# Places in the Shadows of the City: The Role of Culture in the Production and Consumption of Suburbia

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# Places in the Shadows of the City: The Role of Culture in the Production and Consumption of Suburbia

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**For Lazaros**

*May you travel in tamed seas and rest in power, Father*

**Για τον Λάζαρο**

*Σύντροφε αγαπημένε, είθε να ταξιδέψεις σε θάλασσες ήμερες! Καλό κατευόδιο εκεί που πας*

# Ithaca | Ιθάκη

As you set out for Ithaca
hope that your journey is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
angry Poseidon - do not be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare sensation
touches your spirit and your body.

Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
wild Poseidon - you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope that your journey is a long one.
May there be many summer mornings when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you come into harbours seen for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind -
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to learn and learn again from those who know.

Keep Ithaca always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you are destined for.
But do not hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so that you're old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaca to make you rich.
Ithaca gave you the marvellous journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you will have understood by then what these Ithacas mean.

**Constantine CAVAFY [1863 - 1933]**

## Abstract


### Places in the Shadows of the City:
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Giorgos Chatzinakos

Suburbs have long been associated with assumptions and imposed meanings that do not fit the everyday reality of city life. Very little research has looked at the ways in which they are experienced, represented and imagined as 'real' places. With this core focus in mind, in this thesis, I am concerned with the extent to which the cultural consumption of the city has come to shape suburban residents' relationship with that city. This question is addressed through the lens of suburban festivals. My aim is to reassess the role of suburban communities in shaping the cultural life of the city. In this light, this research seeks to (1) to assess the role of the suburbs as more central in defining the practice of everyday life than might be assumed, (2) show why culture matters for places where people live and co-exist day to day; and (3) to bring suburbs, in all of their cultural complexity, to the fore in discussions around improved connections to place and more so-called 'sustainable' urban futures and ways of life. The research draws on fieldwork carried out in suburban communities in Manchester, focusing on three suburban festivals as case studies. It is based on data collected through cultural mapping workshops and semi-structured interviews with festival organisers, festival participants and policymakers. The findings suggest that suburbia is a multi-dimensional concept. As such, the spatial experience of suburban place and the micro-geographies of the 'intimate' play a constitutive role in forming and shaping place identity. Accordingly, the thesis provides a more nuanced approach to the process of place-making in the suburbs. In doing so, it challenges the orthodoxy of a culturally inert suburbia on the fringes of the city, arguing that the suburbs provide a powerful conduit through which the contemporary urban condition can be better understood.

## Acknowledgements

Dear reader

My name is Giorgos. I am an urban and cultural geographer from Thessaloniki in Greece, passionate about the dynamics and complexities of urbanity in our interconnected 'world-of-cities'. Since 2013, my life has developed into a peregrination across different European cities, including Athens, Brussels, Tilburg, Manchester, Tallinn and Barcelona. In this thesis, you can read my most recent journey that took place in the suburbs of Manchester. It began in April of 2016 and finished in January of 2020. It was defended in April - in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic - and was resubmitted in November. Some of its parts were written in Thessaloniki, Siviri, Amsterdam, Berlin, Verin, Barcelona, Vienna and Athens.

It is in our nature as geographers to wander from place to place, from city to city. In the words of Nicholas Chrisman "we never get lost. We just do accidental field work". With this in mind, we delve into the soul of the city, strolling its streets and alleyways like *flâneurs*, with no purpose other than to illuminate and crystalise the discarded and usually forgotten aspects of urban life. This enables us to discover new imaginative ways that challenge common sense perceptions and conventional understandings. Essential to realising this thrilling vision is a vivid commitment to hearing people's silenced voices.

"We travel not to escape life, but for life not to escape us", people say. Well … a PhD is undeniably a long and lonely endeavour that develops in conjunction with myriad expected and unexpected conditions. As you will read in the following pages, our everyday lives are both ordinary and chaotically extraordinary: full of unpredictable surprises, random encounters and countless possibilities. As such, the 'angry Poseidon' can catch you sometimes by surprise. In the middle of this journey, I lost the most subversive and quixotic mentor of my life: my father, Lazaros Chatzinakos. This thesis is proudly dedicated to his memory. Thank you for teaching me to never abandon hope (not even for a second), even during the most insurmountable times (when everything else seems lost), to keep tilting at windmills and to poeticise life. I gave you the promise to keep my thoughts raised high and Ithaca inside my soul and mind. This is the 'telos' (purpose) of life: a point of reference in order to set out on a marvellous journey. To build scenarios of life, as you once said.

Death, indeed, is a striking experience that leaves a heavy emotional impact and knock-on effects on a person's intellectual capacities. Like any separation, it hurts unbearably. It can crush you both emotionally and spiritually. From another perspective, however, it can be seen as an opportunity to better understand our human and fragile nature(s), by getting a greater sense of your own journey in life. In this way, death becomes a transition or in other words a liminal threshold. This truly liberating 'rite of passage' not only entails grief and pain, but also, a struggling effort to navigate the material world. Therefore, the 'end' must receive the same recognition and be as celebrated as every start. Niovi, Darko, Arlen, Sol welcome in our 'wonderful' world: a place that we ought to understand and change it for the better.

During these years, and especially when dark and rainy clouds were shadowing the sky of Manchester, there were several people who brought light into my life. In a variety of ways, they made a decisive contribution to the development of this thesis and, it for this reason that this contribution to knowledge is as much their achievement as it is mine. First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my supervisory team: Dr Louise Platt and Professor Steven Miles were always beside me. Their unending inspiration, intellectual input and consistent encouragement made the difference in this thesis. It was the greatest privilege and honour to work under their guidance.

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At the shore now, as I stare out to the infinite sea. Beyond the blurred line of the horizons, the moon rises above the cliffs and, gradually, mingles with the stars in the endless and without limits dark-blue sky. There is a breeze in the air. Rosemary’s aroma and Nâzim's most beautiful sea. ¡Adelante!

“We are inside our own world.
The most beautiful sea has not been crossed yet.
The most beautiful children have not grown up yet.
The most beautiful days we have not seen yet.
And the most beautiful words I wanted to tell you
I haven’t them said yet…”

**Nâzım HIKMET [1902 - 1963]**

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## List of Conference Presentations

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1 The Background to the Study

This thesis is concerned with the everyday life of the suburbs and how this is played out through cultural consumption. Despite the abundance of older and more recent publications related to the suburbs, there is a significant gap in the literature when it comes to the ways that suburbs are experienced, represented and imagined as 'real' everyday places (Corcoran, 2010). To my knowledge, no prior studies have explored the interconnection between everyday suburban life, place, and cultural consumption. Only a few empirical works have sought to address this imbalance by exploring the cultural value assigned to everyday participation (e.g. Miles and Gibson, 2016, 2017). What is still lacking, however, is a more systematic examination of how place and culture are being *co-produced* at the intersection between 'creative cities' and everyday suburban experience. Accordingly, my thesis contributes to filling this gap and challenges the orthodoxy of a culturally inert suburbia on the fringes of the city. In doing so, it focuses on the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption, discussing the benefits that such an exploration might have in recalibrating our understanding of the city in a more geographically-inclusive fashion.

A study focused on the everyday life of the suburbs is especially timely. Nowadays the city has become the most prominent form of dwelling. According to the United Nations' report on global urbanisation prospects (2014), more than half of the world's population now resides in urban areas. This proportion is projected to increase to two thirds by 2050. Bearing this in mind, the debate over the future of the city is extremely lively and is only likely to intensify (Pieri, 2018). For too long urban theory has conceptualised the city from the centre outward (e.g. Burgess, 1925; Park et al., 1925; Castells, 1977 etc.), neglecting the fact that urbanisation today is mainly suburbanisation in its manifold

differentiation (Keil, 2017). In this regard, we witness not only a systematic denial of suburbs' place value (Corcoran, 2010), but there is also limited knowledge in relation to the kinds of culture and creativity that arguably define these places. It is worth noting that a common perspective on cities is that they are places of social encounter and interaction, as well as, nodes of capital accumulation and information (Lefebvre, 1991; Amin, Massey, and Thrift, 2000). The same characterisations are seldom applied to the suburbs (Bain, 2013).

In general, the 'urban' is mostly imagined as the concentric expansion of economic and human centrality. It refers to an area with certain characteristics such as high density, large population, and cultural vibrancy. On the contrary, the suburbs are most commonly depicted as dormitories: spaces of privacy and predictability; dispersed around the outskirts of urban areas, rather than places of unanticipated encounters and centrality (Sibley, 2001). This was perhaps most effectively put by Silverstone (1997: 4) who argues in his *Visions of Suburbia*, "the suburban is seen, if at all and at best, as a consequence, an excrescence, a cancerous fungus, leaching the energy of the city, dependent and inert and ultimately self-destructive". In short, the literature pertaining to suburbia ironically associates the suburban way of life with notions of pure individualism, unbridled consumerism, lack of diversity, middle-class homogeneity, and conformism (Walks, 2013). In the light of this, suburbia is established in the mainstream literature as "a peripheral and private zone, aimed at marking and maintaining distinct social, economic and gender zones" (Pope, 2015: 5).

In parallel, debates around the role of culture and creativity in the regeneration and reinvention of the city have overwhelmingly neglected suburban communities (Flew, 2012; Collis, Freebody, and Flew, 2013; Burton and Gill, 2015). For several decades, the suburbs have been rendered as unimportant places where creativity cannot possibly establish sufficiently viable roots to flourish (Bain, 2013), and, therefore, they have been considered to be irrelevant for any further investigation. On the contrary, following on from Landry (2000) and Florida (2002), the role of creativity in the regeneration of the inner city is a well-explored terrain (Hall, 2000; Scott, 2000; Markusen, 2006). In fact, the

promotion of creativity has almost become a civic boosterish cliché, which many cities have tried to embrace.

However, the suburbs are often ignored by policymakers and researchers alike and have been almost absent in recent discussions related to creativity and cultural-led regeneration. This absence in academic and policy debates is a significant oversight, heightened by a consensus that suburbs are economically and creatively sterile places in contrast with inner-city areas (Phelps, 2010). Flew (2012) contends that the suburbs are rarely considered in discussions focusing on cultural policy and creative cities, and argues that this lack of interest in the suburbs amongst cultural theorists and policymakers is associated with a preoccupation with the more mundane and routinised aspects of suburban cultural life. As Bourne (1996: 163) observed, scholarly and popular understandings of the suburbs remain reliant upon "externally-imposed images, entrenched social meanings and inherited cultural baggage" and a "simplistic city-suburban dichotomy" that is "outdated and increasingly unsuited to the complex realities of contemporary metropolitan life and urban development". As a result, the suburbs have long been laden with assumptions, images and imposed meanings that do not reflect the reality. On the surface, the social life of the suburbs appears to perpetuate a focus on the enclosed spaces of private homes, yards and cars, and on privatised spaces such as shopping malls or private schools (Baumgartner, 1988). However, a closer more critical look reveals several challenges and empirical shortcomings. An important issue is the fact that as the world's population becomes increasingly concentrated in urban settlements, places that have been classified as 'suburban', on the geographical periphery of cities, claim a new prominence in both urban research and cultural planning (Bourne, 1996; Pacione, 2005). For this reason, a series of studies have focused on a better integrating the suburbs into urban studies, encouraging a more nuanced view of the communities and cultures fostered in such places (e.g. Halsall, 2004; Campbell, 2011; Mace, 2013). In this context, there is a renewed focus on the role of the suburbs and their meaning for social life (Walks, 2013).

This is clearly illustrated in the context of cultural consumption and the way people relate to the city through that process. This subject has received considerable attention from social scientists, and many commentators recognise that the consumption of culture plays a pivotal and symbolic role in shaping place identity (Harvey, 1989; Lash and Urry, 1994). Even if it is broadly recognised that this process has a profound impact on urban experience and the way that people perceive and interact with the city (Featherstone, 1995; Miles, 2010), previous studies have not only generally ignored the suburbs, but have, furthermore, formed an idealised vision of city centre urban life. Given this foundation, this thesis focuses on the relationship between suburban place and the consumption of culture. No previous studies have investigated the specific nature of this relationship and the extent to which the cultural consumption of the city comes to shape suburban residents' relationship with that city. At the core of my argument lies the assumption that suburban place can be experienced *through* this process. But what does this tell us about the role of the suburbs in the empirical analysis of the city? As I mentioned before, previous research has almost exclusively focused on the creative and cultural capacities of the city centre, ignoring the plurality of understandings that 'culture' might entail, as well as neglecting the everyday cultural practices that take place in suburbia. An important question in this context is what is the role and value of culture in the construction of a place-based identity in the suburbs?

In this thesis, I look at how people in the suburbs engage with the city in terms of cultural consumption. This being the case, I am primarily concerned with the commodification of 'culture', a buzzword that continues to lie at the very heart of the contemporary social and cultural life of cities. In general, following the shift to entrepreneurialism in urban policies (see: Harvey, 1989), cities around the world have developed various conceptions of 'culture' to include new uses to which it can be put to meet social, economic and political objectives (Miles and Paddison, 2005). Indeed, a series of studies indicate that culture contains the capacity to address the economic recovery of post-industrial cities and that this offers a way of addressing the immense urban challenges and problems that followed the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial era (Garcia, 2004;

Scott, 2004; Stevenson, 2007). For decades, one of the most popular ideas in the literature was that culture plays a decisive role in differentiating competing localities (Pratt, 1997), because it is capable to enhance their competitive advantage and their "ability to develop attractive images and symbols and project these effectively" (Landry and Bianchini, 1995:12). In a sense, the use of culture has been instrumentalised by policymakers and urban elites who utilise it as an economic asset and a commodity with market value, whilst forming the basis of a 'symbolic economy' (Zukin, 1995). From the perspective of policy-makers, culture can regenerate the economic base and image of the city. As such, it is presented as an 'oven-ready' solution to surmount the problems caused by de-industrialisation.

Having said that, critics have attacked this use of culture as "a 'carnival mask' (Harvey, 1989), worn by the city centre to serve the needs of business or wealthy tourists in order to hide social deprivation on the peripheries, and in order to paper over the 'real' culture of their residents" (Binns, 2005: 118-119). As a consequence, cultural strategies usually fail to connect with the specificities of place (Quinn, 2010) and this raises critical questions as to whether a new approach is needed. This seems to be a common problem world-wide. According to Oakley (2015) the literature recognises a growing consensus that policy in most parts of the world is moving in the same direction, and many of the problems of culture-led regeneration encountered in a UK or USA context are mirrored elsewhere. This discourse reflects the dominance of techno-economic urbanisation processes in the context of economic growth, in which theories of place-based competitiveness have become dominant (Perry, Ager, and Sitas, 2019). However, this thesis is not primarily concerned with questions of place competitiveness. Instead, it focuses on an emerging global challenge posed by the significant yet marginalised suburban culture and creativity. Given this, Edensor et al. (2010) believe that outside the inner city, the suburbs are sometimes seen as offering the potential for a counter-narrative to that of traditional urban regeneration.

Yet, while these issues are more general in scope and have different expressions in different contexts, my study focuses on the UK, a highly suburbanised country. 86 per

cent of the population resides in a suburban/urban-rural fringe context, 5 per cent in rural and 9 per cent in urban cores (Edensor et al., 2010). Although the suburbs host the vast majority of the population, up until 2007 the government did not have an explicit cultural policy for suburban areas. A report titled as the State of the Suburbs (2009:1) states that "more than 80% of us live in areas that can be classified as suburban and yet suburbs have played a secondary role in regeneration and urban policy". In fact, the suburbs have been historically and persistently neglected in urban and culture-led regeneration strategies, even if the need for their regeneration and polycentric planning has been advocated since 2004 by the UK central government (ODPM, 2004 as cited in Edensor et al., 2010). This is thought-provoking, given the fact that the suburbs can provide a rich diversity of experience.

My interdisciplinary research seeks to tap into this diversity by drawing on fieldwork carried out in the suburban communities of Manchester. Given this, I focus on two of the city's suburbs (Didsbury and Levenshulme) and one satellite town that lies in close proximity (Rochdale). Thus, I use three suburban festivals as case studies, namely Didsbury Arts Festival, Levi Fringe Festival and the Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival. These festivals represent ways to engage with suburban culture as it is performed - in practice. In other words, the selected case studies constitute an analytical means by which I inquire how suburban place and cultural consumption can relate to one another. In order to achieve a better understanding of the impact of cultural consumption on suburban place, I develop a qualitative research approach that is grounded in the philosophical foundations of phenomenology (see: Chapter Five). My epistemological framework considers the intersections between everyday suburban life, place and 'culture' and aims to generate empirical data. Furthermore, my research is based on data collected through cultural mapping workshops that took place during these festivals, and semi-structured interviews with festival organisers, festival participants and policymakers.

With this in mind, my study examines suburbs as a lived experience, whereby people develop different everyday realities. My objective is to describe how a suburb is

perceived by its people by taking into consideration the relevant contextual factors that shape suburban daily life (place, culture, people's life-world experiences), whilst making local knowledge systems more visible. Utilising such an approach, my research investigates common and contrasting perspectives through the lived experiences of people who live in suburbia. In particular, I look at how different individuals give meaning to their lives, examining their place-based understandings and their broader relationships with cultural consumption. This allows me to challenge the view that there is no culture or creativity in the suburbs. This task demands new ways of theorising and conceiving the complexity of suburban life, its symbolic and social significance, and spatial dimension. Taking this into account, this thesis explores new avenues for academic research on the suburbs. In doing so, it critically discusses the prevailing "just add culture and stir" (Gibson and Stevenson, 2004: 1) approach to urban regeneration that uses culture or creativity as an interventionist strategy in places (Cunningham and Platt, 2019). Accordingly, I adopt the perspective by which culture and creativity are understood as the multiple, unpredictable, dynamic, and sometimes 'hidden' aspects of everyday life. As Crouch (2010: 129) argues "creativity in everyday life is a dynamic through which people live. A particular consideration is the expressive character of creativity in everyday life: expression in materiality and in friendship, thinking and feeling". This allows me to achieve a more dynamic analysis, avoiding dichotomous understandings "through the reproduction of binary spatial distinctions between global/local, cool/uncool, creative/uncreative, fixed/mobile, centre/periphery and urban/rural contexts" (Edensor et al., 2010: 11-12). This is how my thesis provides a more nuanced approach to the process of place-making in the suburbs: as it offers a place-based alternative that embraces the world-views of the people that live in suburbia it begins to develop more 'inclusive' (sub)urban futures. I content that the planning of the city of tomorrow should not be solely concerned with the regeneration of the inner city, rather it must engage with the lives and the contested realities of the people who live in the city and its suburbs. Yet, the diverse range of perspectives, challenges and conflicts that are involved here combine to produce what is far from a utopian ideal. To this end,

this thesis acknowledges that there is a complexity in 'culture' that has to be embraced further in discussions of place-based sustainability.

## 1.2 Research Questions and Aims

In order to contribute to a more holistic understanding of the city as it is lived and culturally experienced by its people, this research engages with suburbia as a distinct world of meaning, and focuses on the ways that cultural consumption is manifested in the suburbs. Given the lack of research focussed on suburbia, this thesis discusses broader questions that have to do with place and culture. ***To what extent does the cultural consumption of the city has come to shape suburban residents' relationship with the city?*** In order to address this core research question, the empirical analysis addresses the following sub-questions:

1. How do people experience, perceive and relate to suburban place, and how does this relate to their everyday lives?
2. How do people relate to culture and cultural consumption?

Recognising that the urban bias of much of the work on culture and place remains largely unchallenged (see: Oakley, 2015), this thesis aims to reassess the role of suburban communities in shaping the cultural life of the city. In doing so, it seeks to develop a dynamic approach to the study of the suburbs that engages with different perspectives and experiences directly derived from suburban communities. This is achieved through a critical understanding of how suburbs are experienced as potentially *'organic'* places. Given this, my thesis contributes to the ongoing debate in urban theory that calls for a theoretical and practical reorientation in the broader study of the city (Huq, 2013; Keil, 2017, 2018). This line of thought tries to relocate the focus of the analysis away from a narrow fascination with the urban core, distinguishing between real, imagined, built, lived, and conceptual centralities. My main intention is to bring suburbs, in all of their cultural complexity, to the fore in discussions around improved connections to place and more so-called 'sustainable' urban futures and ways of life. As such, it is designed to understand the city as it is lived and culturally experienced by the people who live in the

suburbs. Embracing this view, my primary objectives are to (1) assess the role of the suburbs as more central in defining the practice of everyday life, and (2) show why culture matters for places where people live and co-exist day to day. This requires a broader understanding of how people experience their place of residence and the way they conceive and relate to culture and cultural consumption. In so doing, I intend to provide a theoretical contribution to a debate that has long been based on assumptions regarding the creative and cultural capacities of suburban places and which, thus, has neglected many locational complexities (e.g. Florida, 2005), both at the theoretical and methodological levels. In turn, I pay close attention to suburban living as '*a way of life'* (Hamel and Keil, 2015; see: Wirth, 1938). For this reason, this thesis is underpinned by the ontological contention that suburban living is a complex phenomenon in which contingencies are inevitable.

This thesis is founded on the contention that the persistence of one-dimensional stereotypes has led to simplistic top-down views and narrow preconceptions about suburban life and culture (Mace, 2013; Dines and Vermeulen, 2013). In order to begin to readdress the lack of scientific attention paid to the suburbs and to think more expansively about them, in this thesis I develop a more flexible position that resists compromise with the mainstream representations of suburbia (see: Huq, 2013; Vergauwen, 2013; Chapter Three). As a result, I move away from traditional definitions that consider suburbs to be "bland non-places defined by what they are not as much as by what they are, with the dynamism of urban life somehow bleached out of them" (Cochrane, Colenutt, and Field, 2015: 568). In other words, this thesis considers suburbs through a different lens than the prevalent negativity that has dominated urban studies. The core assumption of my approach lies in the contention that suburbs, or at least the people and communities that reside in them, are capable of creating their own story. For this reason, my work aligns with Moretti's (2007: 70) standpoint that each place "determines, or at least encourages, its own kind of story", one that is being imprinted on place through the rhythmic geographies of everyday life.

My thesis counteracts the binary opposition between the city and the suburb and challenges the perception that urbanity only exists in the city. In considering suburbs as a continuum of the city (as Vaughan, 2015), it emphasises both the role suburbs play as 'everyday places' and their relationship to the city and other suburbs. Thus, the research overcomes the conventional theoretical position that engages with the urban arena through the prism of the central city, highlighting two issues. First, that the suburbs are overshadowed culturally by the city. Second, that our understanding of suburban culture has been somewhat obscured by popular and negative representations. These issues have contributed to a broader consideration of the suburbs as an archetype that lacks a centrality from which meaningful academic and/or policy discourse springs. I argue that this is not the case. The cultural life of the suburbs can in fact represent an important dynamic in the broader distribution and decentring of urban life (Amin and Thrift, 2002). This is what I principally examine in this thesis, seeking to advance an approach that draws attention to the ways in which people are involved in the restructuring of the city, as pro-active agents in making and remaking its place identity (see: Lewis and Symons, 2018). As I will discuss in Chapter Three, in order to recognise the importance of culture outside the spotlight of the city centre, there is a need for a broader conception of what culture is. In this thesis, the emphasis is on culture as it is being interpreted, conceived and ultimately practiced by people who live the suburbs. This emphasises the supposedly mundane cultural practices of the people who are involved in the everyday realisation of the city. Can we speak about mundane activities that are taking place in the suburbs as also having a cultural value?

This thesis is concerned with the extent to which the repetition of everyday practices and the reiteration of seemingly mundane activities that form the basis of what constitutes suburbia. For this reason, my research specifically deals with the way in which suburban place is shaped by its spatial formation and distinctive characteristics, and the ways in which people relate to spaces of everyday socio-cultural interaction and/or cultural consumption. Thus, it explores how 'place' and 'culture' can be engaged to further our understandings of suburban way of life. This understanding is achieved

through an in-depth phenomenological exploration of the suburban daily experience and the ways in which people consume culture in their locality. Finally, it touches upon issues of experience, participation and inclusion in more formal practices of cultural consumption, namely through festivals. By looking at the creative geographies of Manchester, I suggest that there is a significant 'hidden' culture associated with everyday suburban life (as Gilbert, Dwyer and Ahmed, 2015). Accordingly, I acknowledge the role of everyday spaces of cultural consumption in suburban daily life. Within the diverse geography of the suburbs, these spaces operate as generators of a place-based cultural experience and shape people's everyday and cultural lives in the suburbs.

In this light, my main argument is that suburbia is a multi-dimensional concept, which is differently conceived and experienced by people, who develop various affective perceptions and particular spatial understandings of suburbia in relation to their immediate space and residential position. I develop this in three main parts. First, suburbs encapsulate a place with a distinctive characteristics and identity. Although the imaginary geographies of the city have constructed a stark dichotomy between the city and the surrounding suburbs, suburban living still offers a distinctive experience of the 'urban'. In this sense, an appreciation of the different meanings that people assign to their everyday use of place is vital for a rigorous sociological and geographical analysis. Therefore, in order to examine how people shape their everyday experiences and whether suburban place has an effect on the everyday life of the suburb, I address the specific physical characteristics that make up its structure. My aim is to unfold their physical and spatial properties and to understand those elements that generate the street-level suburban experience. I propose the idea that the micro-geographies of the 'intimate' play a constitutive role in forming and shaping place identity, thus leading to social qualities and certain forms of social interaction in the suburban environment. Second, although culture has a decisive role in shaping everyday experience, there is a distinction between its practice and consumption that needs to be further analysed. This distinction warrants special attention for the purposes of this thesis, as it provides a critical counterpoint to understandings of the suburban way of life and practice.

Suburban culture is manifested within a delimited spatial frame that (re-)produces social life and cultural identities, whilst operating as an indicator of place identity. By looking more closely at various cultural consumption patterns and other cultural practices, I argue that everyday spaces offer the opportunity for people to negotiate their own symbolic relationship with place - both in the suburban and urban contexts. Third, suburbia is a complex theoretical and empirical concept and in order to understand its multiplicity, a range of novel methods of investigation are required. In this regard, I examine the vernacular activities that shape the daily experience of the suburb, defined as 'suburban cultural practices'. These are fundamental for understanding suburbia, since they are ordered across space and time and include the embodiment of everyday life. To this end, this thesis offers an alternative approach towards the role that culture plays in processes of local development. Rather than focusing on wider political and economic imperatives, this approach is concerned with place-based belonging and the way in which cultural consumption forges place-based identifications. Here lies the main contribution that this thesis makes to the existing debate on suburbia and related research methodologies: it allows for the articulation of a wider question about the role and value of culture in the construction of place-based identity in the suburbs. In the following sections of this Introduction, I present the general context in which my research is situated. First, I discuss what a suburb is and how I understand the concept of suburbia. I then introduce Manchester, the location of this study. At the end of this chapter, I present an outline of this thesis.

## 1.3 What is a Suburb?

The suburb is a multi-faceted concept that has been the subject of much analysis across various social sciences. Indeed, suburbs and suburbanisation have been researched widely and have been always present in the pursuit of knowledge in urban studies (Mcmanus and Ethington, 2007). Yet, the state of knowledge about them remains disparate, often aligned with traditional disciplinary boundaries between the humanities and the social sciences (Hanlon and Vicino, 2018). Existing academic and policy literature on the topic yields a multitude of definitions for what is commonly referred to as 'the

suburb' (e.g. Forsyth, 2012; Walks, 2013; Moos and Mendez, 2015). However, these provide little indication as to how the suburban built environment should be approached conceptually as a particular category of inhabited space (Vaughan, 2015). Despite the voluminous literature on suburbia, there is neither a minimum definition to which suburbs everywhere conform (Harris, 2010), nor a consensus as to what exactly constitutes a suburb (Forsyth, 2013; Vergauwen, 2013). Some scholars note that the confusion grows when one includes popular and media accounts (Forsyth, 2018). In order to lay the foundation for a further discussion of the complexities of everyday suburban life, it is necessary to provide some basic information regarding their main characteristics.

Broadly speaking, a suburb is a geographical area that is located on the outskirts of a city or a town and denotes an intermediate spatial zone between a city and its countryside. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2011), a suburb is "the country lying immediately outside a town or city; more particularly, those residential parts belonging to a town or city that lie immediately outside and adjacent to its walls or boundaries". The word 'suburb' first appeared in the English language in the late 14th century (Girling and Helphand, 1994). Etymologically, it originates from the ancient French term *Subburbe* and the Latin word *Suburbium*, both formed from the synthetics sub- (under, near) and -urb (city). Literally, the word means an inhabited place just outside, beyond and/or below the city. Therefore, in principle it can refer to any kind of settlement located at the periphery of an urban entity (Fishman, 1987). In its traditional and literal usage, the prefix sub- indicates a situation of subordination via the imputed meanings 'less than', 'partial/limited', 'secondary' or 'beneath/under' the city (Walks, 2013). This implies not only a physical and geographical separation from the city, such as being outside the city gate, moat or wall, but also a relative differential status (Bourne, 1996). In a sense, to be suburban presupposes the absence of urbanity, which in turn means to be peripheral or marginal. Regardless of its peripheral position in urban geography, a suburb can also present a distinctive identity and way of life (Harris and Larkham, 1999).

The suburbs are considered to be a physical developmental consequence of the urbanisation cycle (Hanlon and Vicino, 2018; see: Pacione, 2005). Even if they have been characterised as a typical Anglo-Saxon phenomenon, in a continuously urbanised world, suburbs can be found in every metropolitan area. In terms of their physical characteristics, commentators agree that suburbs have three common dimensions related to their (1) peripheral location, (2) their residential densities intermediate between those of the city and the country and (3) their relative newness (Harris, 2010). The latter characteristic is related to the fact that most suburbs were built primarily as residential developments away from congested city centres. A common view is that the suburbs are places from which "the heart of the city can be reached conveniently, quickly, and at low-cost" (Douglass, 1925: 8). For this reason, according to many commentators, commuting - the movement between the suburb and the city - features as an integral part of suburban daily life (Thorns, 1972; Huq, 2013). Other key variables that suburbs have in common include: the functional dependence and commuting relationship with the urban core, their easy access to the countryside, the low density, the housing type, their social attributes (class, race, ethnic divisions etc.) and their cultural formations (e.g. an utopian middle class landscape versus a dystopian place with devouring urban sprawl, a vacuous aesthetic wasteland) (Mcmanus and Ethington, 2007).

Nevertheless, what a 'suburb' actually is may be disputed (see: Lupi and Musterd, 2006). In a review of suburban literature, Hinchcliffe (2005: 899) argues that "the literature on suburbs is extensive, yet the subject always seems elusive. For some the suburb is a geographical space; for others, a cultural form; while for others still it is a state of mind". As Thorns (1972) contends, while suburban areas can share similar characteristics, they are not all the same. They differ not only in terms of size and proximity to the city centre, but also in terms of class and socio-cultural composition. This diversity in form and structure is reflected in a diversity of concepts in a 'world of suburbs' (Harris, 2010). The following neologisms abound in suburban studies: 'technoburb' (Fishman, 1987); 'edge city' (Garreau, 1992); 'hundred-mile city' (Sudjic, 1992); 'exopolis' (Soja, 2000); 'edgeless

cities' (Lang, 2003); 'boomburb' (Lang and LeFurgy, 2007); and 'metroburbia' (Knox, 2008). All of these forms of suburban settlements are associated with urban decentralisation and urban sprawl. Given these premises, the intention of this thesis is to try to account for some of these complexities in the context of suburban Manchester.

Overall, the phenomenon of suburbanisation is significantly multidimensional and varies greatly from suburb to suburb and from country to country (Fishman, 1987). In fact, even the use of the term 'suburb' does not always mean the same thing in every country and, therefore, its use can differ across countries. In Anglo-Saxon countries, for example, the suburbs refer to low-density areas with single-family and semi-detached houses. They are mainly used for residential needs, accompanied by the daily movement of the population to the neighbouring urban core (McDonald, 2009). In the Anglo-Saxon context, the suburbs have held negative connotations, such as the suggestion that they are 'boring' and monotonous areas. On the contrary, in continental Europe 'suburban' is merely a descriptive geographical term (Ozaki and Uršič, 2005). In the United States, Canada and most of Western Europe, the term is commonly used to differentiate the municipality, borough or other form of administrative entity located outside the urban core of the city (see: Rusk, 1995). This categorisation is not apparent in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia or New Zealand, where the term 'suburb' refers to residential settlements far from the centre of the city. In addition, in the UK areas are often characterised as a suburb, although they lie within the narrow boundaries of the city and not around or outside of it. This complexity increases the difficulty of comparing different suburbs in different countries. As such, recent calls for a deeper understanding of suburban space challenge the existing definitions and demand, at a minimum, broader considerations (Airgood-Obrycki and Rieger, 2019).

Given the debates around what constitutes a suburb, I argue that studying comparative data on density or decentralisation rates alone seems inadequate. On the contrary, there is a need to identify what is particular about these places in terms of physical characteristics and other qualitative features including place identity, way of life, and culture. The argument presented here has implications for the geographical and

sociological definition of the suburb. Relevant terms to this research such as ‘suburb’, ‘suburbia’ and ‘suburbanisation’ are concepts inextricably linked to one another. Yet, for the purposes of this thesis, it is useful to make a necessary conceptual separation between the first two: suburbs and suburbia are often confused with each other. According to Mcmanus and Ethington (2007: 321) “the noun ‘suburb’ is the denotative, or objective location and built form [whereas] the culturally connotative noun ‘suburbia’ […] refers to the way(s) of life of the people living in suburbs, portrayed as an identifiable group, community or class in society: ‘suburbanites’”. Therefore, suburbia refers more particularly to a lifestyle rather than solely to spatial characteristics. However, as a concept, suburbia is also quite vague and is generally associated with a vast array of meanings, representations and connotations throughout different geographical contexts and time periods. For these reasons, Forsyth (2012) encourages scholars to carefully describe the type and characteristics of the suburbs they study, recommending the use of more descriptive terms, which may include combinations of attributes related to physical, functional, and social processes and alternative analytical dimensions. This is the direction that this thesis follows in the analysis of two suburbs of Manchester and one satellite town that lies in close proximity.

## 1.4 Locating the Field of Study: Manchester [UK]

Manchester is regarded as the world's first industrial city. It is located in the North West of England and resides within the metropolitan county of Greater Manchester (see: Figure 1 below). With an estimated population of 503,127 (ONS, 2011), it is the sixth largest city in the United Kingdom. The city is made up of 32 wards that cover some 116 $m^2$, presenting a density of 44.17 persons per hectare (Manchester's State of the City Report, 2014). In what follows, I present a brief description of the suburbanisation of Manchester.

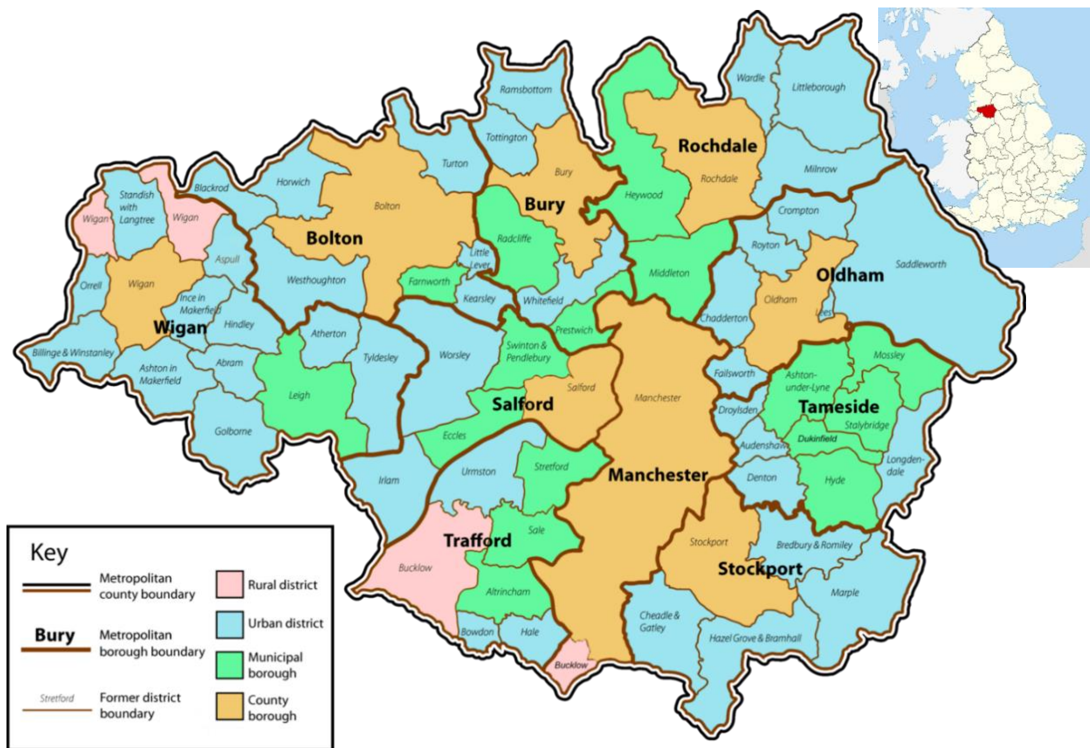



*Figure 1: A map of Greater Manchester*

*Source: Wikipedia Contributors*

Manchester is a hub of technological and social innovation that "helped actively to shape and to mould the newly emerging global economy of the nineteenth and early twentieth century" (Dicken, 2002: 19). During the Industrial Revolution, the city experienced a significant expansion of its limits. The population grew from 75,000 in 1800 to 338,000

in 1851 (Pacione, 2005), while the residential housing that had once been located in the urban core was replaced by factories and warehouses. This development was far from peaceful. Friedrich Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (2009: 54 [1845]) describes Manchester thus:

> Such is the Old Town of Manchester, and on re-reading my description, I am forced to admit that instead of being exaggerated, it is far from black enough to convey a true impression of the filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness, the defiance of all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation, and health [...] Such a district exists in the heart of the second city of England, the first manufacturing city of the world. If any one wishes to see in how little space a human being can move, how little air - and such air! - he can breathe, how little of civilisation he may share and yet live, it is only necessary to travel hither. True, this is the Old Town, and the people of Manchester emphasise the fact whenever any one mentions to them the frightful condition of this Hell upon Earth.

Under these conditions, the new middle classes seized the opportunity to migrate towards the periphery of the city. In this way, the first suburbs were created in South Manchester (Williams, 2003) and functioned as catalyst for reshaping the whole structure of the modern industrial city (Fishman, 1987). From 1840 onwards the city start spreading, unevenly, over a landscape that consisted of a jumble of manors, pastures, green lands, villages and small towns (Cooper, 2002). Gradually, this constellation of interconnected places that once surrounded the old urban core were annexed and incorporated into the urban fabric, thus creating a pattern of local suburban centres and high streets (Brindley, 1974).

The city today is surrounded by a sea of low-density suburbs, which, in turn, present identifiable characteristics and recognisable features. Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst's (2005) research on middle-class housing estates in suburban Manchester is interesting in this regard; they show that local residents express as much cosmopolitanism as local belonging, attachment, social ties and identity. However, most studies of the city have

hitherto focused on inner-city areas, including O'Connor and Wynne's (1996) ode to the cultural dynamism of the new city dwellers.

Manchester is presenting its 'creative potential' as "a grimy, northern industrial city" that has transformed to a "hip, fashionable and dynamic place where people are excited to live" (Jones and Evans, 2008: 163-164) to the detriment of the suburbs. Similarly, many scholars describe the transformation of Manchester from its heyday as an industrial powerhouse, to the doldrums of post-industrial decline and, most recently, to the meteoric rebirth of the city into a flourishing cosmopolitan centre (Knox, 2018). The image of contemporary Manchester is one of a successful city that was lifted out of industrial decline in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Like many other industrial cities in the United Kingdom, it found itself in a challenging position during the glocal economic shift from manufacturing to information and service-based economies (Rahman, 2010; Miles, 2013; see: Castells, 1989). As a response to the effects of de-industrialisation and the urban shrink that followed, in particular between 1951 and 2001, the City Council made a number of attempts to transform, re-brand and regenerate the city centre, in order to reposition it back towards the global economy. In order to achieve that aim the policymakers of the city deployed a cultural turn in their urban development strategies (Miles and Miles, 2004; Catalani, 2013).

This entrepreneurial strategies of Manchester City Council is well documented across urban sociological literature (Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell, 2002; Peck and Ward, 2002; Ward, 2003). When compared to other cities in the United Kingdom, Manchester is said to have been the most successful at playing the regeneration game (Ward, 2018), and is usually characterised as an exemplar of post-industrial culture-led regeneration (Dicken, 2002; Hebbert, 2010). The investments in flagship developments in new cultural infrastructure since the mid-1990s were quite effective in reinventing and reconstructing Manchester (particularly the city centre) as a city of culture (Peck and Ward, 2002). The apparent 'success' of the city has produced widespread recognition and emulation of a 'Manchester model' of regeneration (Sanjek, 2000). It is no coincidence that Manchester

is one of the top cities ranked in Richard Florida's (see: Demos, 2003) 'UK Creativity Index' as the leading provincial 'creative city' (Miles, 2013).

Today, the Council is still embracing the 'creative city' rhetoric, developing a cultural strategy to bring the city's 'cultural activities' into an economic productivity agenda (Symons, 2018; see: Our Manchester Strategy). Most of the strategies adopted have focused on a revitalised inner city, and were accompanied by flourishing business quarters, investment in the housing market, as well as multiple ambitious projects to refurbish some the city's most deprived inner-city neighbourhoods. As a result, the cultural policies adopted by the City Council have primarily focused on creating new (e.g. The Factory) and/or regenerating a considerable infrastructure in the city centre such as shopping centres, opera houses, concert halls, theatres, museums and other cultural venues. These have had major economic, socio-cultural and physical consequences, including changing land-use relationships and the evolving character and vitality of the city centre (Peck and Ward, 2002).

Indeed, in recent decades, Manchester has transformed into a 24-hour city, offering constant possibilities for leisure and consumption in its centre. Overall, the city centre is considered to be the economic growth engine for both the city and the region (Manchester's State of the City Report, 2014). Arguably, with a £6 billion economy, it is the most important economic asset of the city, since it pulls together a vast array of enterprises (such as retail and co-working spaces, cafés, bars, restaurants and so on), employing more than 140,000 people in total. This figure accounts for 40 per cent of employment within the city, and 10 per cent of Greater Manchester's total employment. This number is predicted to rise to more than 150,000 over the next decade (Manchester's State of the City Report, 2019). Consequently, the city centre is paraded as a more lively and cultured place compared to the long-forgotten suburbs on the fringes of city life.

However, the city has long languished near the bottom of the league tables relating to issues of social deprivation and inequality (Williams, 2003). Manchester is one of the

local authorities with the highest proportion of neighbourhoods among the most deprived in England, ranking in second position below Blackpool (English Indices of Deprivation, 2019). Thus, there has been a rise in the proportion of suburbs constituting the most economically deprived areas within the city. In Greater Manchester, 54 per cent of suburban neighbourhoods experienced an increase in economic deprivation (Hunter, 2016). Specifically, as a response to the Manchester context, urban scholars have drawn critical attention to the enduring social inequalities that continue to shape and reproduce the city (Ward, 2003; Binnie and Skeggs, 2004; Young, Diep, and Drabble, 2006). These analyses depict how post-industrial suburbs in Manchester have been marked by exclusion from the wealth, employment and social life of the regenerated and visibly booming inner-city (Lewis, 2018). This sense of a 'dual city' (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991; Mellor, 2002) has produced what are essentially two separate and unequal cities (O' Connor and Wynne, 1996). In relation to the city of Manchester, the issues raised here are of critical importance since there has been an apparent disconnection between the city's long-established, high-profile cultural institutions and the majority of the people who live in the city (Miles, 2013). These facts raise concerns around the presentation of Manchester as a 'creative city'. In this thesis, I am interested in questioning whether people in the suburbs find culture accessible in Manchester, and to what extent cultural consumption shapes their broader relationship with the city. By highlighting the creative, yet 'hidden', geographies of suburbia, I aim to critique the 'Manchester model' of regeneration and to assert the role of suburbia in future debates concerned with change in the city.

## 1.5 The Structure of the Thesis

In order to achieve the aims stated above, this thesis is divided into nine chapters, which I briefly introduce here.

The current chapter, **Chapter One** introduces the topic and justifies its study, identifying a gap in the literature relative to how suburbs are experienced, represented and imagined as 'real' everyday places. It then defines the questions and aims of this research and introduces the field of study: of the city of Manchester. The following three chapters lay out the theoretical dimensions of this study.

**Chapter Two** explains the theoretical tools needed to understand suburbia as a lived experience. In so doing, I develop a place-based approach that examines the distinctive characteristics of suburban place. This approach aims to understand the different ways that people experience their daily lives in the suburbs and allows me to unfold suburbs' physical and spatial properties. My main intention is to highlight the foundational role of place in crafting everyday suburban life. For this reason, I undertake a critical review of the theoretical intersections between everyday life and place theory. Accordingly, I use the notion of 'everyday suburban life' to refer to the way of life conducted in the suburbs. In turn, I engage with suburban place as a contested yet integral and inescapable constituent of being in the world. Thus, I address the notion of place identity and discuss the formulation of boundaries in everyday life. This framework allows me to study embodied engagement with suburban place, and thus the everyday suburban interactions that this implies.

**Chapter Three** lays the foundations for a more flexible conceptualisation of suburban culture - a practical notion that underpins the theoretical foundations of the research and which I address through the theoretical framework of cultural consumption. This chapter thus delves more deeply into the theory of culture to propose a re-evaluation of the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption. Subsequently, it discusses the position of the suburbs in the public discourse and shows how various popular representations have contributed to the 'suburban state of mind'. At the end of

this chapter, I provide an account of the current state of the academic research on the suburbs. Essentially, I build upon these arguments in order to challenge those debates that reproduce conventional understandings of what it actually means to live in suburbia.

**Chapter Four** links the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapters and focuses on the study of festivals, through the lens of place theory. This chapter is broadly positioned within Critical Events Studies (CES) and asserts that suburban festivity should be treated more seriously as sites for understanding suburbia. In this chapter, I define what a festival is and then I proceed to discuss the study of festivity, notably in a suburban context. In order to contextualise how social relations can be developed during suburban festivals, I draw on the theoretical construct of social capital. Following that I explain festivals' relation to place identity, and I focus on their transformative potentials. The concept of 'festivalisation' allows me to discuss the influence of festivals on suburban place.

**Chapter Five** discusses the methodological considerations of this research. First, I outline the research philosophy that guides this study, and I consider how an interpretative phenomenological approach can contribute towards a broader understanding of the way that cultural consumption comes to shape people's relationship with the city. Second, I consider my own role within the research (reflexivity) and my ontological assumptions. Third, I explain the main methods that support the epistemological implementation of my research (cultural mapping and semi-structured interviews). Fourth, I discuss how I became familiar with the field and how access was negotiated. Fifth, I introduce the case studies, presenting their geographical and demographic specificities and general information about the three festivals. Sixth, I describe the research process and the thematic approach that was utilised in the analysis of my data, following the conceptual framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Finally, I address issues of validity and reliability and I provide a synopsis of my ethical considerations when conducting this research.

The empirical findings of my research are presented in the discussions in Chapters Six to Eight. **Chapter Six** deals with the way in which suburban place is shaped by its distinctive characteristics, spatial formation and place identity. My aim is to further unpack the dynamics between everyday suburban life, place and identity and address the suburban condition as manifested spatially in Didsbury, Levenshulme and Rochdale. Thus, I decode the physical organisation of the three case studies in order to (1) explore the association between people and their immediate environment; (2) identify the subjective and practical ways in which people make sense of their material surroundings; (3) examine the relationship between suburban place and place identity; (4) understand the spatial distribution of daily activities and the everyday use of space; (5) delineate some of the complex nexus of spatial relations played out through the rhythmic geographies of everyday life. This allows me to study embodied engagement with suburban place, and thus the everyday suburban interactions that this implies; enabling me to consider what is fundamental, yet unaddressed question in discussions of place-based sustainability, with regards to how people experience, perceive and relate to suburban place and how does this relate to their everyday life, which is one of the main questions my research addresses.

**Chapter Seven** further addresses the role of cultural consumption in constructing the complexity of everyday suburban life. My aim in this chapter is to (1) discuss the role of culture in everyday suburban life and to (2) evaluate the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption. In particular, I examine the way people consume culture, both in urban and suburban contexts and how various patterns of cultural consumption come to shape people's relationship to the city, which is the second question that my research addresses. In this way, I (1) provide an alternative approach to the study of suburban culture(s); (2) uncover suburban cultural complexity; and (3) illustrate the ways in which the consumption of culture shapes everyday suburban experience. In doing so, I recognise the value of culture outside the spotlight of the city centre, presenting evidence of a significant 'hidden' culture associated with everyday suburban life. Finally, I acknowledge the role of everyday spaces of cultural consumption

in the suburbs by focusing on the practice of culture in 'mundane', ‘taken-for-granted’ and 'inconspicuous' spaces.

**Chapter Eight** discusses the significance of suburban festivals and seeks to understand their broader geographical and socio-cultural context. The basic theoretical premise of this chapter is that such festivals operate as sites in which people can negotiate their relationship and attachment to place. Given this, the purpose of this chapter is to offer a further insight into the role of suburban festivals in place-making. Rather than simply recognise their use in place-making strategies, my aims are (1) to illustrate the extent to which they contribute to place identity, (2) to evaluate the extent to which different types of festivals and activities contribute forms of social capital and whether these might be inclusive or exclusive; and (3) highlight their intrinsic value to suburban place by critically assessing how different types of festivals address various realities on the ground. This chapter touches upon issues of participation, co-creation and inclusion in more formal versions of cultural consumption. In particular, it is concerned with the way that particular venues and activities may function as social spaces which enhance inter-cultural exchange and foster transformations of different kinds - both on an individual and collective basis. This chapter is concerned with the implications of this for the question of suburban place identity. By looking at how people interact within the festival environment, the analysis highlights how suburban festivals differ from those that take place in the city and therefore the specific importance of place-based connotations. Finally, it shows how festivalisation influences the spatial and temporal transformations that take place in the suburbs during festivals, offering a new perspective regarding their socio-cultural impacts and their role in shaping suburban place.

**Chapter Nine**, the conclusion, presents the theoretical and methodological contributions of my research; clarifying the main findings and the extent to which the research question is addressed. The chapter concludes with the possible limitations of this research whilst identifying areas of future inquiry, with my core intention being to highlight the benefits to be had from understanding the role of the suburbs as an everyday space of cultural consumption.

# CHAPTER TWO

## A Place-based Approach to the Everyday Life of the Suburbs

### 2.1 Introduction

The everyday life of the suburbs is a topic that has not been adequately theorised in discussions of place-based sustainability. There is, in fact, no systematic theory of place that addresses sufficiently the suburban condition. As I pointed out in Chapter One, quite a significant section of such literature reveals a systematic denial of the place value of the suburbs (Corcoran, 2010). Even if it is generally accepted that the suburbs hold an important position regarding geographic, political, and economic accounts, the notion of place has been noticeably absent in their conception. Consequently, urban scholars and policymakers have "traditionally, tediously and condescendingly" failed to recognise the existence of place in the suburbs (Smith, 1978: 117), ignoring the complexity and ambiguity of their socio-cultural landscape. A common critique is that they are fragmented into disparate sites of socialisation, and rarely possess physical public centres in which people can meet (Martinson, 2001; Chiras and Wann, 2003). Apparently, such studies have neglected the empirical realities of the suburbs and the importance of everyday spaces of social interaction in peoples' lives. Additionally, few empirical studies have measured the impact of urban design on place attachment in the suburbs (Lindsay, Williams, and Dair, 2010; Lovejoy, Handy, and Mokhtarian, 2010; Arnberger and Eder, 2012). Although recent contributions have tried to theorise local suburban infrastructure (see: Addie, 2016), what has not yet been explored in depth is how people experience, perceive and relate to suburban place and how does this relate to their everyday life, which is one of the main questions my research addresses.

In order to shed light to the complexity of suburban Manchester, my research specifically deals with the way in which suburban place is shaped by its distinctive characteristics, spatial formation and place identity. Ryan and Fitzpatrick (1996) believe that the broader use of spatial references can enable researchers to explore the role of spatiality as a

dynamic process of contested meanings and actions. This entails an understanding of the historical circumstances and the everyday practices that have been shaped over the course of time. I argue that the mainstream representations of suburbia in academic and popular imagination (see: Chapter Three) have led to an "oblivion and a misunderstanding" (de Certeau, 1988: 93) of the practices that take place on an everyday basis, excluding a wide range of experiences, and therefore neglecting the essential meaning of suburban life. As a response, this thesis engages closely with the ways people conduct their everyday lives in the suburbs and focuses on the relationship between suburban place and the consumption of culture.

Overall, the literature recognises the importance that places have on the way people identify themselves and interact with each other. However, numerous scholars have expressed concerns about lack of conceptual clarity in research on place. Patterson and Williams (2005) suggest that there remains no systematic theory of place. They call for an academic openness to alternative**,** yet more coherent conceptions of place, including a more thorough understanding of place experience, attachment, and identity. In this context, the main purpose of this chapter is to present a place-based approach to the suburbs that focuses on people's environmental experiences: the first-hand engagements within the geographical world where they typically live (Seamon, 1979)**.**

Central to my approach is the assumption that suburbia can be realised as a distinct entity, a lived and place-based experience that is in contrast to the city experience. My intention is to clarify the role and contribution of suburban place in the formulation of everyday life, and the way cultural consumption practices relate to their place identity. Bearing this in mind, in this thesis, the notion of place provides the geographical context in which suburban life literally takes place. In this way, suburban place is considered "not as a passive backdrop to human relations, but reconceptualised in political and economic formations, social relations and identities" (Jayne, 2006: 37) and as a source of individual and spatial identity (Cresswell, 2004; Holloway and Hubbard, 2014). In these regards, a phenomenological perspective is invaluable, because one of its central concerns is the

identification of foundational structures, through which human life is given coherence and continuity (Seamon, 2012).

Previous studies note that the character and quality of a place results from the accumulation of people's experience and interaction with that particular setting (e.g. Cresswell, 2004; Malpas, 2006; Casey, 2009). Although some scholars do not necessarily agree about the particularities of this relationship, according to Donohoe (2017), there is a broad consensus that a place is not just a site or a spot on the map, rather something that is lived and, therefore, its meaning and value cannot be separated from the factor of human experience. Taking this into account, my practical engagement with suburbia draws on Seamon's (1979, 2012) phenomenological approach to place: such an approach enables the study of people-place experiences as structures of consciousness in "any environmental locus that gathers individual or group meanings, intentions, and actions spatially" (Seamon, 2012: 3). Given this, I explore people's experiences and perceptions of place in the context of everyday suburban life. This alternative approach to suburbia demands a closer examination of the distinctive characteristics of suburban place, including "an appreciation of both the phenomenology and politics of place and a broader understanding of how practice is implicated in the constitution of place" (Pink, 2012: 88). Such a conceptualisation offers a way of understanding cultural practices as part of places.

In what follows, I draw from key elements from the field of Human Geography and I focus on the theoretical tools needed to understand suburbia as a lived experience. The discussion takes its point of departure from the concept of everyday life, which effectively consists of an entry point for understanding the connections between suburban place and cultural consumption, an aim that sits in the heart of this thesis. However, I would like to point out that this chapter is not intended to be a full review of highly diverse concepts such as 'everyday life', 'place' or 'space'. Rather, I draw from the relevant literature to propose that suburbs are not only places with ordinary and repetitive social lives, but they are also places where various cultural practices are undertaken on a daily basis. This approach is important to this thesis, since it

demonstrates that everyday suburban life begins “below the thresholds at which visibility begins” (de Certeau, 1988: 93). It is not only shaped by the visions of urban elites but - just as significantly - through the everyday practices of people. In this context, my phenomenological approach to the suburbs aims to re-establish a sense of meaningfulness around these places and challenges some of the conventional understandings of what it actually means to live in suburbia. As such, it is designed to understand the city as it is lived and culturally experienced by the people who live in suburban Manchester.

## 2.2 A Theoretical Approach to Everyday Suburban Life

Even if the notion of everyday life has been relatively absent in suburban research, it has been an important focus of enquiry in various theoretical debates in the social sciences. Many scholars have thus systematically attempted to analyse and understand its ongoing and complex dynamics (e.g. Simmel, 1971; Berger and Luckmann, 1972; Bourdieu, 1977; Benjamin, 1982; de Certeau, 1988; Lefebvre, 2003). For example, Shove et al. (2007: 2) refer to the “vast amount of scholarship” that has emerged from sociologists and anthropologists addressing the materiality of everyday life, Cresswell (2004) states that a geographer can learn a lot about a place by reflecting on its everyday experience, and Kalekin-Fishman (2013) critically reviews theories specific to the analysis of everyday life, tracing evidence of its salience in general sociological theory.

Everyday life is the taken-for-granted flow of social existence. It has tended to be associated with the mundane, routinised, habitual and hidden - or at least unnoticed - aspects of public and private life (Pink, 2012) and consists of a set of specialised activities performed by people in an embodied and temporal time-space routine (Seamon, 1979). However, it is not just a process characterised by dull compulsion and repetition, but is something that can change unexpectedly and transform incrementally. In this sense, everyday life is not to be seen “as something that is static, but a dynamic and changing site” (Pink, 2012: 28).

Everyday life possesses a dialectical and ambiguous nature. “On the one hand, it is the realm increasingly colonised by the commodity, and hence shrouded in all kinds of mystification, fetishism, and alienation […] On the other hand, paradoxically, everyday life is likewise a primal site for meaningful social resistance (Merrifield 2002: 79). This ambiguity has led commentators to argue that “everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others” (de Certeau, 1988: xii). Even if it is not a self-explanatory concept and may carry misleading connotations, such a framework can have several positive defining features. Sztompka (2008: 31-32) lists these:

> First […] everyday life is the observable manifestation of social existence, and therefore it always includes relationships with other people. It always occurs in a social context […] Second, everyday life events are repeated and not unique. Sometimes they are even cyclical, rhythmic, turning into routines. They occur day after day, month after month, or at certain fixed moments during the year. Examples include: eating out on Friday evenings, taking trips to the country at weekends, attending church on Sundays, vacationing in summer, skiing in winter, sowing in spring and harvesting in autumn, celebrating Easter and Christmas, fasting on Good Friday and dancing on New Year’s eve. Third, very often everyday life assumes ritual, dramatized, stylized forms following certain un-reflexive, deeply internalized scripts. This is, for example, typical for habitual actions: exercising in the morning, reading the newspaper at breakfast, going out for a lunch break, having a drink after returning from work. Fourth, everyday life engages our body – biological endowment, physical prowess, and emotions – with all its strength and frailties, potential and limitations […] Fifth, everyday life is usually localised in space, it occurs at certain locations – at home, in the street, in the church, on the athletic field – and the character of the site significantly determines the character, style, form and content of social events. Sixth, episodes of everyday life have a certain temporal duration – they last longer or shorter in time […] Seventh, everyday life often flows un-

> reflexively, following habits and routines of which the actors are not fully aware.

Sztompka's final point links the understanding of everyday life to studies of place, sense of place, and identity (Perkins and Thorns, 2012). Such methodological hints are of particular pertinence to the suburbs, since "in the everyday enactment of the world there are always immanent potentials for new possibilities of life" (Harrison, 2000: 498). In this thesis, everyday suburban life is seen as a highly sensual and complex activity, where "different encounters with objects and materialities, peculiar sensations and ineffable impressions may be experienced" (Edensor, 2008: 123). In order to illustrate how suburbia is experienced and performed daily, I use the metaphor of 'place-ballet' (Seamon, 1980). The latter highlights the possibility that "everyday habitual routines, as they are regularly unfolding in physical space, can transform that space into a lived place with distinctive character and ambience" (Moores, 2012: 52-56). This sort of lived emplacement is understood to be a complex and dynamic process via which a place and its meanings either shift or remain the same (Seamon, 2012). I argue that through the daily activities, encounters, movements, performances and habitual embodiments that people experience while they enact their everyday lives in the suburbs, they get to know a place and to feel part of it (Tuan, 1977). Essentially, people contribute to the particular constitution of a place through bodily actions, daily encounters and cultural practices. At the same time, those actions, encounters, and practices contribute to people's sense of lived involvement and identification with that place. In such a way, lived bodies and places "interanimate each other" (Casey 2009: 327). Examples can be traced in various mundane practices such as going to work, driving home, walking in the park, visiting the city centre, shopping in the local supermarket, and cooking a meal, but also in more extraordinary cultural consumption activities such as participating in a festival. To this end, Pink (2012) advocates that everyday life is appropriately understood through a theory of practice and place. These two concepts are at the heart of a number of twentieth and twenty-first century discussions of everyday life, and offer routes for researching various "processes such as consumption, innovation and activism through

which everyday transformations become ‘visible’, and which may or may not lead us to a sustainable future” (ibid: 28). I therefore use the notion of ‘everyday suburban life’ to refer to the way of life conducted in the suburbs in the form of practices.

As a preface to understanding suburbia, the following section considers place theory as a means to interrogate the construction of everyday life in suburbia. By drawing on humanist geographical research and its more recent critical contributions, I develop a theoretical framework that allows me to examine how different individuals in the suburbs give meaning to their lives. In particular, I look at their place-based understandings and the ways in which they relate and interact with and within various spaces of everyday interaction. Such an approach helps me achieve a better understanding of the impact of cultural consumption on everyday suburban life and challenge the orthodoxy that has come to be associated with suburbia (see further: Chapter Three).

