Playground near Hulme Park, a group of squatters and housing rights activists lived on the site for some time and sought to draw attention to the unaffordability of housing, before being evicted by the Council (MEN, 2017). The activists, in turn, have connections to the Redbricks, which became clear to me at an art show hosted by another squat: in conversation, an activist explained that they are close friends with several current residents of the estate. Thus, these normative concerns about the geonabolics of Manchester are evident both on the estate in the co-op and in extensive relational connections with other groups. However, resisting geonabolics and questioning whose interests it serves presents somewhat of a paradox for other residents of the Redbricks, which I examine in the following.

Residents that purchased flats through Right to Buy acquired an ownership stake in the estate. This stake has led to longevity of tenure and intensive ties on the estate (Section 6.5.2), which resulted in such aforementioned efforts as the intervention in the geonabolics of the Aaben, and in geometabolics more generally (Section 6.5.2). In this way, a government policy designed to encourage home ownership has resulted in efforts to respond to geonabolic processes that are extensively tied to the Redbricks. At the same time, the security of housing tenure for leaseholders has come about through complicity in financial markets via bank loans, which now are implicated in the geonabolics in the context of the Redbricks. This leads to a paradoxical confrontation of and complicity in geonabolics. Still, if the land of the Redbricks were ever sold to make way for new buildings – something residents speculated could happen – the stake of residents would surely lead to substantial resistance to its geocatabolic demolition and any subsequent geonabolic development. In addition, while ownership stake is clearly tied to financial markets and government policy, it is worth recalling that the stake of residents – and their decision to buy flats in the first place – is also interwoven with residents' attachment to the Redbricks as a place (Section 6.4.1), the cultural

territories enacted there (Section 6.4.3), and other geographically constituted collective activities discussed in this chapter. Thus, a geometabolics of organising lens shows how the intensive and extensive relations and stake in the estate are co-implicated in and complementary to the geographically constituted collective activities of organising therein. Additionally, this lens also extends our understanding of collective activities – and of organising.

The kinds of geocatabolic and geoanabolic processes discussed in this sub-section together comprise the geometabolics of organising in Manchester, though a full accounting of them is outside the remit of this thesis. However, what became clear is that these processes are both extensively and intensively tied to the Redbricks. This further develops the geometabolics of organising as a way for thinking about the geographically constituted activities that change material use and the social metabolism. In particular, what emerges is that financial and housing markets, the government's Right to Buy Policy, activities on the Redbricks, normative concerns, sensory perceptions, and undoubtedly other influences are co-implicated in both geocatabolic and geoanabolic processes that build-up and break-down materiality in the contexts of the Redbricks, and indeed on the Redbricks itself. In other words, the collective that make up the comings together of activities extends geographically, including financial capital, market practices – enacted by individuals and material objects (Lloveras, 2014) – government policy, materiality and individuals. These human and non-human networks of associations comprising collective activities of organising align with a view that assemblages and actor-networks are sociomaterial in nature (Müller and Schurr, 2016), and that the relationally extensive and intensive ties comprising organising illustrates their geographical nature. However, this thesis selects a *particular* set of activities and network of comings together, a *particular* rhizomatic assemblage on the Redbricks, as its subject of inquiry and endeavours to improve its performance (recalling Chapter 5). This rhizomatic assemblage is imbued with both consequentiality and potentiality as it is shaped (Section 6.3) and cultivated (Section 6.4) by the sociomaterial network comprising collective activities extensively and

intensively tied to the estate, and is thereby co-implicated in the geoanabolic build-up and geocatabolic break down of material both on and off the Redbricks. In fact, the contexts of the Redbricks likewise are comprised of rhizomatic assemblages, whether they be the comings together that built Deansgate Square, in which further rhizomatic assemblages of future residents will surely form, or those that initiated the geocatabolic break-down of the West India docks and geanabolic build-up of Canary Wharf, where at present rhizomatic assemblages unfold – or have the potential to – and pulse in intricate coordination with the rhythm of financial markets (Nash, 2020). In each case, rhizomatic assemblages are implicated in geoanabolic and geocatabolic processes, and in the geometabolics of organising. It might be said, then, that the world is characterised by rhizomatic assemblages, fluctuating in intensity (Section 6.3.2), generating cultural territories (Section 6.4.3), implicated in geocatabolics and geoanabolics, and so on. Indeed, these rhizomatic assemblages are co-implicated in organising the sociomaterial world, and are all constituted geographically.

Examining the geoanabolic and geocatabolic processes in Manchester enables the recognition that particular rhizomatic assemblages come together in networks of associations to change material use and the social metabolism. Clearly, certain interests are served in geometabolics processes. A question that remains, however, is when and why rhizomatic assemblages coalesce and become implicated in the geometabolics of organising. In this sub-section, some geoanabolic and geocatabolic processes were driven by the need to secure profit. Others intervened in the geometabolics of organising due to a normative concern about housing justice or activism, or as the result of intensive ties and a stake in the Redbricks. So, while relational connections that comprise rhizomatic assemblages incorporate humans and materiality, a geometabolics of organising lens shows that humans as part of collective activities play a more significant role in causing the geoanabolic build-up and geocatabolic break-down of materiality. In other words, amongst other ties coimplicated in geometabolics, humans are particularly consequential, which reflects the view in this thesis that agency is decentred, but not completely (Chapter 4). In other words, some

agencies are more or less consequential – and imbued with potential – in their influence on whether the geometabolics of organising is activated. The next section discusses this activation as following three distinct routes.

6.5.4 Catalysing the geometabolics of organising: Routes to activation

The last sub-section developed the geometabolics of organising by building from the fact that metabolic reactions are both anabolic and catabolic. From this, geonabolic and geocatabolic processes were illustrated on the Redbricks and in its contexts, which led to a new lens for (re)considering the extensive and intensive relations that build-up and break down materiality, and for identifying particular consequential ties co-implicated in collective activities of organising. This section again starts from literature on metabolics to further develop our understanding of how changes to the social metabolism as geographically constituted. In particular, the understanding of metabolics in biochemistry also makes clear the essential role of catalysts that spark metabolic reactions (Rose and Mileusnic, 1999). The following discussion argues that geometabolics likewise relies on particular catalysts for (re)actions of collective activities to occur. To do so, it focuses on the ways that geometabolic processes can remain latent until activated, with a focus on the Redbricks and its contexts. It is then shown that catalysing geometabolics can follow three potential routes to activation:

Reactive, Regular and Requisite.

In biochemistry, cellular metabolics occurs as the result of catalytic enzymes that spark reactions (Rose and Mileusnic, 1999). Applying this at an extra-cellular level, there are similar catalysts that drive (re)actions. Further, from a geometabolics of organising perspective, these geometabolic events are the result of particular catalysts, which are geographical in nature. To explore this, let us begin with the Redbricks, before turning to its contexts.

As discussed previously, while residents have a view that a 'critical intensity' of collective activities existed on the Redbricks in the past, there continues to be a relative intensity of activities on the estate (Section 6.3.2). Often, these activities are variations or continuations of those that existed previously, such as gardening, RIC or Bentley Exchange. In this way, the prior existence of activities gives momentum to these activities in the present. So, the past serves to catalyse the continuous reenactment of these activities. However, a degree of spatial knowledge that is necessary, which develops over time (Section 6.4.2), to apprehend the significance of these activities. This means that the past serves as a catalyst for present activities only for those that have such spatial knowledge. Thus, the past and spatial knowledge can be catalytic but also can present a barrier to activation, as well. In fact, my involvement in the estate guide (recall the vignette in Section 6.3) contributed to one effort to lower this barrier by detailing existing projects on the estate.

Developing this further, a recurrent concern I heard expressed by residents was that others on the estate are not being included in such activities. Indeed, during my fieldwork, I regularly encountered the particular set of residents that are regularly engaged in collective activities, and there was significant overlap in those involved in different activities. For example, during a gardening day, several of the individuals in the sewing group showed up; at the Bentley Exchange, some of those involved in the setup and take down each month are involved in TAR; and at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), I recognised nearly all of the 30 or so people gathered. More telling, perhaps, I noted that nearly all of the residents at the AGM themselves were familiar with each other. This degree of familiarity among individuals involved in collective activities on the estate has implications for comfort among residents. This extended to my own involvement. During the AGM, one TARA member made reference to me: 'He doesn't talk much, just takes notes as he studies us,' to which I slightly uneasily laughed. Still, this made me familiar to the AGM attendees, and gave both them and me a degree of comfort about my presence, my continued fieldwork, and my notetaking. So, in addition to past activities, comfort through familiarity is also a catalyst to

involvement. Conversely, a lack of familiarity may mean that some residents do not get involved, therefore remaining latent in the geometabolics of organising on the estate.

While a lack of spatial knowledge, familiarity or comfort may present barriers to catalysing the geometabolics of organising, collective activities – and geometabolic processes – on the estate continue to occur. Many of these activities were previously shown to have fluctuating intensities (Section 6.3.2). However, elided in this discussion were the roles of individual residents. In fact, not only do those involved in collective activities comprise a smaller group than all residents, but also the catalysts for those activities are smaller still. For example, a few residents routinely apply for grant funding, including for Sew-In-a-Circle, ‘Celebrate!’, and other activities. They have experience with grant applications and use a language amenable to funding bodies, which enables them to secure grants that support collective activities. Or, consider that there are a few individuals on the estate who play pivotal roles in maintaining the communal gardens. They do their own gardening, but also decide on gardening days for the estate and publicise them. In both cases, individuals are catalysts for collective activities. Interestingly, gardening differs from grant funding because, while some gardening involves actively changing grass or unused land to gardens, other efforts consist in maintaining the gardens and preventing them from becoming overgrown. Often, negotiations over this latter maintenance of the gardens occur between residents and One Manchester. This reflects both the fact that there are individuals catalysing gardening, but also that there is a *requirement* of maintaining them, whether by the residents or by the landlord’s grounds maintenance team. Thus, because of nature’s rhythmic intensity (Section 6.3.2), interventions in the geometabolics of nature are necessary.

In contrast to the ways individuals secure grants and initiate gardening and thereby catalyse the geometabolics of organising, activities are catalysed in other cases as a response to circumstances. For example, while in the past RIC was started to provide internet access on the estate, at present it typically involves dealing with issues that

arise with the internet's smooth functioning. When there is an issue, volunteers work to find the cause and address it, often by rebooting the system or finding a workaround. Additionally, one volunteer explained to me that slow usage is often the result of torrents on users' computers, so addressing this involves informing the residents using the service about how torrents work, and how to avoid them. The RIC activities, therefore, are generally reactive to circumstances that arise with the system.

Other activities are also reactive, including those that involve responses to perceived threats or crises. In this way, the Hulme Street transformation – a significant geometabolic event – came about as the result of ongoing consternation with the frequent use of the street by commuters as a parking lot. Or consider that, during my fieldwork, it emerged that a pile of woodchips delivered to the estate and spread on many gardens was infected with Himalayan Balsam. The presence of this illegal, invasive plant species led to a galvanisation of action amongst gardeners, who searched for and removed many sprouting Himalayan Balsams before they could germinate and spread. In both cases, a perceived threat to the estate is the catalyst for efforts that contribute to the geometabolics of organising on the Redbricks.

An additional example of catalysing the geometabolics of organising during my fieldwork emerged when the estate was asked to contribute a float to the Manchester Day Parade by the parade's organisers. While residents had varying opinions on whether to participate in the parade, a group went ahead, and I helped a bit in constructing the float (*Image 26*), which featured in the Parade.



Image 26: Float under construction for Manchester Day Parade (author)

In this case, the catalyst for a group coming together again was responsive, but in this case to the opportunity presented by the Parade. Still, just as activities to transform Hulme Street and remove the Himalayan Balsam, involvement in the Parade was a reaction to particular circumstances.

While in the above examples there can be particular provocations that catalyse geometabolics, activities on the estate also continue with a regularity, whether the Rockdove Rising, TARA, and RIC meetings, or the Bentley Exchange, gardening and Sew-In-A-Circle. While there are barriers and limits to involvement, the persistence of these activities reflects that catalysing geometabolics of organising continues on the estate through the past, through spatial knowledge, and through individuals' efforts.