## 2.3 Place Theory

Building upon theories and methods of Human Geography, this research’s ultimate aim is to expand our understanding of everyday suburban life. Traditionally, Human Geography has been understood as emphasising the uniqueness of place, whilst rejecting universal laws (Satoshi, 2007). As such, it reflects upon geographical phenomena (variously referred to as sense of place, place attachment, and/or place identity) and looks at the various ways people relate and interact with their environment (physical and socio-cultural), as well as, their experiences, feelings and ideas regarding place and space (Tuan, 1977; Sapkota, 2017). Consequently, the theoretical approach that underpins my thesis reflects upon the distinctive geography of the suburbs and challenges the orthodoxy of less nuanced mainstream representations of suburbia. My purpose is to achieve a better understanding of the everyday ways people experience their lives the suburbs and in relation to their cultural offerings. This being the case, my intention is to deal with questions of place and lived experience.

‘Place’ can be commonly understood as one of the most foundational concepts for human dwelling in the world (Malpas, 1999; Ingold, 2000; Cresswell, 2007). Consequently, it has long been a question of great interest in a wide range of fields since the 1960s, such as human geography (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977), sociology (Gieryn, 2000), anthropology (Ingold, 1995), urban planning (Mugerauer, 1994), environmental phycology (Najafi and Kamal, 2012) and philosophy (Malpas, 2006). In geographical research a 'place' is usually defined as a “space which people have made meaningful” (Cresswell, 2004: 7) and incorporates the natural settings, within which people conduct their everyday lives. What predominantly characterises a ‘place’ is its surrounding physical environment that consists of an “environmental locus in and through which the actions, experiences, intentions, and meanings” of an individual or a community are drawn together spatially (Seamon, 2014: 11). A place is “not a bit of space, nor another word for landscape or environment, it is not a figment of individual experience, nor a social construct […] It is, instead, the foundation of being both human and nonhuman; experience, actions, and life itself begin and end with place” (Relph, 2008: 36).

What it is interesting for my purposes is the fact that the notion of place has been variously considered as a vital ingredient of ‘successful’ cities; long been associated to discussions of local and place-based sustainability (Stefanovic, 2000; Lewicka, 2011; Jacobs and Malpas, 2013). Urban planners, place-makers, architects, and designers around the world have developed various approaches to place that are based on the hypothesis that a positive social and ecological change can be achieved in the everyday life of the city, through the revitalisation of city streets and urban neighbourhoods (e.g. Jacobs, 1961; Larsen and Johnson, 2016). In their view, greater human-place connections can lead to more ecologically and sustainable cities. Yet, as Robertson (2017) comments, these approaches to place remain fluid, at once appealing and ambivalent. Following Robertson, I argue that a phenomenological approach to ‘place’ can be considered as more appropriate to capture the complexities of the suburbs, whilst calling into question the functional and rigid approaches that have dominated the ‘sustainable’ city.

Given that most definitions of place seem quite arbitrary in their construction, phenomenological research has demonstrated that place is a multivalent and complex structure in its existential constitution (Casey, 2009; Seamon, 2012). Indeed, a place can imply "a portion of space in which people dwell together, but it can also mean 'rank' in a list ('in the first place'), temporal ordering ('took place'), or 'position' in a social order ('knowing your place')" (Agnew and Duncan, 2014: 1). As Tuan (1974: 245) remarks

> a place can be as small as the corner of a room or as large as the earth itself: that the earth is our place in the universe is a simple fact of observation to homesick astronauts [...] Geographers tend to think of place as having the size of a settlement: the plaza within it may be counted a place, but usually not the individual houses, and certainly not that old rocking chair by the fireplace.

In consideration of both the variations in scale that a place can entail - ranging from a single room to a building, from a neighbourhood to a city, from a landscape to a region (Relph, 1976) - and the complexity surrounding the notion, this thesis avoids a narrow approach to place. On the contrary, it acknowledges that places do not come with memories attached as if by nature, but rather they are the "contested terrain of competing definitions" (Harvey, 2006: 309). Place is a fluid term, shaped both objectively and subjectively by institutional forces and social relationships (Massey, 1994; Hubbard, Kitchin, and Valentine, 2004). From this perspective, place is a notion that not only emphasises subjectivity and experience, but also directs much of human agency. It is considered a conceptual and practical tool because, by its very nature, it offers a way to portray the experienced wholeness of people-in-world (Seamon, 2012).

Taking into account the conceptual shortcomings implied in the idea of place as used by urban evangelists, I have opted for an phenomenological approach that looks at how people experience their lives. In other words, this approach intends to capture the instability and complexities of suburban place from the perspective of those who dwell and make that place on an everyday basis. In order to best contextualise the geographical and phenomenological rationale for my thesis, in what follows, I briefly review how ideas

of place have changed since the 1970s. My objective is to substantiate my phenomenological approach to the suburbs by taking under consideration the limitations highlighted by the main criticisms towards the humanistic approach to place.

## 2.4 Evolving Notions of Place

In the early 1970s, the human geographers Relph (1976), Tuan (1977), Seamon (1979), Buttimer (1980) and Casey (1987), building on the phenomenological insights of philosophers like Husserl (2002a, 2002b), Heidegger (1967) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), were the first to understand the need to explore places in terms of their everyday lived dimensions and experiences. These authors saw in places the fundamental condition of *being human*, thus focusing their attention on the various constitutive elements of everyday life (such as everyday practices, mobilities, place attachment, place identity and social and environmental ethics). However, during the 1970s little work was done in relationship to phenomena such as power, exclusion, resistance, justice, and political process (Seamon and Lundberg, 2017). Consequently, the humanistic approach to place has too often misunderstood or ignored various forms of individual and/or group diversity, neglecting the economic, socio-cultural and gender differences of various social groups, such as women, refuges, children, LGBT, homeless and so forth.

This is exactly why the early phenomenological work on place was criticised on more than one grounds. The most major critics emphasised methodological, ontological, conceptual, ideological, and ethical concerns (e.g. Rose, 1995; Creswell, 2004; Massey, 2005), condemning the phenomenological approach to place as largely static, bounded, exclusionary, and reactionary (Lewicka, 2011). For example, during the 1980s, quantitative geographers criticised humanistic geography for its weak methodology; they considered that the focus on individual subjective experience has little validity and trustworthiness in findings (Satoshi, 2007). As a result, the humanistic approach to place was denounced as subjectivist, masculinist, voluntarist and essentialist: one that is incorporating often conflicting epistemological and ontological assumptions (Patterson and Williams, 2005) and ignores the lived complexity and sociological richness that is

grounded in specific socio-cultural and historical contexts (Cresswell, 2013; Sapkota, 2017).

Today, there seems to be a consensus among social scientists that the notion of place relates and responds to larger socio-cultural, political, and environmental contexts. In the wake of the 'new cultural geography' (see: Cloke, Philo and Sadler, 1991; Adams, Hoelscher and Till, 2001), many researchers shifted their attention to feminist, Marxist and poststructuralist interpretations of place and space. For example, feminist geographers who developed important and critical discussions on place and everyday life; focused on women's agency in the 'hidden' spaces of urban, suburban and rural landscapes. Dyck (2005) reveals the existence of neighbourhood support networks that act daily to transform people's understanding of the spatiality of everyday life. Marxists scholars believe that the humanistic approach to place is favouring human agency at the expense of societal structure; neglecting various forms of power relations and the underlying economic and political dynamics that shape places and people's everyday lives (Ley and Samuels, 1978; Peet, 2000). Finally, post-structural scholars focused on the way places relate and respond to their wider social and environmental contexts. They argued that even if places have, indeed, a geographical importance, the crucial theoretical and practical aim should focus on finding ways "whereby places could better incorporate diversity and partake in constructive interconnections and exchanges with other places" (Seamon and Lundberg 2017:9).

Essentially, these critics opened up new possibilities for nuanced interpretations regarding the highly diverse geographies of cities and their suburbs, demonstrating how axes of identity never operate outside the context of place (Rose, 1999a, 1999b). Instead, class, gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, culture, lifestyle, identity and consumption patterns are bound up with the particular places within which people live (Waitt, 2008). Bearing this in mind, I argue that the way a suburb is experienced by an individual is directly related to these axes. My conceptual and methodological approach seeks to incorporate different dimensions of everyday suburban life within specific socio-cultural contexts and historical circumstances. As such it examines daily experiences and

meanings and tries to move beyond the aforementioned critiques by probing specific lived situations in current phenomenological research in the suburbs. To this end, how do people experience their place of residence in the everyday of three suburbs of Manchester, and how does cultural consumption practices relate to their place identity? The following discussion highlights the importance of the 'relational turn' and the lineage of philosophical approaches to space in Human Geography and the social sciences more broadly. I focus on recent phenomenological research and the work of Massey (1994, 2005), in developing an analytical approach that allows me to considerate the complexity of everyday suburban life. Suburbs are constantly under construction through shared practices and understandings.

## 2.5 The Relational Turn and its Importance in Suburban Research

As I have established above, research into place has a long history. Despite the critics the literature on place is still growing. Over the last two decades, by drawing on real-world experiences scholars have tried to understand how lived emplacement and related geographical phenomena like community attachment, place identity and other sustaining or debilitating processes, are shaping places. For example, Stefanovic (2000) uses the notion of place to rethink sustainability. Simms (2008) looks at the shifting meanings of place and time-space dynamics in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in Pittsburgh (USA). Seamon (2014, 2015) identifies an interconnected web of generative processes by which places evolve, devolve, or remain more or less the same and examines the lived dimensions of place to suggest how phenomenological work on place might contribute to a rejuvenated humanistic geography. Finally, Robertson (2017: 2) reviews the shifting ideas around place. Reiterating the importance of rethinking place and its experience in urban theory, urban dwelling, and design, she calls geographers to "think through the discursive, material, and temporal particularities of place experience as well as the ethics and politics of 'sustainable' urban dwelling and city-making". This is the direction that my thesis follows in the analysis of two suburbs of Manchester and one satellite town. As she notes

> since the 1970s, emphasis has shifted from bounded views of place to relational and progressive conceptualisations. More recently, geographers and other scholars have emphasised that humans are engaged in complex human-nonhuman entanglements. In the context of arguments and empirical moves to make more sustainable and resilient cities, these shifts have implications for the ethics and politics of place, sense of place, and place-based practices. Continuing empirical work by geographers (and other urban scholars) to explore how place is understood, made, and experienced in more-than-human worlds therefore remains important. However, we also need to consider reframing existing conceptualisations of 'place'.

The relational nature of space has been understood in many different ways and within a variety of philosophical traditions. Ingold (2011), for example, has contributed to defining a 'relational place' by emphasising its dynamism. Places are "topics joined in stories of journeys actually made" he states (ibid: 154). In these regards, perhaps, Massey (1994, 2005) conveys the most comprehensive approach in place theory. In her work she calls for a progressive or relational view of place that takes under consideration the complexities of the politics of place. For Massey (2005) places are best considered as relational, fluid, and open-ended. From her point of view

> [If place is] thought of in the context of space-time and is formed out of social interrelations at all scales, then one view of a place is as a particular articulation of those relations, a particular moment in those networks of social relations and understandings [...] The identities of place are always unfixed, contested and multiple. And the particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counter-position to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to that "beyond". Places viewed in this way are open and porous. [...] All attempts to institute horizons, to establish boundaries, to secure the identity of places, can in this sense therefore be seen to be attempts to stabilize the meaning of particular

> envelopes of space-time. Such attempts [...] are constantly the site of social contest, battles over the power to label space-time, to impose the meaning to be attributed to a space, for however long or short a span of time. (Massey (1994: 5)

Massey, essentially, tries to tackle the epistemological and ontological issues in relation to place, space and people. Her conceptualisation of place is tied to her notion of space, and recognises its open and porous boundaries, as well as the myriad linkages and interdependencies that exist between them. Space is a “simultaneity of stories-so-far” and places are “collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space” (Massey, 2005: 130). Likewise, “places are not as points or areas on maps”, but are “integrations of space and time”, located at the complex intersections and outcomes of particular arrangements of power that are profoundly woven into place and operate across many spatial scales and social relations (individual, institutional, and material). In a similar fashion, Cresswell (2003: 26), building on Massey’s definition, suggests that

> to think of place as an intersection – a particular configuration of happenings – is to think of place in a constant sense of becoming through practice and practical knowledge. Place is both the context for practice – we act according to more or less stable schemes of perception – and a product of practice – something that only makes sense as it is lived.

Given the above considerations, a place, whether referring to the city or a suburban area, is constantly under construction through societal conditions, economic operations and shared practices, and understandings located in the everyday. It is never completed, finished or bounded, but always in a process of becoming (Creswell, 2004). As space is imbued with particular meanings (Tuan, 1977), “place, in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct” (Harvey, 2006: 293), contingent on certain circumstances, social practices, relationships and experiential trajectories (Massey, 2005). In such a way, places constitute “spatial formations of continuously changing composition, character

and reach" (Amin, 2004: 34), they are being remade on a daily basis (de Certeau, 1988; Massey, 2005), and are intrinsic to shared social experiences (Andrews and Leopold, 2013). As Perkins and Thorns (2012: 74) note, "the important argument here is that we all live somewhere, and a place to live allows us to connect with people, the wider community and natural environment, and for many of the world's people, the source of their livelihood".

This thesis underlines the need to consider suburban place as a complex field of practice that plays a central role in the production of social relations. Accordingly, I explore forms and manifestations of sociability in the streets of the suburbs. My approach is influenced by a series of recent studies that highlight the importance of suburban centralities to current developmental challenges, and the key role played by specific street layouts in sustaining the everyday life of suburbia (Vaughan, 2015; Griffiths, 2015; Remali et al., 2015). Here, the spatial meaning of particular streets (e.g. high streets, culs-de-sac) relates to their economic and socio-cultural significance in serving local life, offering different types of engagement (Palaiologou, 2015). In this sense, the streetscape is seen as a distinctive form of social space (Goffman, 1973; Tonkiss, 2005) and its formation as a key component in understanding the performative, affective and non-representational nature of suburbia. So for example, I address the role of high streets "as signifiers of communal identity and as subsidiary nodes in economic topography" (Griffiths, 2015: 32). This necessitates a "comprehensive account […] with both the tangibility of what high streets do in socio-economic terms, as well as the intangibility of what they mean to local people" (ibid). However, it can equally be stated that the high street overshadows the rest of the suburbs, neglecting the qualities of its residential hinterlands. In addressing this, Frumkin, Lawrence, and Richard (2004) found that people's built environments shape their travel behaviour and bodies, arguing that particular streets, such as culs-de-sac, encourage the opposite kind of behaviour from the designer's intention (see also: Montgomery, 2013). Currently, very little is known about how people accentuate suburb's spatial organisation during their everyday lives and whether there are blurred distinctions between different spaces and various cultural

practices such as consumption, work or leisure. This relationship remains unclear up to date. I contend that this is related to the capacity of particular everyday places and spaces to reflect a suburban place identity.

## 2.6 Suburban Place Identity

There is an inevitable reciprocity between place and people (Relph, 1976) and, hence, any place can serve as a source of identity, both on individual and collective levels (see: Relph, 1976; Higgins and Nicol, 1998; Gentry, 2006). Following Seamon (2012), this thesis accepts the claim that place is an integral part of personal and group place identity. This is also related to the widely accepted hypothesis among many scholars (e.g. Relph, 1976; Stedman, 2002; Smaldone, Harris, and Sanyal, 2005) that places are defined on the basis of three broad yet interrelated components that provide them with a particular meaning. This is socially and culturally constructed on an interrelated basis between (1) the physical settings, (2) the individual's internal psychological and social processes and attributes tied to social and cultural factors, and (3) the activities and rituals that people or groups enact. I argue that without addressing the significance of people's experience, any form of assessment to determine the suburban condition would be insufficient, since places are experiential processes and cannot be separated from the people who invest meaning in them (Soja, 1996). In order to understand suburbs as a lived experience, it is necessary to think about the way in which their place identity is constructed.

Place identity has long been of symbolic importance in place theory. Phenomenologically speaking, the identity of a place relates to a reciprocal process whereby people recognise and associate self-consciously with a particular place. This includes the way people engage with its physical characteristics and spatial organisation, but also the social relations that are being developed through the course of everyday life. Through the combination of these elements, people come to feel part of a place and associate their personal and communal identity with that place (Seamon, 2014). In its simplest form, place identity encompasses the idea that a place can operate as a repository for the relationships and feelings that give meaning and purpose to people´s everyday lives (Giuliani and Feldman, 1993; Williams and Vaske, 2003).

What is interesting is that the notion of place identity is not only confined by the natural and physical boundaries of a place, but also addresses its perceptual aspects, namely the human experience. Following this, Petrilli (1993: 150) argues that

> every single town has its own identity which can be recognized not only by the mutual relationship between its buildings and its spatial context - the constructions, the streets, the squares - but also by the existing bonds that exist between those forms, the individuals and the social groups making use of them.

However, given the fluid and contested nature of everyday life, people develop multiple and shifting identities in relation to other individuals and social groups. In this performance, they play a variety of roles and present themselves to others, within the frames of everyday life. In such a way, they act and perform in particular ways and in a variety of temporal settings - front and back stages (see further: Goffman, 1959). On a daily basis, individuals shift between these two stages and they adjust their behaviour to their current stage. In this thesis, this distinction is related to the way in which people think about themselves in relation to their physical, social and material surroundings. With this and methodological considerations in mind, I engage with suburban place "in terms of its distinctive constitutive elements: materiality, practices, institutions and representations", acknowledging that these factors are "relational formations, integrated in far reaching interconnections and always permeated by continuities and discontinuities in time" (Kalandides, 2011: 37).

Bearing the above considerations in mind, in this thesis, suburban place is seen not only as the objective surface onto which locations are marked out, but also as a collection of individual and collective perceptions of the world represented by a "potpourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas, and related feelings about specific physical settings" (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff, 1983: 60). A suburb is not only predominantly defined by its surrounding physical environment but also it can be "interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined" (Gieryn, 2000: 465).

In other words, a suburb can be understood ambiguously as being simultaneously material, conceptual, experienced, and practiced, allowing various stands of experience and even conflicted perceptions to arise. As a result, within a single suburban landscape, “a multiplicity of places will exist that have been defined through use, imagination and cultural practice” (Stevenson, 2003: 55). The suburbs are not only a geographical space that encompass the material form of roads, houses, spaces and so forth, they also make up a unique state of mind (Hinchcliffe, 2005) with a powerful and complex cultural imaginary (Jagose et al. 2004; see: Chapter Three). Likewise, the identity of a suburb is not only determined by its physical characteristics or tangible components (e.g. infrastructure, built environment, streetscapes, etc.) and socio-spatial interactions, but it is also linked to the meanings, imaginaries, representations and affective associations held by people in relation to that particular place. In this regard, the place identity of the suburbs posits a central ontological role in this thesis and is underpinned by human experience.

Places can become significant and contested arenas of collective being and belonging ( Bonaiuto, Breakwell and Cano, 1996; Devine-Wrightand Lyons, 1997). However, as Massey (1995: 188-190) puts it, “the identity of places, indeed the very identification of places as particular places, is always in that sense temporary, uncertain, and in process”. The place identity of the suburbs cannot therefore be considered to be a fixed, consolidated, rigid and homogeneous concept. It consists of a multi-layered context that exists in a state of dialectic re-invention, and revolves around the practical knowledge of places (Relph, 1976), i.e. people’s understandings of place and the very mundane fact of knowing where to enact their lives. Accordingly, this thesis considers place identity as an umbrella term characterised by emotion, diversity, and flexibility, through which the suburbs can be understood as imagined and practiced. The importance of this approach lies in the identification of different meanings through which the organisation of space is understood in situ by different actors (see: Housley and Smith, 2011) and it is related to the way various cultural consumption practices relate to suburban place identity.

I contend that a research approach that aims to challenge the traditional representations that abound in relation to suburbia (see: Chapter One and Chapter Three) requires closer attention being paid to the significance of various spaces of consumption in reflecting a suburban place identity. In order to establish the foundations for a more thorough examination of the relationship between suburban place and the consumption of culture, I recognise that people through their cultural practices - many of them habitual and grounded in the habitual routines of everyday life - contribute to place identity. As they develop they influence and express the character and ambience of particular suburbs. To this end, a key point of consideration is whether this depends on the formulation of particular boundaries between insiders and outsiders in various places and spaces in the suburbs. It is this kind of complexity that research should seek to incorporate. In order to examine how cultural consumption practices relate to suburban place and identity, in the following section, I discuss how people in the suburbs might associate themselves with and within particular places and spaces.

## 2.7 The Formulation of Boundaries in Spaces of Suburbia

This thesis focuses on the way people negotiate their relationship and attachment to particular places and spaces in the suburbs. As I noted above, there is a tendency in the modern world to locate people and identities in particular spaces and within preconceived boundaries (Malkki, 1992). The formulation of boundaries is a pivotal characteristic of place and everyday life, since they “serve an important role in delineating one's place in the world - defining who one is as an occupant of cityspace” (Stevenson, 2003: 69). In this context, Urry (1995: 73) notes that,

> it is part of the culture of those living in a given geographical area that there is a distinction drawn between those who are local, ‘people like us’, and those who are non-local, ‘outsiders’, ‘offcomers’, etc. This binary opposition may be set up and reproduced in a variety of ways, relating to people’s very sense of belonging to a given ‘community’. A general feature of the culture of a given region or nation may be that strong distinctions are drawn between the local and the non-local.

Usually, the construction of boundaries arises through the identification of the 'other' and the negative determination of 'otherness' (Massey, 1991; Jacobs, 1996). These ideas are related to the dualism of what it means to be an 'insider' or an 'outsider' in a place (Relph, 1976). Both terms generally refer to people's and group's relations to particular everyday places and spaces; to the degree to which they feel a sense of belonging and identification with them or a sense of alienation and rupture (Relph, 1976; Seamon, 2008). In particular, an insider is usually a person who 'belongs' to a specific place. According to Hage (2006) he/she is an individual who is bodily and mentally attuned to it. His/her body usually feels 'at home' because it has historically developed in relation to it. From this perspective, the insider is someone whose habitus (i.e. their mental and bodily dispositions) have been acquired in the context of and fit into a specific place or space (see: Bourdieu, 1990). In a similar tone Relph (1976: 49-55) explains that a sense of insideness represents an unselfconscious connection to a specific place:

> To be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with the place [...] To be inside a place empathetically is to understand that place as rich in meaning, and hence to identify with it, for these meanings are not only linked to the experiences and symbols of those whose place it is, but also stem from one's own experiences.

On the contrary, an outsider is someone that has "largely unselfconscious attitude in which places are experienced as little more than a background or setting for activities" (Relph, 1976: 52). In this sense, a sense of outsideness refers to the lack of identity with or belonging to a place or a space. Nevertheless, even if these two notions seem to be in direct opposition, "the dualism of inside and outside is not quite as clear as it appears at first sight" (Relph, 1976: 49). On the one hand, the self-identification and inclusion of an individual as a member of 'us' opposed to 'them' develops through common cultural characteristics that connect him or her to a broader social group. On the other hand, the hetero-determination 'them' is attached to individuals or groups that hold another

identity. As a result, places and spaces can be characterised in terms of inclusion and exclusion.

Research into these issues has predominantly been concerned with people's attachments to their local environments in different settings. For example Brown, Brown and Perkins (2004) who while researching neighbourhood confidence and place attachment among newcomers and old-timers, found out that newer residents have more confidence and as high attachments to place as older ones. There are various logics of inclusion and exclusion that are played out in the socio-geographic space of a place (see: Elias and Scotson, 1994). A series of studies show how different socio-cultural groups effectively live in distinctive social worlds bounded by socio-economic status, cultural differences, and moral values, despite their close vicinity (Watt, 2009; Arthurson, 2012). Building on that, this thesis accepts the claim that the formulation of specific boundaries and the sense of insideness do not have a natural or obvious meaning, but one that is created by structural inequalities and by people with more power than others to define what is and is not appropriate in a particular place or space (Creswell, 2004). To this end, this thesis is concerned with the way various suburban experiences reflect broader societal processes and issues; focusing on the way particular boundaries (e.g. between insiders and outsiders; locals and non-locals; renters and owners; long-term and short-term residents) are (re)produced through the everyday. Are those formed solely on the basis of the physical surroundings within which people settle or they are also shaped by people's backgrounds and cultural tastes?

## 2.8 Conclusions

This thesis is about the everyday life of the suburbs and aims to challenge the boundaries that abound the traditional urban scholarship. In order to set my theoretical foundations, this chapter has sought to establish a place-based approach that examines the distinctive characteristics of suburban place, whilst acknowledging the complexity of everyday suburban life. This is the starting point for understanding suburbia as a lived experience. In the social sciences, place plays a pivotal role in exploring the relationship between humans and their environment. The literature recognises the importance that places

have on the way people identify themselves and interact with each other. Yet the opportunity for exploring suburbia in this way has been neglected for too long. In addition, even if the notion of 'place' is immensely attractive, it remains a frustratingly ambivalent concept. For this reason, I engage with suburban place as a contested, yet integral and inescapable constituent of *being* in the world. My main intention is to highlight its foundational role in crafting everyday suburban life. In this way, I want to unfold suburbs' physical and spatial properties and understand those elements that generate the street-level suburban experience.

In this thesis, suburban place plays a fundamental role in everyday social life and consists of one of the "basic elements in the ordering of [people's] experiences of the world" (Relph, 1976: 43; see also: Tuan, 1977; Seamon, 1979; Casey, 1997). The theoretical underpinnings of this chapter signify that the socio-spatial organisation of place is not only related to the physical conditions that characterise a particular suburb but is also subject to interpretation. Suburbs cannot solely be understood as static geographical and social realities, but rather must be seen to be placed-based symbolic constructions that are in the process of *becoming*. For this reason, I do not look only at their physical elements (location, density, proximity to the city centre, etc.) but also at their symbolic resonance, arguing that suburbs encapsulate a place with a distinctive identity and characteristics. Such a perspective allows me to understand the nature of the relationship between people and suburban place, providing in parallel a more thorough understanding of place identity and its relation to the consumption of culture. In such a way, I aim to enrich our knowledge of suburban geography by highlighting the "need to understand place as incorporating a lived engagement and process whereby human beings afford and are afforded by the world of places in which they find themselves" (Seamon, 2012: 3). This is close to the views of Casey (1996: 18), who argues that to "live is to live locally", and, further, that to know at all is first of all to know the place one is in. I conclude this chapter by arguing that the suburban condition can be better understood at the theoretical intersection between the practices of everyday life and suburban place. This framework allows me to study embodied engagement with

suburban place and the everyday suburban interactions that this implies. In Chapter Six, I unpack the dynamics between everyday suburban life, place and identity and I address the suburban condition as manifested spatially in Didsbury, Levenshulme and Rochdale. This allows me to study embodied engagement with suburban place, and thus the everyday suburban interactions that this implies; enabling me to consider what is fundamental, yet unaddressed question in discussions of place-based sustainability, with regards to how people experience, perceive and relate to suburban place and how does this relate to their everyday life, which is one of the main questions my research addresses.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Suburban Culture(s): A Distinct World of Meaning

### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I developed an analytical approach that examines the distinctive characteristics of suburban place and aims to understand the different ways that people experience their everyday lives in the suburbs. This chapter lays the foundations for a more flexible conceptualisation of suburban culture - a practical notion that underpins the theoretical foundations of the research - and which I address through the theoretical framework of cultural consumption. In general, the notion of cultural consumption occupies an important place in urban studies, but one that is not clearly articulated in the suburban context and academic discussions of vernacular creativity (see: Edensor et al., 2010). Even if some studies focus on the differences between urban and suburban residents' consumption patterns and residential preferences (e.g. Pisman, Allaert and Lombaerde, 2011), the scientific approach to the suburbs has, overall, failed to come to terms with the nuances of such a force on everyday suburban life. This issue has been a peripheral discussion in the literature, which has persistently neglected the context of the lived cultural experience and the significance of consumption in people's daily lives.

In what follows, I clarify what is meant by the term 'culture' in order to avoid oversimplifications and a restrictive definition and I discuss the relationship between place and cultural consumption. Subsequently, I present the position of the suburbs in public discourse, and I show how various popular representations have contributed to the lack of meaningfulness associated with the suburbs. Thereafter, I explain where this thesis sits in relation to existing research, touching upon recent discussions that have shed new light on the topic. This chapter builds upon these arguments in order to challenge those debates that reproduce conventional understandings of what it actually

means to live in suburbia. My purpose is to illustrate the ways in which the consumption of culture shapes suburbia by focusing on the role of culture in everyday suburban life (see: van Heur, 2010). My intention is to (1) reveal suburban cultural complexity, (2) address the importance of cultural consumption in the geographical examination of the suburbs, (3) provide an alternative to the established study of suburban culture, and (4) show why culture matters for places where people live and co-exist day to day. Accordingly, this chapter delves more deeply into the theory of culture to provide an alternative way of understanding suburbia, proposing a re-evaluation of the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption.

## 3.2 The Study of Suburban Culture and the Problem of Definition

In the thesis, the study of suburban culture is seen as an integral aspect of understanding the complexity of everyday suburban life. There are many different ways to think about culture: as a way of life, as the arts, or as a form of national or urban identity. However, defining culture is a notoriously difficult and complicated task (Williams, 1983; Storey, 1993; Spencer-Oatey, 2012). While this notion has been prominent in several scientific fields and systems of thought, it has been characterised as “one of the two or three more complicated words in the English language” (Williams, 1983: 87). This complexity has been highlighted by Kroeber and Kluckhohn who, as early as 1952, identified and gathered 164 definitions from other scholars. Sewell's (1999: 53-54) work eloquently explains why it is particularly difficult to provide a single definition. Cultures are “contradictory ... loosely integrated … contested … subject to constant change … [and] weakly bounded”. This creates a controversy that surrounds the validity of the concept itself. As Sewel (1999: 39) notes, “I have neither the competence nor the inclination to trace out the full range of meanings of ‘culture’ in contemporary academic discourse”. Accordingly, my aim is not to amplify the confusion surrounding the concept by adding one or more new definitions to hundreds of existing ones. Such an approach would be both limiting and misleading, whilst failing to capture the complexity of suburban life. While culture is a concept that can be problematic, it is still useful, and can be modified to address the context in question. “If […] we cannot do without a concept of culture, I

think we should try to shape it into one we can work with. We need to modify, rearticulate, and revivify the concept, retaining and reshaping what is useful and discarding what is not" (Sewel, 1999: 38).

Perhaps the most prominent guiding principle for cultural geographers can be summed up as the idea that cultures "are thought of as sets of beliefs, values and practices that are given meaning by (and give meaning to) ways of life which produce (and are reproduced through) both material and symbolic forms" (Jayne, 2006: 35). Belsey (2002: 113) offers the following definition: "culture is the inscription in stories, rituals customs, objects and practices of the meanings in circulation at a specific time and place". Thus, culture shapes historical memory and creates collective narratives and representations. Belsey's definition is useful for the purposes of this thesis since it links culture to place, while operating on several levels, including that of cultural consumption and the everyday acts of individuals and groups within a particular society (in this case, suburbia). In a broader sense, 'culture' is a form of practice shaped through the everyday experience of place, and through the negotiation of meaning (Miles and Miles, 2004). It is a process of adaptation to the physical and social environment that includes people's behavioural manifestations, consumption patterns and cultural practices and, more generally, all those elements they require to satisfy their material needs.

In this sense, this thesis rejects a functionalist perspective of culture, which views it as a relatively unchanging shared system of thoughts and practices within distinct groups of people (e.g. Parsons, 1951; Durkheim, 1954; Merton, 1968). On the contrary, it adopts a dynamic, flexible and situational approach (see: Stevenson, 2004) that views culture as a practical activity that entails agency, power relations and contradictions. Accordingly, it applies a wide definition in which "culture is what counts as culture for those who participate in it" (Mercer, 2002: 174). Essentially, I engage with culture as it is being interpreted, conceived, and ultimately practiced by people who live the suburbs. In other words, in this thesis the emphasis is on culture as it is experienced by its *'practitioners'*. This requires a focus on the practices that people undertake during their everyday lives.

My approach highlights the various ways in which peoples' relationships to culture and cultural consumption are shaped through daily experience. In doing so, it avoids the limitations derived from the codified definitions of culture, and engages with different experiences and representations derived directly from the suburban 'collective imaginary' (Castoriadis, 1987). My aim is to reinterpret what culture actually means for different people, by asking them how they experience such a complex notion in their everyday lives, since the phenomenological focus of my research is based on their life-world experiences and the ways in which they consume culture in their locality (see: Chapter Five). In the following section, I discuss how cultural consumption plays a pivotal symbolic role in identity formation, lifestyles and place (Harvey, 1989; Featherstone, 1991; Lash and Urry, 1994), and how it can have an impact on the everyday suburban experience. My approach draws from the work of Sack (1997b) who argues that in the (post-)modern world, the primary form taken by our relationship to place is often one of consumption.

## 3.3 Suburban Place and Cultural Consumption

This thesis seeks to develop a dynamic approach to the study of the suburbs by examining culture, as part of a broader set of practices associated with suburban place. Accordingly, cultural consumption is analysed as a form of practice through which a place-based experience can be accumulated. Relevant research on the suburbs suggests "the opportunity to consider this relationship through the processes of cultural capital accumulation or the expression of differentiated social identity" (Bourdieu, 1984 as cited in Askew and McGuirk, 2010: 17-18). As 'consumption' and related terms such as 'consumerism' present analytical difficulties, this chapter adopts a broader conceptualisation of consumption in terms of socio-cultural practices and views consumerism as a dominant ideological behaviour (Jansiz, 2014) and way of life (Miles, 1998).

In general, the emergence of consumption as a social phenomenon and its increasing importance in the contemporary world demonstrates the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society and economy (Featherstone, 1991; Miles, 1998; Edwards, 2000).

Lash and Urry (1994) argue that a new form of consumer citizenship has emerged in which social agents constitute themselves as citizens through the goods and services that they consume. In turn, these goods and services take the form of commodities and thereby acquire a social meaning that forms the basis of a distinction among individuals and groups (Bourdieu, 1984). In this context, the interconnection of culture, consumption and place is a corollary of a set of societal conditions characterised by Baudrillard (1998, as cited in Corrigan, 1997: 20) as "the need to need, the desire to desire".

This conceptualisation of consumption is common in classical and modern sociological thinking, as well as in the field of cultural studies. Various authors (e.g. Simmel, 1957; Bourdieu, 1984; Veblen, 1994 [1899] etc.) have studied consumption as a means of competing for social prestige and consolidating socio-economic and cultural hierarchies, suggesting that the formulation of identity is not solely based on class or place, but also on consumption patterns. In these studies, consumption is conceptualised as a practice of social differentiation and their basic argument has been that the consumption of goods reflects social status. In short, these approaches conceive of consumption as a practice of social distinction that develops across multiple social classes and beyond interpersonal connections and hierarchical structures (Sassatelli, 2007). According to Bourdieu (1984), people's desire to consume is socio-economically and culturally determined by their habitus, tastes and economic and cultural capital: i.e. the knowledge, predispositions, educational needs and competencies that are particularly appreciated in specific social environments, wherein (some) individuals can reaffirm their social existence and identity by participating in various subcultures (e.g. geeks) or counter-cultures (e.g. teddy boys, punks, skinheads, hippies). Accordingly, this thesis looks at the various consumption practices that people undertake during their everyday lives in the suburbs, aiming to highlight what they recognise as part of suburban culture. What does culture actually mean for somebody who lives in a suburb and do people have opportunities to access or consume culture on their own doorstep?

As I mentioned in Chapter One the growing economic and social role of culture has gained a significant influence on urban development (Jacobs and Weiss Hanrahan, 2005; Russo and Borg, 2010). In parallel, scholars claim that the increasing commodification of culture plays a central role in understanding the post-industrial urban transformation (e.g. O' Connor and Wynne, 1996; Gotham, 2002). Likewise, sociological literature at the intersection of culture and consumption increasingly emphasises the importance of cultural consumption in shaping the contours of social locations and relations (Katz-Gerro, 2004). For example, Isherwood and Douglas (1979: 57) note that "consumption is the very arena in which culture is fought over and licked into shape", and Jameson (1979: 139) emphasises that "culture is the very element of consumer society itself [...] everything is mediated by culture". On this basis, at the core of my argument lies the assumption that suburban place can be experienced *through* cultural consumption. In turn, through this process people are able to renegotiate their symbolic relationship to the city.

However, a comprehensive examination of such an idiosyncratic and multifaceted phenomenon not only entails a cultural dimension, but also requires an integration of different aspects of consumption as well. For this reason, I do not engage with cultural consumption as a solely structural and ideological norm, but as a form of cultural practice that is manifested in particular spaces and, at the same time, reflect a suburban place identity, particular tastes and, potentially, contribute to the formulation of boundaries between insiders and outsiders (see: Chapter Two). In this light, Bailey et al. (2004) state that cultural forms of consumption can actively enhance and enliven local communities. Given this, a diverse literature exists which examines the socio-cultural construction of suburban homes and their role as sites of consumption (Dowling, 1996; Madigan and Munro, 1996; Perkins, Thorns, and Winstanley, 2008). Nevertheless, there is a strong sense in the literature that examples of cultural consumption (e.g. festivals) do not manage to achieve this end (Quinn, 2005; see: Chapter Four). Equally, Finkel et al., (2017: 4) note that "creative spaces can operate as sites where claims to cultural citizenship can potentially be contested by marginalised identities such as sexual minorities (Yue, 2007)

and people with disabilities (Darcy and Taylor, 2009)”. These issues are further assessed in this thesis.

Furthermore, theories around the cultural geography of creativity have given new life to negative perceptions of the suburbs as culturally ‘isolated’ (Gibson, 2011). This has led to an emerging consensus among many scholars that the suburbs are economically and creatively sterile places (Phelps, 2010), and to an overarching assumption that everyday spaces in the suburbs lack the inspiration and ‘authenticity’ found in the downtown core (Hracs, 2009). Usually, their role has been defined as secondary to that of inner-city areas, or even as marginal for the ‘real’ city business (Phelps and Parsons, 2003). As a result, they are viewed as localities little concerned with culture, creativity and cultural production. Of particular relevance to the aims of this thesis, Duxbury (2008) identifies substantial knowledge gaps in the literature and invisibilities around small, emerging and unconventional spaces in the suburbs. With this in mind, this thesis intends to highlight the ways in which cultural consumption takes form in various spaces, whilst shaping people’s everyday lives in the suburbs. This raises particular concerns as to whether people in the suburbs find cultural consumption to be accessible.

Recent reports show that this is not always the case for some socio-cultural categories. According to a report published by the Warwick Commission (Future of Cultural Value in the UK, 2015), the gap in cultural participation between white and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) populations is widening. Ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and women in the UK are less likely to participate in the arts and culture than white people are (ibid). The fact that this gap has widened in recent years raises questions as to whether culture is accessible or is marked by various inequalities. When it comes to Greater Manchester, a survey in local arts attendance that focused on the ‘users’ and ‘non-users’ of cultural institutions, presented a significant part of the city’s population as culturally disengaged, with annual attendance rates at arts venues averaging 20 per cent of the population (Miles, 2015). In this light, even if 16 per cent of its population belongs to the BAME communities, these residents show lower levels of engagement with publicly funded cultural activity than white residents. The Active Lives

Survey (2017) shows a 15 per cent difference in levels of engagement and participation between the most and least engaged districts of Greater Manchester. This is also reflected to more recent statistics that show participation rates in the arts and culture not as high by comparison with other cities in the UK. For instance, London (68.4%), West Midlands (66.6%) and Liverpool City Region (62.3%) all have higher levels of engagement with culture when compared to Greater Manchester (60.1%) (see: Greater Manchester's Strategy for Culture and Creativity, 2018). These facts raise concerns around the presentation of Manchester as a 'creative city'. As Bennett et al. (2009) note, certain communities that do not use Manchester's cultural institutions might seem detached from participating in forms of legitimate and high culture, but this does not necessary means that they are excluded from culture. This is because they maintain in them a rich vernacular culture of everyday practices, based around ostensibly mundane activities and social networks. This is also reflected in the research of Savage et al. (2005), who found that people do not see Manchester as the centre of their lives, or feel they belong - even in a relatively detached way - to the city. Among their respondents,

> there was little evidence of any kind of involvement in civic associations organised on a Manchester-wide basis, with the partial exception of the few members of political parties and church related groups. Most associations that were organised on a city-wide basis were based around hobbies or leisure pursuits, which allowed enthusiasts from all over the city to come together and permitted members to develop what Bellah et al. (1996) call 'lifestyle enclaves' which removed them from other issues of local concern. (ibid: 110)

Bearing these issues in mind, I am interested in questioning whether people in the suburbs find culture accessible in Manchester, and to what extent cultural consumption shapes their broader relationship with the city. By looking more closely at various cultural consumption patterns and other cultural practices, I argue that everyday spaces offer the opportunity for people to negotiate their own symbolic relationship with place - both in the suburban and urban contexts. In order to contextualise my research, in the

next part, I address the mainstream representations of suburbia in academic and popular imagination.

## 3.4 The Suburban State of Mind: Representations and Imaginaries

The history of the suburbs is inextricably intertwined with that of the city (Mumford, 1961; Thompson, 1982; see: Chapter One). However, over the centuries they have developed a negative connotation in people's minds, especially as they grew and multiplied. Anyone who lives outside a city "is either a poor specimen or else superhuman […] he too is clanless, lawless, and homeless [...] anyone who is no part of the city he [sic] is either a beast or a god", as Aristotle famously wrote in his *Politics* (1998: 1253a). In the seventeenth century, the suburbs - especially those of London - were infamous areas in which the socially inferior classes and other marginal elements such as outcasts and criminals were found. The image of the suburbs was bound up with the sense of inferior, debased and licentious habits or life (as in the phrase 'suburban sinner', slang for 'loose woman, prostitute') (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.).

Debates about urban and suburban futures are made problematic by the polar oppositions of the centripetal compact city and the centrifugal periphery (Marshall, 2006). Overall, the suburb appears in the urban imagination as a *terra incognita*: an unknown world or a colonial space (Keil, 2017). A negative view of the suburbs infuses the sociological literature and the public imagination (Corcoran, Gray and Peillon, 2008). Stereotypes of contemporary suburban life invoke the idea of detachment and an instrumental relationship with place (Savage et al., 2005). Putnam (2000) sees suburbs as based almost entirely on private life, and therefore considers modern suburbanisation as one of the main contributors to the loss of social capital (see: Chapter Four). In this light, commentators have portrayed suburbs as "negative environments for family life, due to the isolation of the nuclear family from the support that wider kinship networks provided, both in inner-city and rural environments" (Corcoran, 2018: 40).

This portrayal of everyday suburban life is found in seminal studies on the subject (Fishman, 1987; Baumgartner, 1988). In the literature, there are plenty of pejoratives

that render the suburban state of mind as kitschy, crass, thin, diluted, simplified, tame, sterile, barren, bland, drab, stark, mediocre, prefabricated, uniform, sanitised, conforming, alienating, consumerist, self-serving, undistinguished and unmemorable (Bain, 2013). The suburbs usually appear predominantly as a socially unproductive, culturally non-creative, homogenous housing area, where people experience an "individualistic and selfish" life (Wilson, 2001: 105). As Pred (1984: 279) states, suburbs are "little more than frozen scenes of human activity", too often thought of in terms of "fixed, visible and measurable attributes". The most negative representations can be found in popular culture, where suburbia is still commonly represented in films ('American Beauty'), songs ('The Sound of the Suburbs'), poetry ('An Ode to Suburbia'), literary fiction ('The Buddha of Suburbia'), television programmes ('Married... with Children') and other media forms, as a place "suffused with conformity, a cult of domesticity, self-enclosed individuality, mindless aspiration, indulgent consumerism, tedium and blandness" (Edensor et al., 2010:12).

In particular, myths around the suburbs abound in the mainstream literature and the arts, especially in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. These can be divided into categories of the 'pro-urban', the 'anti-urban' and the 'inner city vs. the suburbs' (Short, 1991). In the pro-urban/anti-urban dichotomy, the division is played out in terms of pervasive stereotypes and mythologies of place, which in turn inform a variety of representations. In this context, Stevenson (2003) considers the ways in which the suburbs are imagined and represented as liminal spaces. She argues that suburbs are neither rural nor urban, and yet they are constructed in text in terms of both discourses. In very general terms, the dominant academic and popular discourse on suburbia is divided "between those that support the idea of the suburbs and the quality of life they offer and those that endorse the view that suburbs are 'non-places' where nothing exciting ever happens and no one interesting, different or creative lives" (Stevenson, 2003: 123-124). Suburbs are usually viewed either as "hell and green heaven" (Healy, 1994: xvi): simultaneously as utopian or dystopian places. As Beuka (2004: 4) notes

> the grid of identical houses on identical lots, the smoking barbecues, the swimming pool – loaded signifiers that, taken together, connote both the middle-class 'American Dream' [...] and that dream's inverse: the vision of a homogenised, soulless, plastic landscape of tepid conformity, an alienating 'no place.'"

The suburban dream perspective sees "suburbia as a symbol of goal-fulfilment: the place where families can buy a home, avoid urban ills, commune with nature (and each other), send their children to good schools, and climb the social ladder" (Hall and Lee, 2010: 3). In contrast to what they see as the dangers, immorality and anonymity of the inner city, the suburbs have been viewed favourably as spaces for families, secure friendships, community and tranquillity (Stevenson, 1999). Conversely, the suburban nightmare perspective dismisses suburbia as a 'cultural desert' of commuting and consuming, a place devoid of "diversity, cosmopolitanism, political culture and public life" (Sharpe and Wallock, 1994: 3). In this vein, British novelists "have played their part in establishing suburbia as an object of ridicule" and they continue to disparage suburbia, neglecting its "sociological importance" (Head, 2000: 72). For example, in his novel *Coming up for Air* (2000: 12 [1939]), George Orwell describes a suburban road as "a prison with cells in a row. A line of semi-detached torture chambers". Similar fictional and cultural representations have "ignored, mocked, despised, scapegoated and stereotyped" suburbia, depicting it as "remote, unknowable, philistine, standardised and insignificant" (Pope, 2008: 1). Metaphors and images in popular culture present suburbs as derivative, or even deviant (Keil, 2017), and their role is usually that of a 'pejorative space' that describes the dull and tedious nature of suburban life (Goulding, 2009). According to Beauregard (2006: 138), the suburbs were "bereft of cultural venues and activities of the mind and were moulded by the levelling influence of television". The same negative depictions can be traced in seminal studies of the city too. For instance, Mumford (1961) in *The City in History* denigrated suburbia as uninteresting residential wastelands of conformity, consumption and mediocrity. The suburb, he alleged, is a bleak manifestation of a mass society. Addressing the suburban boom of the 1950s in the

United States, he argued that the ultimate outcome of the suburbs' alienation from the city is manifested in a shallow and lamentable passivity of suburbanites in a mass industrial society:

> In the mass movement into suburban areas a new kind of community was produced, which caricatured both the historic city and the archetypal suburban refuge: a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless pre-fabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mold, manufactured in the central metropolis. Thus the ultimate effect of the suburban escape in our time is, ironically, a low-grade uniform environment from which escape is impossible. What has happened to the suburban exodus in the United States now threatens, through the same mechanical instrumentalities, to take place, at an equally accelerating rate, everywhere else - unless the most vigorous countermeasures are taken (ibid: 486).

This thesis considers these representations as remarkably simplistic and outdated, and therefore as subject to critical reflection (see: Bourne, 1996). I argue that these imaginary geographies of the city have constructed a stark dichotomy between the urban core and the surrounding suburbs. This approach has neglected many geographical and locational complexities. Cities are usually characterised as "dynamic, edgy and diverse" and their suburbs as "bland, homogenous and uncreative" (Oakley, 2015: 11) or as "hinterland sites of uncreative, conservative, dispersed non-productivity and consumption" (Collis, Felton, and Graham, 2010: 105). The key geographical division, which runs through most place theory, essentially splits cities into 'creative inner cities' and 'uncreative suburbs' - particularly when referring to the outer suburbs. Various scholars use this analogy, to compare the "gritty authenticity" of the city with the "bland homogeneity" of the suburbs (Zukin, 2010: 37). Gibson and Brennan-Horley (2006: 456) characterise this

binary as “densely populated vs. sprawl; gentrified terraces and apartment culture vs. new estates and first home buyers; zones of (male) production and creativity against (female) sedate, consumer territory”. To talk of suburbia, Langford, (2000: 68) writes, “instantly invites a certain jargon of authenticity – authenticity, that is, being what the lonely crowd of the suburbs, construed as second-hand, retentive, hypocritical, conformist, soulless, definitively lack”. In a similarly disdainful tone, Hartley (1997: 194) comments that the life of suburbia is little more than a miserable retreat from a truly engaged and cultured urban life, creating “an apathetic, reactionary, conservative, conformist, status-conscious, petit-bourgeois class, whose members are incapable of organising anything for themselves”. In terms of the creative process itself, scholars including Jacobs (1961), Landry (2000) and Florida (2002, 2005), have long argued that high population density, short blocks and pedestrian access - usually features of a city centre - help to facilitate the interactions that support creativity and cultural production. On the contrary, they consider the suburbs as the very definition of a poor and uncreative urban form (Hracs, 2009). Florida and Landry’s contributions have become particularly influential among cultural policymakers (see: Chapter One). For Florida, specifically, there is a direct equation: the more suburbs a city has, the less creative potential the city has (as cited in Collis et al., 2013). Likewise, the widely cited *Creative City* (Landry, 2000) discourse considers urban places as more capable of producing creative potentials. Conversely, the image of the suburbs is not seen to conform physically or socially to the representation of the prosperous and densely clustered cultural districts that are located in the city centre.

> The city centre or urban sub-centres potentially represent places for commonality, where some form of common identity and spirit of place can be created - counteracting the dangers of spatial segregation by social class - and where people of different ages, social classes, ethnic and racial groups and lifestyles can mix and mingle in informal and unplanned ways, more easily than in the suburbs or in outer areas, which are frequently highly differentiated and socially stratified (ibid: 120).

In these rhetorical discourses, inner cities areas are considered to be places of dynamism, productivity and diversity, and as such are presented as the spiritual home of artists, musicians and other bohemians that belong to the so-called creative class (Florida, 2002, 2005). On the other hand, the suburbs are depicted as "sterile, banal and vernacular spaces populated by 'square' professionals who are anything but creative" (Hracs, 2010: 133). Following this, Zukin (1995: 23) refers to the "city's continued cultural hegemony, in contrast to the suburbs". As a result, suburbs are often viewed as 'boring' places, especially when compared to the 'rich' and 'fascinating' stories that surround cities. Against these claims, this thesis contends that the study of different representations that people develop around their locality can lend itself to a deeper understanding and a more comprehensive appreciation of everyday suburban life. This thesis argues that rethinking the cultural significance of suburbia is of critical importance.

Moreover, contemporary studies increasingly acknowledge the role that imagination plays in shaping cities, especially in relation to urban futures (Lindner and Meissner, 2019). For example, Corcoran (2018) shows how the suburban imaginary of Ireland remains so powerful for people today. These imaginaries are not just 'matters of the mind', but also manifest and find expression in lived urban space. From an anthropological point of view, they consist of "representations or image systems that refer to urban space and are articulated through practices" (Gravano, 2012: 13). Accordingly, urban imageries, as an approach to the study of the city and its suburbs, represent a way of deciphering collective subjectivities and the social and permanent construction of the city and (sub-)urban life (Lindón, 2008). Suburban imageries, then, refer to the socially constructed frames of meaning that structure people's beliefs, values and desires, and, effectively, the ways in which a suburb can experienced, used and/or inhabited. My research tries to penetrate into these imaginaries and reveals the imagined yet constitutive spatiality of three suburbs of Manchester and their everyday life.

Historically, this way of thinking about space has been largely attributed to the so-called 'spatial turn' in the humanities and social sciences (e.g. Harvey, 1989; Lefebvre, 1991;

Massey, 2005; Soja, 2009), perhaps culminating, for the purposes of this thesis, in the work of Lynch (1960) who explores the role of cognition and imagination in shaping the human experience in cities. Lynch laid an important foundation for understanding urban life simultaneously as built form, idea and experience. He suggests that in order to understand "environments at the urban scale of size, time, and complexity ... we must consider not just the city as a thing in itself, but the city being perceived by its inhabitants" (Lynch, 1960: 3). In his approach, urban imaginaries and mental images are a key field of concern and are capable of combining objective elements with subjective ones. While Lynch's approach in *The Image of the City* (1960) has been criticised (e.g. de Certeau, 1988), this thesis recognises the significance of its contribution, and examines the physical organisation of the suburb and how its distinctive characteristics establish living patterns that shape everyday life and place identity. This relationship is seen as an interdependent and interrelated factor that contributes to the construction of the 'symbolic suburb'.

## 3.5 Rethinking Suburban Culture(s) and Creativity

In one sense, the whole discussion around the suburbs has constructed its own cultural cliché, underestimating everyday suburban life, notably in light of the 'new suburbanisation' as an emerging and significant trend in cities worldwide (Kotkin, 2005, 2010). Various scholars have begun to challenge the elitist ideologies that have dominated both in popular and academic discourses (e.g. Oliver, Davies and Bentley, 1981; Clapson and Hutchison, 2010; Edensor et al., 2010; Huq, 2013a, 2013b). Gans (1967) was one of the first authors to debunk the alienating portrayal of suburban life as monotonous. In his study, he found that there was greater sociability and less boredom in the suburbs than originally thought, arguing that the differences between the city and suburbs were overstated and even spurious. Gans points out that at the time of his writing, very little was known about the typical residential neighbourhoods of the outer city. According to Dwyer, Gilbert and Shah (2012) the late 1990s and early 2000s saw a more developed response to the social and cultural geographies of suburbia. A key statement of this re-evaluation is found in Silverstone's introduction to the *Visions of*

*Suburbia* (1997). In this work, he insists that "suburbia is creative ... [it is] a social as well as a cultural hybrid", pointing out that, at least in the British context, suburbia has been a wellspring of popular culture. More recently, Edensor et al. (2010: 12) argued that suburbia "has served as the crucible for the emergence of British punk rock as well as for the idiosyncratic domestic productions of innumerable householders in their homes and gardens". Given the fact that significant subcultural practices (such as music, fashion, or literature) largely emerged from suburban settings, Edensor et al. (2010) question the extent to which creativity is the preserve of large metropolitan cities. Similarly, Huq (2013a) emphasises that the suburbs are where terrorists were revealed to have lived; where socio-cultural movements are born; and where mass consumption is resisted (for example through anti-Tesco protests) and sustainable consumption practices, contending that the suburbs are crucial places for examining social change (2013b). Such studies are important because they provoke a rupture in the out-dated and dystopian stereotypes that have dominated public and academic discourse for far too long. Nevertheless, as Corcoran (2018) notes, the dominant discourse about suburbs remains negative. Bearing this in mind, this thesis builds on Bain's (2013: 19) advice:

> It is time, Richard Ingersol (2006: 64) provocatively reminds us in Sprawltown: Looking for the City on Its Edges, to 'consider the inverse movements that shift the attention away from the centre'. It is time to 'de-marginalise the in-between city and reshape the perception of it as something other than a social and economic threat ... [that] remain[s] in the shadow of ... glamour zones' (Boudreau et al., 2009: 140). It is time to turn our practical and scholarly attention away from the repeated adulation of the central city in order to develop a more nuanced appreciation of the changes occurring and the creative possibilities awaiting in the suburban periphery.

In this respect, I build upon a special issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Studies* on *Creative Suburbs* (2012). This special issue aimed to rupture the mainstream approaches that equate creativity exclusively with inner cities, runs directly counter to Florida's (2002) ideas, which emphasise the importance of cultural amenities in inner city

areas as a primary driver of location decisions for the members of the 'creative class'. Flew (2012), through his empirical mapping, found that Australian creative workers are living in suburban areas which do not match the imagined geography of 'creative city' theories. Similarly, Collis et al. (2013), by looking at where cultural workers live and work, located significant concentrations in various suburban areas. These authors argue that despite there being only one 'global' city in Australia (Sydney) and a population that overwhelming lives and works in suburbs, the urban bias of much work on culture and place is still largely unchallenged. Gibson et al. (2012) document local perceptions of cultural assets by collecting personal narratives and mental maps of the suburbs. They found several creative places which were not located in the inner city, but in suburbs with unique cultural histories. They concluded that (1) 'creativity' is relationally situated and linked across all parts of the city, (2) decentralised forms of small-scale cultural infrastructure provision are vital for vernacular cultural pursuits, and (3) 'creativity' is a contested category, only partially revealing the contours of cultural vitality in the suburbs.

Even if this approach is particularly developed in the Australian context, in other parts of the world scholars have identified some suburbs as places of creative enterprise and cultural activity (Gibson and Brennan-Horley, 2006; Hracs, 2009; Bain, 2010, 2013; Gilbert, et al., 2015; Ahmed, Dwyer, and Gilbert, 2019). For example, Bain (2010, 2013), in her study in the city of Toronto, found attributes of suburban cultural production. For this reason, she argued that the suburbs are the new and under-appreciated creative spaces in city regions. In a similar vein, Burton and Gill (2015) note that the absence of traditional cultural spaces in the suburbs (such as theatres, museums, and galleries) opens up a variety of improvisational spaces such as community centres. In their approach, they demonstrate and evaluate the significance of culture in its various manifestations in both shaping and reflecting the suburban built environment across a range of suburbs. Cochrane et al. (2015) show that for many of those who live in the suburbs, even if they are positioned into the wider suburban pattern, i.e. commute for shopping, cultural and employment purposes, it is still their separate identity that

matters. In parallel, feminist perspectives have challenged assumptions that often presented women in the suburbs as the innocent, passive victims of a built environment. Engaging with the relationship between gender and urban spatial structures, they argue that the social landscape of suburbia is comprised of heterosexual, nuclear family households, centred around patriarchal gender roles (female homemakers, male breadwinners) (see: England, 1993). According to Harman (1983: 104), in her essay on *Capitalism, Patriarchy and the City*, “the city has been shaped to keep women confined to their traditional roles as wives and mothers”. However,

> such depictions are typically conceived as reproducing the suburbs as socially uniform, static and conventional, or as the unpromising or indeed dysfunctional fringe of the economically and culturally dynamic city. Yet, as suburbs have developed and diversified, new forms of creative production have arisen from and in response to them. Much of this cultural material has challenged rather than confirmed conventional understandings of what it means to live in and belong to these places. (Dines and Vermeulen, 2013: 9)

More recently, scholar have suggested that creativity has a ‘hidden’ significance that has become more important in the United Kingdom’s increasingly diverse cities and suburbs. Gilbert et al. (2019), focusing on West London’s faith communities, reveal the complex and multifaceted geographies of the contemporary city. In their research, they make wider claims as to how the practices of ordinary and everyday religion can contribute to thinking about the geographies of creativity, and to policy perspectives on the creativity and value of the amateur and voluntary arts sector in the UK. They argue that “the character of what was once thought of as archetypal London suburbia is being changed by large speculative apartment developments particularly around the main transport hubs” (ibid: 45), and that this kind of creativity has been hidden or marginalised, both in academic discussions and in cultural-led policies that address creativity and popular arts participation. Similarly, Felton and Collis (2012: 188) argue that “attending to the characteristics of place and to how people engage, imagine, and produce in places outside the inner city disrupts increasingly homogenous ideas about what a ‘creative

place' might be". Given this, in this thesis I develop an approach that views the suburbs as a landscape full of contradictions (Sand, 2009), yet with a distinctive culture. This is also related to a variety of broader issues such as "whether suburbs are environmentally and socially sustainable, whether they are fountains or deserts of sociability and social cohesion, and whether they are drivers of, or parasitic on, urban economic growth, among other things" (Walks, 2013: 1472). As I discussed in Chapter One, there is a need to recognise the importance of culture beyond the spotlight of the city centre. This requires a consideration of non-economic values and outcomes produced by alternative, marginal and everyday creative practices, as well as an understanding of everyday spaces in which culture and creativity takes shape in place (Edensor et al., 2010). In this regard, I look at the vernacular activities that shape the daily experience of the suburb, defined as 'suburban cultural practices'. The latter are fundamental for understanding suburbia since they are ordered across space and time and include the embodiment of everyday life. I argue that through these daily activities, movements, performances and habitual embodiments, people get to know a place and feel part of it as they enact their everyday lives (Tuan, 1977; Seamon, 1980). These practices carry with them symbolic functions that can integrate and maintain social reality for their participants (Gross, 1995). They are not solely individual or dislocated from a bigger context, but "encompass a wide range of activities that are distinguished by their expression of community values and their inclusion of many participants, in contrast to the individualised and professionalised creation or reproduction of art or culture by experts detached from a community frame of reference" (Markusen, 2010: 185).