Thus far, we have focused on how the geometabolics of organising is catalysed on the Redbricks. However, catalysing the geometabolics of organising likewise occurs in the contexts of the estate. Indeed, in an interview, two employees for the landlord, One Manchester, agreed that the biggest challenge in their job is time, and one stated that 'it's definitely reactive work.' Both described how their work often depends on

circumstances, and one gave the example of a leak in a flat, and they spent almost an entire Friday addressing the issue. They both laughed in sharing with me a saying in the office: 'It always happens on a Friday.' This reflects how the landlord is compelled to intervene in geometabolics changes due to circumstances out of their control. They thus are forced into catalysing the geometabolics of organising due to circumstances, just as efforts by residents were catalysed in response to perceived threats. Similarly, during my fieldwork subcontractors were brought in by One Manchester to deal with issues, such as the plumbing leak in a resident's flat (discussed in Section 6.5.2), or to fix a leaking water main under the street. In this sense, catalysing geometabolics can be reactive due to circumstances.

Still, there are also indications to suggest that One Manchester is active in catalysing the geometabolics of organising. For example, the landlord hired a subcontractor to undertake a tree survey on the estate, part of a survey that occurred on all of their properties. In addition, regular gas inspections – mandated by law – are carried out by another subcontractor, and skip days have been run by a subcontractor for them, as well. Still, with thousands of properties, it is clearly difficult for One Manchester to be proactive in all respects in catalysing geometabolic changes. In fact, the multiple ways that catalysing the geometabolics of organising are evident at One Manchester stand in contrast with the idea, prevalent in OS, that strategies can guide organisational behaviour. This suggests that the strategic shift toward 'place' at One Manchester may face significant challenges because they cannot foresee all reactive drivers that catalyse the geometabolics of organising.

Further trends in catalysing the geometabolics of organising are evident in other relational ties to the Redbricks. Manchester City Council is responsible for providing various services to the estate. For example, they have subcontracted to Biffa the rubbish collection service, which leads to the weekly removal of waste. This constitutes a regular, rhythmic catalyst for the geometabolics of organising on the estate. In contrast, however, the persistent issue of drug use and dealing, related to a concern

over security, is often left unaddressed. Some residents speculated in meetings that drugs will not be addressed by the Council until there is a serious event, such as a drug user dying on the street. Relatedly, the zebra crossing under Mancunian Way came into existence only after a resident died while biking there. One resident morbidly commented on this tendency, explaining that 'the Council needs blood' before it will act. In this sense, the Council also takes a reactive approach to catalysing the geometabolics of organising in some instances, such as drugs.

Another significant way that the geometabolics of organising is catalysed in the context of the Redbricks relates to the presence of universities near the estate. A resident described to me that 'Manchester is a seasonal town' because of the annual influx of students to the three major universities in Manchester and Salford: University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and Salford University. And others described how, once the students return, there is an increase in muggings on and around the estate, as well as problems such as noise and drunkenness as students pass through the estate to and from the city centre. The presence of students during term time, while certainly rooted in the appeal of the city and its universities to students, has another cause: each of the universities has strategic plans that aim to expand their student population (University of Manchester, 2012; Salford University, 2016; Manchester Metropolitan University, 2017). One major driver of the need for increasing student numbers is the introduction of tuition fees, which makes UK universities more reliant on tuition-paying students for income (Dearden et al, 2011). There is thus both a regular return of students, and a necessity for the universities to draw more students to Manchester, both of which catalyse the geometabolics of organising in the city, and on the Redbricks.

Interestingly, among the recent developments in the city, many are specifically aimed at providing city centre housing for students in the coming years. Related to this, these developments rely on financial markets, which must pursue profitable returns to investment. As discussed previously, this leads to the geoanabolic build-up and

geocatabolic break-down of materiality in Manchester. But it is also a core driver in catalysing the geometabolics of organising. In fact, similar to the need for more students, there is an imperative for finance to continue catalysing these and future developments: they rely on a growth-driven logic (Sekulova et al, 2013). Thus, the geometabolics of organising for developments in the contexts of the Redbricks are catalysed out of necessity, and at an ever more rapid rate.

Drawing the above together, there are several identifiable routes of activation for catalysing the geometabolics of organising. They are:

- *Reactive*: activities that impact the geometabolics of organising can be activated in response to such unfoldings as: commuters (Hulme Street transformation), Himalayan Balsam-infected wood chips (gardening), internet service disruption (RIC), grant and participation opportunities (Sew-In-A-Circle, Manchester Day Parade), plumbing leaks (One Manchester), or drugs and safety (the Council);
- *Regular*: catalysing the geometabolics of organising can be activated regularly, both on the Redbricks (TARA, some gardening, Bentley Exchange, groups' meetings) and off the estate (bin collection, tree surveys, strategic plans, and students); and
- *Requisite*: underlying necessities can catalyse the geometabolics of organising, and activation can be due to the rhythmic flourishing of nature in gardens, which require maintenance; the need for more students at universities; or the need for profit in financial markets that drives developments.

These three potential routes for catalysing the geometabolics of organising show the different ways that collective activities are activated, and reflect that motivations both internal to the Redbricks and external to it can result in the geometabolics of organising. Indeed, while some activities build from the historical legacy of the past, and from familiarities and relational ties among individuals, others are catalysed by the obligation and remit of formal organisations (One Manchester, the Council), by the rhythm of nature, or by the profit imperative of capitalist organisation (Bellamy Foster, 2000).

Considered this way, a geometabolics of organising lens shows the multiple catalytic drivers that can activate processes of changing the social metabolism, and indicates their geographical connectedness to the Redbricks.

Still, it remains true that there is further catalytic potential that is not realised, and thus some activities do not occur. Even in these cases, though, there is a latent potential for further catalysing. This reflects that, as discussed throughout this chapter, the estate can be considered a *rhizomatic* assemblage imbued with potentiality. Drawing on the botanical metaphor that gives rhizomatic assemblage its materiality and strength, a multiplicity of potentialities may exist as mycorrhizal networks that remain present but latent, or imperceptible from certain vantages, including the perspective of myself as researcher. It can be said that, if these networks are motivated from latency to activation to become enrolled in collective activities, their activation will follow one of the three routes outlined previously. In fact, in a sense, these networks are requisite for any future emergent collective activities: they are indicative of the inherent potentiality and fecundity of a world comprised of rhizomatic assemblages. Just as there are certain motivations that catalyse the geometabolics of organising, and that there are certain routes of activation, so too is the richness and plurality of the sociomaterial world a requisite for the possibility of difference (Gibson-Graham, 2006; 2008).

6.5.5 Dynamics of the geometabolics of organising: The entropy perspective

This section began by first arguing, with reference to the vignette, that the Redbricks and its contexts can be characterised by the geometabolics of organising: by geographically constituted changes to the social metabolism and, in particular, to material use (Section 6.5.1). This was elaborated by pointing to how the geometabolics of organising is tied to the estate through both intensive and extensive relational processes (Section 6.5.2). Building this further, the processes of geometabolic change were shown to be both geonabolic and geocatabolic in nature (6.5.2). Then, the

different routes that geometabolic change can be catalysed were identified, namely Reactive, Regular and Requisite routes (Section 6.5.4). In turning to discuss the dynamics of the geometabolics of organising, this section draws out the implications for the processes discussed previously from the perspective of entropy. This enables drawing together the argument thus far, and adds the recognition that geometabolics involves *both* material and energy use. In the following, I relate these dynamics to how collective activities entail geometabolising rhizomatic assemblages, emphasising the geographically constituted nature of the social metabolism and collective activities of organising. Further, I point to the urgency of not only understanding these processes, but also prioritising certain geometabolic change(s) over others and, ultimately, *deactivating* geometabolic changes that quicken the social metabolism, which is geographically concentrating in Manchester – though not yet on the Redbricks – and risking ecological collapse. Thus, this sub-section argues for incorporating the relation of entropy to social metabolism from a geographical perspective into the discussion of the geometabolics of organising, and points to potentially radical normative implications for the Redbricks and its contexts.

Whereas previously understandings from biochemistry informed the development of geometabolics, this sub-section builds instead from physics. Without privileging the knowledge derived in the natural sciences, I seek to enliven our understanding of the geographical nature of the social metabolism and inform the conceptualisation of the geometabolics of organising by developing it from the perspective of entropy, which has been incorporated in some literature on social metabolism (e.g. de Molina and Toledo, 2014). In physics, the second law of thermodynamics states that a closed system will tend toward entropy, or low-energy chaos. Relating this to social metabolism, de Molina and Toledo (2014) discuss the underpinning thermodynamics of the social metabolism, including its relation to entropy. Of course, the planet is not quite a closed system because there is one energetic input: the sun. In this sense, the material and energy use in the social metabolism is underpinned by thermodynamics and entropy, and the entropic tendency toward chaos is only countered by solar energy.

The argument thus far is well-versed in urban metabolism and political ecology literatures (e.g. Broto et al, 2012; Conke and Ferreira, 2015). However, incorporating this with OS, and specifically a focus on collective activities, through the proposed geometabolics of organising lens offers a new perspective on particular confluence of relations on the Redbricks and in its contexts.

First, it should be acknowledged that it is not useful to consider every activity as eventually leading to low-energy chaos. Rather, a relative view must be taken on the entropic tendency of geometabolics. This involves considering the *relative* nature of the social metabolism and its geographical constitutiveness through organising, and to relative rates of geometabolic change. However, while it was previously indicated (Section 6.5.2) that quantifying the energetic element of geometabolics is outside the remit of this thesis, considering the relative rate of geometabolic change is still feasible because energy is a fundamental input into materials (e.g. Menzies et al, 2007).

To incorporate an entropic understanding, let us return to the developments in this section's discussion thus far. First, it might make intuitive sense that processes of building-up (geoanabolics) are matched by those processes breaking-down (geocatabolic). In fact, the latter exceeds the former, which was previously discussed from the perspective of the massive, significant geoanabolic build-up of recent developments in Manchester (recalling Section 6.5.2). Indeed, the same holds true from the perspective of entropy: for any geocatabolic break-down, the geoanabolic build-up *of the same materials* will result in a net increase in energy expenditure. If, as in Manchester, the geoanabolic processes harness new materials, including concrete, steel and glass, with higher energetic inputs than the mills that underwent a catabolic change, the energetic expenditure is much greater. Further, while the planet is not a closed system due to solar energy, the expenditure to assemble these materials requires fossil fuels, which are stored solar energy (Dukes, 2003). Thus, the geometabolics of organising involves both geographically constituted activities that are increasing the material *and energy* use in the contexts of the Redbricks.

On the estate, in contrast, a geometabolics of organising lens showed that few significant geocatabolic and geoanabolic events have occurred since it was built. It was shown that the Redbricks is interwoven with the Right to Buy and government policy, the historical and contemporary intensive collective activities on the estate, its ties to Hulme, and so on. In this sense, the estate has a lower rate of geometabolic change, and concomitant relative durability. In fact, the geometabolics of organising on the Redbricks include interventions in the rate of material and energy use, such as the Bentley Exchange's reuse of materials or the TARA's advocacy with One Manchester about prospective changes to the estate. These were previously considered in terms of routes of activation that catalyse the geometabolics of organising. However, from the perspective of entropy, each also has entropic implications. The Bentley Exchange includes efforts to slow material use, and thereby makes an intervention in the tendency toward entropy of collective activities on the Redbricks. Similarly, TARA's advocacy with the landlord seeks to confront potential geometabolic changes to the Redbricks, changes that would involve entropic energy expenditure. In this sense, collective activities on the estate are enrolled in seeking to address the entropy of geometabolics. Still, the scale of geoanabolic change in Manchester's city centre vastly outmatches these efforts.

Relatedly, the three routes to catalysing geometabolics identified previously (Section 6.5.4) are each tied to the entropic use of energy. In the Reactive route, interventions in energy use occur as a response; and in the Regular route, entropy is addressed rhythmically. The Requisite route, however, demands action(s) that involve geoanabolic build-up – and a quickening of geometabolics. This can be seen in the aforementioned ways that financial capital must build new developments to deliver profit, including in Manchester's city centre (6.5.3). It can also be seen, however, in the energetic inputs that enable construction using steel, glass and so on. These energetic inputs are almost entirely fossil fuels (e.g. Spence and Mulligan, 1995), and force fossil fuel companies to search for new 'commodity frontiers' to continue fossil fuel extraction (Moore, 2000). Thus, the Requisite route is necessitating a range of geoanabolic build-ups, but also

the quickening extraction and use of fossil fuels, as well as the carbon dioxide produced by burning them. These are a direct cause of the present climate crisis (Lovelock, 2007; Archer and Rahmstorf, 2010).