## 3.6 Conclusions

This chapter established a flexible framework that aims to further address the role of cultural consumption in the everyday life of the suburbs. In this thesis, I use the notion of culture as a way to understand the complexity of everyday suburban life. In these regards, culture extends beyond its conventional and restrictive definitions. It is not a static term - a resource to be managed - but something inexorably linked to everyday life, and closely intertwined with suburban place. It is a relationship between people and

their physical environment. Furthermore, this chapter highlighted how various popular representations have rendered suburbs as unimportant for further inquiry. As a response, the review of the literature shows the importance of cultural consumption in the creation of a relationship between people and place. This understanding proposes a re-evaluation of the relationship between the suburbs and the impact of cultural consumption upon the city. In Chapter Seven, I examine the ways in which people consume culture in the city and its suburbs. Thus, I proceed to discuss the role of culture in constructing the complexity of everyday suburban life and I evaluate the relationship between cultural consumption and suburban place. In particular, I examine the way people consume culture, both in urban and suburban contexts and how various patterns of cultural consumption come to shape people's relationship to the city, which is the second question that my research addresses. In doing so, I recognise the value of culture outside the spotlight of the city centre, presenting evidence of a significant 'hidden' culture associated with everyday suburban life. Finally, I acknowledge the role of everyday spaces of cultural consumption in the suburbs by focusing on the practice of culture in 'mundane', 'taken-for-granted' and 'inconspicuous' spaces.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Suburban Festivity

### 4.1 Introduction

Festivals have been held in the UK for hundreds of years. However, from the early 1980s onwards, there has been a significant escalation in their numbers, especially on the city and community levels (Finkel, 2009). A key period for this development was the Second World War when some countries, including the UK, begun to promote festivals as a means of culture-led regeneration, economic renewal, and image-making (Waterman, 1988). Festivals such as those held in Edinburgh in 1947, Dartington in 1948, and the Festival of Britain in 1951, were conscious efforts in this direction (Henderson, 1991).

Today, festivals constitute “one of the main players on the stage of modern cultural consumption” (McGillivray and Frew, 2014: 2). This has contributed to a compelling diversification in local and global audiences (Finkel, 2006; Morey et al., 2014; Cudny, 2014). In 2011, the entire music festivals sector was calculated to have been worth £42.2 billion in the UK (Business Visits and Events Partnership, 2011) and, in 2015, $1 trillion in the USA (Kear, 2015). It is estimated that festivals, fairs, and other cultural events will bring in approximately £1.4 billion per year to the UK economy by 2020 (All Party Parliamentary Group. UK Events Industry, 2013). Consequently, the events industry is considered to be a key driver of the UK government’s economic growth agenda (Crew, 2019).

In Manchester, there is a comprehensive array of festivals on the themes of music, food, art, theatre, comedy, and much more (e.g. Manchester International Festival, Parklife Festival, Manchester Pride, Manchester Food and Drink Festival). The majority of these festivals are organised and/or supported by the City Council and other public and private bodies and consortiums such as the CityCo (the City Centre Management Company for Manchester and Salford) and the Manchester Business Improvement District (see: Zukin,

1995), who run high-profile networking events and flagship public events to bring people into the city. In a deliberate attempt to communicate a sense of year-round festivity, Manchester City Council has been promoting the city as a festival destination, using the slogan “always something happening”, inviting visitors to take “an eventful short break” (Smith, 2016: 35-36). In relation to the discussion above regarding the strategic promotion of festivals by local authorities, the leader of Manchester City Council stated that the ‘clustering’ of events in the city is “not, of course, a coincidence nor an expression of the city’s history or creativity”: instead “it is a direct acknowledgement of the catalyst that culture can be for economic growth” (Leese, 2015, as cited in Smith, 2016).

The growth of the festival industry sector has led to a corresponding research interest into the topic. Overall, the literature covers topics and questions related to place (Waterman, 1998; Quinn, 2005), place identity (De Bres and Davis, 2001), meanings (Matheson, 2008), belonging (Duffy and Waitt, 2011; Duffy et al., 2011), sense of community (Reid, 2007), social cohesion (Duffy and Waitt, 2011) and social capital (Finkel, 2010; Wilks, 2011, 2013; Quinn and Wilks, 2013). Festivals are often analysed either in the context of place-making and place marketing strategies (Prentice and Andersen, 2003), or on the basis of the impacts they provoke on the host destinations and venues, as a mechanism of place-branding and destination marketing (Michelini, Iasevoli and Theodoraki, 2017; Testa and Metter, 2017). In this thesis, I focus on how people experience suburban festivals from a personal and place-based perspective. This is because the literature on event experiences is very scarce and fragmented (de Geus, Richards and Toepoel, 2016). Additionally, there is little understanding of what kind of meanings and experiences people attach to a festival that occurs in the place where they live (Brás, et al., 2019). In this context, suburban festivity remains under-examined and poorly understood. Scholars have focused on festivals that take place in dense urban areas (e.g. Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011; Stevens and Shin, 2014; Quinn and Wilks, 2017), in rural areas (Curtis, 2011; Mackay, Fountain and Cradock-Henry, 2018; Mair and Duffy, 2018), on greenfield sites (McKay, 2000), and even in remote desert areas (e.g.

Nevada's Burning Man Festival; see: Bowditch, 2010). However, most of the research conducted focuses on the context of the city centre, neglecting those festivals that take place in the suburbs. In order to balance the strong bias towards the importance of urban festivals, this thesis moves away from the typical metropolitan focus of event studies by looking at three festivals that take place in the suburbs of Manchester.

This chapter is broadly positioned within Critical Events Studies (CES), an emerging field of inquiry that challenges the neoliberal agendas that attempt to managerialise and depoliticise event typologies and all the preceding formulations of events studies, by accepting that there is a central contestation at the heart of all events (see: Lamond and Platt, 2016; Spracklen and Lamond, 2016; Platt and Ali-Knight, 2018; Robertson et al., 2018). By linking the theoretical framework that was presented in the previous chapters, the following literature review examines festivals through the lens of place theory. In what follows, I define what a festival is and then I proceed to discuss the study of festivity, notably in a suburban context. In order to contextualise how social relations can be developed during suburban festivals, I draw on the theoretical construct of social capital. Following that I explain festivals' relation to place identity, and I focus on their transformative potentials. The concept of 'festivalisation' allows me to discuss the influence of festivals on suburban place.

## 4.2 What is a Festival?

In order to agree a basis for festival research, scholars have used a multitude of definitions (see: Janiskee, 1980; Falassi, 1987; Getz, 2005; Quinn, 2005). These range from being very broad, such as "social activities seen as an expression of social norms and the values of a society" (Chacko and Schaffer, 1993: 475), or "public themed celebrations that are held regularly" (Wilson et al., 2017: 196) to more specific, such as "themed public occasions designed to occur for a limited duration that celebrate valued aspects of a community's way of life" (Douglas et al., 2001: 358). Geographical definitions emphasise the unique character of festivals, their role in celebrating culture, and the fact that they are meeting places for people with specific cultural interests (Cudny, 2016). Recently, Mair (2019: 5), combining previous definitions, defined festivals as

> short term, recurring, publicly accessible events that usually celebrate and/or perform particular elements of culture that are important to the place in which they are held or the communities which hold them; that provide opportunities for recreation and entertainment; and that give rise to feelings of belonging and sharing.

For the purpose of laying an appropriate foundation for my analysis, suburban festivals are understood as organised "spatio-temporal events" (Massey, 2005: 130) at once positioned in time and space. They are viewed as relatively independent social scenes that require interpretation and contextualisation (Delanty, Giorgi and Sassatelli, 2011) and they consist of interpretative devices (Getz, 1995; Getz and Cheyne, 1997) through which I am able to inquire how people experience 'culture' in the suburbs and how they interact within the festival environment. In other words, festivals are seen as a way to engage with suburban culture as it is being performed - *in practice.* They have the ability to link people together around a system of shared cultural practices, allowing an experience outside the routines of daily life (Richards, 2013, 2014), and operate "simultaneously as places for pleasure and the performance of identity [and] may provide a moment to reflect on what it means to be ['suburban'] and to reinforce or revise these meanings accordingly" (Gibson et al., 2011: 12). This symbolic inversion can have multiple purposes. Following this, I draw upon Humphrey's (2001: 27-28) approach. In his analysis of festivals in medieval England, he argued that "each festival should be interpreted according to its own geographic and historic setting". This is a principle that I adopt throughout the thesis.

## 4.3 The Contemporary Role of Festivals

Festivals play increasingly important socio-cultural and economic functions in cities which have invested significantly in festivals as part of their place-marketing and image-building strategies. As a result of the general culturalisation of the economy (du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Löfgren and Willim, 2005; see: Chapter One), festivals play a critical role in making cities into more dynamic and liveable places (Richards, 2017). A common perspective is that they are major cultural events that "imbue the city with life"

(Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011: 403), whilst allowing it to "reposition and differentiate itself in an increasingly competitive world" (Quinn, 2005:927). As such, cities have become not just a site in which festivals are staged or produced, but sites which are also produced and experienced through festivals (Richards and Rotariu, 2015).

Overall, festivals are recognised in the literature as having an implicit role in local development and the image of the city. They are seen not only as an economically attractive way of packaging and selling place identity (Jakob, 2013), but also as a means that can contribute positively to economic growth (Richards and Palmer, 2010) and tourism (Arcodia and Whitford, 2006; Saayman and Saayman, 2006; Lorentzen, 2009). The rise of purposeful festival staging in cities is charted by Smith (2012, 2016), who has collected an extensive range of case studies on the use of events in urban regeneration. In this context, staging festivals is seen by policymakers as a fundamental way to generate economic and symbolic capital, and festivals are strategically organised by local authorities as a mechanism to promote a more 'distinctive city' (Markusen and Schrock, 2006). For this reason, the expansion of festivals and events worldwide has often been regarded as an important element in maintaining and reproducing the unique features of destinations (Zhang et al., 2019). In addition, festivals have also been recognised as an effective way to enhance community cohesion, reducing social exclusion (Bennett and Silva, 2006). It is for this reason that local governments use festivals as a mechanism to transform 'problem places' into 'festival places' - as is in the case of East Manchester (Ward, 2003) and Homebush in Sydney (Waitt, 2001). However, the actual capacity of festivals to meet the objectives of cultural-led regeneration remains a moot issue (Sassatelli, 2011).

> Now, it's festivals, festivals everywhere. Big ones, small ones, wild ones, silly ones, dutiful ones, pretentious ones, phony ones. Many have lost purpose and direction, not to mention individual profile. Place a potted palm near the box office, double the ticket prices and – whoopee – we have a festival! (Bernheimer, 2003: 21)

The above quotation refers to the rapid proliferation of all types of festivals on a global scale (Finkel, 2006). Authors claim that there is a tendency to market place through the staging of festivals and other cultural events in an instrumental way (Edensor and Sumartojo, 2018). Quinn (2005: 10) notes that "what is often consumed and experienced in festival settings is an idealised, sanitised version of the city where real opportunities for genuine engagement with the culture and multiple realities of the place, for both local and visiting populations remain sidelined". Likewise,

> such festivals present a sanitised version of the city rather than its life in all its complexity and multiplicity. Instead of displaying ambivalence and multivocality, of breathing new life into the urban space, festivals are a device put in place to promote a coherent, healthy picture of the city planned well in advance of the festival. (Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011: 403)

Duffy et al. (2019) identify a number of findings that make clear the difficulties associated with using festivals instrumentally to achieve local government policy aims. Hughes, (1999) illustrates how the promotion of the festival place appears rather uncreative, lacking in spontaneity, originality and actual connections with place through the example of New Year's Eve Festivals. He argues that these festivals are primarily hegemonic devices for promoting a particularised image of a city or elements of its culture. This leads to the organisation of festivals that

> often poorly represent the interests and values of the community they purport to represent. Although these events aim and often claim to be 'of the people and by the people' and a celebration of community values, numerous examples exist in which the expressed interests and values represented only a segment of the community, which most often were those of the socially and politically dominant groups [...] In such cases, festivals reproduce the dominant values of a community in that they celebrate and conserve the overt values recognized by the community as essential to its ideology and world view. (Waterman, 1998 as cited in Sharpe, 2008: 219)

Similarly, Lamond and Platt (2016) argue that festivals, being part of an 'event industry', can be understood as symptomatic of their colonisation by a dominant cultural, political and economic hegemony. This fact creates several contradictions between the rhetorical goals and aims of festivals, and the bottom-line reality (Finkel, 2006). It must also be taken into consideration that a festival might even become a problem for cities due to potential conflicts that, in turn, negatively affect the image of a place (see: Cudny, 2011).

Festivals are frequently depicted as instrumental spectacles that harness place, culture and identity to imperatives of economic growth through place marketing strategies (Hughes, 1999; Ward, 2003; Miles and Paddison, 2005; Stevens and Shin, 2014). On the contrary, Bennett, Taylor and Woodward (2014), believe that as notions of culture are becoming increasingly fragmented (see: Chapter Three), the contemporary festival has developed in response to processes of cultural pluralisation, mobility and globalisation, whilst communicating something meaningful about identity, community and locality. This discussion raises several critical issues. A number of researchers argue that while cities have used festivals with the intention of creating a sort of place distinctiveness for marketing reasons, this strategy has sometimes been counterproductive. Some festivals run the risk of becoming formulaic and standardised, suffering from a form of 'serial reproduction' (Harvey, 1989) and, hence, devoid of any real connections with place (Evans, 2001; Hannigan, 2003; Gibson and Stevenson, 2004; Richards and Wilson, 2004). In such a way, festivals can become highly institutionalised, since they constitute expressions of creativity performing important social functions. Finkel (2004) also represents this common critique in her research. Drawing on a mixed approach (a postal survey with festival organisers across the UK and qualitative interviews with policymakers and selected festival organisers), she concludes that

> a new 'type' of combined arts festival is emerging that is more standardized and commercialized. This 'type' is partially a result of entrepreneurial local authorities attempting to capitalize on culture and broaden audience inclusion and partly due to combined arts festivals having to conform to consumer demands or funding body regulations to secure capital. These sanitized, more

> homogenized versions could be detrimental to traditional local festivals as more contenders vie for a decreasing pool of resources, potentially leading to a loss of place-based individuality for combined arts festivals and the uniformity of cultural forms presented. (Finkel, 2004: 1)

Even where festivals have been used as a significant driver for the growth, revitalisation and regeneration of the city and a generator of socio-cultural assets for localised consumption, these transformations have sometimes led to growing concerns around place authenticity (Cudny, 2016 as cited in Cunningham and Platt, 2019: 4). Recent studies have found that by providing over-commoditised homogenous experiences, festivals have become less distinctive and are failing to contribute to their location's uniqueness (Davis, 2017 ; see: Zhang et al., 2019). Finkel (2004) describes this process as a process of 'McFestivalisation'. In a similar way, Robinson, Picard and Long (2004) and MacLeod (2006) use the term 'placeless festivals' to describe those which are supposedly adopted as a tool for place promotion, but are effectively transformed into a globalised marketplace that reproduces commodified and socially meaningless cultural performances that are detached from place, space and cultural identity. According to evidence the increasing economic-centric perspective is one of the reasons for the increasing standardisation and homogenisation of combined arts festival programming across the UK (Finkel, 2006). Ironically, as a globalised form of cultural production and consumption, urban festivals appear to limit rather than enhance creativity (Waitt, 2008).

Nevertheless, while the literature identifies the potentially homogenising effects of globalisation in urban festivals, other commentators note that such reproduction of sameness need not be the result. Bailey et al. (2004), for example, argue that homogenisation is not inevitable, but is attributable to urban management approaches, which fail to understand how local particularities might be developed in order to counter the globalising influences of cultural production in cities. Following this, some scholars offer a more optimistic view by conceptualising the social space of the festival as more dynamic, diverse, complex, interactive and practiced, arguing that possibilities always

exist to create alternative realities to those of the elite's interests (Ley and Olds, 1988; Warren, 1996; Boyle, 1997; Waitt, 2008). This thesis considers these issues as worthy of further investigation with regard to their effects on human experience in the process of making and re-making suburban place.

## 4.4 Suburban Festivals

As illustrated above, festivals are important cultural practices with a long-established association with urban culture (Quinn, 2005). Yet there is limited academic focus on contemporary suburban festivals. In fact, suburban festivity is evidently absent from festival studies. The only available publication that includes the words 'suburban festival' in its title is Robertson's (1987) research on a citizens' festival in suburban Tokyo, in which she aims to understand the affective and more 'traditional' dimensions of urbanisation and planning of cities in Japan. The most significant contribution to the topic is the historian Georgiou (2014), whose work examined the relationship between leisure and suburbanisation in Ilford, a suburb in east London that grew rapidly during the 1890s and 1900s. According to Georgiou, the socio-spatial reconfigurations that were accompanied by suburban growth essentially shaped the early twentieth-century suburban cultural practices and the roles they fulfilled. While Ilford was expanding, there was pressure to improve the already-existing infrastructural provision. These developments fuelled a demand for the establishment of a local emergency hospital. In order to raise funds for this development, the residents of Ilford began to organise a carnival every July between 1905 and 1914. The carnival "offered a significant source of pride for those seeking to define and celebrate Ilford as a district" (Georgiou, 2014: 239), and soon became a huge success, attracting crowds estimated at around 250,000 people. The high attendance demonstrates that the suburb was culturally central in the life of the participants, rather than peripheral. In turn, the carnival also helped to create a sense of place,

> through which suburbanites' recreational experiences could be shared and around which social identities could be constructed; their impact was both de-

> and re-localising, producing suburban taste cultures that were at once both generic and extremely place-conscious. (Georgiou, 2014:183)

Essentially, in the case of Ilford, the carnival signifies a sort of a recreational collective experience that "contradicts simplistic notions of city centres as sites of production and suburbs as sites of consumption, revealing the multidirectional nexuses of cultural transmission and connected commercial processes at work in London in the early twentieth century" (Georgiou, 2014: 244). This not only demonstrates the importance of culture in suburban identity formation, but also highlights the fact that such cultural practices existed in the suburbs during the previous century. This is in sharp contrast to the frequent emphasis in discussions of suburban life on its supposed celebration of individualism (see: Chapter Three). More contemporary evidence suggests that during large urban festivals, there are no equivalent events or activities in the suburbs. For example, Jamieson (2004) who looked at the spatiality of Edinburgh's festival culture and identity - a city that hosts one of the most well-known festivals in the world - commented that the city's outskirts, where the most socially deprived areas are, remain relatively free of festival activity. She argues that "the spatiality of Edinburgh's festival events serves the concentrated city centre service economy far from the city's housing estates and socially deprived areas" (ibid: 71). Her research reveals a tendency to promote urban festivals in a spatially structured way that privileges certain parts of the city as the most 'appropriate' for cultural consumption. The bounded central location assures a safe urban experience for cultural tourists in the city, yet it marginalises people who live in the suburbs, and especially in poor areas. This thesis seeks to understand the notion of the suburban festival in its broader geographical and socio-cultural context.

## 4.5 The Study of Festivity

While little is known specifically about people's experiences in suburban contexts, festivals have been studied in depth (see: Getz, 2012). Together with similar collective gatherings of people, such as carnivals, parades, markets and fairs, they "occupy a special place in almost all cultures" (Getz, 2010: 1) and have been an important part of the socio-

cultural life of cities for thousands of years. As Mair (2019:3) argues, the history of festivals "is likely to go far back into the past, long before the written history of civilisations began". In fact, the study of festivity is well established within the social sciences, and spreads across the span of history. In the early days of sociological inquiry, beginning with Durkheim (1954 [1912]), festivals began to be recognised as instances of a 'collective effervescence', and therefore considered as channels for expressing and consolidating a sense of community (Giorgi and Sassatelli, 2011). Similarly, in anthropological and historical literatures, festivals are conceived of as periodic religious and social rituals (Turner, 1982; Bakhtin, 1984); as recurrent short-term leisure events where the members of a community can share, affirm and celebrate various religious, ethnic, linguistic or historical bonds (Falassi, 1987; Getz, 1991; Getz and Page, 2016). What is interesting here is that ritual practices are distinguished by their ability to temporarily disrupt everyday order as they provide a sanctioned forum for unleashing societal tensions and inviting sociability (Arcodia and Whitford, 2006; Liburd and Derkzen, 2009). From this perspective, festivals are seen as meeting places for people to negotiate "communally agreed values, interests, and aspirations" (Derret, 2003: 52). In such a way, people's collective wishes can be exteriorised, providing "a creative space for multiple expressions and reflections on the everyday realm" (Amanatidis, 1998: 127). Along these lines, festivals are often described in terms of their carnivalesque potential to "challenge, re-order, subvert and disrupt" (Quinn, 2005: 934), serving "as an occasion for affirming shared convictions and identities in the life of the city" (Browne, Frost and Lucas, 2018: 1), being a liminal 'time out of time' space (Bakhtin, 1984; Falassi, 1987), or their ability to de-territorialise and re-territorialise urban space (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986).

Broadly, previous discussions in the literature view them as either radical, highlighting their transformative possibilities that release people from the regulations of daily life (Turner, 1982; Bakhtin, 1984; Georgiou, 2014), or as 'safety valves' that serve to temporarily suspend some everyday norms, alleviating social tensions in such a way that

in the long term the status quo in upheld (Humphrey, 2001; Georgiou, 2014; Chatzinakos, 2015). A common critique is that

> contemporary arts festivals do not lead to an actual challenge (a carnivalesque subversion) of the everyday and established differentials of access to cultural production and consumption, because they only provide a tourist, commodified 'encounter with the unexpected', a pseudo-transgression that celebrates difference, but actually aestheticises it and glosses over – thus in fact excluding – actual social differences within the city (Giorgi and Sassatelli, 2011: 20).

Nevertheless, the significance of festivals is well mapped in the literature, and their positive and negative impacts have been presented in several publications. In fact, research on festivals continues to expand and develop (see overviews in Finkel et al., 2013; Getz and Page, 2016; Lamond and Platt, 2016). According to Park and Park (2017), the number of related publications rose from 150 in the years between 1998 and 2003 to 337 in the 5-year period from 2008. Authors remark that since the mid-2000s, a plethora of management-related studies have been published that have progressed beyond conceptual and theoretical explorations (e.g. Lamond and Platt, 2016; Robertson et al., 2018). Quinn (2019: 53) notes that "the literature can now be seen to be growing in size and developing in its conceptual foundations, methodological underpinnings and research questions". According to Waitt (2008: 532), "crucial contributions to rethinking the social impacts of urban festivals have been achieved by post-structuralist, feminist and other social geographers who have embraced the idea that the subjectivities of a person, such as ethnicity, sexuality, age, class and gender, can never operate aspatially, but are bound up with place". However, as Mair (2019) notes, although festivals have been the subject of considerable research, much of this research is highly fragmented and spread across a wide range of disciplines.

Meanwhile, the construal of festivals as being a part of an 'event industry' is being increasingly criticised. Critical perspectives in festival and event studies have become

more prevalent since 2010 (e.g. Finkel, 2010; Stevenson, 2016; McLean, 2018). Scholars, for example, ask questions about the nature of the contribution that festivals and similar events make to communities (Hall, 2012; Mair and Duffy, 2015), and what kind of social change festivals are associated with (Sharpe, 2008). Fundamentally, underpinning critical perspectives in this literature are Harvey's (2001) questions about whose aesthetics, whose collective memory, whose culture is on display, and whose interests are being served when festivals are harnessed within the 'creative cities' paradigm (Quinn, 2019). Following this, Critical Events Studies (CES) have strongly criticised the non-critical approach that dominates event studies in general, and especially as regards to their professionalisation, instrumentality, commercialisation and impact evaluation (Quinn, 2019). According to Robertson et al. (2018), the rise of Critical Events Studies is a timely response to counter decades of neoliberalist politicisation of events and festivals, and divisive governance. Andrews and Leopold (2013) argue that due to the commercialisation of festivals, the terminology has moved away from sociological definitions and towards a more neoliberal and managerial lexicon. Likewise, Sassatelli (2011: 12) remarks that "when not exclusively focused on 'impact evaluation' and management issues, the literature has mainly posited a directly proportional relationship between the growing professionalisation, commercialisation and basically popular success of festivals and their becoming both less critical and less significant in terms of their role within wider social life". This is important, since "an extensive literature on festivals produced in many different disciplines conceives of festivals as very positive endeavours with a wealth of cultural, social and economic potential, the prevalent instrumental use of arts festivals in both urban and rural contexts continues to generate a range of contested reactions" (Quinn, 2019a: S8). My research aims to contribute to this area of studies.

Research focusing on non-hegemonic populations as they relate to festive environments is in need of further conceptual and empirical exploration. Finkel, Sharp and Sweeney (2019) address the current gaps in the literature surrounding issues of accessibility, inclusion and diversity in various eventful landscapes. In their edited volume, the authors

have used festivals as a backdrop to draw out deeper meanings related to political issues and power structures. Williams (2019) for example, examines several museum events that take place in London, highlighting the experiences of BAME audiences (see: Chapter Three). Similarly, Hill and Sobande (2019) demonstrate how ethnic minorities in Glasgow are frequently excluded from institutional creative contexts and Duffy, Mair and Waitt (2019) show how a festival may provide opportunities for unpredictable encounters that may enhance social connectedness and inclusion.

While festivals can be conceived of as a form of public culture that mediates certain ideas about community, such events also offer a means to challenge ideas of who belongs to and who is excluded from elements of cultural consumption (Browne, 2007, 2011). Festival spaces, then, are never neutral as they can be characterised by inclusion as well as exclusion. However, as Waitt (2008: 526) comments,

> rethinking festivals as spaces of fluidity and movement, differences in local contexts of employment and ethnicity are crucial to understanding the social impacts of festivals in terms of how [a] sense of belonging, or not belonging, are negotiated, shaped or reshaped […] Such research points towards the contradictory qualities of festivals that simultaneously close down and open up urban spaces through experiences [which] are interwoven with gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity and class.

Festivals consist of contested forms of culture (Waterman, 1998), and each individual might have a different interpretation of his or her experience regarding inclusivity or diversity. As Perry et al. (2019:6) highlight, “festivals are spatially as well as temporally bounded composites of different realities; they are a symbolic, contingent and situated set of events and understandings, usually only comprehensible in context”. Consequently, the festival space may be a site of both social inclusion and exclusion simultaneously. In addition, a festival space can be quite diverse in terms of natural settings and audiences, or it can spread across a variety of spaces and places. Finally, festival spaces can take on different forms, significance and meaning in various cultural,

historical and contemporary contexts, as well as within their own space-time constructions (Taylor, 2014). They can be highly structured and planned (top-down) or emerge organically and unconsciously from the pragmatic movements of their publics (bottom-up), reinforcing social divides or promoting forms of vernacular creativity. Bearing the multiple accounts of accessibility, inclusion, and diversity in mind, this thesis contributes to these ongoing debates, offering a new perspective regarding the socio-cultural impact of festivals and their role in shaping suburban place.

## 4.6 The Socio-cultural Impact of Festivals

While there is a growing body of literature concerning the relationship between cities and festivals, much of this research has strongly maintained a business-focused perspective, concentrating on their capacity to alter the image of places, to attract tourism or to create employment and income (Richards, 2017). For this reason, the socio-cultural aspects of festivals have been obscured within those debates that focus on the sustainable planning of festivals, with emphasis being placed on economic aspects instead (Andrews and Leopold, 2013; Zifkos, 2015). Wilmersdörffer and Schlicher (2019) note that while the economic impacts of festivals have been a topic of research since the 1980s, the study of their socio-cultural impacts is a more recent phenomenon.

Indeed, over the past decade researchers have started to investigate the social role played by festivals in an unprecedented way, developing a wide range of concepts and theories (Andrews and Leopold, 2013; Jepson and Clarke, 2015; Roche, 2017). In relationship to these under-explored discourses, Getz (2010) reviewed over 400 festival studies. In his review, he identifies three major discourses that focus on the role of festivals in establishing a place or group identity. These are: (1) a classical discourse that concerns the roles, meanings and impacts of festivals in society and culture, (2) an instrumentalist discourse in which festivals are viewed as tools to be used in economic development, particularly in relation to tourism and place marketing, and (3) an event management discourse which focusses on the production and marketing of festivals and the management of festival organisations. Similarly, Deery and Jago (2010) identify an extensive list of positive and negative socio-cultural impacts relating to various issues

such as employment, living standards, entertainment, socialising, community pride, skills, facilities and infrastructure building, crime rates, overcrowding, delinquent behaviour, noise, environmental damage, litter and congestion. They argue that there is a sense that the research into the social impacts of events on communities has "come of age" (Deery and Jago, 2010: 9). However, other researchers disagree. While this body of work is growing strongly, some authors comment that is quite uneven (Quinn and Wilks, 2013), with several disparate realms of enquiry (Ziakas and Costa, 2010). For this reason, Ziakas (2016) suggests that more research into the socio-cultural impacts of festival is required. As a review of the existing literature by Wilmersdörffer and Schlicher (2019) reveals, this particular strand of research is still in its infancy. In their view, the research conducted to this point has taken a purely empirical, non-analytical approach to the subject, which does not sufficiently reflect the complexity or the relevance of the matter. Similarly, Getz et al. (2019) remark that the most notable gap in festival research lies within the social and cultural range. As they state

> individuals are often asked about their perceptions and attitudes, and data have been collected from many surveys on the motivations and benefits felt by persons. But when the scope of discourse is elevated to that of social and cultural impacts, particularly the issues of 'social capital' and 'cultural capital', the literature is more about opinion than evidence (ibid: 29).

In order to develop a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural impact of festivals on suburban communities, in the following I reflect on the theoretical construct of social capital. The latter provides an additional framework that allows me to discuss the role of festivals in shaping suburban place and identity.

## 4.7 Festivals and Social Capital

In order to contextualise how social relations can be developed during suburban festivals, I want to reflect on theories of social capital. As mentioned before, festivals are regarded as facilitating social interaction among individuals and social groups (Lundberg et al., 2017). With such a capacity they lend themselves to social capital ideas. Broadly

speaking, social capital is defined as a collective asset that takes the form of shared norms, values, trust, social relations, networks (e.g. family, friends, communities, and voluntary associations), and institutions that foster cooperation and collective action for mutual benefit (Bhandari and Yasunobu, 2009). The theoretical construct of social capital has been one of the most important discussions in the social sciences (see: Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam; 2000); accompanied by a significant debate and criticism about what social capital is and which are its main components (Jones, 2006; Grossman, 2013). Take for instance, Grossman´s (2013) critique that social capital theory, generally lacks a universally accepted definition, which leaves it open to accusations of vagueness and expediency.

Although the concept has been subject to varying definitions, it has been, nevertheless, used in a range of multidimensional contexts, including debates on social sustainability (Macbeth et al., 2004) and economic development (Knack and Keefer, 1997). As a result, various theorists have interpreted and developed the concept in a number of divergent ways. In this respect, social capital is generally deployed as a broad catch-all term. Still, it refers to the social relationships developed between people and networks, it is related to the norms of reciprocity and mutual trust that exist between them and arises out of opportunities for socialising. It is in this sense that social capital lends itself to a discussion around the grounded contexts in which suburban festivals operate.

In considering notions of capital in this thesis, I draw mainly from the works of Bourdieu (1986, 1997) and Putnam (1993, 2000). Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes between three forms of capital: economic, cultural (see: Chapter Three), and social. He defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (ibid: 248); "made up of social obligations ('connections') which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" (ibid: 243). This definition emphasises the importance of social networks and highlights the opportunities and the advantages that can be obtained by people that belong to them. Bourdieu considers that even if

social capital is a collectively-owned asset, it is mostly possessed and expressed by individuals, who use their membership to benefit their social position and derive social and economic benefits. Bourdieu´s theory is useful for the purposes of this thesis because it explains how social capital is unequally distributed in societies and communities and, thus, it provides a more solid basis from which I am able to critically engage in a discussion about the role of festivals in enhancing social capital.

By contrast to Bourdieu, Putnam (1993) believes that social capital is something that is, or should be, accessible to all the members of a society or a community. He defines social capital as "features of social organisations, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (ibid: 167). For Putnam social capital represents a way to understand the links and the degree to which people associate with one another and form bonds within a particular society. In his view, social capital consists of a vital element in establishing a sense of community, since it is closely related to notions of civic engagement, social connectivity and participation in voluntary organisations (Coalter, 2007). Putnam's work is particularly pertinent given that his conceptualisation has been used widely by policymakers in the UK. By building on his theory they tried to devolve powers and responsibilities to local communities; emphasising their capacities to engage collectively in the identification and solution of potential problems (see for example: Cameron's 'Big Society'; DCLG, 2011). However, various researchers (e.g. Arneil, 2007; Coalter, 2007 etc.) raise concerns, claiming that Putnam's theory is over-simplified, underplaying negative aspects, and over-emphasising positive outcomes (Stevenson, 2016).

Putnam (2000) identifies two types of connections that underpin the development of social capital. For Putnam social capital is generally defined in terms of 'bonding' (exclusive) and 'bridging' (inclusive) ties. In particular, the 'bonding social capital' tends to characterise the tight ties that exists between people who belong to relatively homogeneous groups of trust and reciprocity (e.g. family, friends, neighbours) and it is more oriented to their internal structure. The people who participate in these groups usually share common characteristics related to class, race, age, education, gender and

they present a sense of common identity (e.g. ethnicity, religion and political affiliation). This form of social capital is "inward looking" (ibid: 22); responsible for reinforcing exclusive identities and on some occasions may lead to the exclusion of the *'other'* (Adler and Kwon, 2002). On the contrary**,** 'bridging social capital' is "outward looking" (ibid: 22). It refers to the construction of 'bridges' between diverse individuals and groups, it characterises weaker ties and encompasses people across diverse social cleavages. This form of social capital stretches beyond a sense of common identity and it is hidden in the weak, less dense, cross-cutting social ties between heterogeneous individuals (such as loose friendships or workmates). Still, it characterises more inclusive networks that are more open to new members and this enables individuals and groups to form links with outsiders (see: Chapter Two). In addition to Putnam's conceptualisations, Woolcock (2001) identifies a third type of social capital that has the capacity to 'link' individuals or groups with different levels of power. The 'linking social capital' refers to the development of vertical associations formed between individuals and groups that occupy different social positions and allows people to build connections with others in more powerful ones. A relevant example can be considered the links that can develop between a festival organisation and the local government that makes decisions in their area of interest. According to Halpern (2005) this form of social capital can be useful for community building and social engagement.

The ideas of bonding, bridging and linking social capital are particularly relevant to festival research. Although it has been argued that these distinct forms of social capital are an oversimplification of highly complex processes (Blackshaw and Long, 2005), and indeed they can serve different functions, in this thesis, they provide a conceptual tool, which allows me to examine the socio-cultural impacts of suburban festivals, highlighting different types of social relationships that develop among people who live in the suburbs throughout its duration. It is important to note that despite the potential for positive outcomes derived from the development of social capital, it may equally have negative consequences. Portes (2000) believes that social capital is unlikely to accrue to all community members equally. While social capital can indeed strengthen connections

between community members, this can also lead to a sense of *'us and them'* (see: Chapter Two). This means that a lack of social capital among some members of a community may result in forms of social exclusion (Hawthorne, 2006).

In the last twenty years there has been a small but steady stream of studies that use notions of social capital as a theoretical line of enquiry to understand social interaction in festival settings (Rao, 2001; Arcodia and Whitford 2006; Crespi-Vallbona and Richards, 2007; Finkel 2010; Quinn and Wilks 2013; Wilks and Quinn, 2016). As Quinn and Wilks (2013:2) put it,

> festival researchers are drawing on ideas from different social capital theorists and the focus is widening to incorporate the formation and development of social capital within and across an increasing breadth of festival actors or stakeholder groups. It is also beginning to focus more on the role that place may play in the formation of social capital.

Arcodia and Whitford (2006) and Wilks (2011) were some of the first to investigate the social interactions between festival attendees using social capital theory. Arcodia and Whitford (2006) believe that festivals encourage dialogue between the members of a community, as well as, across members of different communities. In their view, festival attendance provide the opportunity to build social capital (networks, norms, and resources) by: (1) strengthening existing networks and encouraging a stronger interaction between existing community organisations (bonding social capital); (2) developing community resources and producing social links between different individuals and groups which in the past did not had any form of synergy (bridging social capital); and (3) strengthening relationships between individuals, organisations, and the public sector (linking social capital). In the same spirit, Wilks (2011) used social capital as a framework to examine three different music festivals (pop, opera, folk). In her research she suggests that music festivals are not important sites for social and cultural policy aims of combating social exclusion, since they do not bridge significant barriers between different social groups. She concludes that the bonding social capital was in evidence at

the pop and folk festivals that she studied, but that bridging social capital was not common. At the opera festival, neither bridging nor bonding social capital was prevalent, with attendees preferring to stay detached from other people.

However, up to date these concepts have not been widely applied in critical event studies and the available literature has tended to focus on big music festivals (e.g. Wilks, 2011; Quin and Wilks, 2013; Gibson el al., 2014) and large-scale sporting events (Misener, 2013; Jamieson, 2014); neglecting those festivals that take place in the suburbs. For example, Mykletun (2009) investigates the perspective of festival organisers and Finkel (2010) the perspective of community residents. Finkel (2010) produced empirical findings, suggesting that social capital can enhance our understandings of how festivals can strengthen communities and place identity through shared experience, celebration and collective action, whilst reaffirming notions of traditionally constructed gender roles. However, even if Finkel is acknowledging that festivals may not always engender positive social relations, Mair and Duffy (2018) state that in her research she does not explicitly identify different types of bridging or bonding social capital.

Festivals may facilitate social capital by offering opportunities for socialisation; enhancing the abilities and learning skills of participants; facilitating cooperation between organizers and communities (Schulendorf, Thomson, and Schlenker, 2011; Misener, 2013). Towards this inquiry different evidence is derived by various authors. Crespi-Vallbona and Richards (2007) argue that festivals can both increase the 'bonding' within a community and enhance its bridging social capital by reaching individuals beyond the immediate community. MacKellar (2006) demonstrates how social capital was built up in a regional festival in Australia, how it established new relationships and how it strengthened existing ties amongst the community. Kruger (2018) who investigated a music festival as well, validates its capacity as a communication vehicle for the development of social capital. It has been similarly argued that involvement in festivals may contribute to newcomers' feelings of acceptance in the community; enhancing bridging social capital (Laing et al., 2019). Stevenson (2016) investigates the development of social capital and engendered social inclusion in two festivals;

considering who actual accrues social capital in practice and what sort of social capital is developed by different parts of a diverse community. Quinn (2005) meanwhile examines two festivals in the UK and Ireland to investigate the diverse sets of social relationships that develop during their activities. She found that bonding social capital was prevalent among family and friendship groups, while bridging social capital was generated between the different sets of social actors. However, Mair and Duffy (2018) claim that Quinn's research was carried out during the festivals themselves, leading to potential bias from respondents who were enjoying the festival and perhaps emphasized the positives of the experience. Recently, Biaett (2019) tried to advance social capital theory in relation to festivals by reviewing the related literature to the topic. Using a confessional tale, he exemplifies the experiences of attending festivals in terms of bonding and bridging social capital. He believes that many of the research conducted, implies casually an evident connection between festivals and social capital (see: Remington, 2003; Arcodia and Whitford, 2006; Molitor et al., 2011).

Previous research appears to show that festivals can contribute to the development of bonding social capital, yet are less effective in building, bridging, or linking social capital. However, in the context of suburban festivals there are no available studies to inform my argument reflecting in part Mair and Duffy's (2018) claim that much of the overall research on social capital has been conceptual rather than empirically based. Equally, Wilks and Quinn (2016) state that despite the fact that the social dimensions of festivals are being explored and social capital ideas are informing the literature, there remains much scope for further enquiry. My thesis is situated within the context of this growing body of literature that explores the potential of festivals to develop social capital, providing an additional depth to the links already made by other authors. At this point, Hinch and Holt's (2017) argument that the concept of place needs to be part of this discussion seems relevant to this thesis. As Lau and Li (2019: 53) note, "the idea of identifying and articulating the sociocultural meanings of festivals as a means of interpreting the effect of urban festival on the notions of place is conceptually reasonable". Bearing in mind that place has been shown to be implicated in shaping

social capital (Quinn and Wilks 2013) the main suggestion made here is that incorporating further the concept of social capital into the literature might be a useful development in these regards. However, it must also be acknowledged that social capital is a complicated and contested concept with differing interpretations of its meaning and usefulness. The next section focuses on the role of festivals in producing a place identity.

## 4.8 Festivals and Place Identity

In this thesis, festivals are considered as a way to better understand the relationship between suburban place and identity. Earlier studies have pointed to the role that festivals play in creating place identities, arguing for more varied approaches that aim to understand the socio-political relationship between festivals and place (see: Platt and Ali-Knight, 2018). Gibson et al. (2011), for example, highlight the importance of festivals to rural communities, emphasising their transformative effect and their role in reflecting the collective identities of people and place. However, despite recent publications and the new methods adopted in Critical Event Studies, there is a substantial knowledge gap when it comes to the role festivals in producing a suburban place identity.

Place has long been of interest to festival researchers. A number of scholars believe that festivals are place-based cultural events that consist of a key mechanism through which people can make and re-make their collective identities and connections with place (Chwe, 1988; Lorentzen and Hansen, 2012; Gerritsen and van Olderen, 2014). Festivals often celebrate the history, tradition or culture of a particular place (Derrett, 2003; Getz, 2010; Mair and Duffy, 2015) and they are usually developed within a community in response to a need or desire to celebrate its distinctive place identity (Douglas, Douglas and Derrett, 2001; Wood, 2005). As they provide a venue for communication and individual engagement with the ‘collective’ (Rao, 2001), they are an essential component of the social infrastructure of local communities. On the one hand, festivals are always grounded in place. They involve interactions between people (Andrews and Leopold, 2013) and, as such, they express the close relationship between identity and place (Turner, 1982). This capacity arises from various affective practices that develop between people and place and, effectively, are facilitated during the festival. On the

other hand, festivals are social gatherings “based on local consumption and organised around localised geographic ties” (Gotham, 2005: 242) and can “articulate and communicate shared values, ideologies and mythologies central to the world-view of relatively localised communities” (Bennett et al., 2014:1). Bearing this in mind, a festival exhibits different levels of ‘place dependency’.

> Not only do festivals constitute one of the many practices that humans have evolved in the process of making homes, but they also provide a vehicle to express the relationship between people and place, thereby enabling place-based communities to celebrate the unique characteristics of their region. (Merkel, 2013: 41)

In a variety of ways, a festival constitutes a significant aspect of the socio-economic and cultural landscape of everyday life and as such it can become a potential site for representing, encountering, incorporating and researching aspects of cultural difference (Bennet et al., 2014). The relevance of this paradigm is summed up by Waterman (1998: 56), who believes that “festivals are cultural artefacts which are not simply bought and ‘consumed’, but which are also accorded meaning through their active incorporation into people’s lives”. Based on this approach, “festivals may not only foreground this awareness of how the festival space is socially constructed, but also of how conversely its social relations are spatially constructed” (Chalcraft, Delanty and Sassatelli, 2014: 116). In this thesis, festivals provide a mean to understanding how a suburban place might be experienced and lived. In order to achieve this end, I examine the transformative potentials of suburban festivals and whether they have a role in shaping everyday suburban life. I argue that the co-creation of a festival can play a considerable role in differentiating a festival experience.

## 4.9 The Transformative Potential of Festivals and Co-creation

Critical Event Studies understand festivals to have a transformative potential; an ability to disrupt and even deny, the established social order. In general, recent research on festivals and urban artistic activities show how they play a key role in producing and

transforming cities in multiple ways (Quinn, 2019). It has been broadly suggested this potential offers a relief from the routines of everyday life: as festival activities unfold they transform urban space in ways that disrupt and temporally suspend social relations (Wait, 2008); modify the use of various spaces (Quinn and Wilks, 2017); alter routinised mobilities (Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011); and, effectively, revalue the symbolic capital of the place (Weller, 2013).

The idea that festivals have a transformative ability in everyday life is widely accepted by social scientists and has been investigated by researchers who approached the topic from a variety of theoretical angles. Waterman (1998), writing on arts festivals nearly 20 years ago, was one of the first scholars to discuss this attribute. By linking the theoretical inquiry on place to the production and consumption of culture, he examines how a festival can transform an urban place from being an everyday setting into a temporary environment that "contribute[s] to the production, processing and consumption of culture concentrated in time and place" (ibid: 54-55). More recently, Bennett and Woodward (2014) noted that festivals offer opportunities for experimentation with identity in everyday settings, since a key asset of any festival is its ability to offer a temporarily distinctive environment in which the individual can experience an immersive and non-routinised event outside the constraints of the everyday. Davies (2015: 535) emphasises that "festivals are distinctive because they take people outside their normal behaviours in time and space. They provide unusual activities and evoke feelings and emotions that are very different to the regular and material routines of the workday". Likewise, Falassi (1987:3) points out that

> at festival times, people do something they normally do not; they abstain from something they normally do; they carry to the extreme behaviours that are usually regulated by measure; they invert patterns of daily social life. Reversal, intensification, trespassing, and abstinence are the four cardinal points of festive behaviour.

These authors consider festivals to be the antithesis of the everyday, a bounded experience clearly detached from the quotidian rhythms of the city, or a space and time separated from the mundane dimensions of everyday life. However, festivals, rather than transcending the everyday, have also been examined for the ways in which they are intimately embedded within the public sphere as normative and, at times, transformative processes (Giorgi and Sassatelli, 2011). From this perspective, a festival is not just an extraordinary event, a spectacle that lifts people out of their everyday activities but is simultaneously an intensification of that experience.

In this thesis, festivals imply a specific way of consuming culture: the consumer of the festival experience is not only a spectator, but also a co-creator (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Getz, 2010; Fabiani, 2011; Rihova et al., 2015; Getz and Page, 2016). Bearing this in mind, researchers have asserted that the more people engage with the co-creation process, the more likely they are to have a 'positive' experience (Mathis et al., 2016; Zhang, Fong and Li, 2019). Various qualitative festival studies suggest that festivals that are open to the co-creation of the experience create symbolic value for people (Richards and Wilson, 2006; Mathis et al., 2016; Harkison, 2018) and enhance place attachment (Rihova et al., 2015; Davis, 2016). In Chapter Eight, I look at whether the particular festivals present enough evidence to suggest that this factor significantly impacts peoples' experience. I contend that if there is not enough synergy between residents and festival organisations the local community may end up having a different festival with what the community planned to have (Gursoy et al., 2004). This means that the non-inclusion of the local community within the planning process can mean that people's opinions and voices would not and could not be acknowledged (Jepson, et al., 2008). In such a way, the organisers could effectively curtail the possibility of the festival becoming a demonstration of community power (Marston, 1989; Rinaldo, 2002), allowing further the establishment of closed or narrow hegemonic planning processes. To this end, what type of transformations are developed among people who engage in suburban festivals and what are the implications of this for suburban place? In order to

discuss the influence of festivals on suburban place, the next sections discuss the concept of 'festivalisation'.

## 4.10 The Festivalisation of the Suburbs: An Alternative Perspective

Festivals are not only temporally limited events but are also usually bounded by geographical space. As such, they have the capacity to make use of existing infrastructure, whilst temporarily appropriating local settings. Accordingly, most festivals have a direct and/or indirect impact on the geographical space of the city, both temporarily and permanently (e.g. through building festival facilities) (Cudny, 2013, 2014, 2016; Cudny, Korec and Rouba, 2012; Davies, 2015). As a festival unfolds in a specific place, it has a multidimensional effect on the spatial transformations occurred *in situ*. In this sense, festivals hold another transformative potential as they (re)construct the space in which they are held, changing its appearance, ambiance and use (Quinn and Wilks, 2017). According to Edensor (2017: 115)

> festivals are ephemeral events that do not colonise space, they are on the move, or only linger awhile, they are unlikely to change the enduring meanings and uses of space. However, in temporarily challenging, augmenting, or revealing overlooked qualities, festivals do offer opportunities for practicing, representing, and apprehending place in ways at variance to habitual experience.

These spaces can offer distinct experiences that add to a sense of separation from daily life (Davies, 2015). Johansson and Kociatkiewicz (2011), in their study of two festivals, found a profound disconnection between the frenzied festivalised event and the everyday space of the city. This disconnection depends on the multiple and intersected meanings that festivals develop in relation to the spaces they occupy (Perry et al. 2019).

The development and increasing role of festivals in cultural consumption is part of a wider socio-cultural, economic and political process that scholars identify as the 'festivalisation of cultures' (Bennet et al., 2014). This term is usually used to capture the spread of festivals as well as the accompanying diversification of their types, programme

forms and audiences. Even if festivalisation has been utilised differently by different authors (e.g. Hauptfleisch et al., 2007; Richards and Palmer, 2010; Roche, 2011; Jakob, 2013), it provides a useful overarching frame for this thesis, since festivals can be understood as representational and performative spaces of culture through this process (Bennett et al., 2014).

Although the description of the basic conceptions and definitions related to festivalisation includes concepts such as geographical and/or urban space and its different types, the spatial aspect of festivalisation is not sufficiently highlighted in geographical terms (Cundy, 2016). Festivalisation is commonly employed as a policy tool to promote 'creativity' (see: Chapter Three), while attracting investment, footfall and tourists to the city centre (Picard and Robinson, 2006; Edensor and Sumartojo, 2018). As such, it involves the introduction of festivals into city planning to advance economic development (Jakob, 2013) and it is closely linked to the economic restructuring of cities and inter-city competitiveness (AEA Consulting, 2006; see: Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011). Interestingly enough, in the context of urban development, the term is usually used to refer critically to various urban policies that lack democratic legitimacy (Roth and Frank, 2000), and is often accompanied by negative connotations, as processes of intensification, replication, over-tourism and mismanagement of natural resources have been observed worldwide. From this perspective, one interpretation of the term is "doing politics through big events" as civic elites gain political and economic capital to deter resistance to their control (Roth and Franck, 2000; Smith, 2016).

Festivalisation not only involves instrumental economic modes, but also the wider reframing of the city as a site of consumption (Smith, 2012). Essentially, the main consequence of such a process is the "symbolic transformation of public space to a particular form of cultural consumption" (van Elderen, 1997: 126). This encompasses a temporary transformation of the city into a distinct symbolic space (Richards and Palmer, 2010), which impacts the way the city is understood, both in its objective and subjective dimensions (Cudny, 2016), and effectively contributes to place-making (Richards and Palmer, 2010).

However, recently, Edensor and Sumartojo (2018) explicitly disagreed with the generalising assertions that surround this notion. Instead of considering festivalisation as simply a neoliberal process that reduces spectators to passive onlookers and serves only commercial interests, they advocate the potential for festivals to transform places and to encourage people to rethink their familiar surroundings in creative and thought-provoking ways. Bearing this in mind, they suggest that smaller scale, experimental, radical and participatory festivals might shed further light onto the abilities of festivals to transform space and remake place. Similarly, Roche (2011) claims that even if festivalisation can be interpreted as having mainly culturally hegemonic and ideological impacts, it can theoretically refer also to the role and influence of festivals on the societies that host and stage them. For these reasons, in this thesis, I focus mainly on the festivalisation of suburban place by looking at particular types of festivals and venues. To what extent does this process play a significant role in rethinking suburbia?

## 4.11 Conclusions

The perspectives presented above present a call for the widening of conditions for researching festivals beyond the current parameters. Cities continue to promote the production and consumption of festivals. Although festival research has expanded in recent years, the focus has remained on urban festivals, neglecting those that take place in the suburbs. As a result, little is known about people's nuanced festival experiences in suburban contexts. As a response, this thesis picks up from the critical 'turn' in festival studies and uses festivals as an empirical lens through which I examine the relationship between place and cultural consumption.

While my literature review shows that research into the socio-cultural impact of festivals has a long-standing tradition, there appears to be something of a disjoint, and indeed an overlap, in the conceptual ideas employed. "What appears to be needed is a greater synthesising of the theoretical lines of enquiry employed so that the transformative effect that festivals have on social relations may be examined comprehensively and cohesively" (Wilks and Quinn, 2016: 28). In response, I contribute to the existing literature by highlighting the potential transformations that can occur in suburban places

during festivals. In Chapter Eight, I seek to address the weak theoretical understanding of the relationship between festivals and suburban place and illustrate the extent to which suburban festivals contribute to place identity. Given this, the purpose of this chapter is to offer a further insight into the role of suburban festivals in place-making. By looking at how people perceive and interact within the festival environment, I touch upon issues of participation, co-creation and inclusion in more formal versions of cultural consumption.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Methodology

### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I presented the theoretical framework that informs my analysis. This chapter presents the methodology of this research. The following discussion considers the intersection between philosophy, research design and specific methods undertaken to address the research questions and aims to establish the empirical foundations for examining the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption. First, I outline the philosophical foundations of my study, and consider how an interpretative phenomenological approach can contribute towards a broader understanding of the ways in which cultural consumption comes to shape people's relationship with suburban place. I briefly explain this with reference to the work of Heidegger (1967). Secondly, I address issues of reflexivity and explain my ontological assumptions. Then, I outline the overall epistemological framework for data collection, and I address the specific qualitative methods undertaken in my research. This includes a discussion of how I explored the field and how access was negotiated. I also introduce my case studies, presenting their geographical and demographic specificities and some general information about the three festivals. Finally, I describe the research process and present how a thematic approach was utilised in the analysis of the data. The final two sections of this chapter discuss research validity and reliability, as well as a consideration of ethical issues.

### 5.2 Philosophical Underpinnings: Phenomenology

Philosophical issues are essential in qualitative studies, as they are related to the way that a researcher sets questions and deals with any pre-existing assumptions about a particular topic. Bearing this in mind, my research initiated an interest in an area that was previously unexplored in academic literature. Essentially, I conduct an inductive study to generate empirical data in order to formulate new theoretical perspectives and

insights that would contribute to broader theoretical and methodological debates in Human Geography, Sociology and Critical Event Studies. From a philosophical perspective, I look at how people experience and understand suburban place, and how they relate to cultural consumption. These two aspects represent the foundations of my thesis. Building on a short discussion of the literature on the topic, the purpose of my qualitative research is (1) to achieve a better understanding of everyday suburban life through the lived experiences of the people who actually live in the suburbs, and (2) to illustrate the ways in which the consumption of culture shapes suburban residents' relationship with the city. Accordingly, this study adopts a phenomenological perspective that allows me to explore the lived experiences of those being researched (Szarycz, 2009) and various meanings concerning this specific phenomenon (Cresswell, 2002). Such an approach is ideal for my research, since it allows me to identify how people experience and understand suburbia and how they relate to the cultural consumption of the city.

Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a research approach that has been extensively used across various disciplines such as sociology, geography, psychology, health sciences, and education (Creswell, 2009). It has its roots in the European philosophical tradition that was developed by the German philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and others who later expanded upon his work, notably Heidegger (1967), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Schutz (1967) and Sartre (2003). Van Manen (1990) defines phenomenology as the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the internal meaning of the lived experience. Commonly referred to as the study of the life-world (Tuohy et al., 2013), phenomenology deals with the scientific study of 'lived' experience (Dowling, 2007) and looks at the way social phenomena become visible to people (Giorgi, 2012). In other words, it is a way of describing these phenomena as they appear to the conscience of those who actually experience them (Moran, 2000).

Broadly, phenomenologists understand human experience as always emplaced (Mugerauer, 1994; Malpas, 1999) and based on social interaction (Seamon, 2012). Essentially, this research philosophy claims that people perceive their reality by creating a subjective image within their own consciousness that is based on various experiences

and meanings. What is distinctive about phenomenology is its focus on the multidimensional character of experience, in that it attributes a central role to subjectivity (Caelli, 2001). For this reason, phenomenological studies are concerned with the awareness of every research participant, and attempt to adhere to their perspectives in an open and diverse manner (Groenewald, 2004; Wertz, 2005). In this light, a phenomenological approach to the study of suburbia might begin by asking: what is the essence of everyday suburban life and what are its main characteristics?

It is worth noting that phenomenology includes two different conceptual approaches: the descriptive (eidetic) and the interpretive (hermeneutic) (Spiegelberg, 1982). Both approaches focus on the 'lived experience'. However, their main differences are in how the findings are generated and how they are used to produce further knowledge. The eidetic approach, influenced by Husserl's (2002a) ideas, is based on the premise that there are essential structures that constitute every human experience. In Husserl's view, phenomenology is about how people describe their experiences through their senses. The basic assumption of this approach is that people know only what they experience. By questioning the possibility of 'pure' consciousness, Husserl suggests that the researcher should approach various social phenomena without personal biases and without bringing any pre-existing knowledge into the field of research, in such a way ensuring scientific rigour (Lopez and Willis, 2004). This requires a "phenomenological reduction" (Husserl, 2002b: 129) that allows the description of a phenomenon as accurately as possible, abstaining from any prerequisite context, but remaining credible to the facts (Groenewald, 2004). This is known as 'bracketing' or 'epoché'. Even if these notions have traditionally been understood differently by different authors, the objective of the eidetic approach remains to "describe things as they appear to consciousness" (Moran, 2000:6) and tries to explain the significance and the general characteristics of a particular phenomenon (Giorgi, 2008). In this approach, however, space and time, although they constitute important elements, are put aside as the focus is solely on consciousness: what is important is the experience, while disregarding its context (McConnell-Henry, Chapman and Francis, 2009).

On the contrary, the hermeneutic approach, known also as “phenomenology of everydayness” (Cerbone, 2006: 45), is influenced by the interpretative paradigm (Dowling, 2004). Developed by Heidegger in 1967, it focuses on the ways in which people negotiate and develop different meanings within their life-world. The purpose of this approach is to interpret and determine the underlying meanings *behind* people’s experiences. In Heidegger’s terms, people are “always already embedded in a world of meaning” (van Manen and Adams, 2010: 450). Such an approach not only requires a systematic interpretation of people’s realities, but also an analysis of the socio-cultural and political contexts, which exert a significant influence on the lived experience (Flood, 2010). The role of the phenomenologist is the interpretation of this (Heidegger, 1967). In this thesis, I develop an interpretative phenomenological approach that aims to investigate common and contrasting meanings regarding suburban place and cultural consumption, as well as capturing the unique and crystallising components that make up the situational knowledge of those being researched (Cresswell, 2009). This is related to the way in which suburban place comprises a social and practical organised structure (see: Chapter Two).

An essential element of interpretive phenomenology is that the researcher is “considered inseparable from assumptions and preconceptions about the phenomena under investigation”, and that these must be acknowledged and integrated into the research findings (McCance and Mcilfatrick, 2008: 235, as cited in Tuohy et al., 2013). In this context, van Manen (1990) argues that there are four fundamental life-world existential themes to be considered when phenomenologists reflect on how people interpret the world. These are derived from people’s past experiences and have the capacity to influence and shape their present and future experiences. According to van Manen and Adams (2010) these life-world existential themes include the following: ‘lived space’ (spatiality), ‘lived time’ (temporality), ‘lived body’ (corporeality) and ‘lived human relation’ (relationality). These themes are fundamental for understanding how people experience their world through a phenomenological inquiry. For the purposes of this thesis, these themes offer a significant conceptual guide for my empirical interpretation

of suburban place and culture. Representing the patterns of the lived experiences of people who live in the suburbs, they offer insight into how they experience and understand suburban place and what, if any, influences the experience of cultural consumption has on them. In the following section, I reflect upon my own perception of the phenomenon under study, touching upon the role of the researcher in a phenomenological study (Marshall and Gretchen, 2006). My aim is to isolate my personal interpretations and explain the researcher's influence on the data collection and analysis process (Langdridge, 2007).

## 5.3 Reflexivity

Any qualitative study can be influenced by the world-view, thoughts, feelings and experiences of the researcher (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005). For this reason, reflexivity plays a key role in the validity of such a research approach (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). In simple terms, reflexivity is concerned with the positionality and influence of the researcher within the research. In this section, I provide a brief account of my PhD journey, recalling how suburbia became part of my own life-world.

I identify myself as an urban and cultural geographer. I was born and grew up in a central, high-density neighbourhood in Thessaloniki in Greece. I have also lived in various other European cities, including Athens, Brussels, Tilburg, Manchester, Tallinn and Barcelona. Therefore, in a certain sense, my world-view is influenced by the comparative elements that I have incorporated and embodied through my long or short stays in these cities.

Bearing this in mind, I really first came into contact with the British version of suburbia through this study. In Greece, suburbs have a different connotation, and mainly characterise areas that are located only in the outer-city and not the inner. Additionally, even if I had been to a British suburb before, I had never previously lived in one. When hearing the word 'suburb', I instinctively imagined a low-density place with homogeneous terraced houses, with front and back gardens, or I thought about conspicuous consumption (see: Veblen, 1994 [1899]), epitomised by the common phrase 'keeping up with the Joneses': a social context whereby individuals gain or lose self-

esteem in relationship to the status of a consumption good that is established by the standards of a reference group with more prestige and 'eclectic' tastes. Probably, the only unconscious influence in my understanding of the suburbs came from various television series that I used to watch (e.g. Cuckoo, Married... with Children, The Simpsons) and punk music:

> Same old boring Sunday morning / Old man's out washing the car / Mum's in the kitchen cooking Sunday dinner / Her best meal, moaning while it lasts / Johnny's upstairs in his bedroom sitting in the dark / Annoying the neighbours with his punk rock electric guitar / Every lousy Monday morning / Heathrow jets go crashing over our home / Ten o'clock Broadmoor siren / Driving me mad, won't leave me alone / The woman next door just sits and stares outside / She hasn't come out once ever since her husband died / Youth Club group used to want to be free / Now they want Anarchy / They play too fast, they play out of tune / Practise in the singer's bedroom / Drum's quite good, the bass is too loud / And I can't hear the words / Saturday morning family shoppers / Crowding out the centre of town / Young blokes sitting on the benches / Shouting at the young girls walking around / Johnny stands there at his window looking at the night / I said, 'Hey, what you listening to? There's nothing there' / That's right! / This is the sound of the suburbs.
>
> The Members, "The Sound of the Suburbs" (1979)

Still, I was not particularly aware of the popular representations that surround suburbia. The first time I ever realised what suburban life looks like was through this research, as I stayed in four different suburbs of Manchester during this period (Ardwick, Withington, Rusholme, and Hulme). While I was living in these suburbs and generally spending conscious time reading or watching films and documentaries about the suburbs or visiting different suburban areas, I started to realise that these places are indeed very different from other places I had lived before. Take for instance one of my first

observations, quoted from my diary, where I present the first tentative views of a curious outsider in the suburbs:

> "Yesterday I had a good idea. I folded the map, and I closed my mobile phone. I got lost, purposefully, in endless and colourless housing wastelands. Houses, houses and only houses. I walked for 10 minutes along the same street and at the end there was only a dead-end! Why did somebody to design the city in such a way?"
>
> (field notes 30.06.2016)

These early views of mine validate a kind of contemptuous and stereotypical attitude towards the suburbs and their way of life and show how a researcher can become biased toward a particular phenomenon. In this sense, during the study, I felt affected by the data. I recall complaining about the lack of amenities and cultural or consumption spaces in Ardwick, whereas in Withington I felt more satisfied: "here at least there are some cafés and restaurants" (field notes 25.09.2017).