In order to minimise disruption to the climate and earth systems upon which humanity depends – and with which the social world is interwoven – it is necessary to address the Requisite route to catalysing geometabolics. In particular, the quickening of geonabolic build-ups solely for the purpose of profit requires a recalibration: the function these processes serve must be equalised with others, in particular with ecological and social considerations (Roth, 2016). Further, collective activities such as those on the Redbricks that seek to intervene in the entropic geocatabolic breakdown of materiality should be encouraged to continue, expand to new contexts, and flourish. The Redbricks' relative durability as a site of interventions into geometabolics suggests one exemplary approach for doing so. In other words, the sociomaterial dynamics on the estate can serve as both inspiration and model for others. These considerations are and their implications are taken up further shortly (Chapter 7).

So, by way of a conclusion this section's discussion of the geometabolics of organising, it has been shown that geometabolics provides another way for understanding the collective activities of organising on the Redbricks as geographically constituted, while also incorporating the contexts in which the estate exists. Still, just as the prior sections have shown that a geographical perspective of collective activities of organising cannot be summarily captured through a singular appeal to concepts such as 'space,' 'place' or 'territory,' this section has shown that the perspective of scale also informs our understanding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising on the Redbricks. In other words, it is necessary to understand these geographical concepts as interrelated: together, they generate an understanding of the collective activities of organising as geographical accomplishments. By developing a scalar perspective on organising, this section argued that geographically constituted collective activities change the social metabolism (Section 6.5.1). Through this geometabolics of organising lens, it was

shown that the estate is characterised by: intensities and extensities of geometabolic processes (Section 6.5.2), geoanabolic build-up and geocatabolic break-down of materiality (Section 6.5.3), three routes to activation (Section 6.5.4) and dynamics that involve an entropic use of energy (Section 6.5.5). Each of these processes is interrelated with each other, and with the ways in which organising is geographically constituted from a historical perspective of genealogising (Section 6.2), and in the ways collective activities are shaping (Section 6.3) and cultivating (Section 6.4) the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage. The normative implications that this section's discussion of geometabolising a rhizomatic assemblage resonate with these other geographical unfoldings and highlight the necessity for intervening in geometabolic processes that are building-up materiality and accelerating the climate crisis; and for encouraging certain activities, such as those on the Redbricks, that offer a more viable and prosperous way for flourishing into the future.

7 Conclusion and Contributions

This thesis set out to address a question: *How can collective activities of organising be understood as geographically constituted?* Derived from a literature review of OS and engagements with geographical ideas, and then a review of human geography, this research question was motivated by the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework. A diffractive ethnographic approach to fieldwork was proposed to investigate it, and the findings were discussed with the aim of answering the research question. By way of concluding this thesis, I first summarise the arguments presented herein that respond to this thesis' research question (Section 7.1), then note the theoretical contributions made (Section 7.2) and describe some of the implications for practice (Section 7.3). Finally, I point to promising avenues for future inquiry to further develop the ideas presented in this thesis (Section 7.4).

7.1 Summary of arguments

I began this thesis by noting that there is a need to break down the silos of academia in contributing to a compelling narrative that asserts the interconnectedness of the social and material world, and that is imbued with an ethical orientation toward the future. To this end, I proposed that collective activities constitute a starting point for thinking about the fundamental sociality of the world, while also accounting for its sociomateriality. In so doing, this thesis contributes to an emerging narrative of the contemporary world by (re)thinking collective activities of organising as phenomena that are geographically constituted, and in which researchers are co-implicated.

To build an understanding of the geographical constitutiveness of organising, I turned first to existing debates in OS. In Chapter 2, a review of OS literature demonstrated an enduring concern in the field for collective activities. It also consolidated this thesis' critical perspective as a means for thinking about collective activities of organising in

new contexts, while making underpinning assumptions clear, and with an understanding of the political nature of research and the need for selective performativity. One area of critical research that was shown to take up these concerns to varying degrees was OS engagements with geography (Section 2.4). Still, these efforts often focus on a particular geographical concept – most commonly space, but also place, scale and territory – and it became clear that engaging with how these concepts are understood in geography could further our understanding of collective activities of organising from a geographical perspective. To this end, Chapter 3 delved into the ongoing debates about space, place, scale and territory in human geography, reflecting the lively discussions about them that are ongoing. This led to the identification of several enabling factors that drove an interest in the interrelatedness of geographical concepts, and their relation to collective activities.

Building from the reviews of OS and human geography, Chapter 4 drew together OS and human geography through the proposal of the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework. By incorporating a critical perspective, this chapter argued that the geographical constitutiveness of organising entails exploring new contexts of collective activities, accounting for relationality and processes of organising, whilst also maintaining the political nature of research and considering the decentred agencies enrolled in such activities. This was further developed by proposing rhizomatic assemblage as a metaphorical tool for thinking about how, among the multiplicity of relational connections in an assemblage, there are rhizomatic potentialities, but also consequentialities in both intensive and extensive ties comprising assemblages, which come together in geographically constituted collective activities of organising. Through this framework, the research question took shape.

Based on the conceptual framework, Chapter 5 developed a methodological argument that first addressed fundamental philosophical questions about the assumptions underpinning this thesis. Seeking to reconcile process and relational ontologies in OS and human geography, respectively, engaging with the ontological turn and new

materialism was proposed as a means for drawing them together. In particular, agential realism was shown to better incorporate the explicitly political position of the researcher than ANT, as it accounts for the interwovenness of a researcher's enactment of agential cuts through a phenomenon with the phenomenon itself, making understanding the world (epistemology) inherently tied to the world itself (ontology) and to the researcher's subjectivity and values (ethics). Then, the diffractive ethnographic approach to inquiry was outlined, in which a diffractive perspective challenged the capacity for representation and rethought reflexivity in research. In this regard, diffractions on my own subjectivity and values made the ethical grounding of this thesis clear, and I also diffractively articulated the development of this thesis' empirical fieldwork, including approaching the field, the different methods utilised, the unfolding of fieldwork, and my approach to data analysis.

Finally, Chapter 6 discussed the findings from ethnographic fieldwork conducted on the Redbricks. Interwoven throughout were vignettes and diffractive reflections on my own role as researcher, furthering the prior methodological argument. After detailing my entry into a middle and offering a description of the estate, I discussed several agential cuts through the phenomenon of the Redbricks, in which a geographical perspective on collective activities offered a kaleidoscopic view on some of the multiplicity of ways that organising is geographically constituted. To this end, the metaphorical tool of rhizomatic assemblage was (re)turned to as a frame for the discussion and a means for thinking about the geographical constitutiveness of organising.