However, this research is not an ethnographic account of my own experiences, but one that aims to explore the life-world of the people who live in the suburbs. As I mentioned before, I adopt an interpretative approach that is intended to capture people's experiences, providing me with an insight into how these experiences affect their life-world. As a phenomenological researcher and as a result of these reflections, I am dedicated to exploring suburbia as a lived experience, and to understanding how people relate to suburban place and cultural consumption. In such a way, I have followed Pink's (2012: 37-38) recommendation:

> places themselves do not exist independently and we cannot go off and find them and do ethnography or interviews in them. Rather, we are part of the constitution of the research-place-event as we do research: Thus leading to the making of what I have elsewhere called 'ethnographic places' (Pink, 2009).

At this point, I should acknowledge my subjective position as a non-British researcher. I write as an observer who aims to highlight people's everyday realities and examine their relationships with suburban place and cultural consumption. This is achieved through a reflective dialogue with my research participants, which, in turn, enabled me to explore their 'Dasein' (being-in-time) (Heidegger, 1967) in relation to suburbia. In such a way, I tried to become part of their life-world and to create interpretations and shared knowledge regarding their experiences. Still, I cannot understand their world in detail. I can only reflect upon their experiences from the data collected and through my own intersubjectivity and ontological assumptions, which I present in the next section.

## 5.4 Ontological Assumptions

My thesis looks at the suburbs as a geographical expansion of the city and considers them as interdependent places to a broader and more complex urban system. Accordingly, I do not engage with the suburbs in isolation from the city, rather than in direct correlation with it. Still, the framework of my research engages with the suburban place as having a certain dynamic of their own that is capable of creating distinct daily experiences. For this reason, I refer to the suburbs as an analytical category in order to demarcate them as unique and distinctive spatial entities or small-scale geographical units. Even if they are interrelated with a larger entity (e.g. city, region, nation-state etc.), they consist of a differentiated geographical area with particular characteristics, experiential aesthetics, and a distinctive place identity.

From my perspective, 'suburban place' is viewed as a contested site of representation (see: Chapter Two). Bearing this in mind, my approach sets the notion of place at the centre of its considerations and aims towards a deeper understanding of the interrelation between suburban place and cultural consumption. My phenomenological approach was specifically designed to (1) crystallise the distinctive attributes of the suburbs, (2) capture people's perceptions regarding their place of residence, (3) locate cultural resources, (4) visualise different aspects of culture (e.g. consumption, practices, place identity). Specifically, I was concerned with the distinctiveness and particularity of

suburban place (see: Chapter Six), and with the kinds of social forces that are involved in the symbolic construction of suburbia.

Inspired by Bain (2013), my approach to the study of the suburbs does not view their diffused urbanity as less culturally advanced or dynamic than the central city. On the contrary, I engage with suburbia as an actual "place, as opposed to no place" (Peterson, 1999: 46), as a social environment in which everyday life can be studied through 'habitus', i.e. the material practices of everyday culture (Bourdieu, 1977; see: Chapter Three). In doing so, I focus on the role of culture in the everyday life of the suburb (van Heur, 2010; see: Chapter Seven). My purpose is to illustrate how and whether the consumption of culture shapes the everyday experience of suburbia and its way of life. Finally, I want to understand the essence of being in the suburbs as one that is necessarily and importantly in-placed. As such, I concentrate on suburban place from a cultural perspective, and I deal with cultural consumption from a geographical one. This allows me to examine how cultural consumption operates in place, and how it is embedded in everyday practices and spaces, as a locatable and specific phenomenon (Jayne, 2006).

At this point, I would clarify some assumptions about place and cultural consumption. If we consider suburbs as a place of living and the various forms of cultural practices that take place daily as a contributory factor to place-making, we will be able to explore how an analysis of cultural practice and place might be applied to the complexity of everyday living in different social contexts or institutional spheres. Bearing this in mind, this thesis engages with suburban festivals in order to highlight a cultural practice (festivals) as it is being performed - *in practice* (see: Chapter Eight).

In parallel, this thesis is underpinned by the ontological contention that suburban living is a complex phenomenon in which contingencies are inevitable (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Everyday suburban life is understood as a multidimensional and fluid process. It is as a complex system that cannot be understood or analysed in isolation, neither with the material settings, nor the social relations that are played out on a daily level.

I begin from the proposition that there is peculiar ‘suburban condition’ that derives as a consequence of the particular characteristics of the physical location and the way of life conducted in such places. The suburban condition implies an understanding of the relationship between place, culture and people. It plays a central role in how suburbia is experienced since it contextualises the physical environment of the suburb and its socio-cultural organisation. Even if the analytical frame of a ‘*condition’* is generally an abstract category, in this thesis, I use it as an analytical tool in order to examine the everyday realities of suburbia and the way people interact with each other in place and space. Essentially, it consists of an ontological link that is created between the physical place of the suburb and its way of life. The notion is related to the concomitant rise of ‘suburbanism as a way of life’ (see: Walks, 2013), which implies the socio-cultural and political expansion of the urban way of life within the suburb. This allows a departure from strict definitions by stressing the permeability of the urban boundaries in more contemporary spatial classifications (see: Harris, 2010) and implies to extend the critical analysis of the socio-cultural and spatial complexities of everyday suburban life (Fiedler and Addie, 2008). Accordingly, I build on Mumford's (1996: 94 [1937]) theatrical representation of the city and I approach the suburb as a, “geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theatre of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity”, filled with, “significant collective drama”. By paraphrasing Mumford, the suburb becomes a sociological and geographical entity in itself. A relevantly independent unit of analysis that is socially organised and culturally imagined. These ontological assumptions contribute to an emphasis on the diversity of the lived experiences of people who live in suburbia, and further aligns my epistemological leanings with this study. This approach is important for understanding the complex role of place in shaping everyday suburban life. In the following section, I discuss the methods that I used to address the questions and the aims of my study. This includes a discussion of the rationale for their application that will allow the reader to critically evaluate the overall validity and reliability of my thesis.

## 5.5 Research Methods: Cultural Mapping and Semi-structured Interviews

A research method is a set of specific tools and procedures used to collect and analyse data. In the world of research there are two general methodological approaches: the quantitative and the qualitative. A quantitative approach emphasises statistical and numerical measurements and aims to generalise across various groups of people or to explain a specific phenomenon in its broadest expression (Babbie, 2010). The data is usually collected through surveys, questionnaires, polls and demography. On the contrary, a qualitative approach, as adopted in this thesis, is not based on numerical data, direct measurements or experiments and it does not aim to generalise. It is more exploratory and deals mostly with people's perceptions of the world. A qualitative approach that seeks to "explore, explain, or describe a phenomenon" (Marshall and Rossman, 2006), allows me to access a depth of meaning that a quantitative approach would not manage to achieve. In order to realise my approach, I used cultural mapping and semi-structured interviews. The latter supported the epistemological implementation of the research, they provided the necessary data for analysis and allowed me to address the research questions and aims.

### 5.5.1 Cultural Mapping

*A map says to you, "Read me carefully, follow me closely, doubt me not." It says, "I am the earth in the palm of your hand. Without me, you are alone and lost." And indeed you are. Were all the maps in this world destroyed and vanished under the direction of some malevolent hand, each man would be blind again, each city be made a stranger to the next, each landmark become a meaningless signpost pointing to nothing. Yet, looking at it, feeling it, running a finger along its lines, it is a cold thing, a map, humourless and dull, born of calipers and a draughtsman's board. That coastline there, that ragged scraw of scarlet ink, shows neither sand nor sea nor rock; it speaks of no mariner, blundering full sail in wakeless seas, to bequeath, on sheepskin or a slab of wood, a priceless scribble to posterity. This brown blot that marks a mountain has, for the casual eye, no other significance, though twenty men, or ten, or only one, may have squandered life to climb it. Here is a valley, there a swamp, and there a desert; and here is a river that some curious and courageous soul, like a pencil in the hand of God, first traced with bleeding feet.*

*Beryl Markham (1983)*

The first method I used was cultural mapping. The Creative City Network of Canada's Cultural Mapping Toolkit defines cultural mapping as "a process of collecting, recording, analysing and synthesising information in order to describe the cultural resources, networks, links and patterns of usage of a given community or group" (Stewart, 2007: 8). As such it offers ways for describing the cultural resources of places and communities (see: Duxbury, Garrett-Petts and MacLennan, 2015). Langdon (1994: 19-20) advocates this method as follows:

> Cultural mapping involves the identification and recording of an area's indigenous cultural resources for the purposes of social, economic and cultural development. Through cultural mapping, communities and their constituent interest groups can record their cultural practices and resources, as well as other intangibles such as their sense of place and social value. Subjective experiences, varied social values and multiple readings and interpretations can be accommodated in cultural maps, as can more utilitarian 'cultural inventories'. The identified values of place and culture can provide the foundation for cultural tourism planning and eco-tourism strategies, thematic architectural planning and cultural industries development.

This method aligns very well with the research gap that my study identifies. There is a significant gap in the literature when it comes to the ways that suburbs are experienced, represented and imagined as 'real' everyday places (Corcoran, 2010). The aim of this method was thus to collect cultural maps during suburban festivals. Phenomenologically speaking, a cultural map is a mental representation of an individual's understanding of its place of residence. As Powell (2010: 3) argues, using mapping for data collection can enable the researcher to obtain a visual representation and insight into how people understand their world: "what is important to them, what their live social relations are, and where/how they spend their time". In a similar fashion, Jones, (1993: 11) states that a map "is a collection of ideas (concepts) and relationships in the form of a map". Essentially, maps allow people to convey more meaning than words alone. Being unique in time and place, they can reveal people's perceptions regarding their place of

residence. For this reason, combining cultural mapping with phenomenology was considered an appropriate way to portray in more detail the everyday life of the suburbs.

The importance of cultural mapping in this thesis was related to my academic interest in the wider movement to “re-engage the theoretical notions of space itself” in ways that “acknowledge space as socially constructed and contested” (Fraley, 2011: 423). Such an approach recognises “the organisation, use and meaning of space [as] a product of social translation, transformation and experience” (Soja, 1980: 210). On a theoretical level, I was inspired by Lynch's (1960) theory of the perceptual organisation of space and his idea that people experience the city somehow, and, therefore, both insiders and outsiders (see: Chapter Two) can perceive the (sub-) urban fabric in a specific way.

The traditional cultural mapping approaches encompass a wide range of activities in data collection, usually obtained via quantitative methods (Yang, Zhang, and Qu, 2016). While I was developing my empirical approach, I came across different approaches and dimensions of cultural mapping. For example, Yang et al. (2016) propose a cultural mapping approach that leverages participatory sensed collective behaviour data. Providência (2015) identifies two principal methodological approaches, which inform the way we can ‘read’ and map cities: from the top-down and the bottom-up. Specifically, the top-down approach starts from theoretical origins of reading urban morphologies (the forms of buildings and spaces) and their interpretation through urban history or geography (e.g. Rogers, 1958; Rossi, 1966; Rowe and Koetter, 1978; Komossa, 2010). This approach privileges the studies of the neighbourhood and uses mapping as a supportive device for raising awareness regarding urban issues. On the contrary, the bottom-up approach adopts “an empirical approach to urban space and claims to learn about a city’s everyday life, including its neighbourhoods, facilities, and what happens in the city’s public spaces” (Providência, 2015: 218). Such an approach “privileges personal readings of an urban site and conceives of the “townscape” in terms of the public perception of urban space. This, in turn, fosters a planning attitude that privileges the particular, the lived space and the sidewalk, and that fights any abstract general planning that does not focus on improving quality of life” (idid: 218).

In the case of my research, the maps collected provide a visual representation of three different suburbs of Manchester. Essentially, they are forms of bottom-up artistic expression. This means that the maps not only contain a specific meaning of their own, but together they form a 'collective canvas' which allows for the reproduction of different cultural meanings, particularly those assigned to suburban place, cultural consumption and festivals. In this regard, cultural mapping proved a crucial tool to visualise cultural differences and boundaries on a map. In summary, my approach to cultural mapping: (1) contributes to a broader understanding regarding the way people relate to suburban place and cultural consumption; (2) allows for a new perspective on the complexity of suburban life; and (3) opens up new imaginaries, essential for the transformation of suburban life. In section 5.10, I present a short analysis of my sample and more details about the way I briefed my research participants, during nine cultural mapping workshops. This is helpful for understanding the broader context of my findings.

### 5.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The second method I deployed was semi-structured interviews. This method is commonly used in phenomenological research and, effectively, consists of a dialogue between the researcher and the participant, guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented with follow-up questions, probes and comments. This allows for the collection of open-ended data and enables the researcher to explore people's world-views, feelings and beliefs, giving an insight into a particular social phenomenon or experience (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019). DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006: 315) state that semi-structured interviews are "organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee/s". Their main purpose is "to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees" (ibid: 314). According to Giorgi (2009), the most important aim of an interview is to describe as fully as possible the lived experiences of the participant. Likewise, Kvale (1996: 1) notes that interviews are "attempts to

understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations". This method is fully aligned with the research philosophy of this thesis. In the following two sections, I discuss how I explored the field site and how access was negotiated. Thereafter, I explain how I chose Didsbury, Levenshulme and Rochdale as case studies and, afterwards, I justify why and how I chose these particular festivals.

## 5.6 Understanding the Field: Exploring the Landscape through Festival Mapping

In this thesis, I placed a particular emphasis on local geography. The purpose of my phenomenological study was to explore how people experience and understand suburbia in terms of cultural consumption, and more particularly through festivals. In fact, there is little published research that focusses on festival experiences from a phenomenological perspective (Kim and Jamal, 2007; Ziakas and Boukas, 2013; Jackson, 2014; Moss, 2018; Moss, Whalley and Elsmore, 2019). Ziakas and Boukas (2013), for example, developed a model that considers tourist experiences at music festivals using unstructured interviews. Closely related to my discussion in Chapter Four, they believe that festivals can be "understood as symbolic social spaces wherein people interpret the conditions that shape their lives in order to change them" (ibid: 105). This was considered as the appropriate starting point to address the research questions of my thesis.

However, as I mentioned above, I was not previously familiar with this specific context. I had never lived in a suburb of Manchester previously, and my knowledge regarding festivals in Manchester was rather limited (e.g. Manchester Irish Festival, see: Chatzinakos, 2015). So to begin, I conducted a festival mapping of the broader Greater Manchester area. From this first inquiry, I created a database in which included different types of festivals and smaller-scale cultural events. The information was derived mainly through Google searches. In more detail, I located: 'national festivals', 'food and drink festivals', 'music festivals', 'ethnic festivals', 'carnivals and fairs', 'community festivals' and 'combined arts festivals'. These festivals were further categorised between 'urban festivals' and 'suburban festivals'. In such a way, I gathered a significant number of potential case studies. I chose to use case studies, considering this method to be the most appropriate to my approach, since my focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life urban context (Yin, 1994). The vital characteristic of this approach which also makes it different from other research methods is that case studies can potentially

investigate a “specific complex and bounded system” (Stake, 1995: 2), such as the suburbs.

## 5.7 Negotiating Access in Festival Organisations

By researching three different types of festivals I was able to explore the diversity of cultural activity in the suburbs of Manchester. In order to establish a research collaboration with several festival organisations in suburban Manchester I drafted an open invitation and distributed it electronically to festival organisations all across Greater Manchester. In total, three festivals responded. These were the ‘Didsbury Arts Festival’, the ‘Levi Fringe Festival’, and the ‘Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival’. Two of these festivals took place in the suburbs of Manchester (Didsbury and Levenshulme) and one in Rochdale, which is a satellite town of Manchester. I was fortunate that these three case studies provided me with a sufficiently geographically diverse range of festivals that also offered a cross-section of art forms, namely art, music and literature. Having received the go ahead from these three festivals I closely considered the profile of each of them, as well as their geographical location in relation to Manchester and I concluded that they provided ideal comparators on the basis of social, economic and cultural difference.

In order to gain access to the organising committees of these festivals, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with their directors (see: Appendix One). For each of my case studies, I followed the same approach, introducing myself and my research aims. Briefly, I wanted to explore how a suburban community is constructed through festivals and through the actions of the people that make those festivals happen. For this reason, the first objective was to understand the philosophy and the history of each festival, its social objectives, how it was organised, what types of audiences participate, and more generally what was its role in relation to the host suburb.

These interviews were designed in such a way to allow the directors to identify the perceived limitations and challenges that their festivals are currently facing. A key question proved to be *“if you had to start the festival from scratch, what would you*

*change?"* This allowed me to discuss with the festival directors the possibility of my offering a research dimension to the festivals further down the line, effectively using them as gatekeepers. My main idea was to organise a cultural mapping workshop titled as 'Mapping [e.g.] Didsbury's Culture', as part of the festival's programme. The aim of these workshops would be to collect cognitive maps from participants in three different types of festivals and in different venues. The presence of the workshops on the festival programme ensured that the organisers were invested in my research and this facilitated my entry into the field. In the section that follows, I present the geographical and demographic specificities of the three case studies and comparable information about each festival. In this point, I would like to comment that most studies conducted in Manchester have hitherto focused on inner-city areas, while there is not any available academic literature that focuses on the selected case studies. For this reason, I use demographic data and historical sources that allow me to create a contrastable case study portfolio. The demographic data is derived from the 2011 census (ONS, 2011).

## 5.8 Case Studies

Manchester is surrounded by a sea of low-density suburbs and satellite towns, which, in turn, present distinct characteristics and recognisable features. However, every place in the city has a distinct history and geographic position and, thus, is highly diverse in terms of demographics, and place identity. The same stands also for the festivals selected as case studies. They differ in terms of type, history, duration, organisation, audiences, challenges currently faced, etc. In this point, I present this diversity and I explain what the benefits of a comparative case study approach are.

### 5.8.1 Didsbury

In Chapter One, I mentioned that while the old urban core of Manchester was developing the city started to annex into its urban fabric a constellation of villages and small towns. This created a pattern of local suburban centres and high streets. One of these villages is Didsbury, an affluent, predominantly white middle class suburb of South Manchester (see: Figure 2 below) that was incorporated into the city in 1904 (Cooper, 2002). Didsbury,

which is my first case study, is situated about five miles from the city centre (approx. 19 minutes by car, 8 minutes by train, 29 minutes by Metrolink, 40 minutes by bus, 100 minutes on foot) and covers an area of 639,57 hectares. Geographically, it is bounded on the north by Withington; on the south by the River Mersey; on the east by Burnage and Heaton Norris; and on the west by Chorlton-cum-Hardy and the north bank of the River Mersey. Its total population at the 2011 census was 26,788. On an administrative level, it is divided into two wards: West Didsbury and East Didsbury, which also contains Didsbury Village. However, for the purposes of this research, Didsbury was considered as a unified suburb. As it will be shown later in the analysis this created interesting contradictions. The average house price in Didsbury is £382,556 (Zoopla, 2019a), making it one of the most expensive areas in Greater Manchester for housing. What is significant about this particular suburb of Manchester is that both wards are in the bottom five wards in terms of the unemployment rate (4% - 4.2%) (ONS, 2011), while their residents seem to enjoy better living conditions than other areas of the city. Both wards are in the bottom five in the city by percentage of residents of all ages that reported 'bad' or 'very bad' health (1.1% for East Didsbury and 4.2% for West Didsbury) in the census of 2011. Another interesting aspect is that both of them present one of the smaller concentrations of Black African residents in relation to the total population of the city.

Popular places include the St James and the Ivy Cottage churches, the Fletcher Moss Park and Botanical Gardens, the Old Parsonage and the Didsbury Library. Additionally, Didsbury has an active trader association, a collective of businesses of all shapes and sizes that wants "Didsbury to continue to be a place where people are happy and have a great quality of life". The association that consists of locals publishes the 'Didsbury Map' every year (see: Figure 3 below). In 2018-2019, the map listed over 130 shops, cafés, restaurants and other amenities in both wards. This allows to assume that Didsbury offers opportunities for local-based cultural consumption. Against the mainstream representations of suburbia (see: Chapter Two), there are many leisure and consumption spaces such as restaurants, pubs, cafés, bars and independent shops, and various festivals such as the Didsbury Arts Festival, the Didsbury Festival, the Didsbury Beer

Festival, the West Fest, the West Didsbury Comedy Festival etc. (for further reading on Didsbury see: Moss, 1890, 1891; Million, 1969; France and Woodall, 1976; Frith, 1995; France, 1996).

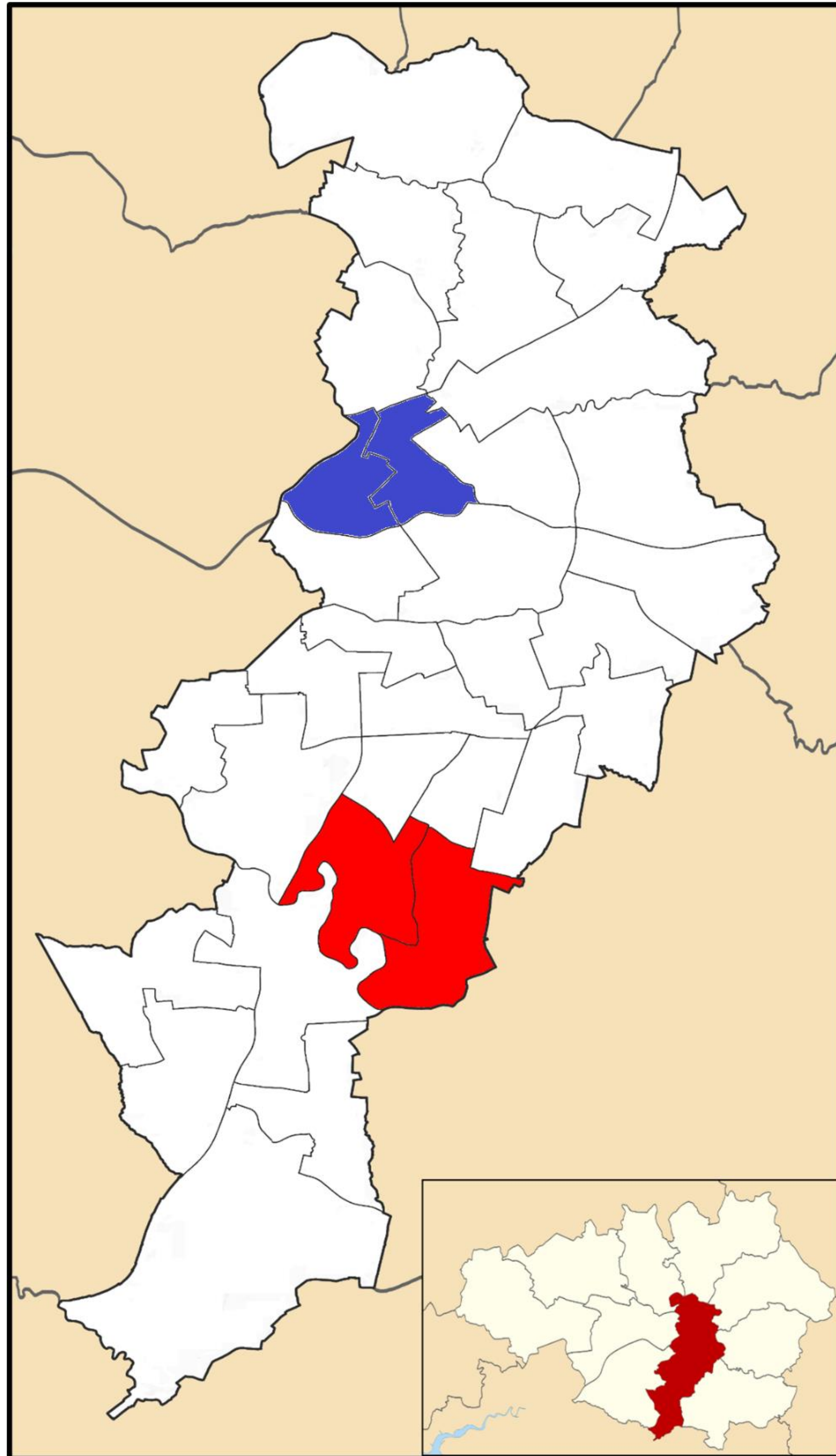


*Figure 2: A map of East and West Didsbury (with red) within Manchester City Council. With blue the city centre*
*Source: Wikipedia contributors*

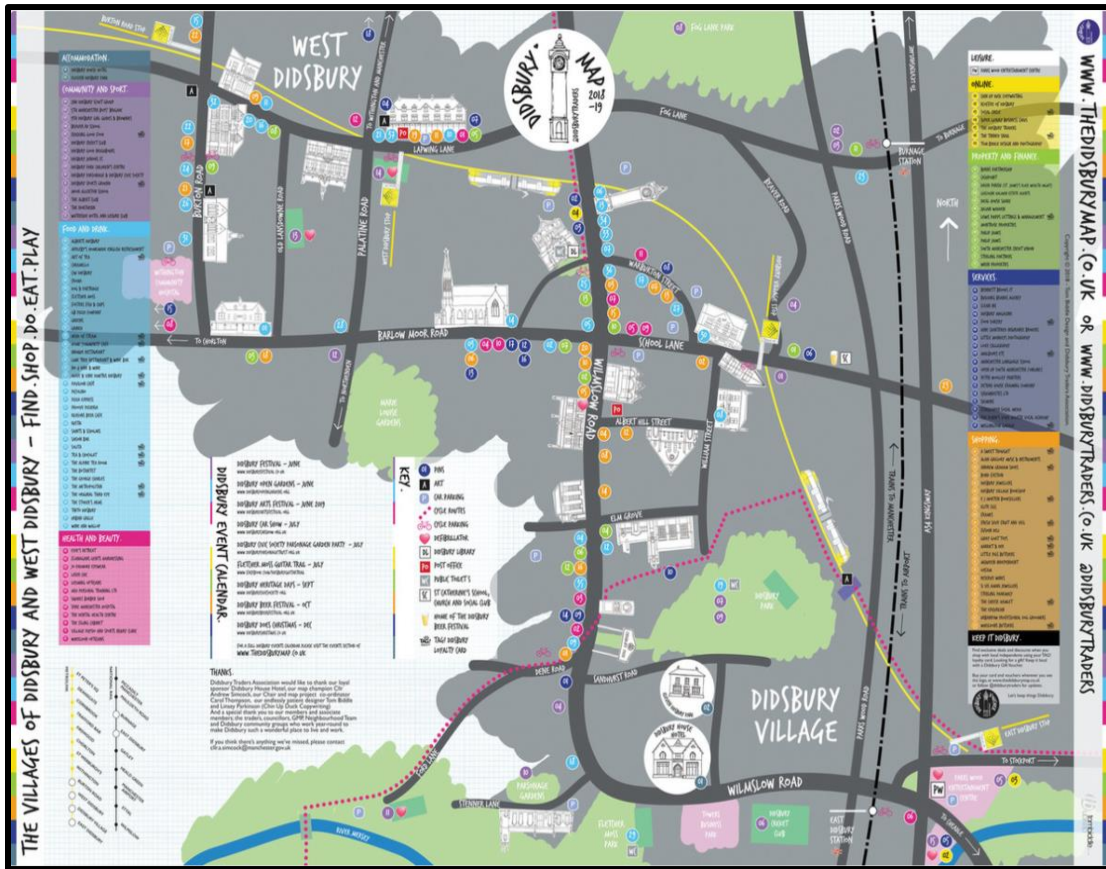



*Figure 3: Didsbury Map*
*Source: Didsbury Traders Association*

### 5.8.2 Didsbury Arts Festival [24th June - 2nd July 2017]

Didsbury Arts Festival is a biennial, volunteer-led, multi-arts festival that runs since 2009 and it is organised by a group of local residents. The aim of the festival is to celebrate Didsbury's "creative culture" and to promote the "increased arts activity" and the "wealth of talent, diversity and the vibrant community that make Didsbury so special" (Didsbury Art Festival Official Website). The festival works together with local and international artists and local businesses who, in turn, support the festival by providing venues or through sponsorship and donations of goods and services. The theme of the 2017 festival was 'Roots', celebrating Didsbury's history, creativity and cultural diversity (see: Figure 4 below). In total, there were 93 events and workshops performed across 37 venues by over 200 artists. These events included a variety of different art forms such as live music, film, literature, theatre, comedy, dance, visual art, cooking and family fun: 57 of the events and exhibitions were free, and 36 charged for entry. According to the festival evaluation report (2017) Didsbury Art Festival had over 14,000 visitors. Half of the participants were new audiences who had not attended the festival before, 75 per cent were between the ages of 35-60+ and 75 per cent travelled a distance of thirteen minutes' drive or less. The festival cost £65,000 to run, and enjoyed strong support from local businesses, community groups, venues and cultural patrons. In that year, the festival initiated an open submission platform, inviting artists from all backgrounds and disciplines to submit their proposals, with a particular focus on inspiring and promoting the work of local artists. In the context of what I discussed in Chapter Four, Didsbury Arts Festival offered an ideal case study in terms of the theoretical assumption that place-based cultural experiences can lead to improved connections to place, since it is branded as a

> "festival that aims to connect people and place; improve community connections and dialogue; work along different communities and through accessible activities; enhancing social engagement and collaboration … The festival is about 'people' rethinking their surroundings in different ways

through the lens of the festival" (Didsbury Arts Festival Director, Personal Interview).

*Figure 4: Didsbury Art Festival leaflet*
*Source: Official Website*

### 5.8.3 Levenshulme

Levenshulme is another inner suburb of South Manchester (see: Figure 5 below). Like Didsbury, it used to be an old village that was incorporated into the city in 1909 (Cooper, 2002). Levenshulme, my second case study, is located 2.7 miles south of the city centre (approx. 11 minutes by car, 9 minutes by train, 19 minutes by bus, 60 minutes on foot) and covers an area of 222 hectares. Levenshulme is a less prosperous suburb than Didsbury and is notable for its high students' population. Geographically it is bordered on the west by Fallowfield; on the north by Longsight; on the north-east by Gorton; on the south-east by Heaton Chapel and Reddish; and on the south by Burnage. At the 2011 census, its total population was 15,430 people. Levenshulme is a growing suburb (12% population growth from 2001 to 2011). Between 2001 and 2011 among the total population that moved to Manchester, 16 per cent settled in Levenshulme. As a result, the demographics of Levenshulme have been changing quite quickly. In 2001, for example, 7 per cent of its total population was Irish, twice the Manchester average. However, this had shrunk to 4.1 per cent by 2011. On the contrary, there has been a rise in the Eastern European population and in recent years, there has been an increase in the Muslim and South Asian population, as well increasing numbers of Africans (ONS, 2011).

Levenshulme is a multicultural suburb in which various ethnic communities live and work and therefore, it is considered to be a melting pot of different cultures. Over a third of the population is from an ethnic minority. This heterogeneous mix of cultures is reflected in the rhythmic geographies of its everyday life. However, Levenshulme is also a place of contradictions bounded with functional and socio-economic boundaries. What is interesting about the particular case study is that displays signs of gentrification, as reflected in the rise in local house prices. According to Zoopla (2019b), the current average value of a house is £158,190. Even if this rate is significantly lower than other suburbs (e.g. Didsbury), a local informant in a blog article remarked that in 2017 "you could buy a home in Levenshulme for £90,000" (Scullard, 2019). It is not a coincidence

that the Sunday Times named Levenshulme as one of the ‘best places to live in the UK for 2019’. The judges described the suburb in this way:

> Reasonable prices and a sense of fun mean this inner-city suburb is perfect for cool kids who now have kids […] Good old-fashioned gentrification is alive and kicking in Greater Manchester […] In a few short years, ‘Levy’ has gone from fake Adidas tracksuits and knock-off trainers to hand-knitted jumpers and home-baked vegan buns sold in the independent market […] At first glance, the high street, aka the polluted A6 trunk road, resembles any other fly-posted urban thoroughfare, but there’s an artsy vibe driven by relatively cheap Victorian and Edwardian houses, and a pioneering spirit of sociability; it’s where Ancoats hipsters might go when they grow up and need three bedrooms. (Johnson, 2019)

The main geographic characteristic of Levenshulme is that it is divided by Stockport Road (the A6), which in turn consists of its high street. Even if Levenshulme is a predominantly residential area, there are numerous consumption options (e.g. fast-food shops, pound shops, social enterprises etc.) as in Didsbury. Thus, there is a significant number of real estate agencies (approximately 20) within less than a mile of the high street. Popular places include the Arcadia Library, the Levinspire, the Klondyke Club, the Levenshulme Market, the old Levenshulme library, the Trove, the Levenshulme Antiques Village and the Fallowfield Loop, an off-road cycle and pedestrian path that connects the area to other parts of South Manchester. The community radio station All FM is also based in Levenshulme. In addition, there are many community organisations, churches, co-working spaces, urban gardens, and festivals such as the Levi Fringe Festival, the Summer of Lev, the Levenshulme Pride, the Levenshulme Festival, the Levenshulme Beer Festival, the Levenshulme Food and Drink Festival, and so on (for further reading on Levenshulme see: Frangopulo, 1962; Sussex et al., 1987; Frith, 1995).

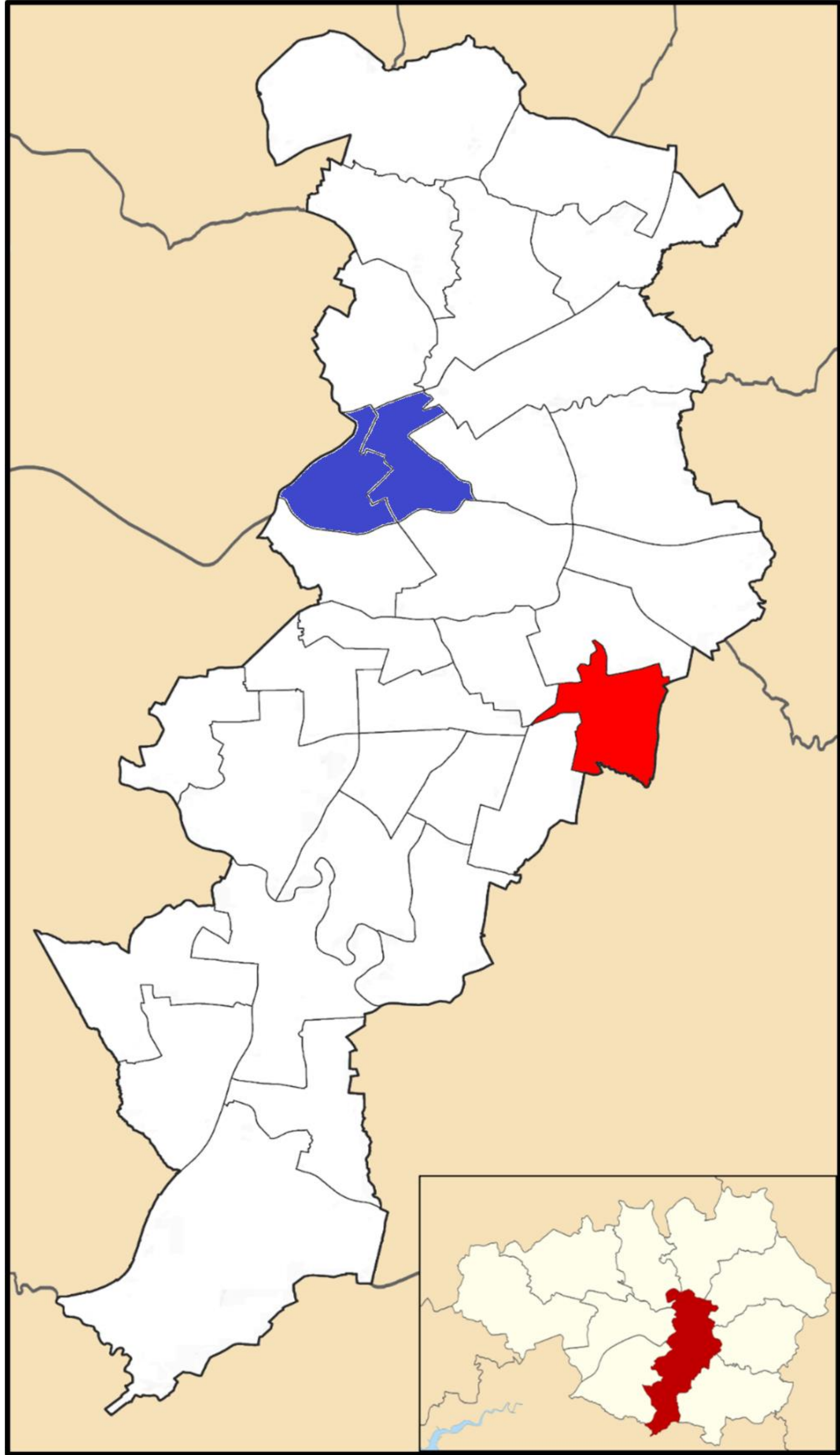


*Figure 5: A map of Levenshulme (with red) within Manchester City Council. With blue the city centre*
*Source: Wikipedia contributors*

### 5.8.4 Levi Fringe Festival [24th June - 9th July 2017]

Levi Fringe Festival was first held in 2017. It was organised by the Levenshulme Old Library Group, a charitable incorporated organisation set up in 2016 to carry forward a vision for a vibrant arts, education, and culture centre for Levenshulme. In 2017 the organisation was trying to raise funds for the restoration of the old Levenshulme library, which is located on Cromwell Grove. Their aim was to transform it into a cultural and community centre that all sections of the community can use as

> a home for arts and cultural activities; a home for performance, music and events that celebrate our community; a youth-friendly space; a home for learning and growing, where individuals can improve their lives; a home for groups: Offices, meeting spaces, resources etc; A building that pays its way whilst benefiting the aims above (such as through pop up cafés, exhibitions, a party venue and place for celebration). (official website)

In 2017, Levi Fringe Festival included a line-up of fifteen different exhibitions, workshops and cultural events such as concerts and poetry, and also incorporated the Summer of Lev, a music and arts festival that takes place annually in the Klondyke Club. Many of the events were broadcast live on All FM. The organisation asked people and venues including bars, cafés, music venues, community hubs, churches and cultural organisations to support "a two-week celebration of all things arty, cultural and creative are in Levenshulme and South Gorton" (Levi Fringe Festival Director, Personal Interview).

The main idea behind the festival was to expose people to forms of art and culture that they would not normally encounter in the venues they use during their daily lives. Another aim was to bring together different groups of people for the purposes of the festival and, thus, connecting local artists with venues. As the organiser told me,

> "the festival can provide the junctions and function as the catalyst for communities to integrate. We need to try and mix that up, but in a way that is considerate to their needs and to that they want to do. It is not about pushing things. It is about providing the circumstances where communities can mix!

That potential is located here" (Levi Fringe Festival Director, Personal Interview).

For this reason, the festival organisation tried to use everyday spaces as festival venues: for example, a musician played classical music in the Tesco supermarket, or an ordinary pub hosted a poetry night. An interesting fact is that at first the festival did not had an actual name. The first time I came across, it was simply known as 'the festival with no name'. In fact, there was an online form, where whoever was interested could vote or suggest a name. In the early promotional material, it was named Levenshulme Fringe: 'International' Festival of Art, Creativity and Culture (see: Figure 6 below) and in 2019 as 'Levy Fringe Festival of Arts and Theatre'. As I was informed by the director of the festival, the word 'International' in the first edition of the festival was meant in an ironic way, since it was going to take place at the same time as Manchester International Festival (MIF), a biannual festival that brings together international artists, from more than 15 countries and from different art forms and backgrounds. The particular festival, only in 2017, generated £40.2 million for the local economy and it counted 380 performances that took place over 18 days, with a record of 300,000 visitors (Manchester City Council, 2017).

*Figure 6: Levenshulme Fringe Festival poster*
*Source: Official Website*

### 5.8.5 Rochdale

Rochdale, home to my third case study, is a satellite town of Manchester and even if it is not technically speaking a suburb that sits within the geographical walls of Manchester , it does allow me to explore the cultural production and consumption of a festival that is similarly in the shadow of a major city and therefore equally peripheral. Rochdale is a post-industrial residential town and the administrative centre of the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale (see: Figure 7 below). The town sits in the foothills of the South Pennines on the River Roch from which it takes its name. It is located just under thirteen miles north-east of Manchester city centre (approx. 38 minutes by car, 21 minutes by train, 61 minutes by Metrolink, 68 minutes by bus). Rochdale's recorded history dates back to 1086, when it was mentioned in the Domesday Book. During the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century it developed into a significant textile mill town. From 1903 to 1933, actually, it produced more cotton than Manchester (see: Farnie, 1992). Interestingly, Rochdale is considered to be the birthplace of the 'Co-operative Movement'. In the middle of the 19th century, a variety of factors including the socio-economic crisis, the high rates of unemployment due to the displacement of the traditional workforce by the installation of production machines, the low salaries, the long hours of daily work and the poor working conditions, had led to conditions of misery for a large part of the population. As a response to that condition, 28 workers - mainly in the textile industry - and artisans founded the 'Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers' in 1844, with the aim of resolving their financial problems. This early consumer co-operative was based on the ideas of Robert Owen and William King, and constitutes a landmark in cooperative history, practice and theory (Zeuli and Cropp, 2004).

Today, Central Rochdale is bounded by smaller towns including Littleborough, Heywood, Newhey, Whitworth, Milnrow, Royton and Shaw. The town has become bigger and more ethnically diverse over the last decade. According to the census of 2011, its total population was 107,926 people, making up almost 55 per cent of the borough's total population (211,699 people). 34.8 per cent of the town's population is non-white British, and it has almost double the percentage of Asians living there compared to the rest of

the borough. Overall, Rochdale is one of the most deprived areas in the UK, ranking 15th in terms of income deprivation and 16th in terms of employment deprivation (English Indices of Deprivation, 2019). This is reflected in low economic growth, high crime levels, high levels of unemployment (8.9%), low life expectancy, low professional skills, and high levels of children and pensioners living in poverty. These characteristics are not uniform across the whole of the borough; however, it is Central Rochdale that is one of the most deprived areas (see: Figures 8 and 9 below).

Well-known places include the Town Hall, the Touchstones, the Pioneers Museum, the Gracie Fields Theatre, the Rochdale Canal, and the 'Seven Sisters' (large tower blocks in the town centre). Rochdale has two professional sports teams, Rochdale A.F.C. (football) and the Rochdale Hornets (rugby league). Finally, several festivals take place in the town, such as the Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival, the Rochdale Feel Good Festival, the Rochdale Canal Festival and the Rochdale Digital Festival (for further reading on Rochdale see: Cole, 1944, 1988; Halliday, 1964; Hibbert, 1975; Moules, 1983; Colligan, 1988; Doughty, 1998).

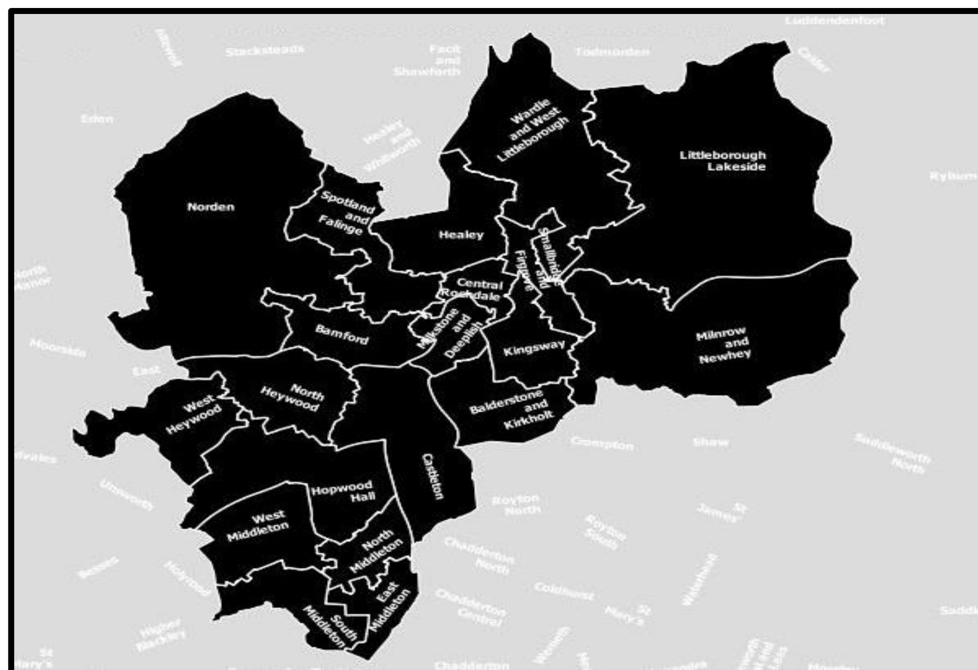



*Figure 7: Wards within Rochdale Metropolitan Borough*
*Source: Geopunk*

*Figure 8: A map of Rochdale Town Centre*
*Source: Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council*

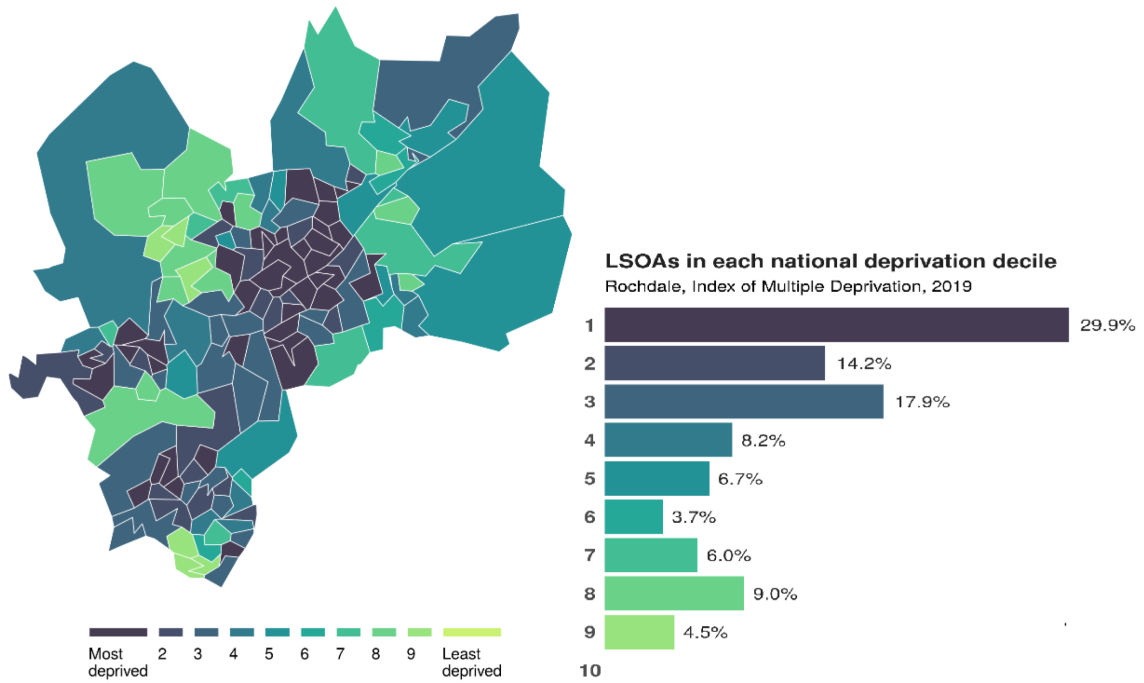



*Figure 9: Index of Multiple Deprivation in Central Rochdale*
*Source: English Indices of Deprivation (2019), MHCLG*

### 5.8.6 Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival [17th - 23rd October]

"What is unique about Rochdale is a fluidity of co-operation" (Festival Director, 2014)

The first Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival was held in 2012. It is organised by Rochdale Borough Council. The festival owes its existence to a Rochdale couple who shared a passion for reading. When they died, they left a sum of money to be used on resources and events related to literature and philosophy, to ensure classic works are available for future generations. As in the other two cases, the festival aims to introduce different genres of art and culture to new audiences, whilst showcasing various venues. The festival originally started as a three-day classical literature and philosophy event, which used to take place in the town library. According to the festival director, when the festival started it had a positive impact on the borough and inspired a number of young people to participate. Then as time went by, the organisation tried to make it more borough-wide, longer, and more artistically diverse. Every subsequent festival has since been developed and organised on the basis of the gaps identified following each annual evaluation. For example, in 2016 the organisation understood that people over 40 with high levels of education and income were highly engaged. However, people aged 14 to 25 were not engaged. In response, the festival developed a specific strategy that deliberately programmed free events for younger audiences, in addition to a young producer scheme. They also initiated a magazine for young people, created by young people.

2017 was the first year that the festival was to last for six days (see: Figure 10 below). It took place all across Rochdale and utilised various venues such as the Town Hall, the Touchstones, social centres, charities, the churches, various cafés, independent shops and the open spaces in the middle of shopping centres. In addition, the festival attempted to use some spaces in an unconventional way, such as putting on a classical music concert in a shopping centre. Events included drama, literature, music, theatre, poetry, talks, visual arts, walking tours, creative writing workshops, and children's shows. There were nearly 40 events held across 13 different venues. Most of them took place in the town centre, but also some took place in different places across the borough. More

than 3,200 tickets were sold, and more than 4,000 people attended. The revenue was £16,298 and spending by festivalgoers in the borough was estimated at £61,500. In the festival evaluation, 23 per cent of the people questioned responded that they had not attended any literature-related event before. The festival also brought new people to the town as 40 per cent said they were not regular visitors to the town centre. These included visitors from across the north-west region and beyond, with people coming from Liverpool, Bolton, Manchester, Halifax, Leeds and Stockport. The festival was characterised by the organisers as a big success across all ages, with 15 sold out performances and big crowds throughout the week.

The director told me that the festival had invited several high-profile authors. The revenue from these special events sustain the festival economically, whilst attracting visitors. There are also low price or free family and children's events. The organisation believes that it is engaging with the community in a creative way by giving local writers the opportunity to showcase their work. According to its organiser, the festival puts Rochdale on the map and makes it a more dynamic place. It is about engaging and inspiring the local community to participate in and have a positive experience of literature, arts and culture. The festival tries to engage with Rochdale's various ethnic communities by organising a variety of events. As the director informed me:

> "for a fabulous festival you need to mix lots of things: you need exciting new work, big brand names that will attract visitors. You need to engage with hard to reach groups, whether they are young people or ethnic minorities. Finally, you need to do something innovative. Something that nobody else has done before. The festival tries to shift what Rochdale can be, but I have noticed that many people have a low esteem of who would come to Rochdale" (Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival Director, Personal Interview).

*Figure 10: Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival leaflet*
*Source: Official Website*

## 5.9 Data Collection

To reiterate a point made above, the focus of this research was to develop a deeper understanding regarding the way people experience suburban place and cultural consumption in Didsbury, Levenshulme and Rochdale. It was, thus, committed to not generalise from the data collected. In this section, I describe how I collected the data and the criteria that I used to select my research participants. In total, I organised nine mapping workshops (see: Appendix Two) in eight different venues. The plurality of the venues and their distinct spatial configuration formed different conditions that I impacted the way I briefed my research participants. During the workshops, I invited festival participants into the research process. I did not make any further classification on the basis of age, ethnicity, gender, insider or outsider, local or non-local etc. In short, the workshops were open to everybody and I did not exclude anybody who wanted to participate on the basis of any criteria. This would be limiting and constraining for the purposes of my research. Every map was created individually, apart from a few cases where my respondents preferred to allow to draw together.

Initially, I provided an information sheet (see: Appendix Three) with details about the workshop and the overall aims of my research, to those who were interested in participating. Afterwards, I was asking them to create a map of their place of residence in an A3 sized paper by locating 'culture' on the map. In such a way, they had to paint a picture of their everyday cultural experience. In the first phase of research, the main objective was to create a visual representation of each suburb. In this sense, I was asking my participants to draw a map of the host suburb. As I mentioned before, I placed a particular emphasis on local geography and I did not focus to more wider interrelations such as social networks or people's relation to the city centre or to other suburbs. On the contrary, I wanted to gain an insight into the way they experience their place of residence in relation to their cultural offerings and to understand where daily activities take place. However, I would like to note that I was not providing any further instructions or defining what culture is. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, in this thesis the emphasis is on culture as it is experienced by people. Therefore, by asking people how they

experience ‘culture’ in their everyday lives, I allowed them to reflect and to express what culture actually means to them. This is also related to the phenomenological focus of the research, which is based on people’s life-world experiences and on the ways in which they consume culture in their locality. In such a way, I managed to engage with ‘culture’ as it is being interpreted, conceived and ultimately practiced by people who live in the suburbs. While they were drawing, I collected brief descriptions about their maps in my notebook and other information by asking them these questions and prompts:

- How do you feel about your ‘suburb-ness’ (e.g. Levenshulme-ness)?
- What does your suburb look like?
- What is important to you?
- Where and how do you spend your free time?
- Where do you socialise?
- Can you include spaces of culture in your map?
- What are you doing in your everyday life? How do you move across space?

These questions allowed participants to focus on specific scales (area of residence) and to record cultural assets that they relate during their everyday lives. Considering the suggestion that “spatial practices create a myriad of narrative maps which, although mythological, imaginary and partial, are central to the process of transforming cartographic space into places of meaning and memory” (Stevenson, 2003: 55), I gathered, in total, 123 maps with comparative and narrative potential. At the end of the appendices I have included all the maps collected from the workshops. In particular,

- 38 maps were gathered in Didsbury. From them 25 were drawn by women and 13 by men. 11 participants were between 18 and 29 years old, 13 were between 30 and 49, and 14 were between 50 and 80 (mean age 43). Most of them lived in Didsbury and other neighbouring areas such as Withington (see: Appendix Four, Map 1). Two of the workshops took place

in open green spaces during other festival events and one in Didsbury Library.

- 44 maps were gathered in Levenshulme. From them 31 were drawn by women and 13 by men. 8 participants were between 18 and 29 years old, 30 were between 30 and 49, and 6 were between 50 and 80 (mean age 38,5). Most of them lived in Levenshulme (see: Appendix Four, Map 2). Two of the workshops took place during the Summer of Lev in the Klondyke Club: an open, yet private community club. The specific event had an entrance fee. The last workshop took place in a community hub (Levinspire), with 20 participants that were refugees learning English (mostly women).
- 38 maps were gathered in Rochdale. From them 15 were drawn by women and 18 by men. 3 participants were between 18 and 29 years old, 5 were between 30 and 49 and 17 were between 50 and 80 (mean age 56). 13 maps were discarded (data is missing, or they were children). Most of the participants were from the suburbs of Rochdale (see: Appendix Four, Map 4). Every workshop took place in closed spaces. Data is missing from the first workshop (a theatrical play) and the third (a creative writing workshop) (see below why).

Cultural mapping gave festival participants the opportunity to demonstrate their personal interpretations of suburban place and the way they relate to cultural consumption during their everyday lives. Overall, these workshops provided me with access to the field and allowed me to become part of the 'festival experience'. They proved to be a very accessible and creative activity that involved community engagement, enabling me to get in contact with different people and to establish a rapport that provoked conversations about suburban place and culture. However, there were many times that, due to my inability to communicate with many different participants at once, potential opportunities for engagement were lost. Thus, there were

several occasions that participation in the workshops was hampered by unexpected circumstances. For example, during the seventh workshop, which took place directly after a theatrical play in Rochdale, participants rushed out from the venue, without giving me enough time to collect sufficient information about their maps, and during the ninth workshop the venue's fire alarm went off and my participants had to leave the building quickly, and did not return.

After the completion of each map, I recorded each participants' personal information (name, age, gender, postcode, e-mail and telephone number), asking them for permission to contact them for a further conversation in the future. I did not stop recruiting new interviewees when data saturation was reached (Jennings, 2005), because I tried to contact everyone who agreed in order to maximise future options and ensure that my research was sufficiently flexible.

Interviewing proved to be a particularly effective method for collecting data about the lived experience of my participants. In total, I conducted 23 semi-structured interviews (see: Appendix Five) with 17 women and 6 men. This imbalance in the sample was simply due to who responded to my request for an interview. Still, the sample size fulfils the criteria of the 'theoretical saturation' (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006). Essentially, all the participants in this research were festivalgoers, whom I recruited at different festival venues. Even if they do not share a similar background, their main characteristic is that all of them participated in a greater or lesser degree in the festivals and most of them were locals.

Before the interview, I asked all the participants to choose the place and the time to be interviewed. In this way, I communicated my willingness to travel - wherever and whenever - in order to meet them, striving to create a familiar environment where they would feel more expressive and comfortable. The interviews were held in various places, such as private houses, cafés, cultural spaces, community hubs, and workspaces. On average, each interview lasted 90 minutes. All of them were conducted in English face-to-face, and were recorded on a digital Dictaphone, with consent from the participants.

Their names have been changed so that anonymity and confidentiality is maintained, but other details remain unchanged. In more detail:

- Seven interviews were conducted in Didsbury. Every participant in Didsbury was female. Apart from one, all were white and British. Therefore, the data concerning this case study could be said to be mono-cultural and has not managed to capture any male perspective. Still, every participant lives in Didsbury, apart from Sarah who was the festival co-ordinator but also participated in the workshop. Three of them were volunteering in the festival.
- Six interviews were conducted in Levenshulme with four women and two men. All but two were white British. Annabel is Indian and Pierre is from Belgium. Caren is the only person that currently does not live in Levenshulme, but she had lived there for 15 years.
- Ten interviews were conducted in Rochdale with six women and four men. The participants either live or have lived in the town. Margery does not live in Rochdale, but she had worked there previously. The majority were white British, apart from Fatima, Chloe and Kumar. Fatima is British Pakistani from Rochdale, but she lives in Sheffield. Chloe and Kumar are a Muslim married couple. Chloe is from Canada and Kumar is from Pakistan. Kumar did not participate in the workshop, but he came with Chloe and their daughter to Manchester Central Library for the interview. In addition, Oliver did not participate in the workshop, but he is the director of the space (the Vibe), where the eighth workshop took place.

In particular, the participants in the second phase of the data collection process, were asked questions that were designed to explore their everyday lives, examining their place-based understandings and their broader relationships with cultural consumption in the city. My semi-structured interview protocol was organised under five main headings/topics: ‘Maps and Workshop Evaluation’; ‘Suburban Place’; ‘What is Culture?”; ‘The Suburb and the City’; and ‘Suburban Festivity’ (see: Appendix Six).

Initially, I asked participants to reflect on their maps thoroughly. This involved something akin to the photo elicitation method which is a technique that involves various forms of visual representation (e.g. photos, videos, etc.) used in an interview. In this method informants are asked to comment and reflect on the images presented (Bignante, 2010). I then asked the participants to evaluate their experience at the workshop. Afterwards, the interviewees shared their personal everyday stories regarding their place of residence with me. In this way, I gathered contrasting place-based understandings, extensively informed by the views of the people who participated in this research. These questions were associated both with the way in which people perceive their suburban daily experience, and the cultural practices that they follow as well. I listened to them talking about the different elements that comprise their daily lives, such as the use of space and their everyday routines. In addition to this, I explored their local knowledge, social relationships, and interactions performed during their everyday lives. Afterwards, I asked people to define what culture means to them, and how this relates to their everyday lives, while incorporating my situational perspective (Stevenson, 2004; see: Chapter Three) that views culture as what counts as culture for those who participate in it (Mercer, 1996). Participants then shared their views regarding Manchester city centre and their broader relation to cultural consumption with me, thus addressing their relationship to cultural consumption and particular spaces in the city. Finally, I asked them to reflect back on their festival experience, and whether they considered the festival as having a considerable impact on their place of residence and the way they experience it through the festivalisation process (see: Chapter Four). I would like to note that during the interviews, I tried to "remain a listener withholding [my] desires to interrupt and sporadically asking questions that may clarify their story" (Brinkmann, 2014: 286).

These interviews allowed me to gain further insight into the ways that the research participants see their world: how they experience suburban place and how they relate to cultural consumption. They were designed in such a way to enable me to develop an understanding of what people think, believe, or do during the course of their everyday

lives. By taking under consideration the plurality of their backgrounds, tastes and place-based day-to-day experiences, the semi-structured interviews allowed me to examine different and multifaceted viewpoints of some of the people that live in the suburbs of Manchester. In this way, I constructed an understanding of how a suburb is perceived by a particular segment of its inhabitants (i.e. people that visit festivals), and how the latter experience suburban place and cultural consumption.

At the end of my fieldwork, I conducted two interviews with policymakers. The first was with the chief executive of the City Centre Management Company (CityCo), and the second with a Councillor who is responsible for culture and leisure in Manchester. The aim of these interviews was to achieve a comparable perspective regarding how policymakers view the suburbs. This provided me with access to official narratives, policy processes, and institutional knowledge (Thomson and Gauld, 2001). In the next section, I present the process of data analysis within the context of this research.

## 5.10 Data Analysis

Upon completion, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. In line with the interpretative phenomenological approach, I transcribed every word in order to fully detail people's experiences. I transcribed even the unfinished or expressive phrases that were recorded during the conversation with each participant, and I did not add anything. This is a key part of the phenomenological enquiry and analysis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009) that contributes to the validity of this research (Yardley, 2017). However, I removed any instances that disturbed the flow of the interview (e.g. unexpected interferences such as telephone calls, coughing etc.). The process of transcription not only allowed an initial descriptive analysis at the end of each interview, but also helped me to better conduct subsequent interviews, offering me the possibility of clarifying any points that were raised in the earlier interviews (see: Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub, 1996; Krueger, 1998).

The data from the interviews was analysed through a thematic analysis, following the six-phase conceptual framework suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). This is a flexible

method that allowed me to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within the data. A theme is something that "captures the key idea about the data in relation to the research question", representing "some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (ibid: 82). In this spirit, the first step was to become familiar with the data. For this reason, I read and re-read all the transcripts carefully, noting down my initial thoughts each time. In this phase, I started highlighting significant statements, sentences, or quotations that provided an initial understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Cresswell, 2009). Moustakas (1994) refers to this step as 'horizonalisation'. The second step was to generate codes in a systematic fashion across the entire data set. The next important consideration was identifying themes, by collating the codes generated previously. Moving to the next level, I carefully reviewed these themes, clustering the data into groups to form more sub-themes that were related to each of my research questions. These emergent themes became abstract constructs, aiming to reflect a set of shared meanings and, substantially, were related directly to the phenomenological experience of suburban daily life and people's relationship with cultural consumption. The fifth step was to define and give a name to these themes. From the transcripts, three emergent data codes were collated within the following main themes: 'Doing Suburbia', 'Doing Culture', and 'Doing Festivals'. Having carefully followed these steps, I proceeded to the final step: to write up the analysis by identifying and reporting patterns within the data.

As I mentioned in the previous section, the cultural maps helped me to gain a basic understanding of the physical and spatial environment that characterises the chosen case studies, allowing for an explicit examination and visualisation of the relationships between place and culture. Most of the maps present a socially or culturally distinct understanding of the suburban landscape. They portray individual representations, meanings and perceptions regarding suburban place and visualise different aspects of culture (e.g. cultural practices, place identity, consumption spaces etc.). However, this visual representation was expected to produce a particular vision of reality that was far

from objective. Essentially, the maps gather a multiplicity of points of view that each festival participant brings into the analysis.

The maps presented a mosaic of different dimensions and were analysed in terms of type, similarities and differences. Bearing in mind that the literature does not offer an authoritative go-to means of analysing cultural maps, which after all are context-specific I developed my own procedure for analysis. First of all, each map was classified on the basis of its main characteristics. Five different types maps were identified and categorised: from 'structured', 'semi-structured', 'abstract', 'ideographic' to 'factual'. The first category includes those maps that present a more accurate representation of place. Usually these maps are accompanied by street names and legends, and different colours represent the different spaces pointed out on the map. The second category of maps sometimes include street names and actual places, but also contain abstract meanings and concepts. The third category are maps that have drawings on them and particular meanings or information about place. The fourth category contains arrows or chains of events and explain a person's everyday routine. The fifth category are maps that contain only written text. In addition, some maps could not be analysed and, therefore, these were discarded from the analysis (see below for an example of each type of map).

The analysis was mainly based on the number and variety of elements that appear in each map and they were processed with several lenses to focus on different aspects of the research. Specifically, cultural mapping enabled me to collect, analyse and synthesise information, and to describe cultural resources, networks, links, and patterns of usage in the different suburbs (Stewart, 2007). The maps produced different cultural meanings, and effectively created a database of information that contain different levels of knowledge and fundamental information about everyday suburban life. These include both the tangible and intangible assets of the suburbs. 'Tangible' refers to physical sites, buildings and artefacts and 'intangible' to practices, representations and expressions that individuals and communities recognise themselves as heritage (Ahmad, 2006; Vecco, 2010; see: Perry et al., 2019). In this sense, I tried to address both the quantitative

and more tangible assets such as physical spaces, cultural organisations, public spaces, physical characteristics and other material resources, and more qualitative elements, such as the values, norms, beliefs, memories and place identities that were presented, usually in the form of factual statements. The results reveal an 'image of the suburb' (see: Lynch, 1960) made up of different places and spaces; bounded with class-based consumption patterns (Bourdieu, 1984) of different festival participants. As I will show in the analysis these patterns are far from uniform. They are related to wealth, power, and cultural tastes. These are the basic parameters that differentiate cultural consumption practices in each case study and, effectively, play a pivotal and symbolic role in shaping their place identity. The final two sections of this chapter discuss research validity and reliability, and a consideration of ethical issues. My aim is to show that a high degree of research validity has been achieved.

Example 1: Structured Map

Example 2: Semi-structured Map

Example 3: Abstract Map

Example 4: Ideographic Map

Example 5: Factual Map

Example 6: Discarded Map

## 5.11 Research Validity and Reliability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four criteria for evaluating an interpretive phenomenological research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria differentiate my qualitative approach from a conventional positivist research paradigm that requires trustworthiness (validity, reliability and objectivity), and thus can be scrutinised further to assist evaluation. Credibility refers to the "adequate representation of the constructions of the social world under study" (Bradley, 1993: 436). Following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendation for improving credibility, I tried to prolong my field engagement, by persistently visiting my case study areas. Thus, I managed to talk to different individuals and to participate in different activities. In terms of transferability, I believe that the same approach can be applied to other research contexts, for example in different countries and/or suburbs, and through more dynamic and interactive research approaches (such as action research). According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2005: 6-7),

> the major technique for establishing dependability and confirmability is through audits of the research processes and findings. Dependability is determined by checking the consistency of the study processes, and confirmability is determined by checking the internal coherence of the research product, namely, the data, the findings, the interpretations, and the recommendations.

In order to achieve this, I used as audits the raw data collected from the interviews and the maps, my field notes, memos and pictures, theoretical ideas and so on, enabling the coherence of my approach.

## 5.12 Research Ethics

The fieldwork research was conducted in accordance with Manchester Metropolitan University's research ethics and guidelines. During every workshop, I provided all of my participants with an information sheet that explained my research. At every interview, I provided an additional information sheet (see: Appendix Seven) and a consent form (see:

Appendix Eight) that informed the participants that their real name would not be used, either in the final report nor in subsequent publications, while also asking for permission to record their voice. I followed all the ethical principles of data collection and storage approved by my University's ethical procedure in order to secure confidentiality for all my research participants. I informed every participant that was able to withdraw during any phase of the interview. Finally, I assured them that their personal information would be kept secure, respecting their anonymity by using pseudonyms.

## 5.13 Conclusions

My thesis is designed to understand the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption through the lens of festivals. In order to address the extent to which the cultural consumption of the city comes to shape suburban residents' relationship with the city, I adopted an interpretative qualitative approach that aims to reassess the role of suburban communities in shaping the cultural life of the city. This allowed me to explore how different people experience suburban place, and how they relate to cultural consumption. It is in this context that my research can make a key contribution to understanding the role of culture in the construction of place-based identity in the suburbs. To this end, the following chapters (Six to Eight) present the main findings of this research.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Doing Suburbia

*"The space around us - the physical organisation of neighbourhoods, roads, yards, houses, and apartments - sets up living patterns that condition our behaviour"*

*Kenneth Jackson (1985: 3)*

### 6.1 Introduction

As I established in the preceding chapters my main intention is to assess the role of the suburbs as more central in defining the practice of everyday life and show why culture matters for places where people live and co-exist day to day. In this chapter and to this end I apply a place-based approach to the suburbs that I developed in Chapter Two. This chapter, specifically, deals with the way in which suburban place is shaped by its distinctive characteristics, spatial formation and place identity. My aim is to further unpack the dynamics between everyday suburban life, place and identity and address the suburban condition as manifested spatially in Didsbury, Levenshulme and Rochdale. Thus, I decode the physical organisation of the three case studies in order to (1) explore the association between people and their immediate environment; (2) identify the subjective and practical ways in which people make sense of their material surroundings; (3) examine the relationship between suburban place and place identity; (4) understand the spatial distribution of daily activities and the everyday use of space; (5) delineate some of the complex nexus of spatial relations played out through the rhythmic geographies of everyday life.

Given this, I explore people's experiences and perceptions of 'place' in the context of everyday suburban life. My intention is to clarify the role and contribution of suburban place in the formulation of everyday life. In doing so, I (1) engage closely with the ways people conduct their lives; (2) investigate the effect of 'place' in setting up living patterns that shape suburbia's everyday life; and (3) discuss the formulation of boundaries in suburban places and spaces. This allows me to study embodied engagement with

suburban place, and thus the everyday suburban interactions that this implies; enabling me to consider what is fundamental, yet unaddressed question in discussions of place-based sustainability, with regards to how people experience, perceive and relate to suburban place and how does this relate to their everyday life, which is one of the main questions my research addresses.

As examined in Chapter Two, previous studies of 'places' have noted that the meaning and importance of a physical setting result from people's experience and interaction with that particular setting. Accordingly, this chapter analyses and acknowledges the importance of the suburban setting, i.e. the physical elements of suburban place that relate to the phenomenological experience of my research participants. Bearing the theoretical foundations of this study in mind, in the following pages, this chapter will argue that suburbia is a multi-dimensional concept conceived and experienced differently by people. Even if they belong to different socio-economic groups and they present racial/ethnic and gender differences, they share a common characteristic: they all live in a suburban environment that is characterised by certain conditions, physical characteristics and elements of place identity. Yet as I mentioned in Chapter One, the appreciation of different meanings that people assign to their everyday use of place is vital for a rigorous sociological and geographical analysis of suburbia.

The main argument I put forward in this chapter is that people understand suburbs differently on the basis of their personal experience (past and present), their financial situation and their cultural capital. Thus, they develop various affective perceptions and particular spatial understandings in relation to their immediate space and residential position. These key determinants not only structure their world-view, social interactions and daily life in their wider suburb, but also impact their broader relationship with the rest of the city. The argument unfolds across the following sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis process outlined in Chapter Five: 'suburbs as physical spaces', 'spaces of everyday life', 'suburban streetscapes' and 'a suburban state of mind'.

## 6.2 Suburbs as Physical Spaces

The case studies present common characteristics that correspond with the definitions provided in Chapter One (see: 1.3). Every place examined consists of a peripheral location with functional dependence to the urban core; it has a distinctive place identity; and differs in terms of spatial, demographic and social attributes. Didsbury and Levenshulme are two mixed-use residential suburbs, within commuting distance to Manchester city centre (see: Chapter Five). Their landscape is composed by high streets, cul-de-sacs and winding, tree-lined roads that usually contain similar houses in rows. As Felski (2000: 35) would describe "it is a world of identical small semi-detached houses stretching into infinity": the most common housing type being either the Victorian single-family house or 1930's semi-detached dwellings. Most of the houses have a garden that is accounted for a parking slot. In some areas, there are also new housing developments (e.g. high-rise flats). These emerged to accommodate new residents. In addition, there are various spaces such as churches, community centres, schools, and green areas, including parks and community allotments. Admittedly, both suburbs are well-served by a good public transport system (train, tram, buses) that connects them to the city centre. Rochdale, on the contrary, even if it is also well connected to Manchester, could be described as a satellite town with a separate yet less cosmopolitan identity. Essentially, it is an independent urban entity that, in turn, has suburbs of its own. To this end, the case studies present a different place identity 'sorting' along lines of class, race, geographical position, types of housing, wealth income brackets and available cultural consumption alternatives.

In this light, cultural mapping enabled my research participants to illustrate their social experience of suburbia. The maps collected produced a multi-layered picture of the three case studies, providing a wealth of geographic information based on the meanings that people attach to place. The very nature of cultural mapping made the participants think about a spatial interpretation of their place of residence. Their maps highlight the meaningfulness of shared spaces and the indirect and intangible effects of cultural mapping on raising awareness of the "blind points of ordinary life and the diverse effects

and meanings that are silenced” (Nuere and Bayón, 2015: 20). This allows an explicit examination of suburban place and the role of cultural consumption in shaping suburban place identities.

Some of the maps contain quite an accurate and structured representation of the street layout (see: Maps 1 to 7 below). In many cases, participants drew their daily paths, various spaces and other physical features such as parks, rivers and green areas. Most of the maps contain borders and boundaries. As can be seen in the maps below (see: Maps 1 to 3), natural elements, such as the River Mersey in Didsbury, usually frame the map. The suburban experience is constrained usually within those natural and mental boundaries. In Didsbury and Levenshulme, the majority of the maps were highly structured, presenting a detailed representation of roads, spaces and other physical elements that compose the physical landscape. On the contrary, in Rochdale the majority of the maps are not structured. Map 7 is one of the exceptions. Most of the Rochdalians who live in the suburbs of Rochdale included in their maps some famous landmarks that are located in the town centre or other spaces that are more generally important for their daily life, such as schools and cultural centres. Still, there is a significant lack of socio-cultural spaces located in the suburbs of Rochdale.

Most of the participants in the cultural mapping workshops identified, and sometimes even classified, actual spaces, activities, and resources that exist in their locality. Usually these maps contain different colours, factual statements and symbols. Sometimes the more meticulous participants included a legend in order to refer to spaces or areas, using different colours for demarcation e.g. *‘cafés, restaurants, bars’*, *‘shops’*, *‘activity’*, *‘green spaces’* (see: Map 1) or *‘entertainment’*, *‘high schools’*, *‘places of worship’*, *‘green spaces’* (see: Map 2). Suburban place in this sense becomes legible (see: Lynch, 1960) to these people, who have a clear and accurate spatial image of their place of residence.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that some maps, even if they contain spaces or factual statements, are quite abstract. Yet, they reflect issues of place identity. For example, Map 8 contains factual statements such as *‘expensive restaurants’, ‘art and calligraphy’,*

*‘churches’, ‘music and dancing’*. Raising a matter of place identity, the participant who drew this map wrote *“Didsbury is a middle-class suburb but there is not an alternative vibe”*. In a similar fashion, the participant who drew Map 9, even though she has lived and worked in Didsbury for 24 years, drew some roads that do not represent the actual spatial reality of this suburb. However, while she was drawing her map, she told me that she knows Didsbury pretty well. Thus, she was able to identify and classify different spaces. She informed me that the red dot signifies her home, the light red a restaurant, the green an art gallery, the purple her workspace, etc. The different colours reflect the different identities of these spaces. In this sense, the participants who might have drawn more abstract maps are not necessarily less connected to their place of residence than those who were more detailed.

*Map 1: Didsbury*

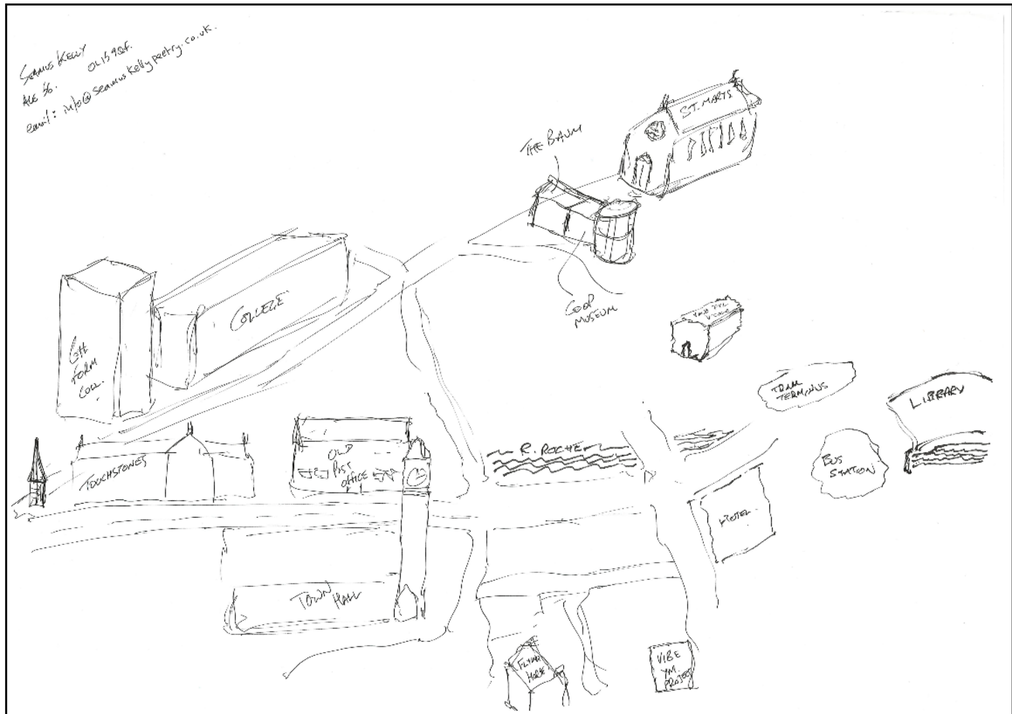
*Map 2: Didsbury*

*Map 3: Didsbury*

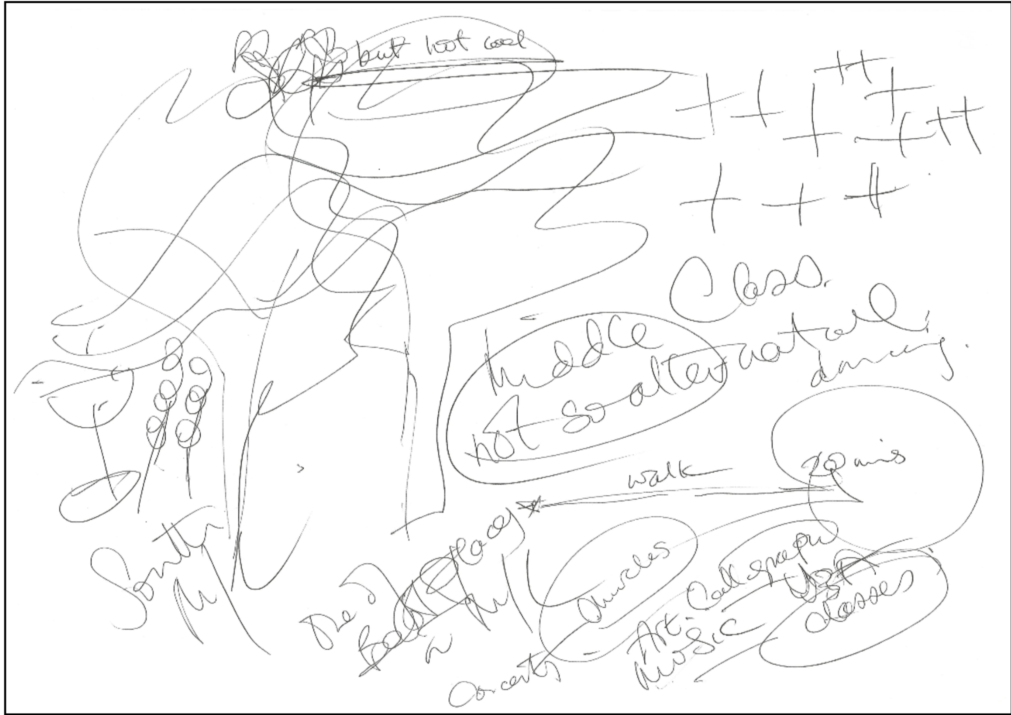
*Map 4: Levenshulme*

*Map 5: Levenshulme*

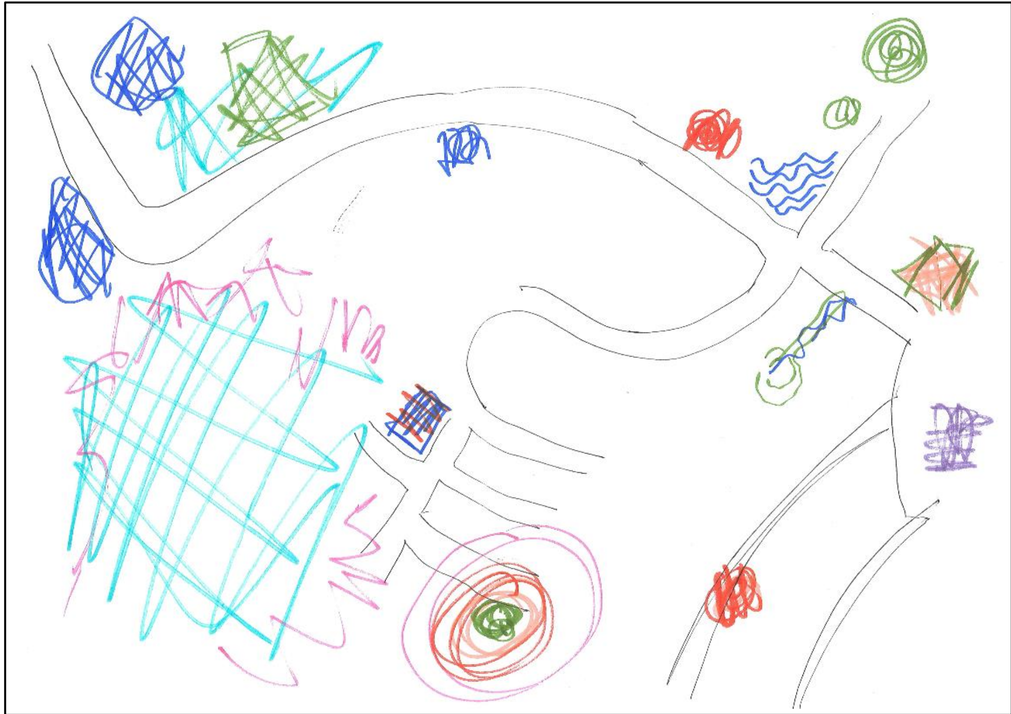
Map 6: Levenshulme




Map 7: Rochdale




*Map 8: Didsbury*

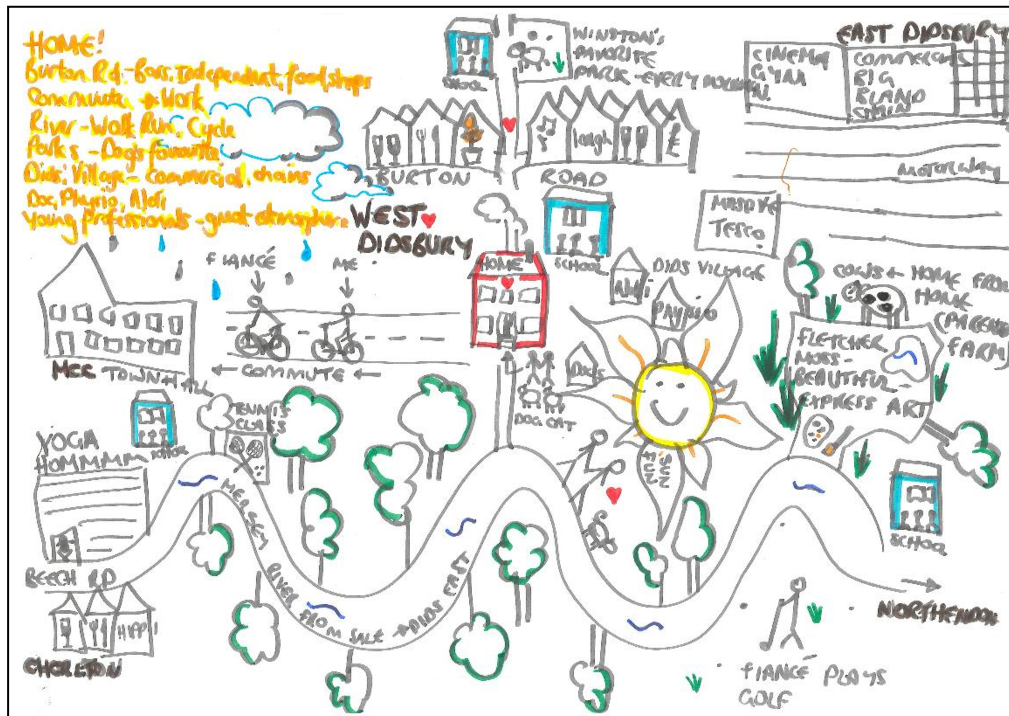


*Map 9: Didsbury*

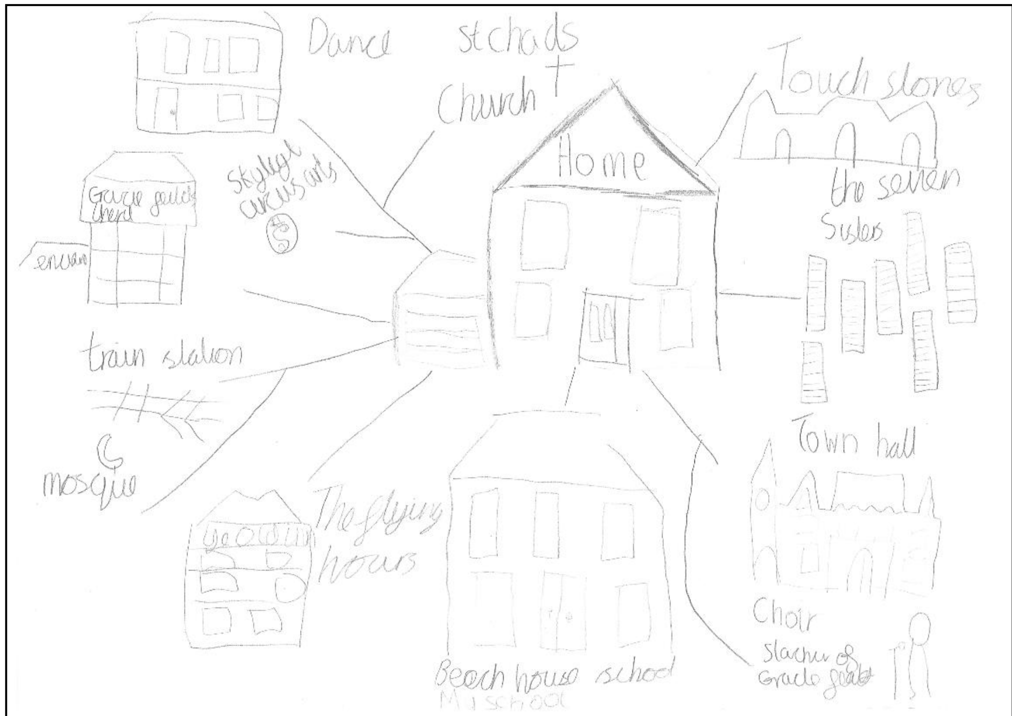
Phenomenologically speaking, people create a familiar and relatively controllable place around themselves (Haapala, 1998). In order to draw a picture of their everyday experience in the suburbs, some of the participants began by placing their house in the middle of the map. The home has traditionally been at the centre of suburban life (Bain, 2013), and it has been suburbia's most distinctive and identifiable feature (Marino, 2014). Houses are centrally important elements of place, identity and everyday life since they are "simultaneously and indivisibly a spatial and a social unit of interaction" (Giddens, 1984: 82). Maps 10 to 15 are examples where the house maintains a significant centrality. Map 13, for example, portrays a specific area of East Didsbury. The participant drew, in a structured fashion, some main streets and a line of houses, in which he also included his own. However, he did not include any details about the area in the hinterland behind his residency. Instead, he included some spaces such as a park and a church that are located nearby and which he visits frequently. In this sense, the participant identifies with his immediate area partially, and more specifically in terms of the spaces he uses during his everyday life. The same stands for the participant who drew Map 14. Even though he was very detailed regarding the street layout and the various spaces he uses, he is *"not really sure"* if the area behind the high street of Levenshulme is residential or not. In both cases, the everyday experiences of the participants are specifically spatial and develop around the daily use of particular spaces and in relation to their residential position.

Map 15 was drawn by Beatrice, who lives on the edges of Didsbury Village. Initially, she drew a heart in order to represent her house, and later she placed herself and her husband within. As she told me, *"my home is full of love"*. Afterwards, she drew her street and some human figures that represent her neighbours, stating that *"our street is a community"*. What is interesting about Beatrice's map is that Didsbury Village is framed and contained by an abstract boundary. Most of the spaces she associates with are located within the boundary of the Village, signifying that her daily experience is mostly locally based. It seems that the life of the suburb begins from the private space of the house. It expands towards the immediate environment and, thereafter, towards the rest

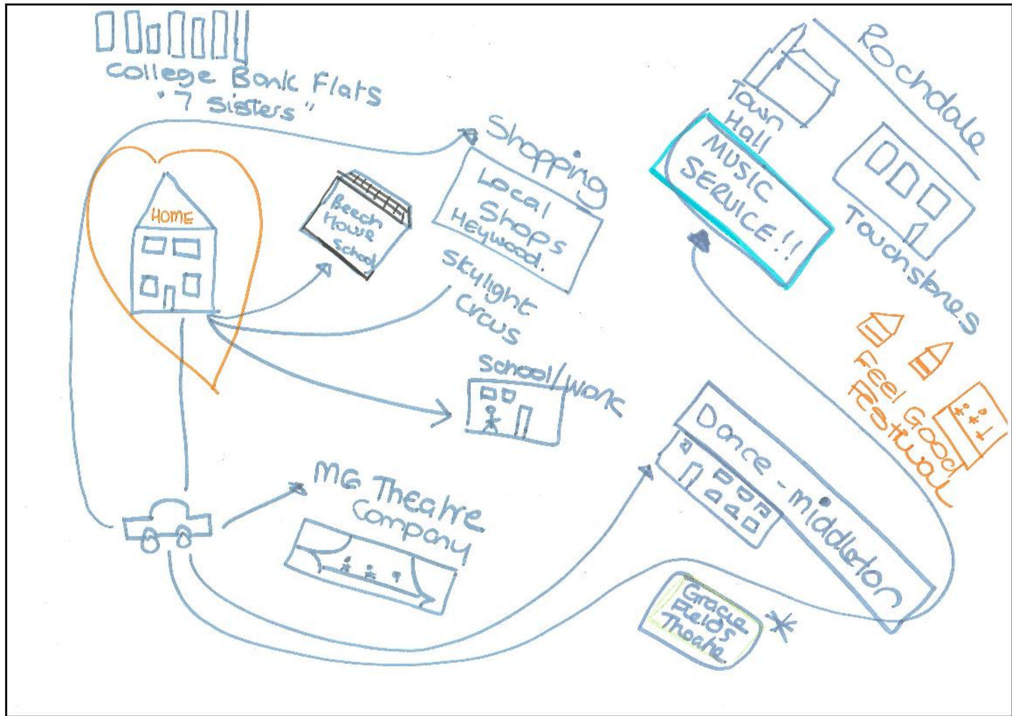
of the ‘physical suburb’. Essentially, people interact first with their houses and the objects in and around them, taking into account past activities and meanings, creating their living terms (Perkins and Thorns, 2012). To this end, the residential position impacts diverse relationships that shape the ways in which people live in and experience suburban place on an everyday basis.



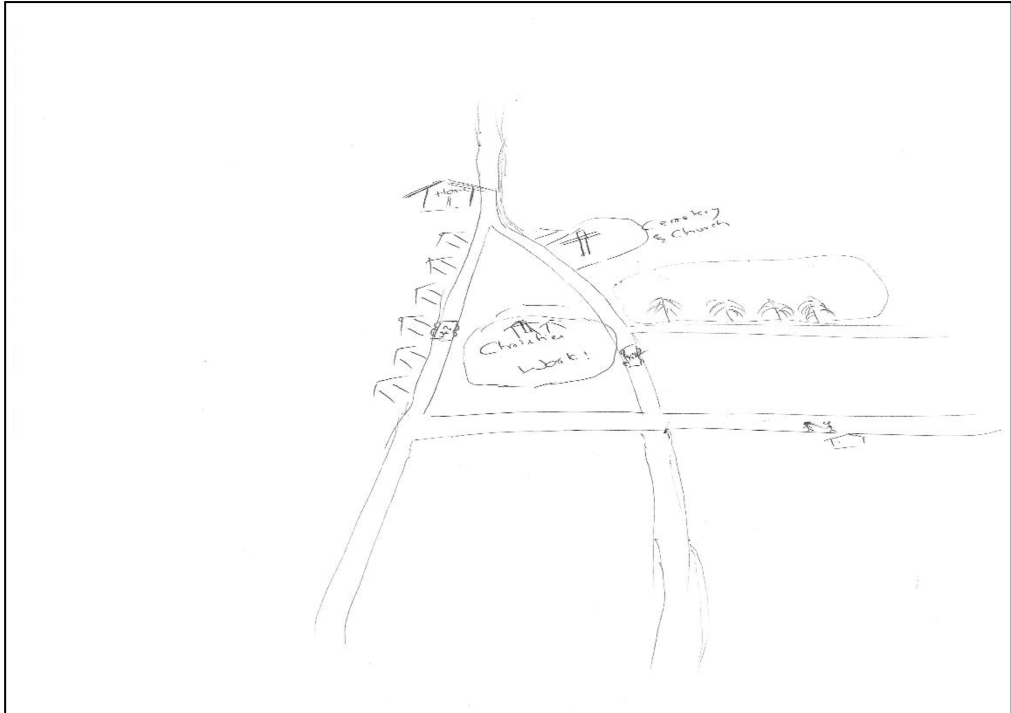

Map 10: Didsbury



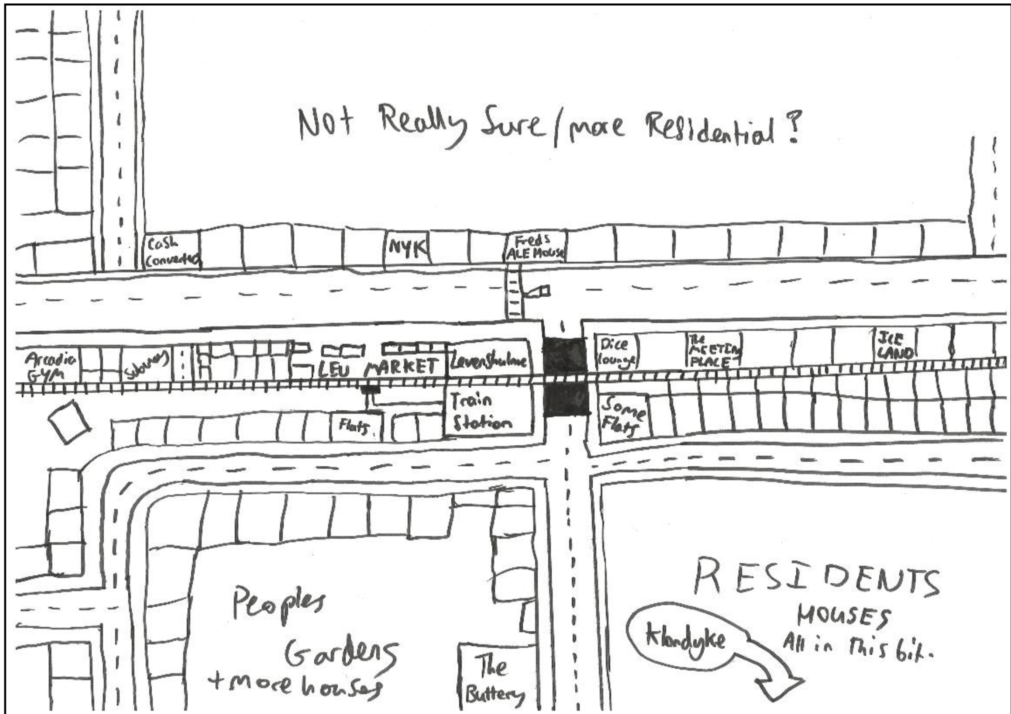

Map 11: Rochdale



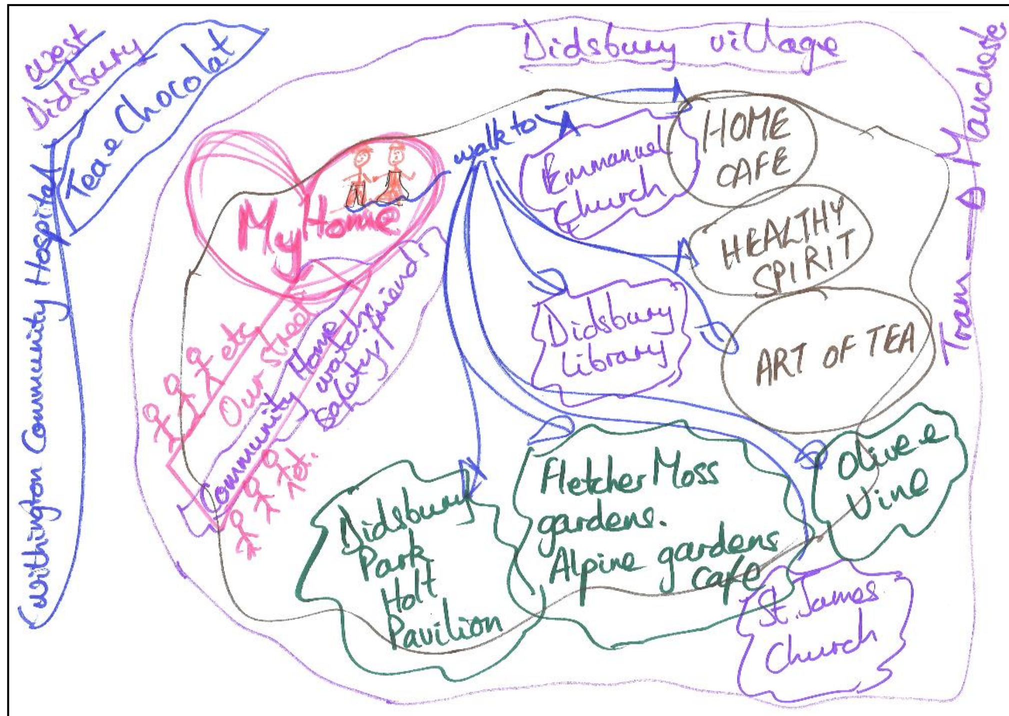

Map 12: Rochdale




*Map 13: Didsbury*




*Map 14: Levenshulme*




*Map 15: Didsbury*

Alongside the central role of the house in the everyday life of people who live in the suburbs, a variety of interrelated and interconnected environmental factors emerged from the data-analysis. These qualities of the physical environment affect the world-views of people, contribute to the legible interpretation of place, and effectively impact upon its everyday experience, adding to a place's identity. Furthermore, the daily experience of suburban place, as presented in some of the maps, reflect the individual's concerned personal engagement with place, while contributing to place identity in the process. The following maps (16 and 17) illustrate the psychological nature of suburban place and how individuals engage with the suburbs differently to how they might in the city centre. Map 16 who was drawn by a participant who lives in the countryside outside of Manchester, compares the city centre to Didsbury. On the left side of the map, Manchester city centre is illustrated in a chaotic and stressful manner. It is a high-density place, characterised by untidiness and congestion. It is filled with people and cars. A clock and a sad face signify negative feelings. The city centre is experienced in such cases as a "space where subversive forces, forces of rupture, ludic forces act and meet" (Barthes, 1997: 171). On the contrary, on the right side of the map is Didsbury. The low-density

suburb is presented with a happy space, filled with positive feelings (hearts), values (*'family matters', 'what is this life if full of care', 'we have no time to stand and stare'*) and sounds (*'ding dong'*: the bell of the church). The sun is shining and smiling. It is apparent that in this map, the suburb is presented as a peaceful place, in contrast to the *'chaos'* of urban living. Still, another clock in Didsbury signifies the fact that suburban life is also constrained by routines and duties. The impact of time is also evident in the suburb. In this case, the dominance of the city over its suburbs becomes explicable through its functional characteristics, which derive in large measure from the psychological effect of congestion and high density.

One might assume that a low-density satellite town such as Rochdale would be presented as less 'stressful'. However, Map 17 reveals that this is not so for some. The creator of this map lives in the suburbs of Rochdale. He told me that whenever he visits the town centre, he feels lost and anxious. These negative feelings are imprinted clearly in his map, in which he has included numerous dead ends, complaints such as: *'so where do we go from here?', 'number ten where', 'but the satnav brought us here!', 'Then told us we are in a pedestrian area!'*, feelings (*'car park whew!'*) and the factual statement *'where am I? How the hell do we get there?'* On the contrary, when he is *'escaping'* the town centre to return back to his home, it is *'a relief'* for him. In this light, for some people 'going downtown' is generally a negative rather than a positive reference point. For example, Margaret (Didsbury) sometimes refrains from commuting to the city centre for leisure because she associates it with her work. As she said, *"I work in the city centre. I am always stressed when I am visiting the centre. In Didsbury I feel more relaxed."* Low-density suburbs like Didsbury or Levenshulme create a setting that is not as *"claustrophobic as it is in the city. Suburban life provides a sort of head space to get away from the city, even if it is only five miles away"* (Margaret, Didsbury).

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, one of the major ideas of suburbia is that people move to the suburbs in order to escape the city and its attendant problems. This is related to what Cipriani (1993: 233) describes as "the outlying situation in relation to the city centre or even life in the city itself involves an evident augmentation of the ill-

being which lately seems to have synthesized in the feeling of insecurity". In this regard, some participants defended their choice to live in the suburbs, basing their narration on the negative aspects of the city (e.g. congestion, dirt, crime, danger etc.). Take for instance Caren (Levenshulme) who described how

> *"people who live in the suburbs face much lesser problems that usually have those who live in the city centre. With my social circle, we never go there. It is not nice because there are loads of homeless people, there is not enough space and green areas."*

Whether or not one agrees with Caren's views on homelessness, from her point of view there are few social problems in the suburbs where there is more open green space which from her perspective adds to the sense of a healthy almost protected existence.

The peripheral geographic position of a Didsbury and Levenshulme offer the advantages of urban living due to proximity to the city centre, but also more flexibility in terms of accessing the countryside. The beneficial position of Levenshulme was very concisely described by Aisha (Levenshulme) who told me

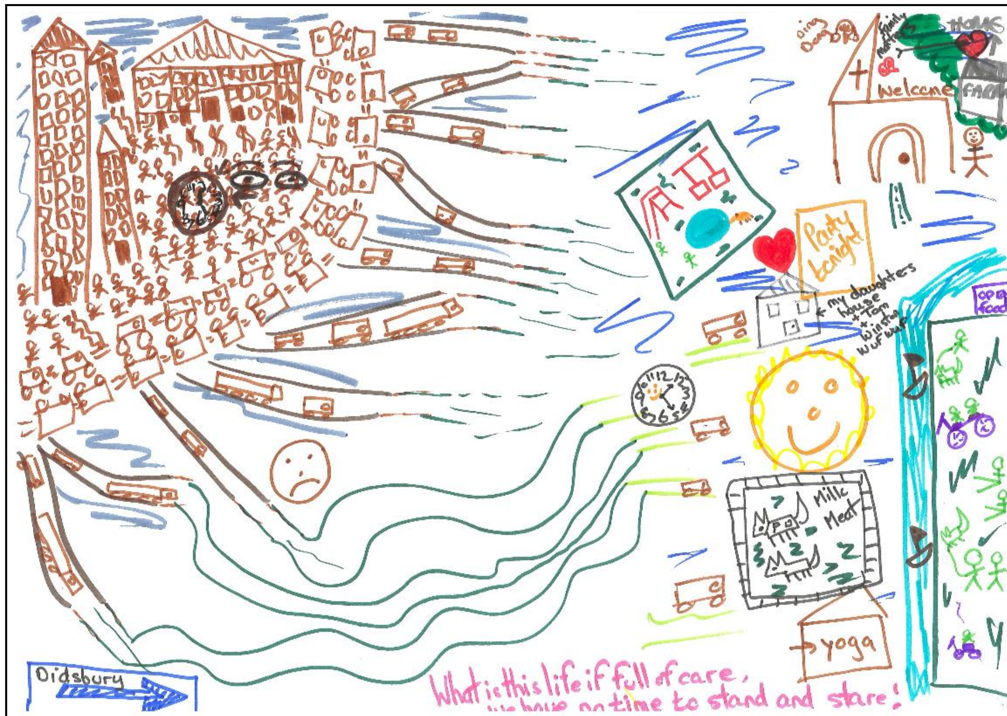
> *"We may count as a suburb, but we are still pretty close to the city centre and the nature. I would say that we have the best of both. It might not be hectic all the time, but we are literally less than half an hour away from anything we want. So, really living in a suburb is not so boring."*

Likewise, Beatrice (Didsbury) emphasised that *"down here you have got the best of both worlds"*. Her words contradict the interpretation of Bourne (1996:179) who saw suburbia as a product of a "rural nostalgia … a desire to return to the countryside and rural roots, but without also severing connections to the urban core". Even if there are evident differences among the case studies and an incompatibility in the views of the participants, many referred to the fact that the suburbs are the best place to live, because somebody can visit the city very easily, as well as the countryside. In other words, the suburbs examined are located within the city's orbit with a "geography […] intermediate between the town centre and the countryside" (Clapson. 2003: 3; see also:

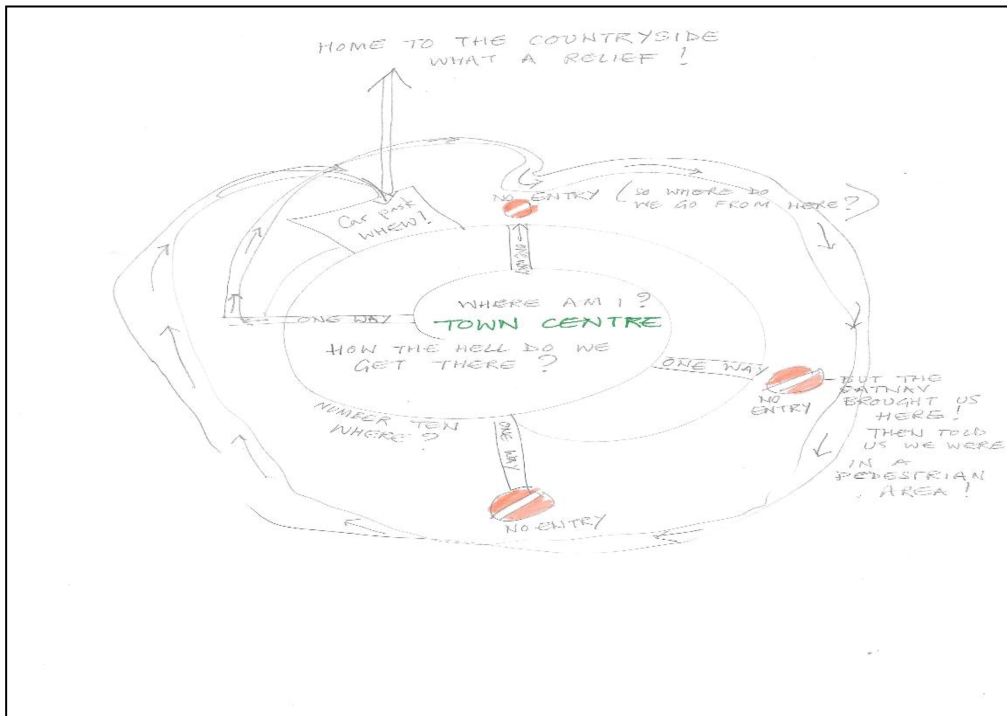
Harris and Larkham, 1999). Still, as in Bain's study (2013), many people who participated in this research communicated a romanticised understanding of the suburbs as places that are close to nature and the countryside and are more rural than urban. As Palen (1995: 93) points out, "the suburban myth of the good life is predicated on urban ambivalence about, if not antagonism towards, cities and city life". In this light, Sarah (Didsbury) reflecting on the urban-rural distinction, argued that

> *"I am really lucky because I have a lot of nature where I live. In parallel, I am able to come into the city quite easily to get that kind of buzz, the "city life" kind of thing. However, I am not like other people on my age. I think I would go insane if I was here all the time. I would not have any space. But I also think I would feel cut off and severed if I was not able to come here. So, I would say that living in the suburb offers a nice balance."*

Sarah's words reflect the work of Lesage (1997:136, as cited in de Meyer and Versluys, 1999: 27), who argued that "just as the urbanite used to feel a need for nature, the suburbanite currently feels a need for the city". Or as Webber (1964: 88-89) puts it (somewhat hyperbolically), "urbanity is no longer the exclusive trait of the city dweller; the suburbanite and the exurbanite are among the most urbane of men (sic)". Against the mainstream representations of suburbia, the evidence derived from Didsbury and Levenshulme does not suggest that the suburbs are less lively than the city centre. The difference is that social and cultural life is organised differently. As I will present in the following section, instead of revolving around the more vibrant street life that usually comes with high-density city centres, it is concentrated around slower, more familiar activities that take place in various spaces like cultural centres and associations.



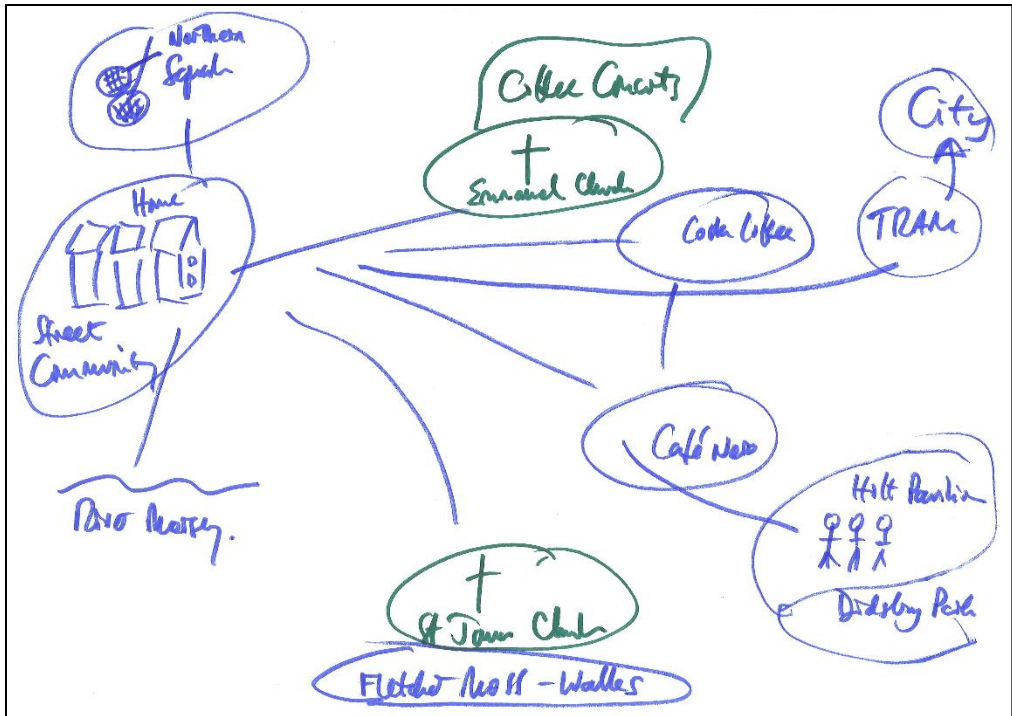

*Map 16: Didsbury*



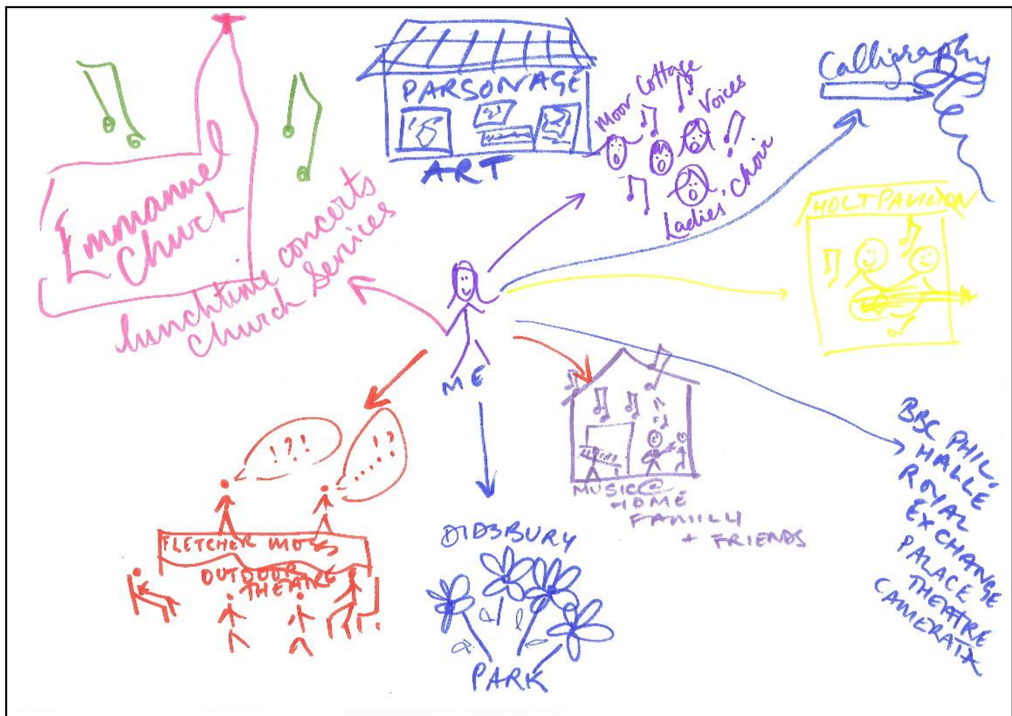

*Map 17: Rochdale*

## 6.3 Spaces of Everyday Life and the Role of Commuting

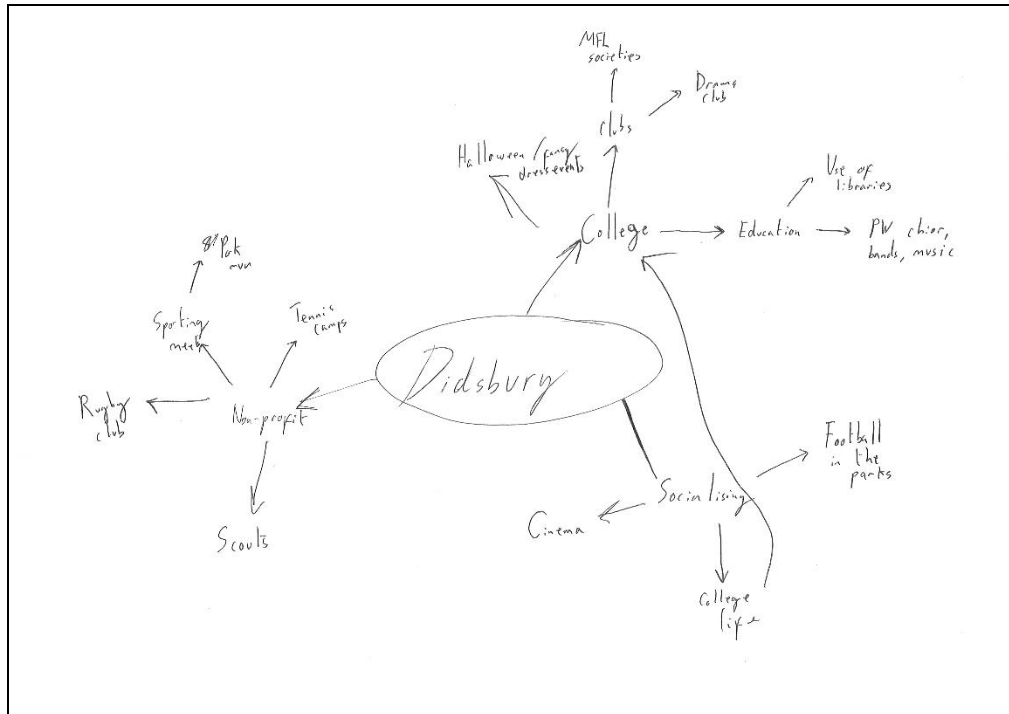
As mentioned above, cultural mapping enabled my research participants to identify various spaces that they use during their everyday lives. Castells (2010) suggests that people identify primarily with their surroundings: community spaces, meeting spots, markets and other daily amenities within walking distance from their home. Gradually, they develop a source of familiarity and attachment to them and this allows the creation of various experiences and shared meanings. In the case of this research, these spaces exert an important influence on the suburban daily experience, and, at the same time, they fulfil individual and collective needs. For many people, these spaces allow them to engage with community activities and voluntary work, whilst retaining the ability to retreat to the privacy of their own house. In particular, some participants expressed a sense of belonging to a collective entity (i.e. a community, a street), which reflects a stronger attachment to place. This effect refers to the idea that physical and psychological proximity to others tends to enhance interpersonal relations (Schneider et al., 2012). The participant who created Map 18 first drew his house, saying *"I live in a bounded street community"*. Then he drew various spaces such as churches, sport clubs and parks that he visits frequently. Similarly, the participant who created Map 19 - in an 'egocentric' manner because she first drew herself in the middle - reflected on her daily associations with community and cultural spaces. Another example is the diagrammatic Map 20. The participant, who had just graduated from college, positioned Didsbury in the centre of the map. This means that his daily life is being developed around the suburb. He emphasised that *"I participate in culture through college life activities and various societies such as sport clubs, tennis camps, park run groups, the scouts etc."* This engagement with culture will be picked up more specifically in later chapters.




*Map 18: Didsbury*




*Map 19: Didsbury*




Map 20: Didsbury

To a large extend, the proximity to various green spaces, retail, leisure and cultural facilities constitutes a particular pattern of spatial activity that not only contributes to a sort of localised experience, but also indicates a place attachment (Hidalgo and Hernández, 2001). Arguably, without the provision of these spaces, the suburbs examined would be different places. The following quote highlights this importance:

> *"Even if Levenshulme does not have the best reputation, it has a very vibrant community that organises quite a lot of activities in different spaces. Without these it would not be such a nice place to live in" (Steven, Levenshulme).*

This reflects the way in which cultural consumption in the suburbs contributes to people's sense of place identity. Essentially, people's accumulated experiences and daily interactions with suburban place impact its character (see: Relph, 1976; Creswell, 2004; Casey, 2009). The findings contradict the authors who view suburbs as solely homogeneous and monotonous residential environments with a lack of community and cultural spaces (e.g. Mumford, 1961; Hartley, 1997; Florida, 2005 etc.). In relation to this,

Esther (Didsbury) believes that the 'community spirit' of her area is highly influenced by the park that is located nearby her house:

> *"I don't think there's an awful lot of areas round Didsbury that have the advantage that we have. The people and the whole atmosphere here is just absolutely wonderful, it really is."*

In fact, some participants emphatically argued that the range of alternatives creates a more vibrant atmosphere compared to the city centre. For example, Caren (Levenshulme), who does not visit the city centre, remarked that

> *"when I think of suburbs, I really do think about vibrant communities in contrast to the city centre. I have a natural visual image, which is completely different to that little boxes on the hillside. Like those kinds of songs that talk about suburbs as 'everything looking the same'. I think about DIY spaces, spaces with handmade things."*

For other participants, the plurality of spaces and the different activities that are hosted within them create a sense of independence from the city. In relation to this, two participants from Levenshulme discussed how

> *"In Levenshulme, I have literally everything within a walking distance, so there is not necessarily a reason for me to go into town" (Aisha, Levenshulme).*
>
> *"There are very good facilities in Levenshulme. We have a gym, a swimming pool, a library and a market. Why shall I go to the city?" (Doreen, Levenshulme).*

The variety of spaces and cultural alternatives provide a counterbalance to the mainstream image of the suburbs. In fact, the suburbs do offer some choices to people. This should be further debated in relation to their functional dependence on the urban core and the role of commuting.