The first agential cut, Section 6.2, began by genealogising the history of the Redbricks, pointing to the efforts to construct continuity therein that are tied to the estate as a place, despite the persistence of change and inability of any single underlying cause to explain the present. This section also argued that the past is characterised by geographical de/reterritorialisations that make the Redbricks a relational place. Then, Section 6.3 discussed contemporary activities on the estate as entangled in a digital-physical assemblage, and characterised both by rhythmic and sporadic fluctuating intensities

and by relational agencies that together comprise the connections that make up collective activities. These activities were shown to be imbued with both the consequential and potential features of rhizomatic assemblages.

Continuing the discussion of contemporary activities, Section 6.4 explored collective activities in relation to the culture and communities on the Redbricks, in particular the cultural values that manifest in materiality, in particular objects. The limits to culture were then discussed, in particular how demographic and other changes can undermine the longevity of ties to place, though cultivating the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage continues. Further, it was shown that multiple cultural territories that are enacted through sociomaterial relations and objects, requiring spatial knowledge to apprehend and comfort to enact, and also occurring both as temporary and permanent phenomena. Finally, the complexities of community on the Redbricks was discussed, with an understanding that several communities exist, some of which are interwoven with a place-based sense of belonging to the Redbricks and continuously (re)enacted. Here, it was made clear that only one such place-based community was the focus of this thesis, as were the particular elements cultivating the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage.

Finally, Section 6.5, turned to the contexts of the Redbricks and proposed the 'geometabolics of organising' as a means for making sense both of the geographical changes to the social metabolism occurring intensively on the estate and, through a relational perspective, extensively in its contexts. Then, it was shown that these are characterised by both geonabolic build-up and geocatabolic break-down of materiality, and several distinct routes to activation that catalyse geometabolics were discussed. Finally, by incorporating an entropy perspective, some of the implications of the geometabolics of organising began to emerge, particularly the threat that requisite geometabolic changes are posing to our climate as geometabolising rhizomatic assemblages are catalysed by requisite (re)activation. This normative dimension of the

geometabolics of organising demands intervention, toward which this thesis seeks to contribute.

Thus, this thesis demonstrates a promising means for inquiring into the relation of collective activities and geographies, and through several distinct agential cuts it improves our understanding of collective activities as geographically constituted, responding to this thesis' research question. There are surely other perspectives that could further develop our understanding of this question. Together, this thesis contributes to an emerging narrative that enlivens our imagination of the sociomaterial world, and urges us to (re)consider collective activities of organising as geographically constituted. Based on these arguments, the contributions to theory are now summarised, then I turn to the practical implications of this thesis and areas for future inquiry.

7.2 Theoretical contributions

This thesis makes several distinct theoretical contributions, of which several are relevant to the field of OS. First, I challenge the prevailing efforts in OS that delimit engagements with geography to a single geographical concept (Section 2.4). Rather, the geographical constitutiveness of organising serves as a conceptual framework for reconsidering the ways in which collective activities of organising are inherently connected to the geographies of the world. In other words, I contribute to improving our understanding of OS by arguing for a theoretical framing that engages with space, place, scale and territory as interrelated concepts. Second, the critical perspective articulated in this thesis confronts the longstanding notion that the remit of OS is formal organisation, and instead prompts new contexts for inquiry, whilst still seeking to contribute insights to the enduring concern in OS with collective activities. The development of selective performativity within this critical perspective – and the acknowledgment of the politics of research – contributes to performativity debates in

OS (e.g. Taylor and Spicer, 2009; Wickert and Schaefer, 2014; Cabantous et al, 2015; Fleming and Banerjee, 2016; Parker and Parker, 2017). Third, the engagement with agential realism through a diffractive approach to ethnographic fieldwork is an underexplored methodological option for OS. This approach contributes theoretical rigour to OS by challenging representation, and to interweaving an ethical stance in to methodological arguments. In particular, the appeal to ethics develops the aforementioned notion of selective performativity by calling for the integration of ethical choices into OS research.

The final contribution to OS relates to the theoretical insights derived from empirical research on how the shared areas of the Redbricks are organised. By enacting four agential cuts – genealogising, shaping, cultivating and geometabolising – this thesis contributes to and extends recent work in OS (e.g. Vermeulen, 2011; Cnossen and Bencherki, 2019) by theorising the geographical nature of organising. However, while extant work has delimited the relationship between organisational phenomena and geography to single concepts, this thesis demonstrates that considering these together improves our empirical understanding, but also enables us to theorise and make sense of a complex world. In other words, to explain the empirical context of the Redbricks, this thesis theorises that collective activities of organising on the estate are geographically constituted by arguing for the need to question the capacity of the past to explain present unfoldings in shared spaces; to examine such shared spaces in the present as characterised by a digital-physical assemblage, fluctuating intensities and the relationality of place, whilst accounting for decentred agencies; to consider the territorial nature of collective activities, their relation to materiality, community and place; and to inquire into the materiality of scalar unfoldings as both intensive and relational, with accompanying normative implications. While this theoretical contribution was shown in the particular rhizomatic assemblage of the Redbricks, it warrants scrutiny in the context of other such phenomena.

The thrust of this thesis' contribution is to OS, in particular both to process-orientated research on organising and to inquiry at the intersection of OS to geography. A second area of theory to which this thesis contributes is human geography. In particular, it follows existing efforts to elaborate the relationship of organising to geographies (e.g. Philo and Parr, 2000; Müller, 2012). Indeed, as these efforts have made clear, geography debates have tended to take 'the organisation' as a fixed and stable entity (Müller, 2015). As a result, insufficient attention has been given to the ongoing, multiple, relational and processual dynamics of organising. In this respect, this thesis makes a contribution to enlivening the (re)considerations of organisation and organising in geography. It encourages geography debates to take seriously that organising is a complex unfolding that deserves critical scrutiny in examining its relationship to the geographies of the world.