People commute to the city mainly for (1) work, (2) leisure, and (3) cultural consumption. In the suburbs, there are often fewer spaces and less opportunities for people to meet with particular sub-cultural groups, since they lack specialised meeting hubs or social

spaces that can satisfy the needs of individuals with particular tastes. This limits the opportunities for face-to-face contact and the possibilities for extending one's influence beyond local, place-based ties and relationships. In such cases, if the city centre or even other suburbs offer an alternative, there is a need to commute. Annabel (Levenshulme), who defines herself as a 'geek', told me apologetically that she needs to travel to the city centre to meet other geeks:

> *"I have not quite found the place for hanging out with geeks in Levenshulme. I have to travel to the city centre."*

Similarly, Pierre (Levenshulme) noted that there is a big music scene in the city. However, in comparison to the city centre, in Levenshulme there are not many open stages. For this reason, he has to travel to another suburb in order to participate in jam sessions, highlighting the fact that some suburbs in Manchester are not well connected by public transport, in comparison with the city centre. As he explained,

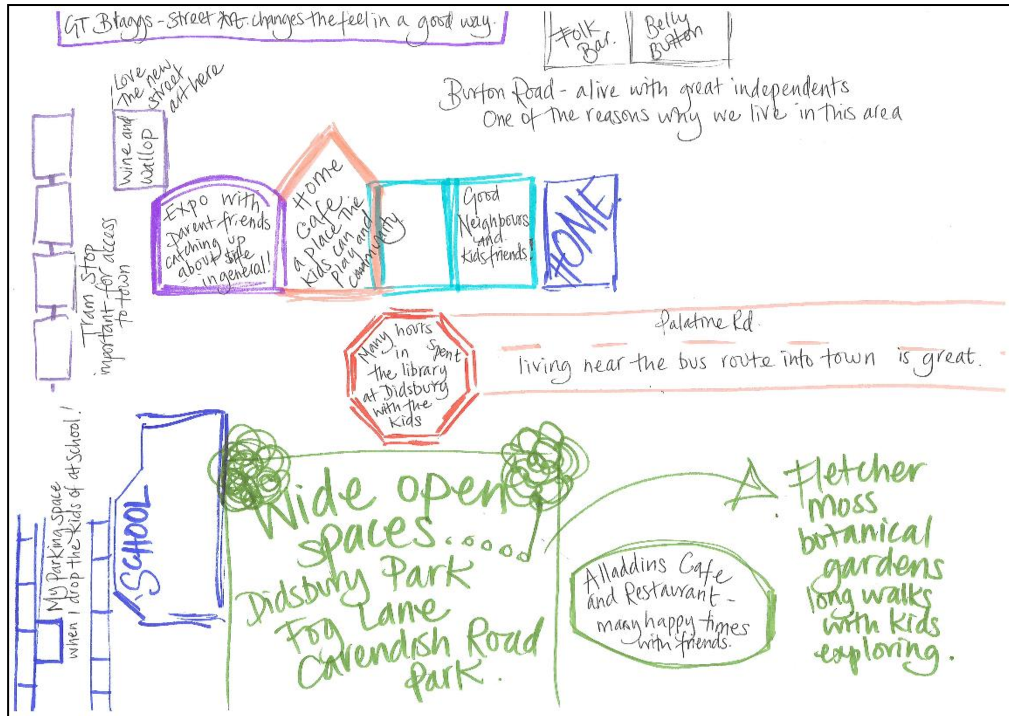
> *"I play American bluegrass. I was looking for jam sessions but in Levenshulme I could not find [any]. There was only one chaotic jam night organised in the Klondyke [haha]. So it is hard to find opportunities to play. It was quite tricky to find an appropriate space, but finally I found one in Chorlton. However, to be honest, it is easier to get into the city centre than to get from Levenshulme to another suburb, if you do not have a car."*

The fact that people need to commute whenever they want to watch a theatrical play or enjoy a concert in a big venue is a general pattern in the data that emphasises the symbiotic dependency of the suburbs in relation to the city centre, and in particular when it comes to the consumption of culture. Many participants mentioned this factor when they described their relationship to the city centre. This movement between the suburb and the city is well represented in the data, and it can be argued that commuting remains "the obvious symbol of the dependent suburb" (Donaldson, 1969: 47). Despite changes as illustrated by Featherstone (1991), commuting still plays an important role in the life of the suburbs, and significantly impacts suburban daily experience. In light of this, many

of the maps contain elements of transport infrastructure (see: Maps 21 to 26). The train, tram, car, bicycle and bus are important for accessing Manchester. As illustrated by the participant who drew Map 21, *"living near to the bus route into town is great/ tram stop is important for access to town"*. In some cases, public transport even offers an escape route from the suburb (see: Map 24). Accessibility was also highlighted and appreciated by older people. Esther (Didsbury) remembered when Didsbury was not so well connected to the city:

> *"Due to the tram today, the city is much more accessible compared to the old times. In the old days we never went into the city at all. Back then, I would not even known what the city looked like really."*

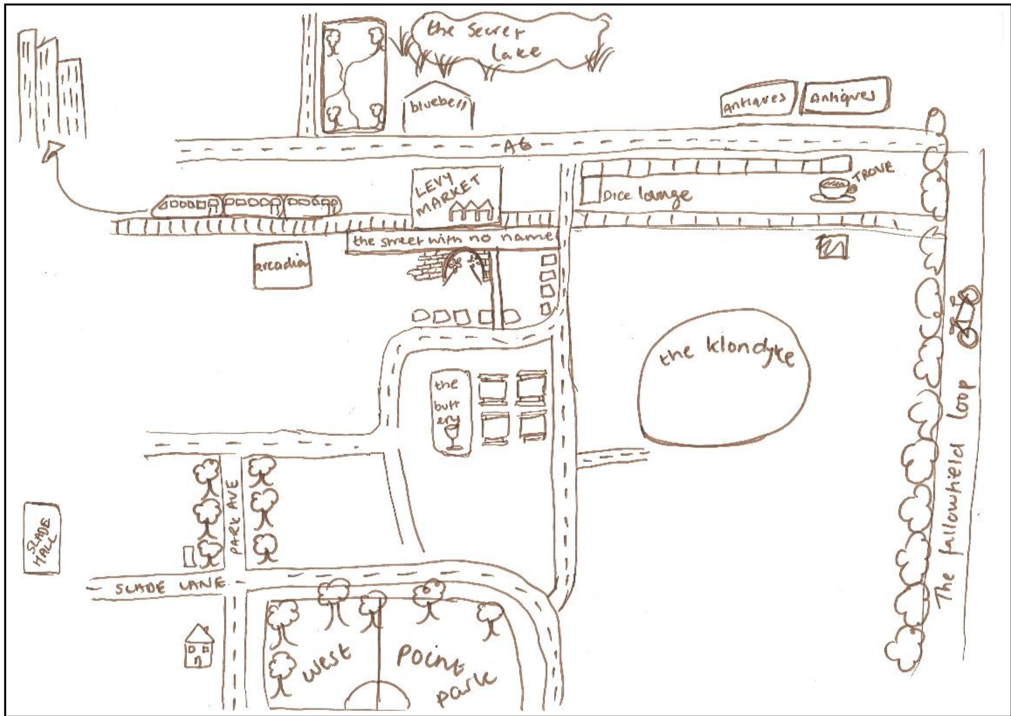
Therefore, one could argue that due to commuting today from the suburbs to the city is more inclusive than in the past, because the city centre is more accessible. However, economic factors such as the high housing cost, the cost of commuting and the employment patterns in some suburbs like Didsbury and Levenshulme, arguably maintain exclusivity from the city. In the following section, I focus more closely on the distinctive elements of the suburban streetscape.




Map 21: Didsbury

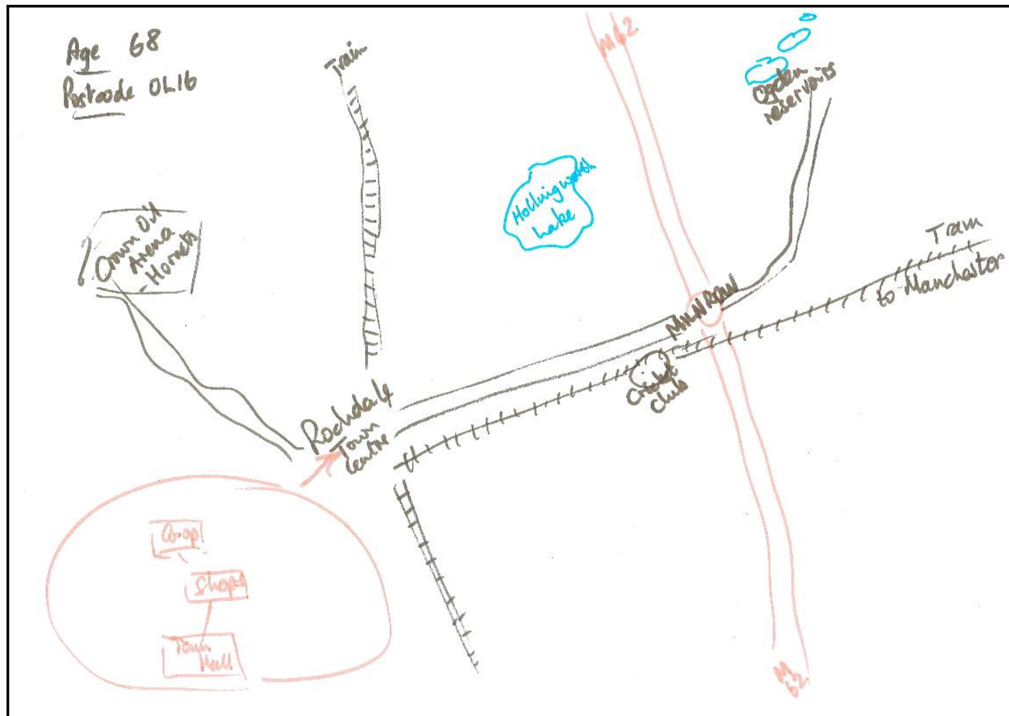
Map 22: Didsbury

*Map 23: Levenshulme*




*Map 24: Levenshulme*

*Map 25: Rochdale*



*Map 26: Rochdale*

## 6.4 Suburban Streetscapes

After analysing the physical, psycho-geographical and spatial elements that contribute to the suburban daily experience, I consider it essential to discuss how the 'street' is situated within the suburban setting. As I discussed in Chapter Three, the formation of the streetscape was considered as a key component in understanding the performative, affective and non-representational nature of suburbia. Arguably, much of the essence of everyday suburban life is being developed on the street, because it consists of a space where diverse activities are taking place. Streets not only host daily life, but also contain opportunities for socialisation and random encounters (Holloway and Hubbard, 2014). In that respect, they constitute the main stage in which suburban daily life is performed and experienced. In the following, I address how the form of the streetscape and its specific spatial arrangements impact different types of socio-cultural interaction. In doing so, I refer to the central role of the high street, and the design of culs-de-sac.

### 6.4.1 High Streets

While the suburbs examined differ in terms of historical, geographical, architectural, socio-cultural and demographic background, they share a common characteristic: the centrality of the high street. Even if they present aesthetic differences, the high streets of both Levenshulme and Didsbury act as the centre of local social life. This is the case also in similar cases examined (Jones, Roberts and Morris, 2007; Dhanani and Vaughan, 2013; Vaughan, Dhanani and Griffiths, 2013; Vaughan, 2015). The high street is woven into the social fabric of the suburb in multiple ways. In contrast to their residential hinterland, they are lined with a continuous commercial front that resembles a feeling of 'place ballet', performed by people in an embodied and temporal 'time-space routine' (Seamon, 1980). This feeling illustrates how suburbs are performed daily through the movement and embodiment of people enacting their everyday lives and highlights the possibility that habitual routines, as they unfold in physical space, transform the suburbs into a lived place with distinctive place identity and ambience (Moores, 2012). The following maps (27 to 32) demonstrate the symbolic and functional importance of the high streets of Didsbury and Levenshulme. Essentially, the high street is the *"heart of the*

*suburbs"* (Beatrice, Didsbury), the location of the highest levels of everyday activity and social interactions. In this way, various daily activities are drawn together spatially. In turn, the high street functions as an incubator of socio-cultural life.

In line with previous research (Griffiths, 2015; Palaiologou, 2015; Remali et al., 2015; Vaughan, 2015), the spatial properties of the high streets relate to their socio-economic significance in serving local life and the particular needs of people. As can be seen from the maps, the high streets of Didsbury and Levenshulme contain an agglomeration of supermarkets, groceries, delis, independent businesses, chain shops, bank branches and post offices, alongside numerous restaurants, bars and pubs. An interesting fact that I traced a rising concern among people that the suburbs have changed as a result of the domination of chain store retailers. These transformations impact suburban place identity. Steven (Levenshulme), reflecting on the gentrification of Levenshulme, believes that *"maybe the butchers or the fishmongers will come back if we get more hipster"*. Aisha (Levenshulme) also highlighted this issue. Nostalgically, she told me that when she was a little girl, there was a lot more diversity in terms of consumption choices:

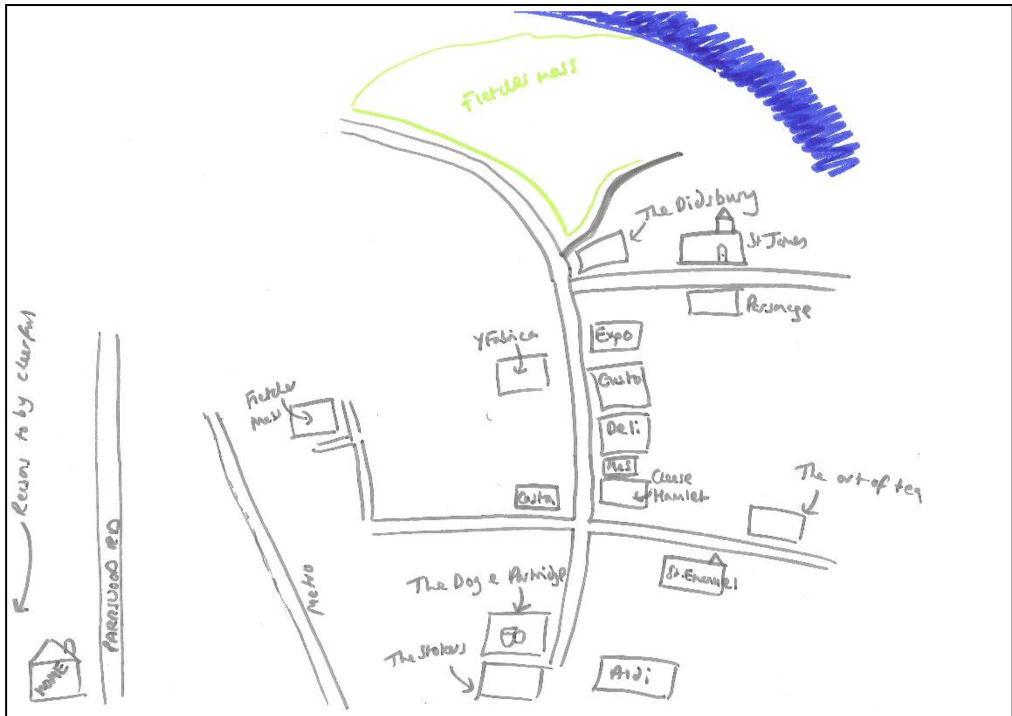
> *"There used to be a lot of Irish butchers and Irish businesses, whereas these days they seem less. That has partially to do with the invasion of the supermarkets that led to the decline of butchers in general. In addition, there are not as many pubs as before. This is a general phenomenon but particularly there were more pubs along the A6 and a lot of them have gone now."*

Essentially, the high streets - each with their own character, consumption alternatives and cultural features - provide the opportunity for people to visit a relational centre for local consumption. In this sense, even if retail plays only a modest part, the suburban high street is seen as a space for consumption (Miles, 2010).

At the same time, apart from their economic significance, the high streets are the locus for community activity. In both suburbs there are numerous leisure, educational, recreational and cultural premises (e.g. community centres, churches, libraries, gyms, swimming pools etc.) on or close to the high streets. In turn, these spaces establish the

role of the high street as an important generator of local activity. This supports the development of a distinctive place identity in every suburb examined.

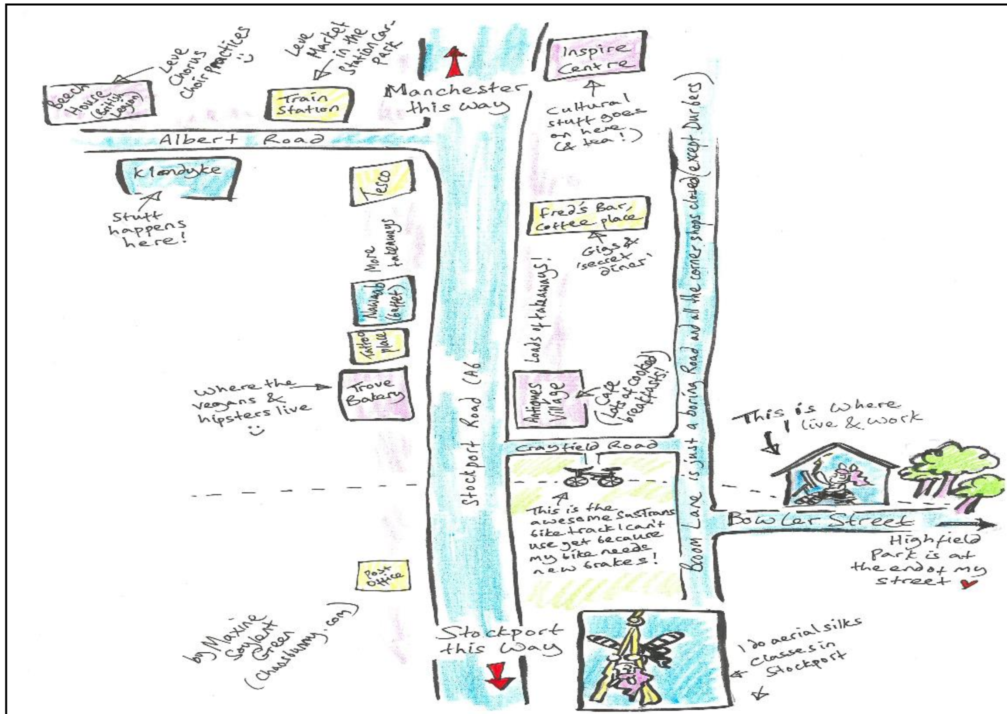
Map 27: Didsbury




*Map 28: Didsbury*

*Map 29: Levenshulme*

*Map 30: Levenshulme*



*Map 31: Levenshulme*

Map 32: Levenshulme

### 6.4.2 Culs-de-sac

In the previous section, I discussed the centrality of the high street in concentrating suburban daily life. However, the data highlights elements of sociability in the deeper residential hinterlands as well. This is more evident in specific areas where there is a lack of transit and traffic, such as in some culs-de-sac of Didsbury. The design of these particular streets allows a sort of street-level socio-spatial appropriation, providing opportunities for neighbourhood organisation (e.g. neighbourhood watches), moments of socialisation, and the organisation of cultural events (e.g. Christmas carols, street parties, collective dinners). According to Alice (Didsbury),

> *"in culs-de-sac there is a sense of security. I like when I see somebody I know to say hello to. It is important to be known, to belong. I think those are basic needs. I like that my neighbours have the key of my house. They will notice if there is a burglary [...] On Christmas Eve every year, we meet at the end of the road, somebody prints out carol sheets and we walk round the road all together*

> *singing. This tradition was here when we came, and we have just maintained it."*

On the contrary, people who live on bigger streets confessed that the aforementioned convivial feeling and level of street organisation is not so evident. For instance, Molly (Didsbury), who lives on a long and busy road of Didsbury, does not socialise with her neighbours at all. In her case, spatial proximity does not necessarily reduce social distance (Chamboredon and Lemaire, 1970, see also: Barnard, 2009). As she described it:

> *"I do not really know anybody across the road. My street is not good for knowing people because you do not see each other regularly. This road is very long. It does not feel like a community. I know some people, but we do not socialise. We do not have a residents' association. In culs-de-sac usually they have, and they organise Christmas carols or street parties."*

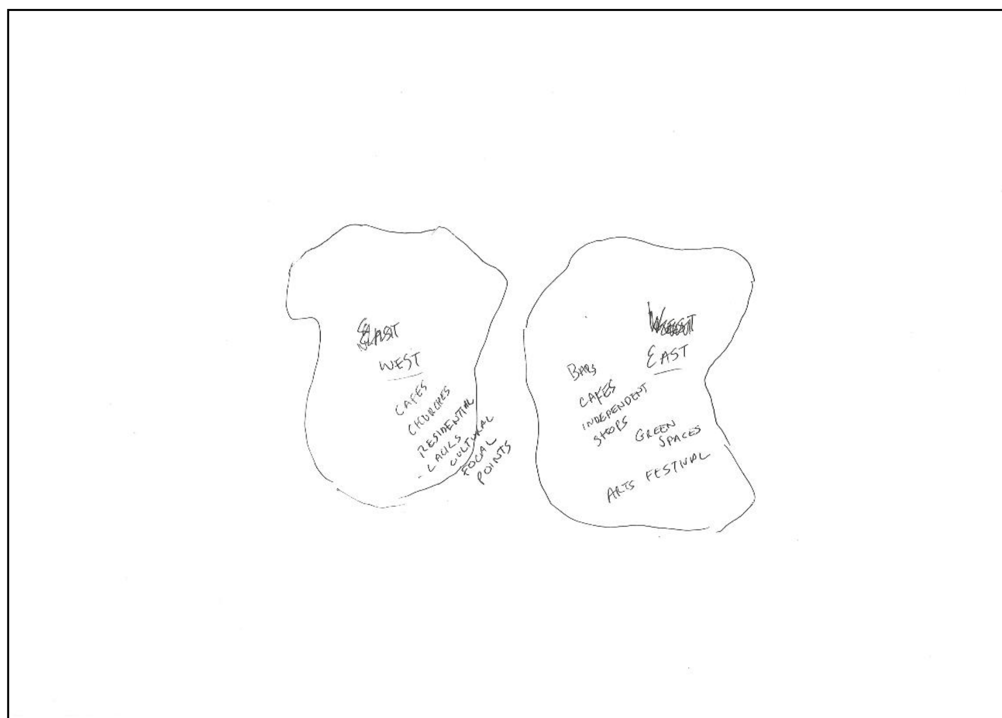
It seems that some culs-de-sac in Didsbury create a sense of safety and trust. Four participants from Didsbury who live on such streets shared similar experiences. In relation to the sample, the findings contradict those authors who believe that the design and the quietness of culs-de-sac are responsible for a backfiring behavioural system that it is associated with the absence of security (see: Frumkin et al., 2004; Montgomery, 2013). Instead, their design resembles what de Certeau (1984: 117) defines as a "practiced place", an everyday space of social interaction where the daily use of space provides the opportunity for socialisation and cultural engagement. This is envisaged as a sort of sociality that arises from gathering and meeting in public spaces (Amin, 2008). In this light, the closeness of culs-de-sac provide a space where people feel comfortable to sit, hang out, or be together in the public realm, due to feelings of conviviality and familiarity with their immediate surroundings and their neighbours. Reflecting on previous studies (e.g. Greenbaum and Greenbaum, 1985; Grannis, 1998; du Toit et al., 2007; Schneider, Gruman, and Coutts, 2012), it appears that people who live in culs-de-sac know more of their neighbours, and they are more likely to know and interact with

each other due to geographical proximity. This allows individuals to maintain a sense of control over their immediate space and enables the organisation of bottom-up cultural events (e.g. communal Christmas carols). These findings are in accordance with Tonkiss (2005), who showed how members of a collective used art to transform the left-over space of a cul-de-sac into a communal public space of collective belonging, social exchange and informal encounters. Accordingly, the appropriation of public space for culture is seen as a product of socio-spatial dialectics. In this process, people appropriate collectively suburban space for different types of cultural events, and they develop a connection to place through the use of space. At least on the basis of my case study evidence suggests that by appropriating space, people transform inexpensive and unclassified suburban space into a place with specific cultural characteristics. In what follows, I examine the suburban state of mind by reflecting further on issues of place identity.

## 6.5 A Suburban State of Mind

In order to understand suburbs as a lived experience, it is necessary to think about the way in which their place identity is constructed. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the identity of a place is considered to be a reciprocal process whereby people recognise and associate self-consciously with a particular place. In turn, place identity shapes and is being shaped by various factors including the use of space(s), the everyday cultural practices of people, and their imaginaries. In this sense, suburbia is not only a geographically reflected place-based experience, but it can also be considered as a state of mind that is 'being' constructed in people's minds (Silverstone, 1997). In order to make this point clearer, I will discuss some examples that reflect issues of place identity. Many participants referred to the fact that Didsbury and Levenshulme have different place identities, for example during the day and at night. This is also related to the demographic composition of particular areas that are located within the same suburb. For example, the fact that West Didsbury attracts more young professionals and independent shops, whilst East Didsbury is more family-friendly, made several respondents mention that Didsbury in not a unified suburb. Rather, it is constituted by

two entirely different communities that are attracted into particular areas for different reasons. Map 33 illustrates the ‘split personality’ of Didsbury in an abstract fashion.

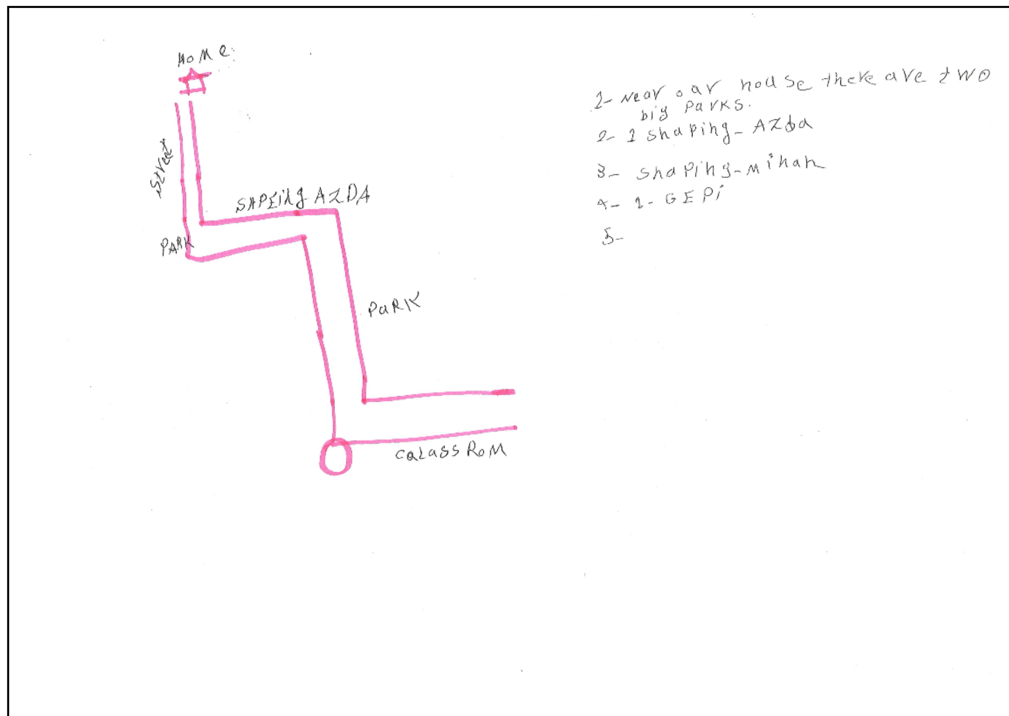



*Map 33: Didsbury*

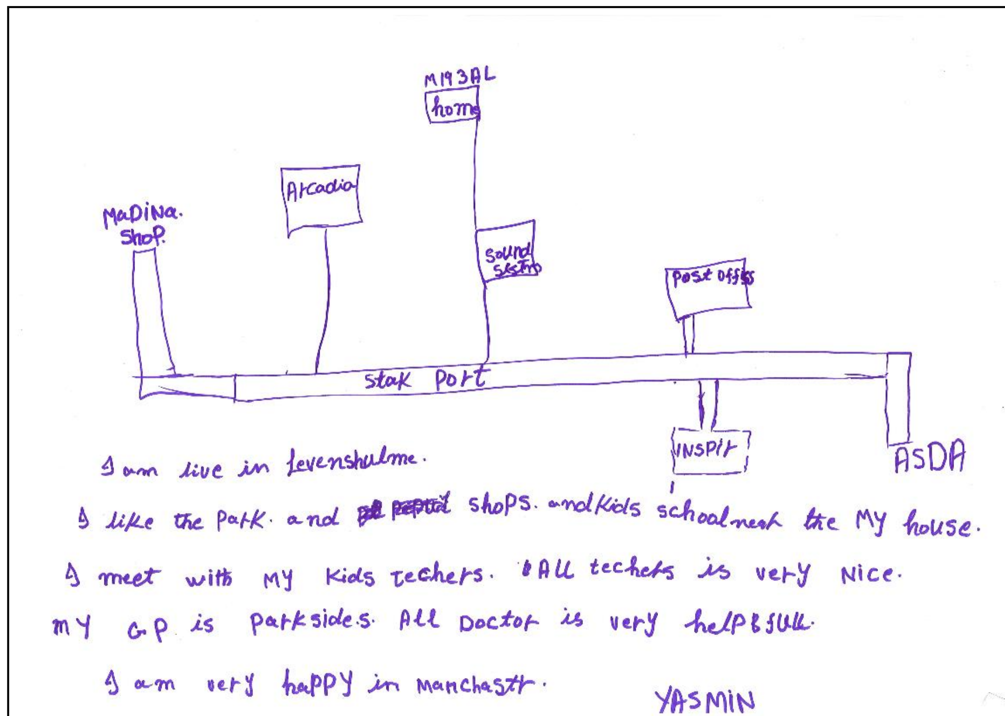
Levenshulme is a multicultural suburb in which various ethnic communities live and work. This heterogeneous mix of cultures is reflected in the rhythmic geographies of everyday life (Seamon, 1979; Pink, 2012). This habitual and embodied rhythm changes form and depends on the everyday use of space, the day of the week, the time, the weather and the seasons. Still, particular communities tend to congregate in its different areas. The majority of the maps collected include Stockport Road (A6) which, although it forms the high street of that particular suburb, is at the same time a mental and even functional boundary. It seems that the majority of the refugees that participated in the workshop that took place during the English language class congregate in the north-eastern part of Levenshulme, i.e. above the A6 (Maps 34 to 35). Still, almost every map contains the major supermarkets (e.g. ASDA) and other cultural spaces (e.g. Levinspire). These spaces are common also in the rest of the maps collected in Levenshulme. Finally, Rochdale - being a satellite town - presents a separate place identity from Manchester.

This was reflected by every participant in this research. Jack (Rochdale) sums up this sense of independence:

> *"I do not know why, but I am proud that I come from Rochdale. I have no problem in saying that I am from Rochdale. No[t] Manchester, Rochdale [...] We are Rochdale!"*




*Map 34: Levenshulme*




*Map 35: Levenshulme*

This multiplicity of identities is not solely manifested in place and/or in particular space(s). It is also reflected on an individual level. During their daily performances, people occupy multiple identities in relationship to the different spaces they use (see: Goffman, 1959; Massey, 1994, 2005). In this sense, place identity is not solely related to a physical space but is also subject to how people confirm their own identity when they use a particular space. This is related to the theatricality of everyday life, as individuals adapt to certain roles within its frames, whilst constructing their identity in relation to other individuals and social groups (Goffman, 1959). This becomes evident in the following interview excerpt:

> ***Giorgos:*** *I see that you have included different spaces in this map, such as the local school and the park. What is the difference among them in terms of culture?*
>
> ***Esther:*** *I suppose a school is a more ready-made cultural community where my role and my position is more well-defined as a parent. However, if I go to the park, I could go there as a parent, as a friend, as a solitary person, as an artist*

*etc. Therefore, there are many more roles that I occupy in the park. I never have one single role in my everyday life, but many. Sometimes they are predictable and explicit, and other times less so.*

Place identity is not only determined by the physical characteristics and components of a place or individual performances. It is also linked to the meanings, imaginaries, representations and affective associations developed by people in relation to that place. The data highlights that the notion of place identity has a much broader context, even if it appears to be homogeneous and to explain suburban life. In the following section, I focus on peoples' representations and imaginaries as emerged from the data analysis, and I discuss the difference between the real and the imagined suburbia. What appears to be, and what actually is, suburbia in peoples' imagination? I would argue that the way in which people imagine their place of residence offers an alternative and fruitful framework to explore the symbolic construction of suburbia. This forms the basis for unravelling the complexity that lies behind the notion of place, since it allows us to draw important comparisons.

### 6.5.1 Representations and Imaginaries

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, contemporary Manchester is a city constituted by a number of former villages that were gradually integrated into the urban fabric. Given this, Didsbury and Levenshulme have managed to successfully conserve a kind of village place identity. Far from being accidental, this is related to how the high streets of East Didsbury and Levenshulme are commonly referred to as villages, even now and to the fact that there are various alternatives for consumption and cultural activity over there. This was also reflected in the data, with people referring to a *'village feeling'*, especially when they compared their suburb to other places they had lived in the past. For example, Molly (Didsbury), who used to live in another suburb, told me how

*"Wythenshawe is just a horrible housing estate. There are no shops, there is no centre, there is no community. There is no heart to it! The 'Forum' is horrible. Really, I just do not know how you could improve those areas. Some parts of*

> *Manchester are just horrible. They are just houses. Soulless! There is nothing there."*

Molly's description reflects a standard criticism of post-war suburbs, that they are fragmented into disparate sites of socialisation and rarely contain physical centres in which people can socialise (Martinson, 2001; Chiras and Wann, 2003). However, touching upon such mainstream representations of suburbia, Beatrice (Didsbury) highlighted that Didsbury is different from other suburbs:

> *"Didsbury is a suburban village, because it has a centre as a heart of the community, a local market, a library, etc. I have everything I need […] unless you walk around with your eyes down, you will see people that recognise you. You kind of bump into the same people just being out […] People often say to me, 'Oh I have met you somewhere before haven't I?' […] It is very different if you live in suburbia."*

This contradicts much urban scholarship in which a high-density place offers more possibilities for encounters with strangers (Bramley and Kirk, 2005; Rani, 2015). For Beatrice, suburban space creates opportunities for incidental encounters, which is a typical characteristic of a village-like community life. Indeed, such a description may be linked to conceptions of daily life in agriculturally based societies with a higher degree of attachment to a particular locale (Bernard, 1973). However, mutual greetings are not a practice common only to rural villages. They can be also experienced in the suburbs, since in many respects they draw upon similar social resources of cohesion as in smaller villages. This notion seems to create a representation in peoples' minds that connect ideas that are closely related to localism and community-based needs. It impacts place identity and people's relationship with suburban place. Thus, it creates a culture of reciprocity, where people may know each other on the basis of everyday relations. This stresses the importance of the face-to-face interaction in everyday life encounters (Goffman, 1959) and shows how the distinctiveness of suburban place and its identity influences the way an individual actually experiences the suburb on an everyday basis.

Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that there are distinct factors that differentiate the village-type suburb from 'actual' suburbia. While one of the participants was creating his map, he told me that *"the actual suburbia is a purely residential environment. The suburbs are areas close to the city where people experience a village way of life"* (Map 21, Didsbury). People believe that 'actual' suburbia has a different character, place identity and demographics. Beatrice (Didsbury) and Molly (Didsbury) discussed some of those crucial differences with me:

> *"When I used to live in Bury, which can be considered as the actual suburbia, people were quite single-minded. Also, there was nowhere to go within walking distance. Just a row of shops, where you could get some basic things, some primary schools, one or two churches, and a dentist. There was no community centre at all." (Beatrice, Didsbury)*

Beatrice's words echo the work of Hecht (2001) who discussed the material cultural of everyday suburban life, showing how new suburban residents relate to their past lives elsewhere. Molly (Didsbury) offers an interesting perspective that relates to Shanks, Coates and Harris, (2017) who argued that people in the suburbs may not define themselves or their places of residence in relation to the city centre, or think of themselves as suburban:

> *"Didsbury has a cosmopolitan character. It is not too parochial. For this reason, I would not define it as suburban necessarily. The actual suburbs are a lot more family friendly. Didsbury has got a mix of all generations and it is quite a young place, whereas the suburbs are kind of old. You would not really live there unless you had a family. Here it still feels quite young, quite dynamic. You're not just all this homogenous group." (Molly, Didsbury)*

These two perspectives highlight issues of proximity to spaces and place identity (e.g. a cosmopolitan character). It can be argued that such factors differentiate the village-type suburb from actual suburbia. Still, people have contrasting opinions about what a suburb

is. For instance, Molly (Didsbury) reflecting on her past experience, argued that Didsbury is neither a village nor a suburb:

> *"I do not feel that Didsbury is a village. I grew up in a real village, which was a lot smaller and more compact. Didsbury is quite massive in terms of population and it stretches in a very large area. In addition, it lacks a central reference point, like an actual community centre. Where I grew up, there was a community hall that everybody could use."*

This highlights the contested nature of suburban place (Massey, 1994; Harvey, 1996; Cresswell, 2004). The imaginary of a village within the city is considered an oxymoron. Living in such a place, does not necessarily mean living together in a community that is based on mutual trust, shared understandings and communal values. Such imaginaries and representations contribute to the construction of the 'symbolic suburb' but they rest upon the distinctive uses of space(s) and the extent to which they impact everyday life. In this light, it could be argued that the notion of suburban village is, essentially, a front stage in which theatricality and performativity are the key drivers for the everyday suburban experience. This entails boundaries that are neither complete nor fully visual, but instead partial and practical (see: Lindner and Meissner, 2019). In order to examine how cultural consumption practices relate to suburban place and identity, in the following section, I discuss how various research participants associate themselves with and within particular places and spaces of cultural consumption.

### 6.5.2 Boundaries

This thesis accepts the claim that the formulation of specific boundaries and the sense of insideness do not have a natural or obvious meaning, but one that is created by structural inequalities and by people with more power than others to define what is and is not appropriate in a particular place or space (Creswell, 2004). Still, the formulation of boundaries between specific social categories influences and expresses the place identity endowed in particular suburbs. As a result, various places and spaces in the suburbs can be characterised through various logics of inclusion and exclusion.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, there is an inevitable reciprocity between place and people. Yet, the formulation of boundaries is also pivotal in defining a place, and fundamental to the construction of identities (Relph, 1976; Massey, 2004). This is achieved through the identification of the 'others' and 'otherness' in everyday interactions and uses of space. The following perspectives reflect Fishman's (1997) description of the suburbs as places where someone can feel comfortable alongside other people, because s/he shares the same outlook on life:

> *"Me and many of my friends that live in Didsbury have the same mentality. We all share the same cleaners, and we all want just to enjoy life. So we are all in our thirties, in relationships, we do not have children, so we have got that dispensable money to spend on eating out and drinking. You see, we meet part of the culture of where we live." (Margaret, Didsbury)*

> *"My friends are very liberal, that was quite important to me. I did not want to move somewhere where peoples' politics were different to mine [...] The Tory voters tend to live in the actual suburbia. We call them middle England." (Molly, Didsbury)*

The above extracts highlight the fact that there are particular self-selecting individuals (particularly in Didsbury) who identify themselves as belonging to broader social groups that share the same practices, class background, and/or political orientations. Yet, the construction of boundaries became more evident during the interviews with the participants. Some respondents made several social classifications and categorisations, drawing distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. For instance, when I asked Margaret (Didsbury) to describe the street where she lives, she confessed:

> *"In my street we have quite a few houses for people that got out of prison or homelessness and such things. So, you often get the police across the road. It does not matter to us where people are from, but what we do not like [are] the people in the half-way houses. Some of those are white British that are*

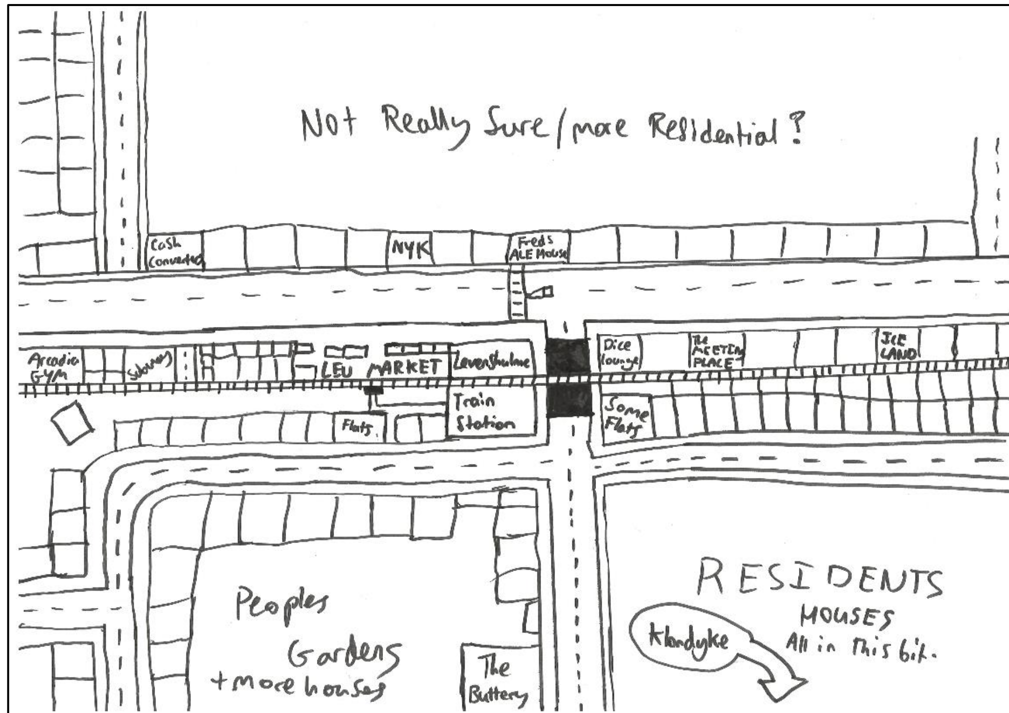
*swearing at 2 - 3 o'clock in the morning, shouting, walking around with drinks. We do not want to encourage that."*

What is interesting in the above interview extract is that Margaret, an individual who has lived in Didsbury for three years, not only expresses what could be deemed to be a degree of classist prejudice in relation to structural inequalities, but she also appears to strongly believe that she is entitled to define what is and is not appropriate in the vicinity of her place of residence. In her eyes the 'other' negatively impacts the image of her place of residency. Along similar lines, I traced further conflictual perceptions that reflect the same mentality among locals who complained about people who visit their place of residence to consume alcohol. During the fieldwork, I was told about the existence of two different cultures in Didsbury: the day-time culture, where people engage in recreation and the arts, and the night-time culture where people from *"outside"* also consume the *"Didsbury experience"* (Margaret, Molly, Beatrice). Some of my respondents were afraid that their area would be transformed into *"drinking villages"* (Margaret, Didsbury). This would contribute negatively to place, thereby *"losing its charm"* (Molly, Didsbury). However, reflecting on the contested nature of place identity, there were conflicting perceptions among the participants. Esther (Didsbury) believes that Didsbury is constantly evolving. This is an ordinary and natural process and, hence, does not considerably impact her everyday life.

In a different context, another conflictual distinction that emerged was based on the housing status (homeowners vs renters). Caren's (Levenshulme) map (36) presents a socio-economic boundary in relation to dwelling and identity. On her map, Stockport Road (A6) consists of a relational border that divides the map between the renters that live to the west, and the homeowners that live to the east. Caren (Levenshulme) told me that

> *"obviously people who are homeowners have a very different kind of identity to renters [...] With my friends we quite often [talk about] the idea of settling down somewhere. Some of them moved from that side of the A6 to the more*

*homeowners' side. Still they rent but they wanted to settle down in a quiet house. I kind of see this side as being a more settled place, whereas that side is a little bit more social and vibrant."*




Map 36: Levenshulme

What is interesting is that the discomfort and negative emotional expressions against renters were not expressed by long-term owners, but by people that are newcomers, following Brown et al. (2004). While Margaret (Didsbury) sometimes generally expressed a sense of belonging and a high degree of integration with her locality, she was pretty clear that:

*"what I do not like about Didsbury is that you get a lot of people that are renting here. They do not look after the properties as much as we would do. There seems to be a difference between the residents, who are the people that own the places, and then the people that rent. This divides Didsbury."*

In addition, there seem to be certain boundaries in particular spaces such as tennis clubs and pubs. Molly (Didsbury), who is member of a tennis club in Didsbury, told me that this space is not hospitable, preserving a degree of social exclusivity against the 'other' and

the ‘undesirable’. A similar perception was shared by Pierre (Levenshulme) who told me that when he first visited some pubs in Levenshulme, he felt like he was taking part

> *“in a western movie, where everyone just kind of turned around and looked at me when I entered the pub. My first thought was what am I doing here? I kind of felt that here is not my place, which is quite strange and hostile.”*

The above quotes show how various spaces superficially function as social enclaves that bound particular groups together, but essentially, they divide the suburb into tribes (see: Maffesoli, 1996). These findings are in line with many studies that have shown how different groups can reside in close proximity, but live in distinctive social worlds that are bounded by socio-economic status, cultural differences, and moral values (Watt, 2009; Arthurson, 2012). It can be argued that such experiences reflect broader societal processes and issues. In this process of spatial segregation, the discursive and the material are intertwined, producing boundaries between insiders and outsiders. This is manifested in the form of cultural expressions and experiences, spatial identifications, as well as socio-economic materiality and structural inequalities.

## 6.6 Conclusions

The findings present a previously unknown aspect of the existing social-spatial reality in two suburbs of Manchester and one satellite town that lies in close proximity. The data yields sociological insight into peoples’ interpretive and interactional reasoning, demonstrating the importance of the physical arrangement of space, whilst highlighting the practices of people who inhabit. Furthermore, this chapter has illustrated how the distinctive characteristics of suburban place shape the everyday life and identity of the suburbs. In doing so, it has focused on the environmental experiences of my research participants and delineated some elements of the complex nexus of spatial relations played out through the rhythmic geographies of everyday suburban life. In other words, the chapter has served to illuminate different dimensions of everyday life, and to understand how people accentuate the spatial organisation of their place of residence. Finally, it was concerned with the way various suburban experiences reflect broader

societal processes and issues; focusing on the way particular boundaries (e.g. between insiders and outsiders; renters and owners; long-term and short-term residents) are (re)produced through the everyday life of the suburbs. Bearing in mind that “the city is not a spatial entity with social consequences, but a sociological entity that is formed spatially” (Simmel, 1997: 131), I conclude with the proposition that suburbia is a dynamic place that is being shaped by diverse relationships over time and under specific material conditions and historical circumstances. In the next chapter, I move on to discuss in more depth how people relate to culture and cultural consumption and whether this process comes to shape the everyday experience of suburbia. My main intention in doing so is to bring the suburbs, in all of their cultural complexity, to the fore in discussions around improved connections to place and, ideally, in the delivery of more ‘sustainable’ urban futures and ways of life.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## Doing Culture

*"Let us think about margins as much as centres, of work as much as play, of ways of being in the city that do not correspond to bourgeois forms of entertainment – and let us find ways of imaging the city in these terms as well"*

*Richard J. Williams (2004: 241)*

### 7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the ways in which suburbia is expressed in place and I unpacked some critical assessments regarding the socio-spatial relations played out during the practice of everyday suburban life. I argued that the particularities of suburban place and the micro-geographies of the 'intimate' play a constitutive role in forming and shaping place identity. This relationship is seen as an interdependent and interrelated factor that contributes to the construction of the 'symbolic suburb'. In this chapter, I apply the theoretical framework that I developed in Chapter Three and I further address the role of culture and cultural consumption in constructing the complexity of everyday suburban life. My aim in this chapter is to (1) discuss the role of culture in everyday suburban life and to (2) evaluate the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption. In particular, I examine the way people consume culture, both in urban and suburban contexts and how various patterns of cultural consumption come to shape people's relationship to the city.

As also discussed in Chapter Three, in order to better contextualise the plurality of understandings that the term 'culture' might entail, I adopted a flexible and situational approach (see: Stevenson, 2004) that views culture as a practical activity, formed through the everyday experience of place. This entails agency, power relations and contradictions. Accordingly, I engage with culture as it is interpreted, conceived and eventually practiced by the people who participated in this research. This requires a focus on the practices that people undertake during their everyday lives. In such a way,

I engage - in practice - with different experiences and representations, directly derived from the suburban ‘collective imaginary’ (Castoriadis, 1987). Such a perspective forms an enhanced basis for rethinking suburbia and the relationship between suburban place and culture.

The forthcoming discussion is structured into two main sections. First, I describe how people relate to Manchester city centre in terms of cultural consumption and whether they find it accessible. Secondly, I demonstrate how they experience this process in their place of residence. By looking at the creative geographies of Manchester, my intention is to (1) provide an alternative approach to the study of suburban culture(s); (2) uncover suburban cultural complexity; and (3) illustrate the ways in which the consumption of culture shapes everyday suburban experience. In doing so, I recognise the value of culture outside the spotlight of the city centre and I acknowledge the role of everyday spaces of cultural consumption in the suburbs. Within the diverse geography of the suburbs, these spaces operate as generators of a place-based cultural experience and shape people’s everyday and cultural lives in the suburbs. In the following section, I address how the cultural consumption of the city centre impacts people’s broader relationship to the city.

## 7.2 Cultural Consumption in Manchester City Centre

As mentioned in Chapter One, the greatest density of cultural infrastructure is concentrated in the city centre. As can been seen in the following Figure 11 (below) most of the city’s iconic cultural institutions are clustered together in the city centre. Theatres, concert halls, museums and galleries offer “an immense accumulation of spectacles” (Debord, 1994: 1) to locals and visitors. These spaces of cultural consumption have a significant and visible impact on the image of Manchester (Richards and Milestone, 2000) that may serve to overshadow how they see the provision of culture in their localities. The city centre is undoubtedly the main site for cultural consumption in Manchester and it is valued as such by policymakers. Not only it contains many ‘high’ cultural pursuits, but it also consists of a place where Mancunians can come together to enjoy the ‘culture of the city’. As a city centre Councillor told me during the interview:

> *"The city centre is really important for us, because it is the place where the concentration of the 'cultural offer' is [...] It is also where we host our bigger events and festivals. In addition, it consists of a reference point for Mancunians. It is where the different communities of the city come together."*

Making a similar point, the head of the City Centre Management Company (CityCo) highlighted the city-wide importance of the centre and explained to me that

> *"since the 2000s the city centre is thriving. In total, there are 26 venues that host various activities and events such as the most important festivals [...] We are doing really well in terms of visitors and footfall. People were talking about the death of city and town centres, but it is pretty obvious that Manchester is the lead. Today the city centre drives 90 per cent of our economy. We want to continue to produce events and other activities that are going to make it [a] more vibrant and attractive place."*

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the Manchester City Council has developed a specific cultural strategy to ensure the city's 'cultural activities' are part of its agenda for economic productivity (Symons, 2018; see: Our Manchester Strategy). However, this strategy is arguably biased towards the city centre, and may potentially lead to the detriment of the suburbs. This can be seen, for example, in relation to the upcoming cultural investments, managed by the Council such as the development of 'The Factory': a £130.6 million "world-class cultural space in the heart of the city" (MIF official website), currently being built on the former site of Granada's TV studios. Designed by Rem Koolhaas' world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), the project is currently funded by Manchester City Council, HM Government and the National Lottery.

The city is essentially building another large-scale cultural venue, despite the abundance of existing ones. The investors' logic behind its construction is to provide a permanent home for the Manchester International Festival and, moreover, to encourage various creative industries to cluster together somewhere in the city centre. It has been

suggested that such a totemic investment would establish Manchester as the country's most significant arts and cultural employment centre outside London. According to an executive member for culture and leisure, "the Factory would make Manchester the cultural capital of the UK, if not the world" (Sherwin, 2015); a "genuine cultural counterbalance to London" (BBC, 2014). The Councillor told me that the city will therefore continue to invest in the cultural sector because "*it is widely recognised that culture has a central role in tackling a lot of the big dangers of the day".* Still, acknowledging the centrality of the city centre in terms of cultural consumption, he believes that

> *"our cultural offer has got to be more than just the city centre [...] the culture and the arts are embedded within our neighbourhoods and communities. Ultimately, we must make sure that culture is accessible to our residents. This is really fundamental [...] It is particularly important that all our people are able to benefit from everything that we do in the city."*

For this reason, as the Councillor suggests, all the cultural organisations in the city have put in special rates to make sure that people from all over the city are able to have access to culture. *"All the museums and galleries in the city centre are for free. There is no charge".* However, recent reports show that when it comes to Greater Manchester, a significant part of the population is culturally disengaged (see: Chapter Three). On the one hand, participation rates in the arts and culture are not high by comparison with other cities in the UK. On the other hand, the annual attendance is averaging 20 per cent of the population (Miles, 2015), and certain socio-cultural categories (e.g. BAME communities) show lower levels of engagement with publicly funded cultural activity than white residents. This does not necessarily mean that people are generally excluded from 'culture'; their cultural experience are rather played out through a rich vernacular culture of everyday practices, based around mundane activities, social networks and various 'lifestyle enclaves' (Bellah et al., 1996). This sort of culture operates on a city-wide basis and through the rhythmic geographies of everyday life. Bearing these issues in mind, in what comes next, I analyse whether people in the suburbs find culture

accessible in the city centre of Manchester, and to what extent cultural consumption shapes their broader relationship with the city. In this way, I start to formulate an alternative to the 'Manchester model' (Sanjek, 2000) of regeneration; highlighting the creative, yet 'hidden' geographies of suburbia, and the benefits that such an exploration might have in recalibrating our understanding of the city in a more geographically-inclusive fashion.

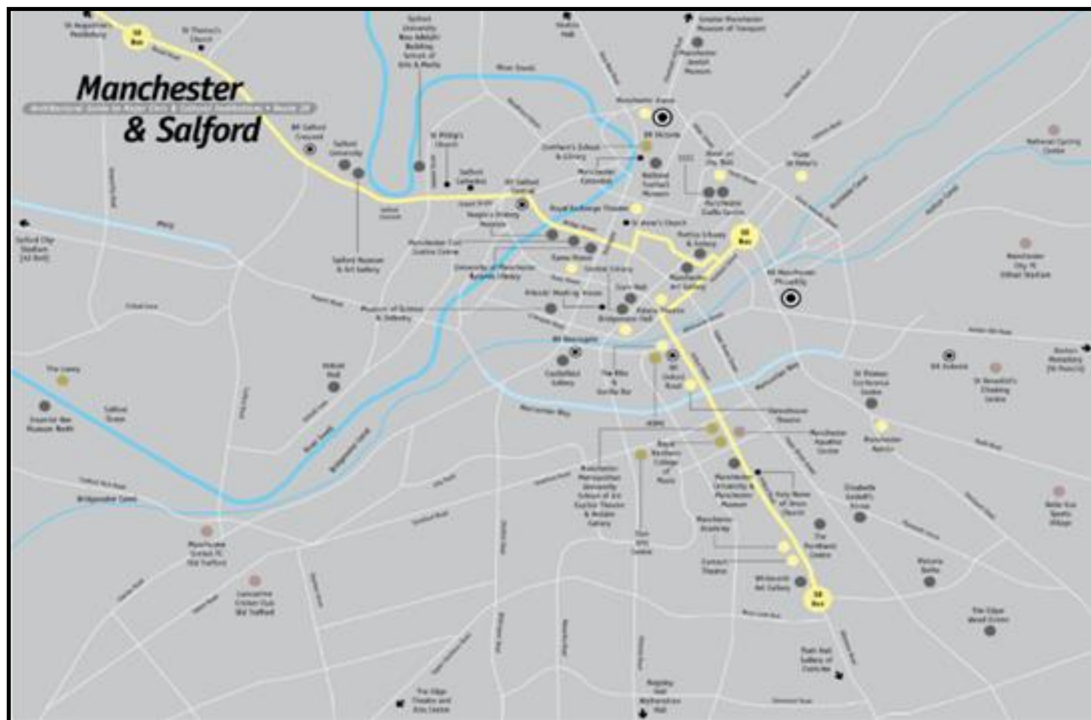



*Figure 11: Manchester & Salford Cultural Map*

In Chapter Six, I described how my research participants commute to the city for various reasons (e.g. work, leisure, cultural consumption). In the suburbs of Manchester, not only, are there often fewer spaces and less opportunities for people to satisfy their particular cultural tastes (e.g. Annabel, Levenshulme; Pierre, Levenshulme etc.), but they also lack big venues and meeting hubs for niche cultural interests. This highlights the symbiotic dependency of the suburbs in relation to the city centre, and notably in terms the consumption of culture. The inner-city retains a sort of centrality when it comes to this end. Many participants referred positively to the city centre when they spoke in my

semi-structured interviews about the activities one could undertake there. Pierre, a Levenshulme resident, drew my attention to the fact that

> *"The city centre is definitely vibrant and lively. It is such a nice place and there are many things going on. If you just go into the city centre, you will definitely find something to do. Anything!"*

Similarly, Doreen (Levenshulme) believes that the cultural venues *"bring excellence to the city"* and Kathryn (Didsbury) noted that

> *"We have three world class orchestras, we have a wonderful theatre, incredible art galleries. Wow! What an astonishing city we live in!"*

Nevertheless, while it seems that people universally accepted the city centre as the legitimate place for cultural consumption, some participants expressed a more critical standpoint. For example, Molly (Didsbury), who works in the City Council, stated that *"the new developments and policies adopted by the Council are very much focused on the city centre"*. Like Molly, other people I met during my research believed that this centre-focused approach to the city has negatively impacted grassroots organisations and other cultural spaces such as community centres, small museums, and libraries that are located outside the centre (e.g. Alice, Didsbury; Oliver, Rochdale; Jack, Rochdale). In response to this view, the Councillor I spoke to argued that, in the past few years, the focus of the Council has been

> *"to make sure that every neighbourhood in the city is able, first of all, to have a cultural offer, and secondly to connect centrally to the city's offer. For this reason, many cultural institutions tape their work within the city's neighbourhoods and communities."*

Arguably, when people visit the centre to consume culture, they are able to negotiate their relationship and attachment to the city. Alice (Didsbury), who as she told me finds culture accessible because she is fortunate enough to have a steady income, claimed that the city centre is "*the place that offers cultural experiences in a collective way".* A

feeling of belonging when she visits cultural venues in the city centre emerges from her words: "*you are part of a group of like-minded people, at the same time as taking in the culture of the city".* Another example is Lavinia, who grew up in some other town, and whose description seems to confirm that cultural consumption creates a new sense of belonging in a place: *"Rochdale used to be a sort of technical home for me. I did not feel connected to the town. But when I started to participate in different cultural activities in the town, I started to feel more tied into the community"*. Through this process, people can connect with other people, whilst developing social capital; or renegotiating a symbolic relationship to the city.

Kathryn (Didsbury) believes that culture in Manchester is accessible because of the short commuting distances and the reasonable economic costs of the venues. In order to make her point more clearly, she compared Manchester to London where she had lived for several years:

> *"We are incredibly lucky that we do not have to pay London prices and it does not take us an hour to go to the centre, which is what happens if you live in London. I do not think that the quality of the cultural scene is directly comparable. Manchester Art Gallery is not the National Portrait Gallery or the National Gallery. But actually a lot of the activities around culture are just as fabulous as any of that in London [...] It is part of our DNA to compete with London."*

Similarly, Beatrice (Didsbury) was brought up in North London. However, she moved to Manchester because she finds life cheaper and culture more accessible: these are the main reasons why she likes the city. She explained to me that culture is not accessible in London because of the cost. In her own words,

> *"The actual physical cost of everything in London is twice as much as in Manchester. Rent and transport. That excludes people from culture [...] this is the reason why I decided to live in the North. I am happy and content in*

*Manchester because I have access to culture. People are more friendly anyway."*

While Beatrice was sharing her many cultural tastes with me, she developed her personal theory on what makes culture accessible in Manchester. She does not think that the high cost of the venues is a real issue. In her view, cultural access is a matter of cultural capital (see: Chapter Three):

> *"I have a huge appreciation of music. I like jazz, folk, pop, and even classical music. Theatre-wise I like musicals and murder mysteries. I appreciate some opera and ballet. I do not think that the cost of the venues in Manchester is an issue, but it is whether the people are interested. I believe that some people, maybe, they never had that opportunity to experience that culture. I think that the culture is there. However, what makes culture accessible is whether you have a desire or you have been introduced to that culture."*

Both Kathryn (Didsbury) and Beatrice (Didsbury) used to live in London. So, when they are referring to access to culture in Manchester, they both carry with them their past experiences. Still, it seems that their desire to consume culture is socio-culturally determined by their habitus and what Bourdieu (1984) would refer to as their cultural capital. Kathryn, even if she cannot equate the quality of Manchester's scene to London's, acknowledges that the cultural offer of the city fits her aesthetic standards. Beatrice also appears to be highly engaged with culture. As she told me, she is in a position to do this: "*In my life, I see culture as the icing on the cake. My life has not been easy. It has been quite hard. Now, I am in the position to enjoy my life. However, I think that if you do not have your other needs covered you cannot actually enjoy life."*

In Chapter Three, I described how individuals are able to classify one another in terms of tastes and cultural capital. This relationship can also be understood as a broader process, one which determines privileged forms of tastes and desires for particular forms of 'legitimate' culture. Even if Manchester's official narrative presents it as a vibrant and cultural city; fitting the tastes and the aesthetic competence of some of my research

participants, the majority do not find cultural consumption in the city centre accessible for various reasons. For example, many participants reflected on the economic cost of particular venues (e.g. Molly, Didsbury; Annabel, Levenshulme; Oliver, Rochdale):

> *"A play at the Bridgewater Hall costs £40 per person. This is why if you go there you only see retired people. It is awfully expensive. I believe that culture is closing down because of the high cost." (Molly, Didsbury)*

> *"If two people want to see a play in the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, they will probably have to pay £50 to £100. That is pretty much a third of your monthly salary. For many people that is just not something they would even think about." (Oliver, Rochdale)*

> *"I am not visiting any cultural venue. City costs money! I do not have any disposable income right now. It is expensive getting there. It is expensive being there. It is expensive consuming there! But it is the place where all the interesting people are [haha]." (Annabel, Levenshulme)*

It seems, therefore, that cultural access is not purely a matter of taste: certain people are inevitably excluded and/or marginalised from cultural consumption in the city centre as they lack the requisite economic capital. There was a strong sense among some respondents - especially those in Rochdale - that access to some of the venues in Manchester is simply beyond the pockets of some people. Jack (Rochdale) mentioned that when he visits the venues in Manchester, from his perspective, he can only see rich people. For this reason, he considers the *"arts to be only for the chosen few."* Oliver (Rochdale) makes a similar point: *"there is a class ceiling in the arts and only a small elite actually get to engage with it."*

In addition, cultural consumption in the city centre tends to be perceived as inaccessible for particular socio-cultural groups, such as ethnic minorities and BAME communities. Kathryn (Didsbury), Molly (Didsbury) and Aisha (Levenshulme), who visit cultural venues in the city centre quite often, have observed that audiences tend to be mono-cultural, attracting only certain demographic groups:

> *"I think that there is not enough accessibility to the cultural venues in the city centre. Whenever I am going to the Halle to hear the orchestra or to the Bridgewater Hall, I am aware that the vast majority of the audience will be white and probably older than me [...] Otherwise, I would not be sitting at the Bridgewater Hall and the only person of colour around would be my husband." (Kathryn)*

> *"You only get a certain demographic group at the Bridgewater Hall. Honestly, I do now know why. I think it depends on how you were brought up, where did your parents take you, if it is something you have studied or if you have got any genuine interest." (Molly)*

> *"The culture of Manchester is a little bit [of] everything. There are so many cultural events going on. However, the majority of the audience is white [...] for some people cultural access might seem out of their economic reach. I used to work in a school in Rochdale and I met children that had never been to the city centre of Manchester. I found that pretty shocking. I just assumed until then that everyone would have taken a trip into Manchester at some point to enjoy its culture." (Aisha)*

Along similar lines, Caren (Levenshulme) believes that certain events such as city centre-based festivals are *"deemed to be exclusive towards people with other religions."* As she told me, *"personally, I am not really aware of anything going on during the Ramadan or Eid*." In order to make her point, she compared the 'Summer of Lev', a festival that takes place in Levenshulme, to the Christmas and Halloween Markets that take place in the city centre. She believes that this suburban festival is not attached to any kind of religious holiday and for this reason, people mix more comfortably. On the contrary, the Markets are based around the Christian calendar and, as a result, people from other religions do not participate. Interestingly enough, Kumar (Rochdale), who was one of the few Muslim participants in this research, disagrees with Caren. He told me that cultural participation is a matter of education and curiosity:

*"I think that when you come from a society that is doing well in terms of education and culture then you get more open-minded people who are curious to explore the world. I do not think that religion is a barrier when it comes to cultural access. I believe it is more a matter of education. Education opens your mind. It makes you think and exposes you to different ideas and concepts. In such a way, you have more possibilities to become curious about other cultures. It does not have to be necessarily a western education, but any as long as it is honest and open."*

These findings broadly confirm the evidence presented in Chapter Three (Warwick Commission, 2015; Active Lives Survey, 2017; Greater Manchester's Strategy for Culture and Creativity, 2018). Cultural access in Manchester city centre tends to be beneficial to certain socio-cultural categories; it attracts specific demographic groups and depends on the economic and cultural capital of each individual: i.e. the knowledge, predispositions, educational needs and competencies that are particularly appreciated in specific social environments, wherein (some) individuals can reaffirm their social existence and identity by participating in various subcultures. Some of these issues are already known to the City Council. The Councillor I spoke to acknowledged that there are several barriers to cultural access. These include the accessibility of the city centre and the high cost of the venues. As he told me, the problem is not just with ethnicity, but it has to do with the socio-economic backgrounds as well.

*"We know that transport is a big barrier. From some parts of the city, is very difficult to get into the centre. In addition, we know that pricing is sometimes a barrier in terms of theatre. Most of the audiences are middle-class families. Working-class families are less likely to participate or to access the cultural offer of the city. Thus, the big cultural institutions and organisations are not at the moment representative of the diversity of the city [...] The biggest barrier for me is that people might feel that culture is not for them. Once we break this and everybody feels that the cultural offer is for everybody, it will be a big success*

*for us. Then we can tackle all the other issues, so whether that is transport or the high cost of some venues. This will bring people into the city as well."*

But how can you make everybody feel that the cultural offer is available to them? The limitations presented above, highlight what appear to be unbridgeable gaps in cultural provision caused by structural inequalities. Of course, not all cultural venues should be tarred with the same brush. Sarah (Didsbury) who works at HOME (a city centre cultural institution with galleries, a theatre and cinema), informed me that this particular cultural venue provides many outreach schemes for schools and tries to be as accessible as possible to everybody. As she told me "*that is what the arts is about, isn't it? It should not be for a particular set of people."* From Sarah's perspective, HOME tries to get people who are either disengaged with the arts or not necessarily engaged with lots of cultural activity to visit its space. Still, the following interview extract sketches out what are deeply stereotypical views in this regard.

*"I think cultural participation in such spaces has to do with peoples' outlook when they are growing up and what they are introduced to when they are formulating their ideas. If people would not realise that the arts is open to them, they probably would not even consider coming to an art gallery [...] The 'average Joe' might visit HOME but will probably not even think: 'Oh I had an amazing night out'. He probably would prefer to go to the city centre when the shops are busy and get drunk"*

As has emerged from the discussions in this chapter, there is a strong link between class, cultural practices, consumption patterns, tastes and cultural capital in each of my case studies. All of these determinants are seen to play a key role in peoples' relationship to the city centre and show how their intersubjective experiences are somehow related. This reflects back on the idea that people's desire to consume culture is socio-economically and culturally determined by their habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), as the following examples show. Steven (Levenshulme) described how

*"I consume in a kind of a hipster way. You know, cupcakes [...] In Manchester there is enough culturally to match my values. I suppose there is a surprisingly visible amount of culture. By culture I mean the arts and crafts."*

In this case, Steven embodies a distinct *'hipster'* lifestyle, wherein he reaffirms his cultural identity through his patterns of consumption. This echoes the work of Miles, (1996: 155) who argued that "the individual's experience of culture is fundamentally constructed by his or her struggle to establish his or her individuality, an individuality whose primary focus lies in the cultural context of social groups, which often encourage conformity". Likewise, Jack (Rochdale) visits Manchester city centre quite often because he feels that what is available in Rochdale is not tailored to suit his particular culinary tastes:

*"My family is gluten free. There is no way to find that in Rochdale! The first time we went to a restaurant in Rochdale - because we usually go out of it - we ordered something vegetarian. The waiter came up with a turkey! I said to him that I ordered a vegetarian dish and he just took the turkey off with his bare hands! Some people just need to be educated in Rochdale. In Manchester there is just a better class of service, better class of food, better class of culture."*

Similarly, Molly (Didsbury) believes that her tastes *"are fairly average"* when they are perhaps anything but:

*"I do not go out as much as I would like because I have children. Ideally, I would love to go every night to the theatre, to see a movie or visit a cultural venue. But I do not do culture as much as I should. However, I do go to The Royal Exchange. I went to the Manchester Book Festival. I just went to the Bridgewater Hall. I go to the Lowry. Yes, I do go, but not like three times a week. Also, we do group things. We have got a theatre group and we go once every three months to HOME."*

Overall, the city centre remains a symbolically important place for the people who participated in this research. However, the discussions above raise issues around the role

of cultural consumption in fostering social and cultural inequality, particularly based on class, age, ethnicity, and religion. The way in which people consume culture in the centre is primarily affected by their world-views, as well as, their level of education, occupational status, financial and cultural capital. These factors are causing social inequality and a sense of 'distance' in terms of cultural access in the city centre.

In response, people without access to the city centre (due to such barriers) have developed informal social networks all across the suburbs of the city. This signifies the existence of a 'hidden' culture located in people's practices. However, these are only rarely highlighted in the official narrative of the 'creative city' (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2005). This is clearly the case for younger populations. In the following section, I examine the ways in which people consume culture in the suburbs in more detail. I discuss the role of culture in shaping everyday suburban life and I evaluate the relationship between cultural consumption and suburban place. To what extent does cultural consumption in the suburbs differ from urban areas? In particular, I focus on the consumption of culture in 'mundane', 'taken-for-granted' and 'inconspicuous' spaces, arguing that there is a close relationship between suburban place, patterns of consumption, and ways of life. Culture is not purely about consumption, but also about the way people relate to this process, and whether they have opportunities to access everyday spaces on their doorstep in which culture and creativity take shape (see: Edensor, et al., 2010). Initially, I examine various patterns of cultural consumption in Didsbury and Levenshulme. Thereafter, I consider the distinctive patterning of cultural consumption in Rochdale.

## 7.3 Cultural Consumption in the Shadows of the City

### 7.3.1 Didsbury and Levenshulme

As mentioned in Chapter Six, Didsbury and Levenshulme are not completely removed from the city, in the way that 'actual suburbia' is assumed to be. Both suburbs are located within easy reach of the city centre, transport infrastructure is well developed, and the distances are fairly short. These factors create a feeling on the part of the people who live in these suburbs that the 'culture of the city' is located on their doorstep. This theme emerged strongly among my research participants in both suburbs. For example, Beatrice (Didsbury), while commenting on the lack of cultural venues in Didsbury, explained that she feels that it is appropriate for big cultural venues to be located in the city centre.

> *"I can understand what someone might mean by saying that there is a lack of culture in Didsbury. This is true. There are so many theatres and art galleries in the city centre. I would not expect that to be here in Didsbury. But then you can get into Manchester very easily. It is so accessible. You can get in by tram, you can drive or you can get on a bus or the train."*

In comparison to the cultural riches of the city centre, the suburbs examined here have a significant shortage of big cultural venues and other types of 'high' institutions that can support cultural production and consumption on a local level. It seems that while inner-city cultural regeneration was booming in recent decades, the suburbs were left far behind. In this sense, the city centre holds a hegemonic position in the urban fabric that overshadows the suburbs culturally.

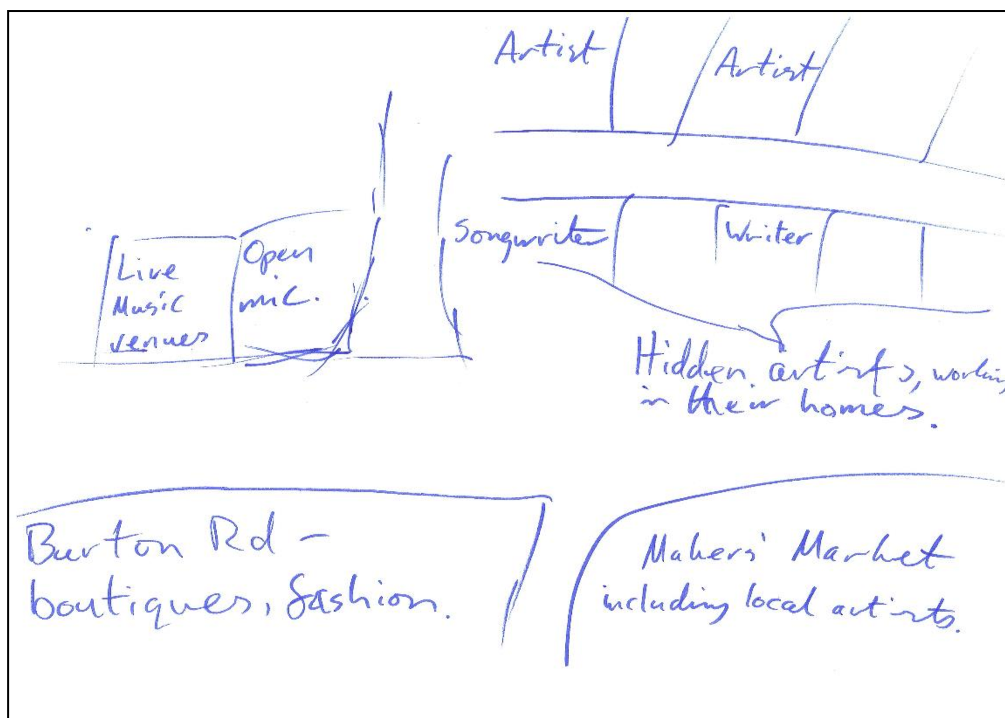
That is not to say that there are no spaces of cultural consumption in the suburbs. When I expressed this point of view to the Councillor, he replied that a large number of small and medium-sized cultural organisations operate in nearly every ward of the city. The difference is that they do not receive as much attention as the bigger organisations in the centre. Likewise, some of the participants believe that even if there are alternatives in the suburbs, they are sometimes 'hidden' from the spotlight. On the following Map

(37) of West Didsbury, the participant has included the statement *"hidden artists, working in their homes."* This is line with Duxbury (2008) who identifies substantial knowledge gaps in the literature and invisibilities around small, emerging and unconventional spaces in the suburbs. According to the director of the Levi Fringe Festival

> *"cultural assets are often unseen until something draws them from their hiding places. I think that the creation of artistic endeavours and cultural opportunities is a way that you draw people out of the dark corners where they hide shyly, not talking about their skills and talents. The more opportunities that we give to people to step out of the dark corners with theirs skills and talents the more likely you are to see it."*

This is also related to a lack of local geographical knowledge and information of what is available in the suburbs. For example, Margaret (Didsbury) believes that in West Didsbury there are not enough events that promote local cultural activities: *"A lot of people do not even know that it's going on".* Similarly, Aisha (Levenshulme) reflecting on a particular space of Levenshulme, assumed that

> *"People that do not know Levenshulme cannot find easily the Klondyke, because it is located on a backstreet. If it was on a main road it would be much more noticeable for people and probably more people would know about it."*




*Map 37: Didsbury*

As the above example suggests, the suburban house operates as an informal space of socialisation where people can consume a cultural experience. This is the case with individuals who participate in established social networks. Beatrice (Didsbury), for example, is a member of a home watch group that looks after her cul-de-sac. As she told me,

> *"The home watch is part of the community. It is a part of the culture of where I live. Every December we invite people to our house to come and have some mince pies. They just bring a bottle of wine. It is just like a big social event but it is actually connected with the home watch, because we are supposed to get together at least once a year. It is all just done by email or word-of-mouth."*

In a similar fashion, Caren (Levenshulme), who does not visit the city centre, prefers to socialise with her social groups in private houses in the suburbs, hosting 'invisible' parties. This is because she finds cultural consumption in the city centre to be expensive. She explained to me that

> *"There is a kind of almost underground network of social spaces that obviously are not documented anywhere. I know loads of people that go to such places. There is a massive network of people and houses. If you belong to certain friendship groups, you can get access to that type of information quite easily. There is a kind of an almost unspoken culture that has developed that kind of 'we all look out for each other but at the same time we are very open for people to do what they want to do' […] The cultural life of the city is so expensive nowadays. The house parties that I usually go to are for free."*

Indeed, some people feel more comfortable when they socialise in their own private space. A characteristic example is Jack (Rochdale) who has developed a particular view regarding some public spaces in Rochdale (e.g. pubs). As he told me,

> *"There is nowhere to socialise in Rochdale. The numbers of pubs have been reduced significantly or they are too crowded with people that I do not want to meet. When I socialise, I want to be comfortable. I want to be able to relax. In Rochdale you have always to keep one eye over your shoulder because there might be someone coming on behind you with a bottle or a stick. For this reason, I prefer to socialise in my house or in somebody else's house."*

In the above examples, the cultural practices that take place in the suburban house produce an intensity of everyday social relationships that reflect different aspects of suburban culture and place identity. In such a way, the suburban house not only has a central role in peoples' lives (see: Chapter Six), but also provides a comfortable and more accessible space for cultural participation (Edensor et al., 2010) since it operates as a word-of-mouth space where people can experience culture. It is an invisible yet diverse social hive in which informal "spatio-temporal events" (Massey, 2005: 130) take place and the base from which many cultural practices are organised and take place. Therefore, the socio-cultural interaction associated with suburban culture(s) significantly influences the ways that people become attached to their place of residence. This in turn,

contributes to the development of various vernacular cultural practices that, effectively, impact people's relationship to suburban place.

This is not to say that there are no public or private spaces of cultural consumption in the suburbs. Still, the very nature of this process is more dependent upon the particularities of the available spaces and, most importantly in this respect, the distinctive characteristics of suburbia. As I mentioned in Chapter Six, suburban place is appropriated and modified by the cultural life of different communities and this is how it shapes the everyday life of the suburb. Following this, the analysis of the participants' maps demonstrate that suburbs are places where people live, work, socialise, and participate in community, cultural and consumption related activities. These take place in private or public spaces. Essentially, the maps contain spaces of 'conventional' and 'convenient' cultural consumption (e.g. pubs, cafés, markets, supermarkets, cinemas). Even if there are a number of important differences between Didsbury and Levenshulme, the majority of these spaces, in both suburbs, are concentrated on their high streets, as the following Maps (38 and 39) show. In the previous chapter, I discussed the role of the high streets as an important generator of local activity that supports the development of a distinctive place identity in every suburb examined. In this light, both suburbs contain a wide spectrum of cultural infrastructure and "informal community cultural service hubs" (Bain, 2013:153) that are embedded in the everyday rhythms of the suburb. Most of these spaces host local groups and informal initiatives that organise cultural activities. These include, film clubs, choirs, calligraphy classes, bikers and hiking associations, running groups, community and voluntary groups that provide social support, groups of residents who get together to discuss ways of addressing local challenges (e.g. Didsbury Good Neighbours), groups with a commitment to the environment, community allotments that involve people in growing locally produced food and a mix of independent shops, retailers and trader associations. As Beatrice (Didsbury) told me,

> *"In the suburbs there are all sorts of things to do in terms of culture. The suburbs offer a kind of very balanced life, because if you look closely you can find whatever you really want to do."*

*Map 38: Didsbury*

*Map 39: Levenshulme*

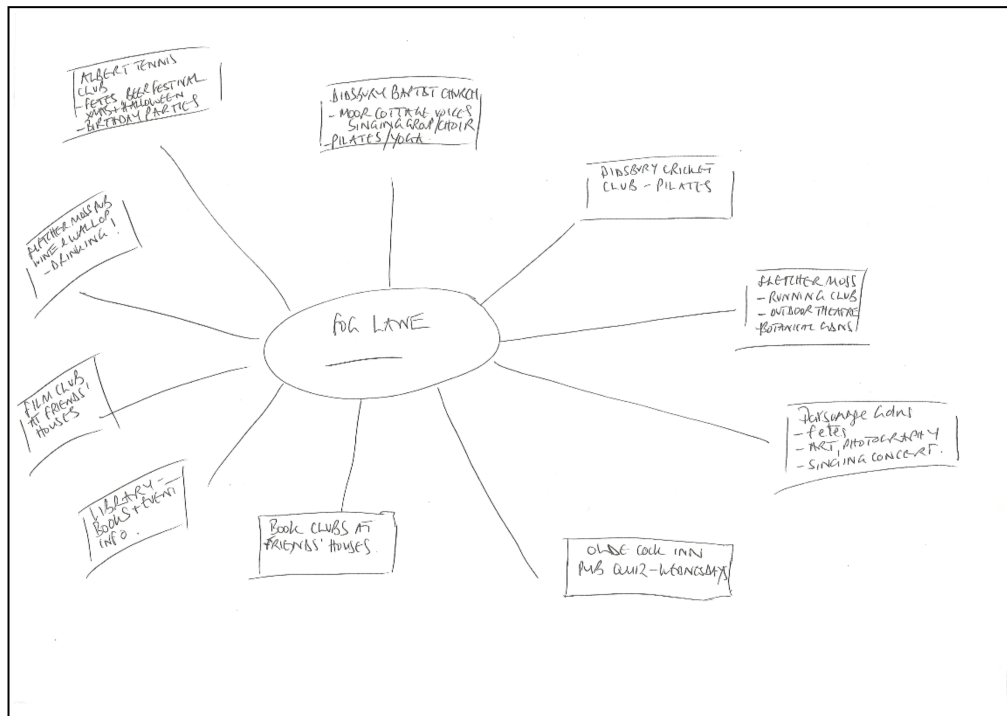
Against the mainstream representations that view suburbs as "bereft of cultural venues and activities of the mind" (Beauregard, 2006:138), in reality, people have access to a wealth of cultural alternatives in their everyday lives. These include community hubs and social enterprises (e.g. The Klondyke and Levinspire in Levenshulme, The Parsonage in Didsbury), public libraries, small cultural organisations and art centres, parks, markets (e.g. Levi Market in Levenshulme, the Makers' Market in Didsbury), multi-spaces, cafés that accommodate reading and creative writing groups, and pubs that organise concerts with local bands and quiz nights. Further, some spaces have been variously transformed, used and imagined as hubs of culture for diverse communities and activities. For example, various churches in Didsbury and Levenshulme host free yoga and music classes for different people and age groups. Another example is the Arcadia library, a multi-purpose space that includes a library, a gym and a swimming pool. Map 40 shows the multi-functional use of that particular space (indicated by the green square at the bottom of the map). Some of them (e.g. Levinspire, Klondyke) can even foster a sort of community awareness among local residents. These spaces host formal and informal cultural activities in the suburbs on a daily basis and provide opportunities for bringing different people and groups together. Essentially, these spaces constitute hives of culture, accommodating various cultural practices that allow people to experience, participate in and/or consume culture on their doorstep. This highlights the role of particular spaces as boosters of cultural life, since they are 'containers' of suburban creative activity, and support cultural consumption in their own distinct way (see: Hracs, 2010).

Map 40: Levenshulme

The evidence collected from the participants suggests that suburban life is no less cultural than the city centre, but that it tends to be more home-based and habitual. For example, Margaret (Didsbury) usually meets up with her friends at the same bar every day after work. The following extract is taken from an interview with Molly (Didsbury), and it shows not only that there are plenty of cultural alternatives in Didsbury, but also highlights the habitual rhythms of suburban daily life and the key role played by the home. While describing her Map (41), she shared her routines with me:

> *"I put Fog Lane in the centre of my map because it is where my house is. I told you already about the Baptist church which is at the end of the road, which is great. They allowed us to use it without a fee. It is really good for children. I meet every Monday with my singing group there. Then I do a Pilates class at the Didsbury Cricket Club on Saturday mornings. In the Fletcher Moss Gardens, we have a running group. There is also an outdoor theatre at the Botanical Garden where they organise open air stuff in the summer, which I have been to a few times, but I usually miss it because it is usually when I am on holidays. And, yeah,*

*that is the Parsonage Gardens. They have had fêtes and the Christmas Fair. One day I helped a friend who ran that. They also do art and photography classes. My husband went to those. Then we had a concert there for our singing group. It was really nice. Pop quiz at the Inn. I go there every Wednesday. I have always got a table reserved for us. Book clubs, so that is our bit of culture. Tomorrow night we will meet at a friend's house to read. I also go with the kids once per week in the library because they host various activities. We have just set up again a film club. We met last week at a friend's house and we saw a French movie because we like languages. That is the Wine and Wallop where we drink and then this is Albert Tennis Club, which is fabulous, you must get there, if you have not been. They have something on every night. They do quizzes, they have bands, they have talks from scientists, etc., etc. I just did cardio tennis there this morning, but they have also a beer festival. We went there for our Halloween and Christmas fireworks. It is a brilliant cultural hub in West Didsbury. So I think these are just all my activities and hobbies, rather than culture necessarily."*




Map 41: Didsbury

However, some forms of cultural consumption can break the habitual monotony described by Molly. Pierre (Levenshulme), for example, made an interesting distinction highlighting the different experience people may have during an ordinary day in a pub, and at festivals. The latter brings a rupture in time and space (see: Chapters Four and Eight):

> *"People in the suburbs tend to stay in their habits. They will not get out of their comfort zone if they have their own pub. If you get used to one pub, you habitually go there! On the contrary, a festival is just another frame of mind. You kind of go into something you really do not know what is going to be about, and you just end up mingling with a larger part of the community."*

Essentially, some of the spaces described in the maps provide the opportunity for socialisation, and anchor local cultural life. Pierre (Levenshulme), while he does not socialise in his area of residence that much, finds certain forms of cultural consumption (e.g. festivals) in Levenshulme to be very accessible. "*It does not cost that much, and you get a chance to meet new people from the neighbourhood. People have an incredibly positive attitude as well. I mean, it kind of contrasts with the rowdiness you can find in certain pubs"*. This form of cultural consumption takes into account the attributes of convenience, proximity and recreation. Thus, it includes visible and less-visible components of socio-cultural interaction and particular boundaries developed between insiders and outsiders. I argue that the interaction within these spaces is manifested through peoples' relationship to these spaces. In this way, the different uses of space acquire a symbolic value for people who essentially transform them from mundane to cultural places. An interesting perspective was shared by Doreen (Levenshulme), who I met in Levinspire, a former church which has been transformed into a multi-purpose community and business hub. When I asked her why she chose to meet me there, she responded that it is a public space that sees a lot of community use.

> ***Giorgos:*** *You said before that Levinspire is a public space, but as I can observe it is a closed space. Can you clarify what do you mean by 'public space'?*

***Doreen:*** *Uhhh, what I mean with public space is that there are people that are members of the public using the particular space. For me, public space is not necessarily located in open air. It can also be a closed venue. It is tied well with the concept of a place to which people go to participate in culture.*

As mentioned in Chapter Six, even if Didsbury and Levenshulme appear to be unified suburbs, on closer examination there are sub-areas within them that differ significantly, not only in terms of demographic composition but also in terms of cultural activity and place identity. Caren (Levenshulme) has highlighted the west side of Levenshulme as more important in her map because of the significant agglomeration of cultural and community spaces there (see: Map 42). Thus, due to the ongoing gentrification of Levenshulme. some spaces attract different types of audiences and some are more diverse than others. During our interview, she explained why this is the case:

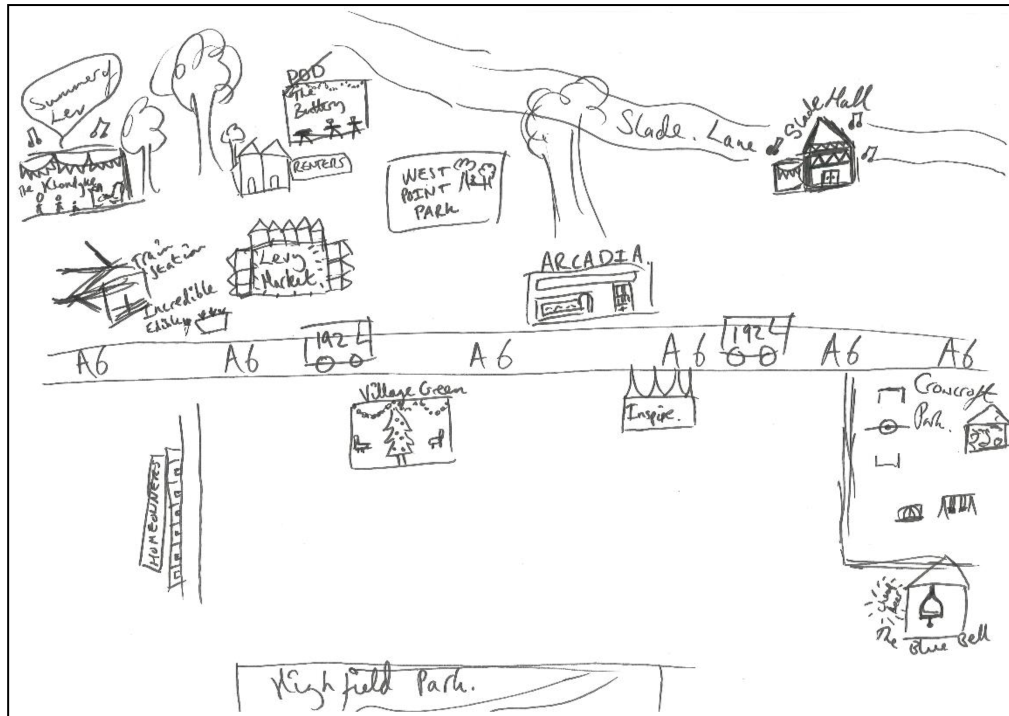
*"I kind of see the east side of Levenshulme as more residential. The west side is more social and culturally vibrant because of the Buttery, the Levy market, the Klondyke club and the Slade Hall. However, I suppose if you compare Slade Hall to Klondyke, I would probably say that the first attracts residents from the middle class. It is also full of artists, musicians, hippies and youngsters who may be socially conscious, but like to party. At the same time, these people are very well connected with their social networks. On the contrary, Klondyke sits somewhere in between because it was a working-class bowling club but now is a community space that also attracts a middle-class audience, like young families that maybe own their homes on this side of the suburb. Then the Levy Market is quite a mix of both groups. Finally, the Buttery is a space that shows a little sign of gentrification, because it is quite expensive, and the kind of stuff that they sell is quite high end."*

This last observation draws attention to "the role of spatiality and territorialisation in mediating the relationship between culture, participation and identity" (Miles, 2015: 190). As was the case in the city centre, some spaces in the suburbs are more multi-

cultural and others more mono-cultural, attracting audiences from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. For example, *"the Asian communities do not like to go in places where a bar is."* (Levi Fringe Festival Director, Personal Interview). Steven (Levenshulme), who feels strongly that there are two communities in Levenshulme, shared his personal experience with me:

> *"When I used to play snooker at the Klondyke there was only one Asian guy who was playing with me. He was the only one in the whole building. On the contrary, if you go down to the cake shop at the end of this street, you will be the only white person in the shop."*

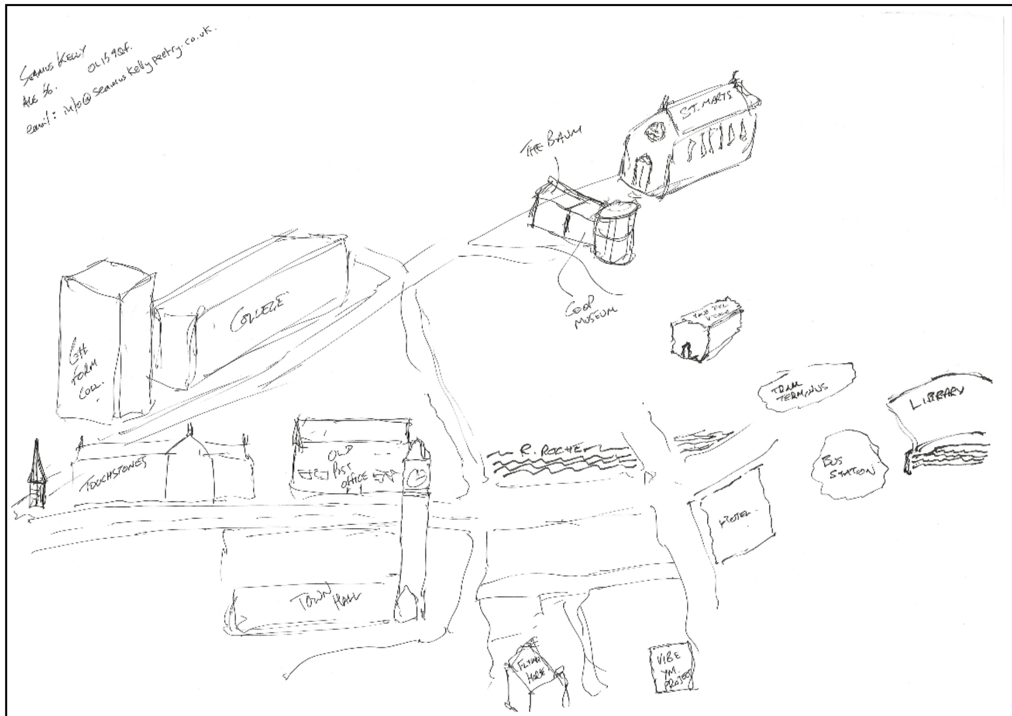
There is a mosaic of diverse everyday cultural practices undertaken in the suburbs. This is what people recognise as part of suburban culture. Still, cultural consumption in the suburbs is shaped by the distinctive characteristics of suburban place and the particularities of the available cultural spaces, as well as people's socio-economic backgrounds and cultural tastes. As I mentioned in Chapter Six, even if there are various spaces that people use daily, the evidence reflects the logic of inclusion and exclusion. This is related to people's worldviews and to the fact that their desire to consume culture is socio-economically and culturally determined by their habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), which, effectively, influence their broader relationship to suburban place, shapes various cultural consumption patterns and contributes to an overall place identity.



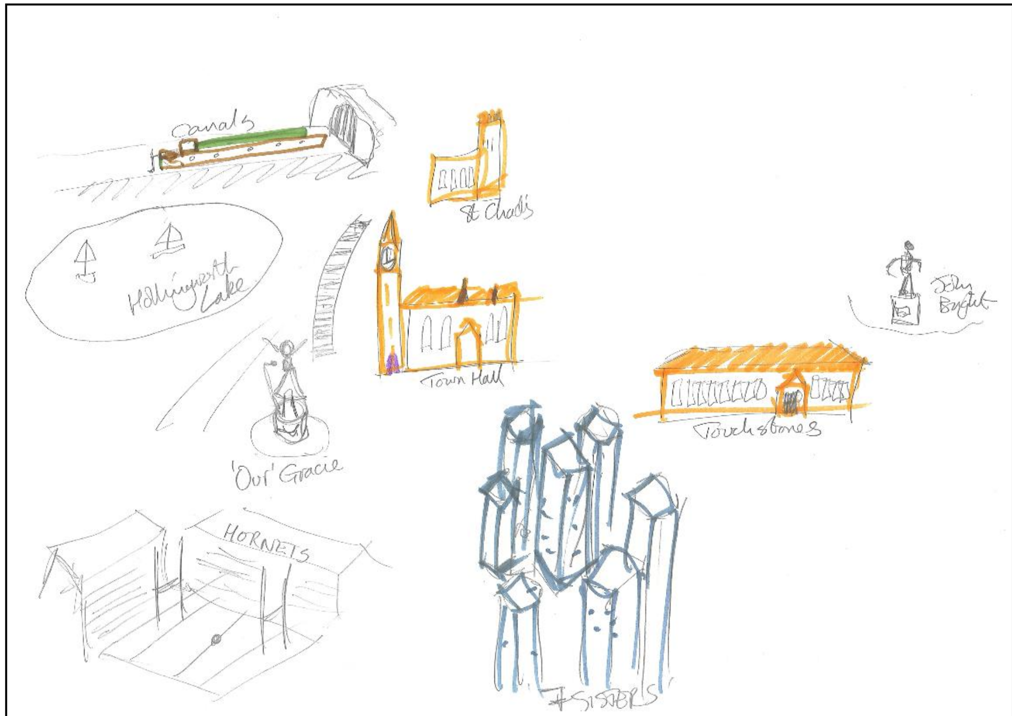

*Map 42 Levenshulme*

### 7.3.2 Rochdale

Patterns of cultural consumption in Rochdale are characterised by their diversity. Rochdale is a satellite town of Manchester that, in turn, has its own suburbs too. However, the vast majority of the maps collected do not include reference these. There are indeed several important differences between Rochdale and Manchester. For example, the town lacks the plurality of cultural venues that can be found in Manchester. In spite of that, there is a similar centrality regarding formal types of cultural consumption and the dominance of the town centre. This is very evident in the following Maps (43 and 44).




*Map 43: Rochdale*




*Map 44: Rochdale*

Every participant acknowledged that Rochdale is extremely limited in terms of entertainment alternatives (e.g. cinemas, concert halls) and big events. *"You know everything is happening in Manchester, but nothing is happening in Rochdale",* Margery told me. Likewise, *"Rochdale does not have a huge cultural offer. We do not have venues. The biggest space we have is for 180 people"* (Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival Director, Personal Interview). In this sense, Rochdale is overshadowed culturally by Manchester in terms of cultural consumption. For this reason, when visiting Manchester city centre, people can feel quite excited (Elvira and Jack).

Overall, the participants felt that Rochdale not only lacks employment opportunities, but also does not offer enough cultural experiences. This led many people to believe that young people are leaving the town for more vibrant places. For example, Oliver, who was characterised by the director of the festival as *"the voice of the local people*", told me that

> *"Young people are leaving Rochdale. There isn't anything available for them to do. There are no working opportunities in this town. The positions in the cultural sector are limited. The town does not have the infrastructure. So if as a young person you want to develop yourself, you need to move away from the town."*

Many participants agreed with Oliver, highlighting how Rochdale lacks community and cultural spaces (Eleanor, Elvira, and Lavinia). The director of the Festival shared with me her experience:

> *"I meet with young people that they do not engage with any arts or culture. It is kind of working in a vacuum. It is extremely hard to reach them, whereas in Manchester, you have a huge cultural offer and young people go more often to the library and to cultural events. They can enjoy culture. Young people in Rochdale are not engaged, because they are not used to culture socially."*

Eleanor informed me that during the 1950s and 60s, there used to be many centres that hosted cultural activities and classes for youth groups. Those spaces closed down for financial reasons. *"Today, there are not many spaces that provide educational*

*opportunities and organise cultural activities for young and disadvantaged groups",* she noted. Oliver who works in the Vibe (a social space that tries to introduce arts and creativity to young people), believes that such spaces do exist in Rochdale, but are limited by what funding they can get. He told me that if the Vibe

> *"was funded at the level of art, it would be open pretty much 18 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year around with different groups coming at different times of the day. Currently, it cannot because the funding is not there."*

This is in line with Gibson et al. (2012: 299) who emphasise that "the unheralded and prosaic sites of suburban creativity" such as "community halls, writers' centres, youth music studios and art spaces […] deserve better and more sustained financial support". The lack of financial resources has an impact on how people experience these cultural spaces. For example, Lavinia does not really have a particularly good impression of such places, although she often visits some of them:

> *"These spaces are not encouraging people to join. Vibe, for example, is a bit of a depression room with garden furniture. I do not seem to get an impression of what we actually do there. To me, [it's] like a waste of opportunity for the young people of Rochdale."*

Still, as the following Map (45) suggests, there are many 'hidden' spaces in Rochdale. As was the case in Didsbury and Levenshulme, some people believe that there is a lot of creative activity in the town, but that it usually remains obscured from the spotlight. Eleanor emphasised that

> *"In Rochdale there is lots of creative stuff going on, but I think that the town does not do as much as it could. For instance, we do not make enough of our surroundings such as the countryside or the canals - as other towns do. If you come into Rochdale and you want to find out what is going on in the countryside, you cannot. You can go to the information point and you can get some leaflets for sure. For instance, the walking festival starts tomorrow, but you cannot find that information there. Nobody knows that this festival is on."*

Coincidentally, Eleanor had taken the initiative to create a cultural directory, including all the arts, cultural/creative organisations, and creative professionals that are based in Rochdale. She provided me with access to it. In a document of 37 pages she had mapped thirteen artists; six art galleries; eleven artistic groups and societies; five art organisations; two art studios, two comedy venues and two comedians; twenty craft spaces; fifty-four dance related groups; five drama spaces and nine actors; six theatres and ten theatre companies; eleven festivals and events; four film companies; thirteen literary and reading groups; eight writers and ten writing groups; one media association; fourteen bands; seven choirs; eight music clubs societies and organisations; ten musicians; four photographers and four photography societies; four radios and two radio presenters; and twenty-one cultural venues. She is deeply passionate about this directory and she believes that the main challenge for Rochdale is to find a way to highlight the cultural activity that remains hidden from view.

> *"For such a small town, there is massive amounts of cultural activities going on, which are really good. However, ordinary people cannot find what is going on. I would just like to see more communication between what is going on, so everybody knows and can get involved with it [...] I know that there are many walking groups around, but they do their own thing. People need to get organised and cooperate. This is the spirit of our town, isn't it? Unfortunately, we do not do much about bringing everything together and there is no communication."*

*Map 45: Rochdale*

Jack's comments introduce a new angle to this debate. He informed me that

> *"There are many little pockets of grassroots stuff that is going on in Rochdale, especially for kids – like football and rugby. Usually, these activities are done voluntarily by someone who works bloody hard. However, they are given no money or the council does not improve the facilities. Does the council want to back that? No! Do people get any help from the council? No! Whenever you try to do something nice for the people, it is always blocked. We asked the council to improve the pitch for the kids to play rugby. They said no and they blocked it. They just want to build houses and promote Rochdale as a tourist destination. It is either go away and do it alone, or we will not do it. They do not say we will join you, but you have to join in with us."*

Jack's words highlight that "vernacular cultural creativity is often organised by individuals and groups, who ask little or no economic return, since they are gifting their work to the community or engaging in it as a shared expressive practice" (Markusen, 2010: 186). Still, some of my research participants highlighted a range of cultural venues in the town.

Margery (Rochdale) said that there are many little spaces that do a really good job, giving the example of the Gracie Fields Theatre, which is located outside the town centre. This particular space puts on a variety of productions and activities that aim to bring people together, to share ideas and organise discussions and debates about the future of Rochdale. Margery told me that:

> *"I have met some of the most fantastic people I have ever worked with and befriended. In Rochdale, I have experienced a lot of energy, commitment, desire and underlying creativity [...] However, I do feel that culture is not easily accessible. It is available but people cannot embrace it. I think that is part of the challenge. We need to enable everyone to use it and participate in it."*

Even if Rochdale is a very diverse town with many social mixtures, as seen in Chapter Five, it seems that cultural access in particular venues *"is divided into subsections of races and ethnicities"* (Elvira), as was the case in the examples above. Oliver, who visits many of these spaces due to his work, told me that the audiences are usually

> *"90 per cent middle-class professionals. They are the same group of people that will go to an art gallery, to the theatre or even to the cinema. These activities do not attract the average Rochdalian, who does not see them as being there for themselves!"*

He believes that particular spaces such as the Touchstone (a multi-space that was refurbished in 2002 and now includes a museum, a café and an art gallery in the town centre) are not accessible, due to particular meanings that people attach to it:

> *"The problem that we have with Touchstone is that some people do not think that it is a place that they would enter. It has got some negative connotations ... that it is only for rich or posh people, or for those that at school were a bit of a geek. However, they believe that they cannot engage with that space. They are more happy maybe to walk into a pub than they would go into a gallery. Therefore, the question is why? What do we need to address here? Why do people feel more comfortable going to some spaces, but they feel that a gallery*

*is not for them? How do you try and engage people in the arts who have not yet made that step forward for whatever reason [...] Sometimes I feel like there is like a glass wall."*

As was the case in Levenshulme and Didsbury, different ethnic communities congregate in different areas of the town. Deeplish, for example, is a neighbourhood located between the train station and the town centre. According to Eddie (Rochdale), this area is mainly populated by the Asian community (there is a lack of detailed demographic data). In this neighbourhood, there is a theatre company called 'Curtain Theatre'. This company was established in 1925 and stages regular productions and plays. What is remarkable about the particular space is that there is not any sort of formal membership, and no ticket sales. Instead, the audience is invited to make a small donation. However, making a direct link to what I discussed above regarding the hidden nature of creative activity, the director of the theatre stated that *"a lot of local people are still not aware that the theatre is here!"* (Oldfield, 2019). Eddie, one of the participants, occasionally visits this theatre. He informed me that the majority of the audience are white, middle-aged Rochdalians, with an average age of 65, whereas everybody living in the vicinity of the theatre is Asian.

*"The theatre is actually in the middle of a South Asian area. So everybody outside the theatre is Asian, the shops are mostly Asian and the services are Asian, while everybody inside the theatre is white. It just struck me when I went to this theatre. I saw a standard British play. I looked around at the audience and there was no Asian faces to be seen. I just want to know what people feel when they go to the theatre, and they pass these streets and what they feel when they come out as well. I just feel the contrast really. You feel the difference. You feel a bit more self-conscious about the fact that you are in a different area. It is a predominantly Asian area where you are in the minority, if you go by skin colour. It is not necessarily an anti-feeling. It is just a different feeling."*

His description provoked me to ask him if he ever wondered why the Asian community do not visit the theatre. He replied:

> *"It is a good question. One reason is that the plays are not remarkably interesting for them. They do not put on Asian plays or anything that relates to the actual situation of the area. Another reason is that everybody who runs the theatre is white middle class. They are putting on English plays and English music. If an Asian person wants to see something, he would not recognise anybody there. They might go to find out about English culture, but there will not see anything that is nearly reflected to their culture."*

The final part of this chapter shows how certain areas are defined in the minds of people in terms of their imaginary connections with other symbolic meanings and representations (Savage et al., 2005). In this sense, Rochdale presents many similarities to Manchester in terms of cultural accessibility. Although, the suburbs of Rochdale appear more sterile, there are some spaces that have the potential to be socially and financially accessible to a diverse range of people. Still, Rochdale is a town with sharp socio-cultural contrasts and evident inequalities. Yet, what is becoming apparent from the participant's responses is that despite the current challenges, the town presents opportunities that need to come to the fore.

## 7.4 Conclusions

This thesis aspires to develop a dynamic approach to the study of place and space by examining culture, as part of a broader set of practices related to everyday life. Taking this into account, in this chapter, I discussed how people relate to culture and cultural consumption, both in urban and suburban contexts and whether this process comes to shape their relationship to the city. In doing so, I have sought to illustrate some of the ways in which cultural consumption in the city centre differs from the suburbs, recognising its importance outside the official narrative of the 'creative city', and I presented evidence of a significant 'hidden' culture associated with everyday suburban life (as Gilbert, Dwyer and Ahmed, 2015).

In the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Richard J. Williams (2004) prompts us to think of the ways in which marginal places (as the suburbs are) can become centres of *being*. In this respect, I have tried to capture various realms of cultural consumption. Such an approach moves beyond traditional methods that look at the consumption of culture through the prism of the central city and challenges the orthodoxy of the 'creative city' by shedding light on the mundane realities of everyday suburban life and culture. This provides an insight into the wider role of culture on the periphery of the city. Given this, I suggest that the intersection between the consumption of culture and the practice of everyday life provides a focal point from which people are able to negotiate their relationship with the city. Such a perspective provides an enhanced basis for rethinking the relationship between suburban place and culture. The following chapter seeks to address the weak theoretical understanding of the relationship between festivals and suburban place, and in doing so, it explores how more extraordinary forms of cultural consumption contribute to place identity, thus asserting that they should be treated more seriously as sites for understanding suburbia.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## Doing Festivals

### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the significance of suburban festivals – as a more extraordinary form of cultural consumption. As discussed in Chapter Four, suburban festivity is a topic that has largely been neglected in critical event studies and in urban studies more broadly. In response, this chapter seeks to understand the notion of the suburban festival in its broader geographical and socio-cultural context. The basic theoretical premise of this chapter is that such festivals operate as sites in which people can negotiate their relationship and attachment to place. Given this, the purpose of this chapter is to offer a further insight into the role of suburban festivals in place-making.

Rather than simply recognise their use in place-making strategies (see: Perry et al., 2019), my aims are (1) to illustrate the extent to which they contribute to place identity, (2) to evaluate the extent to which different types of festivals and activities contribute forms of social capital and whether these might be inclusive or exclusive; and (3) highlight their intrinsic value to suburban place by critically assessing how different types of festivals address various realities on the ground. In particular, I am concerned with the way that particular venues and activities may function as social spaces which enhance inter-cultural exchange and foster transformations of different kinds - both on an individual and collective basis. This chapter is concerned with the implications of this for the question of suburban place identity. What follows is a discussion based on the data codes that emerged from my research: 'festival participation and co-creation', 'suburban festivals and social capital', 'place identity in suburban festivals', 'inclusion and exclusion', and the 'festivalisation of suburban place'.

## 8.2 Festival Participation and Co-creation

Picking up from the critical 'turn' in festival studies, in this thesis, three festivals provided an empirical lens that has allowed me to examine the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption (see: Chapter Four). With this in mind, my objective was to understand the effect that these festivals have on place, assessing how people experience this form of cultural consumption from a personal and place-based perspective. Taking this into account, my research participants have developed various meanings through their participation in and consumption of the festival experience. However, as I mentioned in Chapter Four, festival participation is inevitably contested (Waterman, 1998). Therefore, my research participants expressed different kinds of emotional bonding with their local festivals, with which they had a broad and often conflicting range of experiences. This is related to how many times they had attended the festival. For example, Beatrice (Didsbury) and Molly (Didsbury), who visited the festival for the first time, had what for her was a surprising experience:

> *"It was my first time at Didsbury Arts Festival, so I had no idea of what to expect. The Festival exceeded my expectations. I was blown away, actually because of the very high level and standards of the performances [...] I think it is a very significant event in Didsbury, because it brings people together. Again, it is all part of community. Isn't it?" (Beatrice, Didsbury)*

> *"I was not aware that the genre was so impressive. I think it was amazing. I said to myself that next year I am going to take the whole week off and go to every venue." (Molly, Didsbury)*

On the contrary, Kathryn (Didsbury), who has been volunteering for six years at Didsbury Arts Festival, has a more solid understanding of the festival's role in Didsbury and its impact, or otherwise, on social bonding. Remaining critical she told me

> *"I think the Festival does not play a major role in Didsbury, because it cannot reach out to the marginalised groups that live on its fringes. The Festival must develop a more active role. I believe that it can provide a space for more than*

*just a dialogue in tackling social issues. I think the arts can provide another way to address some of those but there needs to be done some proactive work done."*

Kathryn feels very connected to and passionate about the festival. However, even if the festival fits her cultural tastes, she believes that its impact is not that significant. This is because certain marginalised communities in the fringes of Didsbury do not participate in the events. This raises an issue of inclusion that I will address later in this chapter. For Kathryn there is "*a kind of predictability about what events are on".* In her view, these events are not inclusive enough and do not provoke any sort of dialogue that can address or tackle social issues. In response to that claim, Sarah (Didsbury), the festival coordinator, told me that

*"this sense of predictability is based on the fact that particular groups of people want to see similar things, and therefore participate in activities they have done before at Didsbury Arts Festival."*

Furthermore, participation in suburban festivals is directly related to free time, especially, when it comes to forms of more active engagement (e.g. volunteering). This was the case for Molly (Didsbury) and Kathryn (Didsbury) who volunteered at Didsbury Arts Festival. Molly's (Didsbury) family lives in London, so she had enough free time to volunteer at the festival with her friend Kathryn. They wanted to go together to as many venues they could, thinking *"if we are volunteering at the Festival, we will be naturally going".* She told me emphatically that

*"I just had free time in the weekend, and I dragged my friend Kathryn along because she is similar to me. Me and my friend, we are the same! We do not have family in Didsbury, and this releases us from many social commitments. Therefore, we have free time."*

Chloe (Rochdale) and Kumar (Rochdale) instead, who are married to each other, even if they both liked the Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival, they went only to two events. Both reflected on the fact that they would like to go to more venues, but they have social

responsibilities: *"it is hard when you have children"* (Chloe, Rochdale). Likewise, Beatrice (Didsbury) clarified that

> *"if you have got a family you do not have enough time for the arts. This is because these are the conditions that frame your life. When you get older, like me, you will not have the responsibility of looking after a child, and you can actually have some free time to pursue your real interests."*

Likewise, many of the participants who had been to the 'Summer of Lev' several times in the past, they had an uninspiring experience. Caren (Levenshulme) stated that she was not expecting anything extraordinary, and Pierre (Levenshulme) commented that his expectations were low. He told me that

> *"I did not visit the festival in order to see something marvellous or exceptional. It was just a nice day where I spent a few hours in the sun. I had a good laugh, while I was drinking my pint with my friends. This festival is just a very enjoyable activity if you have a free weekend. It is also next to my house. However, I think that if I had something else to do, I probably would not bother."*

Pierre's words show that proximity is a factor that makes suburban festivals distinct from those that take place in the city. Closely related to that, Molly (Didsbury) highlighted that *"the festival offers the arts on your doorstep. You do not have to travel to the city. Thus, the venues are easy to get to. All are located very close, and many are for free".* In this way, festival participation in the suburbs is also linked to a notion of commodification. Explaining why the Levi Fringe Festival is an important local festival, Caren (Levenshulme) compared it to the Manchester International Festival (MIF). She highlighted the fact that

> *"Manchester International Festival is a very important festival because it brings challenging things into our city, but it is very expensive. This festival is not as commodified as MIF. It is more cooperative and offers more chances for co-creation. People can get involved and feel part of it, rather than being solely a consumer of it."*

On the contrary, suburban festivals tend to be smaller in scale and not as expensive to put on as those in the city. They constitute a form of a practical social occasion among people who share common interests, usually related to the theme of the festival (see: Cudny, 2016). Consequently, festivals such as Levi Fringe hold the potential to be more inclusive, offering opportunities for co-creation and, therefore, create symbolic value for the participants (Richards and Wilson, 2006; Mathis et al., 2016; Harkison, 2018) and enhance their place attachment (Rihova et al., 2015; Davis, 2017). In this sense, notions of proximity and the fact that such localised events are less likely to be corporatised are some of the factors that differentiate a festival experience in the suburbs from that in the city.

In addition to this, each of my case studies contained elements of community participation and co-creation. For example, every festival organisation promoted different types of online submission schemes, that allowed people who were not engaged to participate more actively in the events. Take for instance, Alice (Didsbury) who had never attended the Didsbury Arts Festival before, and, actually, did not have a good impression. In her case, the open submission scheme of the Festival offered her the chance to present her artistic work to the public, volunteering as a curator. As she told me, she considered this as an *"opportunity to get involved and invest sentimentally and materially to the festival"*. Before submitting her work to the festival, she felt that she did not belong to the group of the organisers. However, through her participation, her opinion changed dramatically. When she asked to join them, she felt an *"exciting feeling of acceptance".* Today, she feels part of the festival and she thinks that it is exceptionally good for Didsbury to have this kind of variety on offer. This is how a festival that is truly open to local participation can transform people's relationship to it.

Another good example of a co-created production was the theatrical play *'It's in the Blood',* which I attended as a spectator at the Touchstones, a cultural multi-space in Rochdale town centre. This event involved exploring people's social and emotional bonds with rugby and aimed to highlight its role in the 'shared' history of the Town. The actors were former players from two local rugby teams: the 'Rochdale Hornets' and the

‘Oldham Roughyeds’. During the play, the actors shared their ‘true’ life stories in Rochdale with the audience. The stories were drawn from former players and fans alike. Jack (Rochdale), who used to play rugby for one of these teams, shared his experience with me:

> *“The event was good. I love the fact that normal everyday people put on a show. Just normal people. Real people telling their story! The actors involved were all good players who never have been on a stage in their life. Big rugby players and they were all shitting themselves!!! It was quite funny. Thus, you did not have the feeling that you were just going to sit down and listen to me acting because I am full of crap. There was actual participation from the audience.”*

Jack had a positive festival experience because he felt as if he was a co-creator, rather than a mere spectator (Fabiani, 2011). This also reflects to what I discussed in Chapter Four regarding the role of emotional responses in considering festivals as sites of belonging (see: Duffy, 2009, 2010; Duffy and Waitt, 2010; Duffy et al., 2011). In the same way, Oliver (Rochdale), whose organisation was an official partner of the festival, believes that the general challenge for every festival is to get more people involved, through specialised co-produced activities that are based on their everyday lives. In order to back up this point, he referred to a co-created event that took place during the festival. “*Co-created events such as the ‘refugee tales’ can become something that people can identify with during all the year, because they reflect their true stories”.*

The above views broadly match those scholars who argue that festivals which are open to co-creation of the experience can create more symbolic value for people and enhance place attachment. In a sense, festivals open to co-creation can have a positive impact on the way people experience and relate to it. Still, not every participant shared the same view, nor did they have the same experience. Kathryn (Didsbury) told me that even if all the artists involved in Didsbury Arts Festival were local, the musicians and the actors were less well represented. For this reason, she expressed her desire to see an event at the festival in which people from Didsbury would have the opportunity to organise a

community project, where all generations would be represented. She believes that the festival currently does not offer this representation, especially when it comes to young people. From her perspective, even if Didsbury Arts Festival is promoted as "celebrating the creative culture in Didsbury, through working with local, national and international artists … with a particular focus on inspiring and promoting the work of local artists" (official website) many activities did not fully embrace local creative talent and often failed to bring together younger and older people for a common purpose. In the following section, I discuss below what types of social relations and interactions are developed during suburban festivals. The notion of social capital is used to investigate this further.

## 8.3 Suburban Festivals and Social Capital

In Chapter Four, I analysed how the distinct forms of social capital are particularly relevant to festival research. Although they were considered as an oversimplification of highly complex processes (see: Blackshaw and Long, 2005), they offered me the opportunity to examine different types of social relationships and interactions that can develop during suburban festivals among participants. These are considered as a key element of the festival experience and they are engendered by a specific socio-cultural and historical context.

Overall, in every case study there are indications of bonding, bridging and linking social capital. This can be seen from the fact that every festival organisation tries to facilitate different forms of cooperation between existing community assets. This includes the use of human (e.g. volunteers) and physical (e.g. parks, venues etc.) resources and the promotion of specialised activities that aim to enhance the abilities and skills of individuals. Essentially, the organisation of the festivals, encourages a stronger interaction between cultural organisations and local businesses. This, in turn, makes them more visible in the everyday of the suburb. In these regards, the suburban festivals examined provided to some of my research participants an opportunity to connect and network with other individuals in their area of residence.

The data collected through the interviews indicates that people had an extraordinary occasion for socialisation that extended beyond their everyday lives. Through this process, the festivals produced links between individuals and groups, which in the past did not had any form of synergy. This facilitates the development of different types of social capital (Arcodia and Whitford, 2006; Schulendorf et al., 2011; Misener, 2013). For example, traces of ‘linking social capital’ are evident in every case study as the festival organisations, sponsors, cultural venues, local community institutions and local businesses all appear to be interconnected.

Nevertheless, festival participation can enhance the development of ‘bonding social capital’ as the following illustration suggests. Caren (Levenshulme) is an individual who no longer lives in Levenshulme. While she has family and friends in the area, she told me that her everyday life is overloaded with duties and responsibilities. For this reason, she cannot visit Levenshulme frequently. Given this, the festival offered her the opportunity to spend time with her social network, while visiting the place where she used to live. From her perspective,

> *“this festival is a social event, where I meet with people I know. It is quite different from other festivals and events I go to. It is a space that connects people. For me, it is very much about the social network that I have here.”*

These findings evaluate Wilks (2011), and Quinn and Wilks (2013) who found only evidence of bonding social capital in music festivals, particularly among family and friendship groups. However, my data presents signs that social relationships were also being bridged. This finding is of particular interest, reminding that most previous studies have suggested that festivals contribute to the building of ‘bonding social capital’, but they have a negligible effect on ‘bridging social capital’ (e.g. Quinn and Wilks, 2013; Jamieson, 2014). This has been the case with various individuals, who previously may have had no communication with each other. The festivals offered some of my respondents the opportunity to create social links within their community where those opportunities never previously existed. For example, Molly (Didsbury) commented that

*"the festival adds to the community feeling of Didsbury, because it is a great way to meet other people in the community"*. Similarly, Margery (Rochdale) described how "*the [Rochdale Literature and Ideas] Festival provided me with the opportunity to make a lot of friends from various and diverse communities",* and Aisha (Levenshulme) how *"festivals, such as this one [Levenshulme Fringe Festival], definitely help to bring people together. Perhaps, people get to know more about their area by knowing more people"*.

The above examples show how suburban festivals can both increase the 'bonding' amongst people within a community and, in parallel, provide a space to enhance its 'bridging social capital' by reaching individuals beyond the immediate community (see: MacKellar, 2006; Crespi-Vallbona and Richards, 2007). In the first case, the festivals offer opportunities that strengthen existing social ties. In the second case, they facilitate the creation of new relationships. In this way, festivals can contribute to place identity through shared experiences and collective celebration (Finkel, 2010). In that respects, personal contacts, social interaction, local knowledge and emotional bonding are important elements of the festival experience (Wilks, 2011).

However, as was the case in previous research, there is some evidence in my data of a connection between festivals and social capital (see: Biaett, 2019). In this light, it appears that the theoretical construct of social capital may indeed be linked to suburban festivals, but its development is by no means guaranteed in practice. As discussed in the previous chapters, the suburbs are not homogenous, and they are characterised by wider power inequalities. Therefore, even if the findings indicate that the selected case studies contribute to social capital, in one way or another, this development is uneven. This is closely related to Stevenson (2016) who argued that even if some festivals can indeed facilitate the development of social capital within a community, its accrual is uneven, exacerbating existing inequalities and reinforcing processes which re-image the area as a cultural place. This echoes Bourdieu (1986) who explains how social capital is unequally distributed in societies and communities, and it is closely related to critical questions within a growing body of research that focuses on the social inequality and exclusion, associated with social capital and the negative implications of this (e.g. Portes, 2000;

Hawthorne, 2006 etc.). Finally, it is also linked to festivals' potential to be personally, rather than necessarily collectively, transformative.

In practical terms, every festival addresses particular audiences' needs and cultural tastes. This results in specific groups dominating the programming of the festivals, thereby creating outcomes which exclude others that potentially share different characteristics, tastes and backgrounds. In this context, many people justified their position by stating that in every festival there were special free-entry and accessible events. However, it must be stated that particular events might contribute to the negative outcomes of social capital by excluding some people on the basis of high ticket prices, or other exclusionary practices (see: Mair and Duffy, 2015). This might include the consumption of alcohol and the reproduction of particular stereotypes (artistic, ethnic etc.) in festivals. As I will show in the following section, these stereotypes sometimes reflect a suburban place identity. To this end, I argue that different types of festivals and activities contribute differently to social capital. However, it is important not to expect a single festival to be able to bring disparate elements of a community together or to tackle social exclusion, without explicit efforts to make this happen (see: Duffy et al., 2019). Bearing this in mind, I suggest a more careful consideration of the opportunities that the theoretical construct of social capital offers. This should include its capacity to articulate the heterogenous, contested and many times conflicting nature of the suburban condition. This lends itself to a discussion around the grounded contexts in which suburban festivals operate and helps to address further the question of place-based belonging that arises out of the opportunities for socialisation and inter-cultural exchange that suburban festivals can provide. In the following section, I illustrate the extent to which suburban festivals contribute to place identity and whether the development of social capital presents a way of enhancing the relationship between suburban place and identity.

## 8.4 Place Identity in Suburban Festivals

During the fieldwork, I traced a general positive attitude towards the organisation of every festival. This was very much the case in Rochdale, where all my research

participants liked the idea behind the Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival. Most of the people interviewed acknowledged the potential benefits that this festival has for their place of residence. Not only, *"the festival brings quite a lot of local people together"* (Elvira, Rochdale), but it also *"puts Rochdale on the map"* (Eleanor, Rochdale). *"The Town needs events like this"* (Fatima, Rochdale). This is related to the fact that a festival can put a place in the spotlight (see: Waitt, 2001; Ward, 2003), whilst reflecting its distinctive place identity (see: Chapter Four). In this case, the Festival "*draws people from outside into the Town, providing a great opportunity to change Rochdale's bad reputation […] It is one of the big things that cuts across all the bad publicity that is going on in Rochdale"* (Eleanor, Rochdale). In this fashion, participants expressed the view that the festival makes Rochdale more appealing for outsiders and enables the negotiation and redefinition of what has long been a negative place identity. In this way, festivals operate as sites in which people can negotiate their relationship and attachment to place.