Finally, two proposals made in this thesis offer further theoretical contributions. First, the 'geometabolics of organising' lens contributes to how the social metabolism is understood in political ecology: namely, by arguing that social metabolism is a geographical phenomenon inherently interwoven with collective activities of organising. Additionally, the entropic perspective on the geometabolics of organising highlights the need to account for ethical considerations in the kinds of geometabolic changes to materiality we seek to encourage in the world. While this has been accounted for in some political ecology literature, the geographical contribution of geometabolics to these debates is a novel contribution of this thesis. A second proposal contributing to theory in this thesis is its effort to help make sense of reality: rhizomatic assemblage as a metaphorical tool provokes a means for thinking about the world as sociomaterial assemblage, but one in which agencies are not completely decentred. Rather, the consequential effects and potentialities of connections that generate collective activities of organising point to a means for differentiating amongst the 'mangle' of social practice (Pickering, 2010), especially by developing an agential realist perspective. Further, as briefly mentioned previously (Section 5.3.3), rhizomatic assemblage might, more than a metaphorical tool, constitute a metaphysical means for understanding the world. This

potential for thinking of the world as rhizomatic assemblages that are imbued with *both* consequentiality and potentiality highlights a contribution this thesis makes to philosophy. While outside the remit of this thesis to fully develop this, this constitutes a promising area for further inquiry. Before describing other areas for future research, I now note the contributions this thesis makes to practice.

7.3 Implications for practice

The view this thesis develops on the geographical constitutiveness of organising enlivens our understanding of the many ways that collective activities on the Redbricks are geographical accomplishments. Here, I first point to some ways that the arguments in this thesis can inform how individuals, and in particular residents of the Redbricks, engage in activities both now and in the future. To this end, I have urged that the kinds of collective activities shaping the Redbricks as a rhizomatic assemblage ought to continue, including by appreciating the complementarity but also relative independence of physical activities from digital ones in the digital-physical assemblage. This highlights the importance of collective activities that make material interventions, whether in generating cultural territories, in continuing to develop a place-based community, or in intervening in the geometabolics of the estate. By improving our understanding of the dynamics of such efforts, this thesis enables residents to reflect on them and prioritise certain activities, whether the rhythmic fluctuating intensities of activities, the different cultural territories enacted – from temporary to permanent – or the kinds of geometabolic change unfolding on the estate and its contexts.

At the same time, this thesis also reinforces the relative durability of the rhizomatic assemblage that is Redbricks: historical de/reterritorialisations have enabled new rhizomatic assemblages to emerge in other towns and places; the fluctuating intensity of activities the estate mean periods of relative latency are temporary and can be reversed; even acknowledging the limits to a shared culture on the Redbricks highlights

ways that developing spatial knowledge – such as the estate guide I was involve in – can catalyse and cultivate a more intensive rhizomatic assemblage. Of course, by focusing the agential cuts of this thesis on seeking to understand the activities of residents, I seek to privilege them, and aim to share this thesis and its findings with residents. To this end, by provoking a new understanding and appreciation of the estate, this thesis helps to buttress the Redbricks from potential threats and, hopefully, to preserve it. Indeed, through this thesis, I have sought to reinforce the estate as a relatively permanent cultural territory and relational place that residents can defend. I, too, will do what I can to come to its defence.

A further implication for practice relates to the relational ties that constitute the estate as a rhizomatic assemblage, co-implicating others in this process, most notably the landlord and Council. From the vantage of these actors, the durability of geographically constituted collective activities on the Redbricks should be viewed as a strength because they are a unique, irreplaceable feature of Hulme and, indeed, of Manchester. By sharing an understanding of collective activities as geographical accomplishments, I seek to contribute to improving the management of these shared spaces. The groups responsible – whether the landlord, One Manchester, the Council, or other housing providers – should encourage such collective activities, both on the Redbricks and in other housing contexts. There is not only less precarity in the future of a community when such activities occur, but they also create an authenticity that cannot be readily transplanted. Similarly, the organic reterritorialisation of rhizomatic assemblages in Todmorden, Glossop and so forth should be allowed and encouraged, without prescriptiveness on the part of formal organisations with power. Rather processes that might threaten rhizomatic assemblages or lead to uninvolvement in collective activities by residents on housing estate should be deactivated, in particular the trends in Manchester toward increased transience and quickening geoanabolics. Instead, the mycorrhizal networks that presently remain latent potentialities should be encouraged to cultivate into new and as-yet-unknown rhizomatic assemblages.

Related to the above, there are policy implications of this thesis. Given the concern with a housing estate, a significant implication relates to housing policy, as well as the Right to Buy policy. Regarding the latter, residents on the Redbricks described to me how this policy changed the attitude of many residents, from radical and antiestablishment to homeowners with an interest in the property market. So, it might be said that Right to Buy both disciplines the radical potential of residents, and generates more durable and intensive rhizomatic assemblages. This paradoxical tension is not unproblematic, particular for residents whose values might shift as a result. Still, this policy relates to the geometabolics of organising: at present, local government policy seems to be to encourage the quickening of geoanabolic build-up in Manchester, in particular by exempting developments from their Section 106 obligations to provide affordable housing and allowing large-scale developments across the city centre (Silver, 2018). In this case, Right to Buy constitutes a means that residents gain a stake in their home and, for the Redbricks, in a housing estate. This can encourage efforts to intervene in geometabolics (Section 6.5.2). So, in this sense, Right to Buy *might* serve to counter the geoanabolic build-up in Manchester, although this is not guaranteed. For example, if Right to Buy is used to purchase a flat that then enters the housing market as a rental, then it becomes enrolled in financial markets that catalyse a quickening of further geoanabolic build-ups. On the other hand, government policy could require that homes purchased through Right to Buy be occupied by the purchaser for an extended period of time *after purchase*, and that such purchases can only occur once (i.e. one family has one Right to Buy option). Alternatively, facilitating more co-operative ownership of flats – an effort already underway on the Redbricks through Rockdove Rising – could circumvent the entry of flats in the housing market. Finally, with respect to housing policy more generally, there must be adequate housing provision such that new homes are built that are affordable and constructed at a rate matching those bought through Right to Buy, while also accounting for historical Right to Buy purchases and the net increase in Manchester’s population. This would reflect a significant shift in policy direction to address the housing crisis, and would require substantial political will at both the local and national levels.

The above points highlight the particular policy implications of this thesis in the context of housing in Manchester. Still, the trends toward geometabolics are not only occurring on the Redbricks and its contexts, but also more widely across the UK and, indeed, around the world. Addressing the quickening geonabolic build-up and concomitant increasing fossil fuel use that together are driving the climate crisis should form a central tenet of government policy, which the recent 'climate emergency' declaration is a promising first step. But a serious climate policy would slow the construction industry's geometabolic activities, and be matched by substantial commitment of resources to encourage the durability of existing housing stock, such as the Redbricks, as well as the essential sociality therein. By recognising the interwovenness of sociomateriality in generating the kinds of geographically constituted collective activities discussed in this thesis, government policy can more accurately intervene – or step back – to allow citizens to develop a depth of connection to the shared areas that give homes sociality and meaning.

Finally, this thesis has more general implications, which relate to where this thesis began: a narrative for the contemporary world. In particular, thinking about collective activities as geographically interwoven with sociomateriality highlights the fundamental becoming-together of rhizomatic assemblages and, in turn, the becoming-together of the world. I have argued that both humans and materiality are together enrolled in collective activities that are constituted through the geographies of the world. Such a view positions this thesis against the narrative and trend toward privatising the realms in which relations thrive. Rather, I seek to further an emphatic and positive view that the shared areas of the world constitute the arena in which the diverse unfoldings of our sociality and becomings-together are enacted. We must defend such arenas, whether from developers seeking to privatise housing and other shared spaces, or from companies accelerating their activities and geometabolising fossil fuels that foul the air, water and land we share, rendering those spaces unusable. Acknowledging our mutual enrolment in a multiplicity of rhizomatic assemblages contributes to a narrative about

our diverse practices and collective activities that can counter, outlast and conquer the addictive fixation on growth or the seductive divisiveness of nationalism. To this end, there are areas to further this narrative and extend this thesis' research through future inquiry.

7.4 Areas for future inquiry

There are several ways that the new directions proposed in this thesis might be taken forward. At various points, topics surfaced that would be relevant for further scrutiny but were outside the remit of this thesis. These include considering the role of humour functions in contributing to geographically constituted collective activities on the Redbricks, examining how reterritorialisations of collective activities are geographical accomplishments and relationally tied to the Redbricks (such as in Todmorden and Glossop), making the power relations between the Redbricks and groups such as the landlord and Council more central, and further assessing the energetic impacts of the geometabolics of organising. This latter area is particularly urgent given the rapid geoanabolic build-up of new housing developments across Manchester. While each of these was mentioned within the thesis itself, other areas for inquiry emerge from the considerations herein.

There are several potential avenues for future inquiry based on this thesis. First, while the geographical constitutiveness of organising was developed with specific reference to space, place, scale and territory, other geographical concepts warrant consideration for their interrelatedness with collective activities. For example, the theoretically rich geographical concepts of landscape (Mitchell, 2003; Milligan and Wiles, 2010), movement and mobility (Shaw and Hesse, 2010), urbanisation (Lees, 2012) and others could inform and further enrich our thinking about organising as geographically constituted. Second, the geographical constitutiveness of organising as a conceptual framework could be further extended to other contexts – beyond those mentioned

previously, which are relationally tied to the estate through reterritorialisations. This would elaborate the insights developed in this thesis, and would further contribute to OS debates. For example, considering the geographical constitutiveness of organising on other housing estates and new housing developments in Manchester, as well as other UK cities – or indeed places in Europe and the United States with similar political and economic circumstances – are promising avenues for further work. How do rhizomatic assemblages of geographically constituted collective activities form in these contexts? What kinds of activities should we seek to encourage as researchers? And how? Third, the geographical constitutiveness of organising could be extended to consider the contexts of neighbourhoods (Chatzidakis et al, 2012), town centres (Coca-Stefaniak et al, 2009), city centres (De Cock and O'Doherty, 2017), public parks (Vermuelen, 2011) and other arenas of society in which social relations unfold. How does thinking of these other contexts as geographically constituted collective activities and as rhizomatic assemblages improve our understanding of them? And, more importantly, how does this contribute to the emerging narrative about interwovenness of the social world with materiality and ethics?

On the Redbricks itself, other research might develop new perspectives and agential cuts on the estate, asking: How are agential cuts enacted by others, including residents involved on the estate, but also those that remain uninvolved in collective activities? I sought to capture the former through the photo elicitation project, a relatively underutilised method in OS that is worthy of further research. A further perspective that could be developed relates to how do those in positions of power, such as employees of the landlord or Council, apprehend the phenomena of organising on the estate, and the geographically constituted collective activities there. The critical perspective of this thesis confronts the latter area of inquiry by explicitly focusing on organising and not privileging management. So, any future research into managerial roles should make explicit the selection of performances that it seeks to improve, as was done in this thesis. This indicates how future inquiry based on this thesis could contribute to the field of place management (Parker, 2011; Kalandides et al, 2016), which often focuses on

contexts such as town and city centres. Indeed, such research could consider how the relation of housing to the geographical constitutiveness of organising might inform place management, both in a housing context as well as in the more traditional remit of the field. Still, the critical perspective articulated in this thesis demands that the politics of such research is made clear.

Whose interests would place management in the context of housing – or otherwise – serve? What performances would inquiry into place management select to improve, and what political stance does this entail? Indeed, by framing such work as focusing on organising, rather than management, future research could, perhaps, facilitate viewing place management through another, less managerial, lens (Ntounis, 2018).

The above are promising areas for further inquiry based on this thesis. It should be said, however, that this thesis has argued for crossing a threshold – one that some OS works have tentatively approached thus far. By arguing for thinking about organising as constituted through geographies, it no longer suffices for OS scholars to cherry-pick particular geographical concepts in seeking to explain phenomena of organising. Instead, the collective activities that give meaning to our lives must be considered as constituted through the geographies to which our lives are inextricably bound. In fact, enacting ethically orientated research is not enough; we should strive also to become enrolled in ethical collective activities in the world, and to help realise a narrative about the diversity and sociality of contemporary society.

Finally, and relatedly, while rhizomatic assemblage served in this thesis as a metaphorical tool, it was indicated that it might meaningfully serve as a metaphysical way for thinking about the world. This offers a potential avenue for developing the philosophical arguments in this thesis further. Indeed, viewing the world as comprised of rhizomatic assemblages, like the Redbricks, can enliven our imagination about the sociomaterial assemblages of the world, the consequential assemblage imbued with rhizomatic potentialities, the intensities and extensities of collective activities, and the constantly generating, degenerating and regenerating pulse of phenomena. While

found on a housing estate in this thesis, inquiring into a metaphysics of rhizomatic assemblages would consider how they exist in countless other forms as well. One might imagine, for instance, reconceptualising a text – such as a thesis – as a rhizomatic assemblage that the reader turns and re-turns as the words therein (un)fold and provoke new meaning(s), perspective(s), practice(s) and truth(s).

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