Additionally, the participants attach various emotional meanings to the festivals that contain place-based connotations. These, effectively, good or bad, reflect the place identity of the suburbs. For example, Margaret (Didsbury) told me that even if Didsbury Arts Festival is sporadic and disjointed, it reflects the 'nature' of Didsbury. In her own words,

> *"holding an arts festival is in the nature of our area and resonates a bit more about what we can do this in this area. Such a festival cannot take place in Moss Side [another suburb of Manchester] for example. People over there are not interested in the arts and, therefore, there would not be a high audience participation."*

Margaret presumes that people in Moss Side are not interested in the arts. However, bearing in mind that there are several festivals and cultural events that take place on an annual basis in Moss Side (e.g. Moss Side Food Festival, Caribbean Carnival of Manchester etc.), I asked her:

> ***Giorgos:*** *Would you go to Moss Side, if there was such a festival on?*

> ***Margaret:*** *Probably I would not go. I am not encouraged. You do get events like this in Chorlton and Didsbury where you can get into peoples' houses, etc. You would not get that in Moss Side. I think Moss Side does not have the same community feel. It is also associated with gun crime. I might be wrong. I do not know that area well.*

In this case, Margaret might visit other suburbs of Manchester that, apparently, flourish in terms of social capital, but she is not encouraged to visit Moss Side. Not only has she formulated a somewhat stereotypical idea regarding the identity of this suburb, but it is also obvious that she lacks local knowledge, when it comes to collective celebrations that take place in other suburbs that have a 'bad reputation'. This sort of attitude raises critical questions as to whether social capital is accessible to all the members of a society (Putnam, 2000) and enables a reflection upon the specific socio-cultural and classed-based dimensions that play a role in the development of social exclusion and place identity. In the next section, I look at how people perceive and interact within the festival environment and I touch upon the issues of inclusion and exclusion in suburban festivals.

## 8.5 Inclusion and Exclusion

The discussion so far shows why a suburban festival can be important for a place, both individually and collectively. Yet the data highlights a variety of social issues when it comes to participation and inclusion. In every case study, people spoke about how the festivals address the needs and the tastes of a particular audience that shares similar characteristics. Thus, it seems that different types of festivals and particular activities attract different socio-cultural groups. This view was widely shared during the interviews, and it is related to what I discussed in Chapter Seven regarding participation in more formal and informal forms of cultural consumption.

When it comes to Didsbury Arts Festival, Kathryn (Didsbury) realised that the audience was usually of a certain (older) age, while there were not many people from her generation attending. She told me that she did not see any of her friends at the Festival, even though they share the same cultural practices and tastes. This sparked her curiosity:

> *"I do not know why this is the case. My friends are very much like me. We share the same tastes. I sing in choirs with them, we go out together to theatrical plays, but they do not find the Festival particularly interesting."*

Molly (Didsbury) had the same experience to Kathryn. According to her reasoning, this is because of 'mainstream' perceptions that dominate different age groups, regarding particular types of festivals and venues. She thinks that

> *"a lot of young people associate arts or book festivals with a certain stereotypical way. It is not hip for them and, therefore, they are not getting interested […] I think that the venues I visited were different, because there were both young and old people. I think if people had been there, they would have been extremely impressed. The problem is how to get them."*

Raising an issue of diversity and place identity, Sarah (Didsbury) informed me that at Didsbury Arts Festival, the number of people who were not white British was ridiculously small. She did not know "*if this is just an indicative of the area itself, or because the things that were put on did not appeal to people who were not white British and middle class".* Similarly, Molly (Didsbury) touching upon the same matter remarked that *"not only the participants, but also the artists were white and middle-class. In Manchester there are over 190 languages spoken in schools. This was not really reflected in the Didsbury Arts Festival".* For the same reason, Beatrice (Didsbury) believes that *"the diversity aims of the organisation were not met".*

The same experiential observations were shared by the participants at the festivals in Levenshulme and Rochdale. Steven (Levenshulme) stated that "*only the white community participated in the Summer of Lev".* Many people from Levenshulme agreed with Steven. Pierre (Levenshulme) believes that the reason for this was that

> *"festivals tend to appeal to the same part of the community who tend to be mostly native English people or a white ethnic group. This is because most festivals contain a lot of drinking, which is traditionally quite an English behaviour. I think a large part of the community here in Levenshulme is Muslim,*

*so drinking would be quite restrictive for them. So I think that tends to kind of be a separating factor as well. At the same time, if you take the drinking part away from any English activity, you are going to lose fifty per cent of the people."*

Pierre offers an interesting distinction. He believes that people do not mix at festivals because different ethnic groups engage in different activities and public spheres that do not always interconnect or overlap. In relation to this, the director of the Levi Fringe Festival told me that *"we have to respect people's desires. We need to provide the necessary junctions and catalysts for communities to integrate through the festival".* Unlike Pierre, Chloe (Rochdale) who converted recently to Islam, believes that it is *"a myth that Muslims that do not participate in festivals. Indeed, I have a friend that would never go to a music festival. It is 'haram' [forbidden] for her. But for me it is not. Visiting a festival is not a factor of religion but a cultural one".* When it comes to the Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival, Jack and Fatima raised questions of class and ethnic background. Jack stated that,

*"this festival is quite concentrated on white and rich people. There were not that many Asian things going on. Why there was not an event about the latest Asian book written in Rochdale? I think it should be rolled out towards to the masses rather than the chosen few. It was very – what is the word - white, middle class. Sadly! Some people seem to forget that there is a lower tier that keeps the place running and keeps the place going."*

In a similar way, Fatima (Rochdale) told me:

*"Personally, I went to that Festival because I am open to that sort of experience. This is because I have lived outside Rochdale and I have been quite lucky to have some friends that introduced that culture to me [...] If you look at the context of poverty, people in Rochdale have to work really hard to survive. They have difficult lives. So, when we put on a literature festival, it is great for people like me to join, but not everybody has the money to do so."*

However, as already discussed, suburban festivals consist of contested forms of culture, and each individual might have a different interpretation regarding inclusivity or diversity. Consequently, the festival space may be simultaneously a site of both inclusion and exclusion. Molly (Didsbury), for example, believes that there are no negative sides to the festival. When I asked her to what extent she thinks that the festival was inclusive, she pointed out that *"they did a cookery event where there was a Japanese lad and a lady from Thailand who prepared different dishes from around the world. That was quite inclusive".* While Molly (Didsbury) thinks that this event was inclusive, she also noticed that the people who participated all across the festival were

> *"retired, white, sort of liberally minded, and interested generally in the arts. Usually they might have an artistic background themselves [...] Didsbury needs to showcase and promote the arts, but I do not think that the Festival is about showcasing Didsbury. Simply, in this area there are individuals that go to festivals."*

Peoples' experiences in Levenshulme were slightly different. Aisha informed me that in Levenshulme, there are many inclusive community festivals that attract various socio-cultural groups. When she participated in the Summer of Lev, she was

> *"quite pleased to see quite a lot of different people with different backgrounds, all enjoying it or being part of what Levenshulme is. There was different styles of music that would not necessarily appeal to everybody, but they had as much right to be there as the burlesque group or as some of the bands that were on. It felt definitely an inclusive event rather than exclusive [...] but there were definitely people that day that had never been to that festival before. So it kind of opened their eyes to the community feeling that is in Levenshulme and you know, areas that are slightly further out from that. It was like a private event so but for the public."*

Doreen (Levenshulme) shared the same view as Aisha regarding inclusivity, yet, from her point of view, this was not representative of the demographic composition of

Levenshulme. As she told me "*the festival was inclusive among generations. There were many children, young professionals, adults and old people",* but *"it was not necessarily a fully inclusive community festival. I saw some Muslim people on some of the days, but not that many".* In this respect, Pierre (Levenshulme) agrees, partially, with Doreen (Levenshulme), and adds another dimension to the discussion regarding inclusion and accessibility:

> *"I think the Summer of Lev is quite a functional festival because it remains accessible to everyone [...] I would say that the festival is inclusive but it does not mean that all groups within the community are equally represented [...] There are certain trends in Levenshulme. If you look at the kind of people that come to these different community events, you are going to find the same people. For example, if you go to the market, to the Summer of Lev, to the food or to the gin festival, to the Levinspire, you will end up seeing the same faces over and over again, even if you never have spoken to them."*

The data highlights that some suburban festivals are tailored around particular cultural tastes and desires. This was very evident at Didsbury Arts Festival where

> *"all these years there is a particular core of middle-class people that they want to see what they are used to. They wanted saxophone recitals, the 'art on the railings' etc. They wanted to do the same thing again and again. It is a kind of what they are used to. It is something they obviously enjoy, and I think it is quite easy probably for them, rather than stepping out of their comfort zone and trying something different. Which is what the organiser, especially, was trying to make happen within the festival, but you can only do so much." (Sarah, Didsbury)*

These findings are in accordance with the expectations of the organisation committee and reflect the demography of Didsbury. Indeed, the festival relies on peoples' local contacts and networks in Didsbury, capitalising on a small group of highly engaged and committed arts participants. This principle sits at the core of the festival.

*"People who are already engaged with the arts are more likely to attend. In order for a festival to be sustainable, our core-based people have to be our primary objective. And then looking at kind of trying to bring a bit more of a family offer, for people who maybe are on slightly lower incomes, and are busy with family life, but maybe they do not engage with the arts so regularly, but when they do they have an enjoyable experience and hopefully that will enrich their lives, making them think about other cultural experiences. We know that our audience is primarily white and middle class. We want to encourage also a more diverse audience to attend the festival. We know that there are diverse communities on the edges of Didsbury. But is difficult to engage. We need to address that really, but is quite difficult work. We want the festival to feel to people like it is for them. Like it is for everyone. It is inclusive. But I think there is still a sense, which by the way happens a lot with arts festivals in general, that there has been a little bit of a clique, a little bit of a 'closed club'. Didsbury Arts Festival is trying to bring down this perception within the community in different ways. I think working with the schools is a good way to do that, because children speak to their parents about their experience with the festival." (Didsbury Arts Festival Director, Personal Interview)*

Didsbury Arts Festival is not as inclusive a festival as the artistic director idealistically describes. It attracts eclectic individuals from specific social classes and artistic backgrounds. In order to highlight this issue, many participants compared Didsbury Arts Festival to the Didsbury Festival: a different festival that takes place in Didsbury Park. This festival is made up of lots of stalls hosted by local charity groups, schools, and other assets local to Didsbury. It is noteworthy that while Didsbury Festival takes place at a similar time to Didsbury Arts Festival, the two festival organisations do not cooperate and are not in contact, as the Levenshulme Fringe and the Summer of Lev do. The Artistic Director for Didsbury Arts Festival informed me that

*"these two festivals really should share closer ties, because they are doing something that is very similar in a way. But it feels to me that the two organisations do not really want to talk to each other."*

In this way, people from Didsbury argued that Didsbury Festival is more community-orientated than Didsbury Arts Festival. This is because it is exclusively comprised of local community groups. It is a *"big community thing where there are not commercial stalls, but only local charities. The Didsbury Festival is just for families, while the Didsbury Arts Festival is to me an arts festival not just meant to be for the people of Didsbury"* (Esther, Didsbury). In a similar fashion, Beatrice noted that not every festival in Didsbury is the same. Raising issues of accessibility and class, she commented that

*"Didsbury Festival is totally different. It is more, family-orientated and open to everyone. There are many children's activities, parades and local performers. Therefore, it touches a whole cross-section of society because it is rawer. I would say that it is more accessible to people because it is less cultural. It is the type of place you take children to, or anyone else, and this is not the case for the Art Festival. Whereas in the Art Festival, some people would say that this is a class snobby thing. A lot of people do not appreciate some of the art. Personally I do not see it like that."*

Similar issues also emerged in the festivals in Levenshulme and Rochdale. While Aisha (Levenshulme) believes that the Summer of Lev addressed different sections of the community, she got the feeling that the *"participants were quite an established social group".* As she commented, *"not everything is for everybody unfortunately"*. Similar statements were made by Oliver (Rochdale) and Lavinia (Rochdale). Oliver believes that the people who are most engaged with the festival are those who go to concerts and art galleries. As he told me

*"not only in Rochdale Literature Festival, but also in other cultural events you will find the same people, or you can pretty well describe who would be there without you being there [...] the challenge for every festival is the same. How to*

*engage with people beyond the 'Guardian reading people' and how to integrate them not only in its consumption but also in production."*

Lavinia argued that at *"such events, there are only people that know each other already, and come always together. I feel that these are the same people that gather every year".* In this sense, suburban festivals present various landscapes of inclusion and diversity that are related to the multifarious individual interpretations of who is included, and who is not. This is related to their meanings, socio-cultural issues and power structures (see: Finkel et al., 2019). Still, certain groups are inevitably excluded, and this demonstrates the role of festivals in fostering social inequalities and social exclusion.

However, not every festival examined was of the same type, nor did the host suburbs share the same socio-cultural and demographic composition. The same stands for particular venues and events that were more open to different sections of society. Festivals such as the Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival and Levi Fringe seem to encourage more involvement and co-creation in comparison to Didsbury Arts Festival, providing a space for marginalised groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, homeless people). For instance, in the third cultural mapping workshop that took place during a creative writing event, 45 per cent of the participants were from a non-white background. Margery (Rochdale) believes that specific events such as creative writing groups can offer more opportunities to bring people together, potentially developing social capital. However, she made a crucial point that this did not happen during the particular event at which I met her.

*"There were many Asian ladies that - I am not sure - they all could speak good English. They came together and I think they were quite shy. I do not think that they have ever been to anything like that before. So they sat at their table and then everybody else sat at the other tables with the people they came with. Personally, I think if you want to use such an event as a source for integrating and bringing people together, you need to mix the groups. So people will have*

*to engage or discuss with people they do not know. In this way the experience will be totally different."*

The spatial ordering of particular venues arguably affects the festival experience. Thus, it holds the potential to enhance inter-cultural exchange among participants, through specialised activities. Yet, as the above interview extract signifies this is not always the case. In a similar vein, Annabel (Levenshulme) told me that *"folks from other races in Levenshulme did not seem to be represented in the event that took place in Klondyke. However, in other spaces such as the Levinspire, there was a bit more of an inclusive feeling, because in general there is a bit more of a mix in that space"*. The question that arises is to what extent can particular activities and/or spaces bring different sections of the community together, providing points for inter-cultural exchange among different social classes and communities? Taking this under consideration, different types of festivals or activities do not necessarily guarantee more inclusivity than others. In these regards, Caren (Levenshulme) compared Levenshulme Fringe to another festival (Envirolution) that takes place in a suburban park:

> *"I suppose you can compare the enclosed garden of the Klondyke Club to the Envirolution festival that takes place in Platt Fields Park. In both cases, there are similar groups of people. Even if the park it is an open space that you can physically access, you might feel not included, because you are not part of that group."*

On the one hand, suburban festivals can be understood as a form of public culture that mediates certain ideas about community. On the other hand, they offer a means to challenge ideas of who belongs and who is excluded from certain elements of cultural consumption (Browne 2007, 2011). Arguably, the distinctive characteristics of the suburbs, the variety of performances, the types of events, the cost of participation, but also the socio-cultural and educational background of the participants constitute factors that enhance inclusivity, diversity and accessibility. Yet people's perceptions around these notions are based upon their own experiences, and this reflects socio-cultural,

economic and geographic boundaries. In the next section, I consider the festivalisation of suburban place as having a fundamental importance in the overall festival experience. In such a way, I seek to offer a new perspective regarding its role in shaping suburban place.

## 8.6 The Festivalisation of Suburban Place

The process of festivalisation influences the spatial and temporal transformations that take place in the suburbs during festivals. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the suburbs examined lack cultural venues that can accommodate large-scale performances and events. For this reason, the festival organisations have used many different public and private spaces located in their area of interest. These spaces were symbolically and temporarily transformed into festival venues and acquired an alternative use for the purposes of the festival (see: Cudny, 2016). This is based on festivals' capacity to transform a place and the way people experience that place. For example, particular festival activities, such as walking tours led by homeless people for example, provide an opportunity to experience a place from a quite different point of view. Jack (Rochdale), who participated in such a tour, remembered that

> *"there was a good thing done with some homeless and unemployed people. I went on a tour where you walk with them around the places they use in their lives. This event showed a different Rochdale. How Rochdale is experienced from a homeless person's point of view. It was really a different way of looking at Rochdale. Usually, you do not look at the Town from such a perspective."*

In this way, festivals operate as sites in which people can negotiate their relationship to place. Additionally, the festivals provided people with the opportunity to visit various ordinary places and spaces in their locality, offering a chance to experience them as cultural venues. These places and spaces were 'staged' and consumed experientially. For example, the park became an art gallery, the church a concert hall, the library a cultural mapping laboratory, and so on. This defamiliarisation affected their everyday use,

routine, and habitual appearance (Edensor, 2017), allowing people to experience them differently (Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011).

As mentioned above, suburban festivals offer more intimate experiences compared to those in the city centre. When I asked Beatrice (Didsbury) to reflect back on her festival experience, she described how she had gone to a College to see a concert. As she told me,

> *"I was literarily sitting in the front row seat. Just in front of this pianist. I was like mesmerised! I could see! I was thinking 'wow'! This is an accomplished pianist and I am literally there, and I can see what is going on. I thought, wow! It did spur me on to practise the piano. If you go into the Bridgewater Hall, you are never going to be that near."*

Some people had never visited particular spaces before, yet the intensified festival experience enabled them to develop a different view. In some cases, participants were even able to introduce new meanings and to rethink their familiar surroundings (Edensor and Sumartojo, 2018). This is in part because such spaces were experienced in a new and different way. Margaret (Didsbury), for example, told me that she had never been to a particular church before, and she would never have gone but for the festival. Now she believes the church to be a really beautiful and quiet space. In this context, Oliver (Rochdale) was very supportive about the fact that the festival used different venues and engaged with different people and groups that otherwise use that spaces during their everyday life.

Moreover, the quality of the venues and spatial ordering are thus key factors in contributing to the overall festival experience. For example, the Klondyke club in Levenshulme created an intimate feel of "being in a nest" (Pierre, Levenshulme) and a sense of safety, especially to parents (Doreen, Levenshulme, Aisha, Levenshulme) because it was enclosed by a fence:

*"The good thing about it being in an enclosed place was for those families that were there. It meant that the kids could run around a bit and have a bit of freedom within a safe space" (Aisha).*

*"If the space is bounded by walls and hedges, people can feel reasonably safe that they are not going to lose their children" (Doreen).*

In such a manner, the so-called festivalisation of the suburbs can have a significant effect in the process of making and re-making suburban place. In turn, this process can influence the way an individual relates to this place during his or her everyday life. However, in Rochdale, the venues used raised particular concerns for some of the participants. Margery (Rochdale), who attended three creative writing events, did not like some of the venues. She told me that she had had a better experience the previous year because it was held in the library, which is a good facility for that kind of event, "where you are able to concentrate, where everyone can sit and listen". In such a way, the festivalisation of the suburbs might foster transformations of different kinds and impact the way people relate to suburban place on a daily level. Yet, my data suggests that such transformations tend to operate at an individual level, rather than a collective and as I argued above they are dependent on the socio-economic background and the cultural tastes of each festival participant.

## 8.7 Conclusions

In this thesis, I have used three festivals as a way to engage with suburban culture as it was being performed - in practice. Given this, this chapter aimed to provide an insight into the role of suburban festivals in place-making. By looking at how people interact within the festival environment, the analysis highlights how suburban festivals differ from those that take place in the city and how their spatial organisation can facilitate social interaction on the local scale, revealing important insights regarding their socio-cultural impacts and spatial dynamics. Thus, this chapter has offered a more critical perspective on the intertwined relationships between festivals and suburban place, discussing their potentials and limitations to develop social capital. This requires a

deeper understanding of the highly contested meanings that underpin festival experiences in general, and whether different types of festivals foster social inequalities and exclusion. Finally, it showed how the process of festivalisation influences the spatial and temporal transformations that take place in the suburbs during festivals, offering a new perspective regarding their socio-cultural impacts and their role in shaping suburban place. The latter acknowledges the effects of festivalisation in the process of making and re-making suburban place and emphasises the specific importance of place-based connotations in festivals that take place in the periphery of the city. The next chapter brings this thesis to a conclusion.

# CHAPTER NINE

## Conclusions

*"If we wish to imagine the ideal future city or suburb, we cannot base it on the outmoded models of ideal cities or suburbs of the past. We have to look at the urban-suburban reality of the twenty-first century, and try to understand what forces created the suburbs of yesterday and today, to help inform how we might plan for tomorrow […] if we wish to optimize suburbs for the future, we should not start with the assumption that suburbia is intrinsically the unsustainable offspring of the city – the land-consuming, travel-generating, socially-alienating poor relation of the city proper; but what we call 'suburban form' could be a thing in its own right, and possibly even a more desirable human habitat than the urban?"*

*Stephen Marshall (2006: 267-270)*

### 9.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I set to study the everyday life of suburbia and to understand its cultural significance. Even if research into the topic has a long tradition, my literature review reveals that there is limited knowledge regarding the ways in which the suburbs are experienced, represented and imagined as 'real' everyday places (Corcoran, 2010). As a result, we have been witnesses of a systematic denial of the significance of suburban life as a legitimate arena for the exploration of the city as cultural entity. Similarly, there have been constraining academic and popular misunderstandings in relation to the kinds of 'culture' and 'creativity' that arguably define these places; heightened by a consensus that they are economically and creatively sterile places in contrast to inner-city areas (Phelps, 2010; Collis et al., 2010; Oakley, 2015 etc.). For this reason, their role has been defined as secondary to that of the city centre and they have been significantly absent in academic and policy debates for decades. Bearing these issues in mind, my research aimed (as presented in Chapter One) to reassess the role of suburban communities in shaping the cultural life of the city. Given this foundation, I focused on the relationship between suburban place and the consumption of culture.

As I discussed in Chapters One and Three, recent theoretical developments reveal some of the common challenges and empirical shortcomings faced by cities worldwide. Not only urban theory has neglected that today urbanisation is mainly suburbanisation in its manifold differentiation (Keil, 2017), but also various types of suburbs have started to claim a new prominence in both urban research and cultural planning (Bourne, 1996; Pacione, 2005). Considering this, I call into question notions of the 'creative city' (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002), and I critically examine the prevailing "just add culture and stir" (Gibson and Stevenson, 2004: 1) approach to urban regeneration. In so doing, I offer an alternative to an, arguably, outdated model that has focused almost exclusively on the creative and cultural capacities of the city centre, neglecting the everyday cultural practices that take place in suburbia. Consequently, by shedding light into the contemporary suburban landscape of Manchester, my thesis opens up a new avenue for academic research on the suburbs and contributes to an alternative way of theorising the complexity of suburban life, its spatial dimension and its symbolic and social significance. Rethinking suburbia, in such a manner, becomes of critical importance: it consists of a potential path that can lead to more 'inclusive' (sub)urban futures.

By recognising that the urban bias of much of the work on culture and place remains largely unchallenged (see: Oakley, 2015), my thesis addressed the ***extent to which the cultural consumption of the city has come to shape suburban residents' relationship with the city.*** In order to answer this core research question, I developed a dynamic approach to the study of the suburbs that engaged with different perspectives and experiences directly derived from the suburban communities of Manchester. Furthermore, my epistemological framework focused on the theoretical interconnections between everyday suburban life, place and 'culture'. This allowed me to examine the way suburban place and culture are being *co-produced* at the intersection between 'creative cities' and everyday suburban experiences.

To illuminate this uncharted area, in Chapters Six to Eight I reflected upon how a suburb is perceived by a segment of its residents participating in three different types of suburban festivals. My main intention was to bring the suburbs, in all of their cultural

complexity, to the fore in discussions around improved connections to place and, ideally, in the delivery of more 'sustainable' urban futures and ways of life. As such, my research was designed to understand the city in a more inclusive fashion: as it is lived and culturally experienced by the people who live in suburban Manchester. Embracing this view, my primary objectives were to (1) assess the role of the suburbs as more central in defining the practice of everyday life than might be assumed, and (2) show why culture matters for places where people live and co-exist day to day. My argument has developed in line with the view that "place is a centre of meaning constructed by experience" (Tuan, 1975: 159), and at its core lied the assumption that suburban place can be experienced *through* cultural consumption. Following this, my thesis was guided by a phenomenological framework that provided me with a philosophical angle for understanding the way people experience, perceive and relate to suburban place (sub-research question 1); and the way they relate to culture and cultural consumption (sub-research question 2). This was achieved through a critical understanding of how suburbs are experienced as potentially *'organic'* places. Thereby, I took under consideration the relevant contextual factors that shape the everyday life of the suburbs (place, culture, people's life-world experiences) and I examined how different individuals give meaning to their lives. At the same time, I examined 'culture' as part of a broader set of cultural and consumption practices associated with suburban place (see: Askew and McGuirk, 2010), trying to account for some of its complexities.

In my empirical chapters, I demonstrated how different individuals experience their place of residence via the consumption of culture in three different case studies. This allowed me to investigate the role of cultural consumption in constructing the complexity of everyday suburban life. Initially, my analysis focused on the distinctive characteristics of suburban place (see: Chapter Six) and, thereafter, on people's broader relationships to culture and its consumption (see: Chapter Seven). In parallel, due to a significant lack of empirical work on the role of festivals in everyday life (especially in the suburban context), I focused on the *'topography'* of three suburban festivals. Essentially,

I tried to understand how more extraordinary forms of cultural consumption contribute to place identity and to what extent they are inclusive or exclusive (see: Chapter Eight).

This is how I made local knowledge systems more visible, thus, presenting some of the creative and cultural possibilities of suburbia; challenging some of the conventional understandings of what it actually means to live in such places (see: Chapter Three). I contend that the study of different representations that people develop around their locality can lend itself to a deeper understanding and a more comprehensive appreciation of the everyday life of the suburbs. This final chapter brings the thesis into a conclusion. Initially, I outline the theoretical and methodological contributions of my research by summarising the themes and the main findings discussed in the empirical chapters. Thereafter, I reflect upon the possible limitations of this research, and I identify areas of future inquiry.

## 9.2 Theoretical Contributions

A contention underlying my thesis is that the planning of the city of tomorrow should not be solely concerned with the regeneration of the inner city. Rather it must engage with the lives and the contested realities of the people who live in the city and its suburbs. Essential to realising this vision is a commitment to hearing people’s silenced voices (Perry et al., 2019; Finkel et al., 2019). This requires an in-depth understanding of the role of the suburbs. Yet, as I mentioned before debates around the role of culture and creativity in the regeneration and reinvention of the city have overwhelmingly neglected suburban communities. Essentially, policymakers and scholars from a variety of fields continue to reproduce philosophical arguments about the creative and cultural capacities of inner cities (e.g. Florida, 2002), neglecting the essential meaning of suburban life and excluding the mundane cultural practices that make suburbia what it is.

Given this premise, the empirical data generated through my cultural mapping workshops and the semi-structured interviews with festival organisers, festival participants and policymakers, documents several key contributions made to the fields

of Human Geography, Sociology, and Critical Events Studies. In short, my thesis contributes to critical perspectives on the instrumental use of culture for the purposes of culture-led regeneration and provides a more nuanced approach to the process of place-making in the suburbs. As such, it challenges the orthodoxy of a culturally inert suburbia on the fringes of city life. Herein lies the main contribution of this thesis to the existing debate on the future of suburbia and the related research methodologies: it allows for the articulation of a wider question about the role and value of culture in the construction of a place-based identity in the suburbs. Accordingly, my approach sheds light on the mundane realities of suburban residents. Thus, it highlights the creative, yet 'hidden' geographies of suburbia and discusses the benefits that such an exploration might have in recalibrating our understanding of the city in a more geographically-inclusive fashion. Yet, the diverse range of perspectives, challenges and conflicts that emerged from the data combine to produce what is far from a utopian ideal. In this context, this thesis acknowledges that there is a specific complexity in 'culture' that has to be embraced further in discussions of place-based sustainability.

### 9.2.1 The Everyday Life of the Suburbs

My theoretical framework utilises the concept of everyday life as an entry point for understanding the connections between suburban place and cultural consumption. From its very beginning my research tried to overcome a conventional theoretical position that engages with the urban arena through the prism of the central city. Departing from the idea that suburbs and cities are mutually inter-dependent (Mumford, 1961; Fishman, 1987), my thesis counteracts the binary opposition between the city and the suburb and challenges the perception that urbanity only exists in the city centre (Vaughan, 2015). Based on the literature explored in Chapter Two, I engaged with the idea which poses every place as 'unique' (Moretti, 2007). In this sense, the analysis considered suburbs as not different from other areas of social activity; their everyday realities are developed along with the material conditions that form society as a whole. Accordingly, the data that I collected aligned with such a position and demonstrates that

the suburbs can be conceived of as places socio-culturally constructed in contrast to the city.

The results reveal that Manchester is a city that extends well beyond its core. Simultaneously, its suburbs and satellite towns have their own life, shaped by their actors on an everyday basis. In line with other studies (e.g. Flew, 2012; Huq, 2013; Collis et al., 2013 etc.), my evidence shows that the suburbs can also be places of congregation, social encounter and interaction. Overall, the data provide the basis to consider suburbs as places where people live, socialise in public (e.g. parks) and private spaces (e.g. houses), and participate in community (e.g. neighbourhood watches) and cultural activities (e.g. 'invisible' house parties, communal Christmas carols etc.). As Beatrice told me during the fieldwork it seems that *"in the suburbs there are all sorts of things to do in terms of culture [...] if you look closely you can find whatever you really want to do."* Effectively, there is a strong sense among my research participants that the everyday life of the suburbs is "lived day by day, one day at a time, from day to day, day after day, day in day out" (Craik, 2000: 234). It involves both ordinary and extraordinary conditions and it is full of unpredictable changes, random encounters, and countless interactions. These factors synthesise its rhythmic geographies and depend on the everyday use of space, the day of the week, the time, the weather and the seasons.

Despite the impact of various macro-developments, this thesis is a testament to the argument that the everyday life of the suburb is more immediately shaped by the local experience of place, a notion that is largely neglected by approaches that emphasise the broader socio-economic context (e.g. Florida, 2002). In my analysis, I carefully described the type and characteristics of the suburbs selected as case studies (as Forsyth, 2012). Thus, I formulated a broader consideration regarding their position in the public discourse, questioning the ways in which we conceptualise suburbs (as Airgood-Obrycki and Rieger, 2019). In this fashion, I tried to grasp their diversity and account for some of their complexities in the context of suburban Manchester.

Given this, the case studies present some common characteristics that correspond with the definitions provided in Chapter One (see: 1.3). For instance, every place examined consists of a peripheral location with functional dependence to the urban core. However, the case studies present significant differences, not only in terms of form, size, and proximity to the city centre, but also in terms of physical characteristics, geographical boundaries, demographic profiles, socio-cultural composition, and consumption alternatives. These elements define and shape their everyday life and contribute to an overarching place identity. In addition, in every case study, there are evident structural inequalities and cultural barriers between people with more power than others. This thesis represents a call to arms for these challenges to be met. A starting point could be the fact that the formulation of boundaries between specific social categories influences and expresses a sort of place identity that is endowed in the particular locations.

Nevertheless, one of the more significant findings to emerge from this research is that what a 'suburb' is can be disputed (see: Lupi and Musterd, 2006). This was expressed by some of my participants. For example Molly (Didsbury) who grew up in an actual village, believes that Didsbury is neither a village nor a suburb. On the contrary, she thinks that it is quite an urban place. This highlights the contested nature of suburban place (Massey, 1994; Harvey, 1996; Cresswell, 2004) and signifies that the everyday life of the suburbs can be significantly a multidimensional and contested phenomenon. Therefore, suburbs not only vary greatly from suburb to suburb and from country to country (Fishman, 1987). An important issue is that some people may not even agree with the fact that their place of residence is suburban. The evidence highlights that there are many complexities when it comes to this issue and this raises an important question regarding the top-down characterisation of a place which apparently, might not be in accordance with the bottom line reality of its residents who might believe that they live in totally different places. In this light, the diverse range of conflicting perspectives that were presented in the empirical chapters, raise many critical challenges regarding the future of the suburbs. These include the heuristic way people become or feel attached to their place of residence and the way people think that they participate in culture. Both

examples highlight the existence of compelling economic and socio-cultural conflicts between different social categories, not least given that, “cities have always constituted typical spaces of exchange, where conflicting and confusing perceptions and representations crisscrossed continually: spaces where memories have been negotiated and processed” (Spiridon, 2013: 206). In this sense, the main challenge is finding a way to highlight and understand the complexities of this sort of suburban culture that remains ‘hidden’ from the spotlight of the creative city.

It would be a simplification to say that the suburbs are an idealised cultural space independent from the tensions of the city centre. From the results, it is becoming clear that people experience suburban place differently and this is directly related to their everyday lives and life-world experiences. As has emerged from the discussion of my data, suburbs are places of multiple and intersecting performances. In these regards, there is a strong link between social class, consumption patterns, practices, tastes, and cultural capital in each of my case studies. All these determinants are seen to play a key role in the way people experience the city and show how their intersubjective experiences are somehow related to suburban place. Yet, the perception of physical and cultural ‘distance’ between the suburbs and the way of life in the city centre, as well as within suburbs themselves, is distorted and varied.

As is in the case in other countries (e.g. Canada), the suburbs of Manchester are also “uniquely textured with their own intensities, elasticities, and complexities” (Bain, 2010: 74). This transforms them into diverse and complex micro-societies with distinctive socio-cultural interrelations and everyday dynamics of their own. As such, they allow different lived experiences to unfold within them (Bain, 2013). In particular:

**Didsbury** is an affluent and predominantly white middle class suburb with an ‘evident’ “creative culture” (Didsbury Art Festival, official website). As was testified by my research participants, in Didsbury there is a wealth of cultural and consumption alternatives. This variety provide a counterbalance to the mainstream image of the suburbs and creates a feeling of a village. On the surface, my research participants seem to have a good quality

of life. In this sense, it is not a coincidence that the respondents in the census of 2011 stated that they are in the privileged position to enjoy better living conditions than other areas of the city. Still, Didsbury is one of the most expensive areas of Manchester and it is quite mono-cultural. This was acknowledged by some individuals who, in turn, expressed many times various stereotypical ideas against other suburbs of the city or classist and elitist prejudices towards people that belong to other socio-cultural categories (e.g. Margaret, Beatrice, Molly). These participants identified themselves as belonging to broader social groups that share the same practices, class background, and/or political orientations, making several social classifications and categorisations and drawing distinctions between 'us' and 'them'.

**Levenshulme** is a multi-cultural suburb, under the process of gentrification. Even if I traced a rising concern regarding the domination of chain store retailers and the *"invasion of the supermarkets"* (Aisha), some participants seemed to be quite positive towards the change that gentrification has brought. As Steven told me *"maybe the butchers or the fishmongers will come back if we get more hipster".* Also in this case, people presented some stereotypical attitudes. For example, Caren does not visit the city centre because there are "*are loads of homeless people and there is not enough space and green areas."* As in Didsbury, people in Levenshulme have *"literally everything within a walking distance"* (Aisha), they enjoy *"very good facilities"* (Doreen) and in some cases they experience a more vibrant atmosphere compared to the city centre (e.g. Caren). This was acknowledged by most of my participants. Indeed, there are alternatives that provide the opportunity for socialisation, and anchor local cultural life. However, Levenshulme lacks meeting hubs for niche cultural interests and, therefore, some people have to commute elsewhere to satisfy their particular cultural tastes. For example, Annabel has not found a place *"for hanging out with geeks in Levenshulme"* and Pierre cannot participate in jam sessions. Still, some participants find certain forms of cultural consumption (e.g. suburban festivals) to be very accessible compared to the "*rowdiness you can find in certain pubs in Levenshulme"* (Pierre). Furthermore, as it can be seen from most of the maps, Stockport Road (A6) consists of a relational border that

divides Levenshulme in two sides. The high street is at the same time a mental and functional boundary. In addition, particular areas present a different demographic composition, and they differ in terms of cultural activity and place identity (see: Map 42). Essentially, different communities tend to congregate in different areas. For example the majority of the refugees that participated in the workshop that took place during the English language class live in the north-eastern part of Levenshulme. In other words, Levenshulme is further divided along lines of physical, economic and socio-cultural factors. These are not only reflected in the rise in local house prices and the ongoing gentrification, but also through particular boundaries that are being constructed in public and private spaces. Steven has played snooker only one time with an individual from the Asian community at the Klondyke, and Pierre when he visits some pubs, he feels like participating *"in a western movie"*. Still, some spaces attract different types of audiences and some are more diverse than others (e.g. Levinspire). Essentially, as my research participants testified there are two communities in Levenshulme, that even if they share the same relational space, there are unbridgeable gaps in cultural provision caused by structural inequalities. Still, most of the maps contain common spaces (e.g. supermarkets, cultural spaces etc.). I content that some of these spaces provide further opportunities to assess the potentials for inter-cultural interaction and communication, effectively, building bridges between diverse communities.

**Rochdale** is an ethnically diverse and very deprived post-industrial town. Even if there used to be many cultural and community centres in the past, today the town presents a significant lack. This is due to financial reasons and the lack of funding. In this sense, Rochdale is overshadowed culturally by Manchester in terms of cultural consumption. Thus, young people seem not to engage with any arts or culture. According to Oliver "*It is extremely hard to reach them, whereas in Manchester, you have a huge cultural offer and young people go more often to the library and to cultural events".* Still, as was the case in the previous case studies there are many 'hidden' spaces and a lot of creative activity in the town as Eleanor's cultural directory confess. *"There are many little pockets of grassroots stuff that is going on in Rochdale, especially for kids"* Jack told me. However,

even if Rochdale is a very diverse town with many social mixtures, cultural access in particular venues *"is divided into subsections of races and ethnicities"* (Elvira). To this end, the evidence question the extent that "Rochdale is a fluidity of co-operation" (Festival Director, 2014). Yet, what is significantly remarkable in this case study is that the majority of the respondents when they were talking about the town they used the word 'we': *"We need to enable everyone to use culture and participate in it."* (Margery), "*Unfortunately, we do not make enough of our surroundings and we do not do much about bringing everything together"* (Eleanor), "*We are Rochdale!"* (Jack). Thus, I should state in this point that during the fieldwork, I felt that people in Rochdale where more accessible, communicating and expressing their desire to share their thoughts, expectations and concerns. Every one of them was quite knowledgeable and assertive about the socio-economic reality of the town. I argue that this sense of collective responsibility and people's desire to talk signify that the legacy of the 'Co-operative Movement' is still alive. Despite the sharp socio-cultural contrasts and the evident inequalities (low economic growth, high crime levels, high levels of unemployment, low life expectancy, low professional skills, and poverty), the town is in a quest of a new place identity and presents opportunities that need to come to the fore.

In line with previous studies (e.g. Bain, 2010; Burton and Gill, 2015), my analysis highlights two issues. First, that the suburbs are overshadowed culturally by the city. Second, that our understanding of suburban culture has been somewhat obscured by popular and negative representations. These issues have contributed to a broader consideration of the suburbs as an archetype that lacks a centrality from which meaningful academic and/or policy discourse springs. Across this thesis, I argued that this should not be the case anymore. The examples presented signify the existence of a 'hidden culture' located in people's practices.

Despite the fact that the city centre presents a hegemonic position in terms of cultural production and consumption, the suburbs do shape the broader socio-cultural map of the city too. Their socio-cultural life can in fact represent an important dynamic in the broader distribution and decentring of urban life (Amin and Thrift, 2002). This is related

to the nature of suburban culture and creativity. Although imaginary geographies of the city have constructed a stark dichotomy between the city and the surrounding suburbs, suburban life still offers a distinctive experience of the 'urban'. The difference is that their socio-cultural life is organised in another way. Instead of revolving around the more vibrant street life that usually comes with high-density city centres, it is concentrated around slower, more domestic and familiar activities that take place in various spaces like cultural centres and associations. From this standpoint, the mundane cultural activities that take place in the suburbs do have a specific cultural value that needs to be addressed further.

This value arises from two facts. First people are pro-active agents somehow involved in the everyday realisation of the city. Second, culture exists and operates in every corner of the city and far beyond its centre. Even if we live in a world of prescribed technological, administrative and capitalist complexity, in their everyday lives people act in small-scale, subversive ways, expressed through place. Through their everyday actions, cultural practices, and spatial relations people *co-produce* the city and shape its overall identity (see: Lewis and Symons, 2018). In that sense, the everyday life of the suburb is developed in conjunction with suburban place, the plurality and richness of (sub-)urban life, the 'ordinary' cultural activities and consumption practices carried out by individuals and groups within and outside these localities. These are played out through what can be described as the rhythmic geographies of everyday suburban life. In this context, the world-views and the actual needs of suburban residents seem to get unnoticed and on many occasions they remain unaddressed.

It can be argued that such experiences reflect broader societal processes and structural issues. This is manifested in the form of cultural expressions, place-based identifications, stereotypes (e.g. in Moss Side people over there are not interested in the arts; Margaret, Didsbury), as well as socio-economic inequality and materiality. In effect, class, gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, culture, lifestyle and consumption patterns are not uniform, but bound up with the particular places within which people live (Waitt, 2008). Bearing this in mind, I argue that the way a suburb is experienced on a daily basis by an individual is

directly related to these axes of identity that, in turn, never operate outside the context of place and space (Rose, 1999). This creates particular dynamics of (sub)urban relations, which constitute both culturally and socially shifting landscapes. In turn, the various features of place are not simply projected into the everyday life of the suburbs but are recorded in it. These include asymmetries of power among individuals and groups, producing places and spaces of inequality and spatial segregation, within a defined territory. In this process, the discursive and the material are intertwined, (re)producing different boundaries between insiders and outsiders; locals and non-locals; renters and owners; long-term and short-term residents and so on and so forth. This is related to how people experience suburban place.

### 9.2.2 The Daily Experience of Suburban Place

In this thesis, one of my main intentions is to highlight the foundational role of suburban place in crafting the everyday life of the suburbs. For this reason, in Chapter Two I established a place-based approach to my geographical engagement with the suburbs that sought to examine their distinctive characteristics, spatial formation and place identity. I argued that the various experiences of everyday life are firmly rooted in place: a notion that relates and responds to larger socio-cultural, political, and environmental contexts (see: Cloke, et al., 1991; Adams, et al., 2001). Bearing this in mind, my practical engagement with suburbia drew on Seamon's (1979, 2012) phenomenological approach. Following this approach, the notion of suburban place provided the geographical context in which suburban life literally takes place. This enabled me to study people's place-based experiences and to capture the perspectives of various people who dwell and make that place on an everyday basis. However, not only did I perceive suburbs as objective, fixed or static surfaces, somewhere located outside an urban core. Rather, I considered them as relational places in which social, economic and political processes operate. My objective was to substantiate my phenomenological approach to the suburbs by taking under consideration the limitations, highlighted by the main criticisms towards the humanistic approach to place (e.g. Rose, 1995; Patterson and Williams, 2005; Lewicka, 2011 etc.). In a sense, my approach took under consideration the

complexities of place that are depended on asymmetries of power, social relationships, cultural representations and practices (Creswell, 2004; Massey, 2005; Jayne, 2006). Given this, I engaged with the concept of 'place' as a contested, yet integral and inescapable constituent of being in the world (see: Chapter Two). As I argued the socio-cultural life of the suburbs is not only related to the physical environment that characterises a particular suburban setting, but it is also subject to interpretations. This allowed various stands of experience and even conflicted perceptions to arise.

From my perspective, the suburbs are places constantly under construction through contrasting understandings, shared practices and the negotiation of meaning. Effectively, as individuals and groups develop their daily and cultural activities, they shape and re-shape suburban place through a dialectical relationship. In this way, to 'live in the suburbs' consists a source of individual and spatial identity (see: Cresswell, 2004; Holloway and Hubbard, 2014). This highlights the fact that the suburbs can be dynamic and symbolic places. Thereby, suburban place cannot be considered a passive backdrop to human relations, and neither an inert surface that is cut off from human society - as the mainstream literature on suburbia have suggested. On the contrary, suburban place plays a fundamental role in the everyday socio-cultural life of the suburbs.

In Chapter Six, I explored people's experiences and perceptions of 'place' in the context of everyday suburban life. Initially, I addressed the specific characteristics that make up the physical structure of my case studies. In this way, I was able to decode their spatial organisation and unfold their geographical properties. Thereafter, I examined their street layout in order to understand those elements that generate the street-level suburban experience. This allowed me to formulate an understanding of how people experience, perceive and relate to suburban place and how this relates to their everyday lives.

The analysis shows that suburban place is embedded in the daily practices and imagination of the people who inhabit it. At the same time, it has an active role in various political and economic formations, social relations, and identities. As such, it is a critical

factor in setting up the living patterns that shape daily life and people's relationship to the city. These results suggest that the distinctive physical characteristics of the suburbs effectively govern the uniqueness of these places, as they have a strong influence on people's perceptions and experiences. In this context, the data in Chapter Six reveals that the key factors that influence the way people experience, perceive and relate to suburban place are: (1) low housing density, (2) geographic position, (3) accessibility of amenities and spaces in walking distance, (4) proximity and ease of access to the city and the countryside, (5) the role of commuting. In addition to that, the daily use of various public spaces and other retail, leisure and cultural facilities in close proximity, constitute a particular pattern of spatial activity that not only contributes to a localised experience, but also indicates a sort of place attachment (see: Chapter 6.2). The combination of these intertwined elements of suburban place set up various living patterns, they structure and influence people's world-views and affective perceptions in relation to their locality and, therefore, play a constitutive role is shaping an overarching place identity. Not only, they have a direct impact on their daily experiences and interactions in the wider suburb, but they also impact their broader relationships with the rest of the city.

Furthermore, the results indicate how social interaction in the suburbs can be fostered by certain physical features of the streetscape. The street essentially is the main form of the socio-spatial organisation of the suburbs. Considering the fact that the "street has long been a key laboratory for studies of social life" (Hubbard and Lyon, 2018: 937), I suggest that the streets of the suburbs actually constitute the main stage on which people experience and perform the "intrinsic theatricality" (Raban, 1974: 27) of their everyday lives. The data provides a considerable insight into how specific features of the streetscape can transform the socio-cultural life of the suburbs. As in previous studies this concurs well with the importance of different types of suburban centralities (see: Vaughan, 2015), such as the relational role of the high street and its socio-economic significance as an incubator for serving local needs (see: Chapter 6.4.1). In parallel, the evidence from this chapter points towards the idea that the spatial organisation of particular streets (e.g. some culs-de-sac in Didsbury) have the potential to promote

various forms of social organisation (e.g. neighbourhood watches) and cultural appropriation such as communal Christmas carols, street parties and collective dinners, that might enhance sociability and conviviality (see: Chapter 6.4.2). These notions can be further understood as having two socio-spatial levels. The first level concerns how people experience and relate to their residential area in order to cover their daily needs and desires. The second level involves the social relations and cultural practices that are developed between neighbours or more generally between people that live in close proximity to each other. Here, I do not suggest that strangers will necessarily socialise with other strangers on these streets, but rather that their design can have a significant impact on the everyday cultural practices and social relationships that are developed on different level among people. This adds substantially to our understanding of how the design of the streetscape can create further possibilities for appropriation. This highlights the need for further critical research that involves a thoughtful exploration when it comes to the capacity of the suburbs and specific streets to represent a social site where everyday suburban life unfolds, both ordinarily and extraordinary. Still, a closer inspection revealed that this process includes boundaries and distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. For example, the individual who created Map 18 told me that *"I live in a bounded street community".* Other participants strongly believe that they are entitled to define what is and is not appropriate in their place of residence. Take for instance Margaret who confessed that *"it does not matter to us where people are from, but what we do not like [are] the people in the half-way houses. They are people that got out of prison or homelessness and such things. Some of those are white British that are swearing at 2 - 3 o'clock in the morning, shouting, walking around with drinks".* These perspectives adds to the sense of a healthy almost protected existence for social cycles that *"live in Didsbury […] have the same mentality […] share the same cleaners […] want just to enjoy life […] they are in relationships without children […] with dispensable money to spend on eating out and drinking"*. This is how people construct their identity in relation to various places and spaces of everyday life and how they can associate to other individuals and social groups. These findings outline how newer residents can have more

confidence to express their stereotypical and classist opinions, presenting as high attachments to place as older ones (as Brown, Brown and Perkins, 2004). Thus, they are consistent with many studies that show that different socio-cultural groups even if they live in close proximity, they effectively live in distinctive social worlds bounded by socio-economic status, cultural differences, and moral values (Watt, 2009; Arthurson, 2012).

Evidently, there are various logics of inclusion and exclusion that are played out in the socio-geographic space of the suburbs (see: Elias and Scotson, 1994). Such experiences reflect broader societal processes and issues that are manifested in the form of cultural expressions and experiences, spatial identifications, as well as socio-economic materiality and structural inequalities. On this note, I contend that the distinctive spatial arrangement of the suburbs and their streetscapes influence both the significance of everyday social practices and people's perceptions regarding their place of residence. Essentially, a place is transformed into a social landscape by a series of practices. These have a real effect in geographical and socio-cultural terms. What is equally important is the fact that suburban place is the most immediate setting that people relate to and sometimes it is the locus of the most intimate social and personal concerns beyond the private realm of the home. This metaphorical, symbolic, and material engagement to place has an impact on place identity and suburban daily experience. As I said in the previous section, the physical arrangement of the suburb is not a passive backdrop to everyday life. People effectively *co-produce* places when they make use of their immediate environment in their everyday lives. In these regards, people identify primarily with their surroundings and create different spatial understandings. These are based, mainly, on people's personal experiences and background. I argue that they develop various affective perceptions in relation to their immediate space and residential position. The location of their home and its surrounding space influences directly their life-world experiences and their ideas about the place they live. This is how they give meaning to their immediate environment, which in turn consumes a large part of their everyday lives. Departing from this consideration, the micro-geographies of the 'intimate' contribute to the production of certain forms of social interaction in the

suburban environment. These are imprinted on its rhythms and they shape individual and collective lifestyles.

Nevertheless, much like the city itself, even when identified as 'home', suburbia represents a site of paradoxical and conflicting meanings. Indeed, it is a "theatre of social action" filled with "a significant collective drama" (Mumford, 1996: 94 [1937]), experienced and understood in a range of divergent and contradictory ways. As the case studies of Didsbury, Levenshulme and Rochdale suggest, each place is made up of microcosms i.e. smaller 'suburbs within the suburbs', which develop their own realities and identities. This means that the suburbs are places of difference too (see: Sennett, 1994). Far from being uniform entities, they rather consist of partial, fragmented and usually overlapping worlds in peoples' imaginations. Consequently, people develop their own relationship with suburban place.

This is also reflected in their ability to relate, identify and interact with each other and within particular spaces. In these regards, my research participants have developed various positive and negative identifications with particular places and/or spaces within and outside their locality, on the basis of various subjective, experiential, psychological and affective factors. The analysis highlights the importance of everyday spaces of social interaction in peoples' lives and some of the meanings they attach to them. Private houses, community centres, churches or the local pub play a constitutive role in structuring the locality that people identify as 'home'. Their daily use consists of an influential and significant component of suburban socio-cultural life. This was portrayed in detail in the maps and was heightened further in the interviews. Most of the times, my research participants presented a sort of experiential attachment to public and private spaces located in their area of residence. In these spaces they feel more comfortable, and sometimes they think they might have better opportunities for formal or informal socialisation, entertainment, culture, recreation and/or consumption, compared to those in the city centre. An interesting point is the fact that rather than being stagnant, they are constantly under negotiation and processing, as different social practices claim to use and produce them in different ways and through different material

and symbolic conditions. However, the data reveals a complex tapestry of underlying relations of power in spaces that have the potential to reproduce exclusivity and boundaries between insiders and outsiders. This is related to the way people become or feel attached to those spaces and to particular ideas that they might have developed on the basis of their personal experiences. Essentially, each space is characterised by a special atmosphere that is reflected and reproduced in the attitudes of the people who use them frequently or seldomly during their everyday lives. These also attract niche 'constellations' of tastes and to a lesser extent they address the needs of particular sub-cultural groups.

The suburbs are inhabited by people with different tastes, conflicting attitudes, mixed feelings and recollected past experiences. In this sense, suburbia is a multi-dimensional concept conceived of and experienced differently by people who formulate a perception on the basis of their background: personal experiences (past and present), financial situation and cultural capital. These key determinants not only structure their world-view, social interactions and daily life in their wider suburb, but also impact their broader relationship with the rest of the city. Essentially, the evidence shows that suburbia is a dynamic place that is being shaped by diverse relationships over time and under specific material conditions and historical circumstances. These encompass conflicting identities, contrasting representations, fluid imaginaries, and unsurpassed boundaries that are not formed solely on the basis of the physical surroundings within which people settle or their residential position. Rather, they are shaped by people's socio-economic backgrounds and cultural tastes. From my perspective, although there are blurred distinctions between different spaces and a variety of cultural practices undertaken within them, some of them present the capacity to echo a suburban place identity and the different logics of inclusion and exclusion this implies. This is not only related to an understanding of suburbia's ubiquitous constitution as a meaningful, and hence a socio-cultural, milieu, but it is also linked to the way cultural consumption forges place-based identifications and belonging. In this regard, there is a fairly strong relationship between the distinctive characteristics of suburban place and place identity.

For the purposes of my analysis, I asserted that a suburb is not only determined by its physical characteristics and the affective association people develop during their everyday lives. It is also constituted by various representations and imaginaries. On this basis, I have sought to illustrate the effect of suburban place on place identity (see: Chapter Six). In this light, in every case study presents a sort of overarching place identity that characterises the particular area. *"Didsbury is a middle-class suburb but there is not an alternative vibe"* (see: Map 8) or "*Levenshulme does not have the best reputation"* (Steven, Levenshulme). Although there was a high degree of contestation in what my participants said, I argue that place identity is socially constructed at the level of the micro-geography of the suburb yet mediated by wider structural influences. It is related to its demography, its geographical position and history, the types of housing, the wealth income brackets of its residents and the available cultural consumption alternatives. On the one hand, it is a form of cultural expression that is manifested through a process of day-to-day experience and through various interactions and encounters in public and private spaces. On the other hand, it is a spatial frame that (re-)produces forms of social life and cultural identities. I argue that the way in which people imagine their place of residence offers an alternative and fruitful framework to explore the symbolic construction of suburbia. In this context, the interplay between the 'real' and the 'imaginary' suburb is fundamental in any further analysis. This allows an explicit examination of suburban place and the role of cultural consumption in shaping suburban place identities.

As my research evidence suggests, there are distinctive factors that differentiate village-type suburbs like Didsbury and Levenshulme from 'actual' suburbia. Such place-based imaginaries contribute to the construction of the 'symbolic suburb', but they rest upon the distinctive uses of space(s). In this sense, the suburb becomes a village due to various processes, such as individual and collective experiences (e.g. festivals) that take place within and/or outside their spatial boundaries or the availability of consumption alternatives in close proximity. However, investigating the existence of community life in the suburbs is a complex task which involves other complementary subjective factors

such as imagination, observability, critical thinking and exposure to specific experiences. The question that remains unaddressed is how such symbolic interaction is (re-)produced and, at the same time, negotiated on a daily basis and beneath the 'surfaces' of social life. This is related to the theatricality of everyday life, as individuals adapt to certain roles within its frames, whilst constructing their identity in relation to other individuals and social groups (see: Goffman, 1959).

### 9.2.3 The Cultural Consumption of Suburbia

Another intention of this thesis was to address the importance of cultural consumption in the geographical examination of the suburbs. Due to a significant lack of relevant research, I was mainly concerned with the impact of cultural consumption on everyday suburban life. In order to show why culture matters for places where people live and co-exist day to day, I focused on the practice of culture in 'mundane', 'taken-for-granted' and 'inconspicuous' spaces, looking at whether local cultural consumption is actively involved in the construction of suburbia. This is how I recognised the importance of vernacular activities in shaping the daily experience of the suburb. These lie outside the official narrative of the 'creative city'.

Given the above, I adopted a flexible conceptualisation of 'culture' which I addressed through the theoretical framework of cultural consumption. This enabled me to develop a dynamic approach to the study of the suburbs by examining culture, as part of a broader set of practices associated with suburban place. As I established in Chapter Three, I considered 'culture' as an integral aspect of understanding the complexity of everyday suburban life. I argued that It is a form of practice shaped through the everyday experience of place and the negotiation of various meanings (Miles and Miles, 2004). In this way, 'culture' becomes a process of adaptation to the physical and social environment that includes people's behavioural manifestations, consumption patterns and cultural practices, and, more generally, all those elements that somebody requires to satisfy his/her material needs. This entails agency, power relations and contradictions.

Taking this into account, in Chapter Seven, I examined the ways in which people relate to culture and cultural consumption - both in urban and suburban contexts - and whether this process comes to shape their relationship to the city. In so doing, I evaluated the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption, illustrating how cultural consumption is a multifaceted, yet symbiotic relationship that exists between the city and its people and some of the ways that cultural consumption in the suburb differs. As was the case in previous research (e.g. Savage et al., 2005), my participants view the city centre of Manchester as the primary arena in which formal cultural production and consumption takes place. Indeed, the biggest and most popular venues are concentrated there and as such it constitutes the main arena within which people can, or sometimes cannot, consume culture. This highlights the role of this process in the reproduction of the city's overarching place identity. Still, people have developed an ambivalent relationship to the city centre.

The evidence evaluate previous reports on cultural participation since it became clear in the analysis that cultural access to the city centre is a privilege granted to people who possess not only the necessary economic, but also cultural capital. In response to that the City Council tries to facilitate cultural participation by developing more 'inclusive' policies. However, people acknowledge that marginalised social categories are inevitably excluded from the iconic cultural venues of the city (e.g. young people, BAME communities) due to economic and cultural reasons. Therefore, while the relationship between cultural consumption and the city is organic and emergent; it is also related to place-based dynamics. Such an understanding leads me to re-evaluate the relationship between the suburbs and the impact of cultural consumption upon the city.

The suburbs or satellite towns lack cultural venues and the vibrancy of the city centre. For this reason, the city centre remains the focal place for cultural consumption. However, the evidence presented in Chapter Seven, substantially challenge its cultural centrality. At least as far as my research participants are concerned, the suburbs that I examined are far from culturally sterile places. On the contrary, they are dynamic places with rich vernacular cultures that develop always in relation to the city. This indicates

that the suburbs cannot be readily dismissed as ‘uncreative’ or without a ‘culture’. In opposition to popular representations of suburbia (see: Chapter Three), these places remain relevant and meaningful for the vast majority of my respondents. This can be seen from their maps that essentially contradict the view that ‘suburbs are places where nothing ever happens’. This shows why these places are far from being socially and culturally bland. In fact, the results present a much more complex picture, whereby suburbs are instead dynamic sets of cultural landscapes, filled with a wealth of meanings, complexity and variety.

Furthermore, there is a strong sense in the data that cultural consumption in the suburbs offers a different experience to that of the city. Even if there are some spaces that can potentially support cultural production in Didsbury, Levenshulme and Rochdale, they operate on a different spatial scale, with substantially less public financial support. This is a distinctive element of cultural consumption in the suburbs. As I mentioned in Chapter Seven, the suburbs of Manchester lack the totemic cultural venues found in the city centre, and therefore they occupy a marginal position when it comes to more formal kinds of cultural consumption and investment. This is not to say that there are no spaces of cultural consumption in the suburbs. Quite the contrary. Still, the very nature of this process is more dependent upon the distinctive characteristics of suburban place and the particularities of the available spaces.

The creative geographies of some suburbs such Didsbury and Levenshulme or satellite towns like Rochdale, indicate some unexpected characteristics. These are expressed within these communities’ physical settings and through the daily practices of their residents. In this light, while both suburbs may appear more sterile in terms of big cultural venues and events, there is a variety of other spaces in close proximity to many residents where people can consume culture or participate in a cultural experience. I suggest these everyday spaces in suburbia offer the opportunity for people to negotiate their own symbolic relationship with place.

Referring to my previous argument, the data shows how the everyday use of suburban place contains different embodied practices and daily activities. Through them people reproduce suburban daily life. Bearing this in mind, I demonstrated how people use various spaces during their suburban lives. These include private houses, schools, community centres, churches, parks, super-markets and other spaces of local consumption etc. These spaces accommodate social dynamics and play an important role in fostering vernacular and sometimes 'hidden' activities. The latter hint at the richness of Manchester's suburban culture and creativity.

As Chapter Seven demonstrated, 'suburban cultural practices' come in many different forms and are stimulated by many different conditions, environments, and spaces. These can take place domestically or spill over into the aforementioned spaces. They can, thus, take more social, experimental, inclusive, collaborative, flexible and communal forms. The data presented many activities organised by small and grassroots organisations that are frequently located in multi-use cultural spaces. In turn, some of them may run on a non-profit public basis. As such, they seem to be socially and financially accessible to a diverse range of people and, therefore, more open to cross-cultural audiences and communities (e.g. Levinspire, the Vibe etc.). Given this, they can compensate for local cultural inequalities by organising diverse activities that can enrich people's social and cultural capital. An important fact is that some of these spaces serve not only one suburb, but also neighbouring areas. In that sense, the more dynamic a suburb is in terms of available spaces, the more diverse it will be in terms of creativity and culture. Arguably, more visible cultural spaces can successfully engage with more people. However, some people do not know what types of spaces or activities are available in the suburbs. Margaret (Didsbury) for example believes that in West Didsbury there are not enough events that promote local cultural activities: *"A lot of people do not even know that it's going on".* Similarly, Aisha (Levenshulme) told me *"people that do not know Levenshulme cannot find easily the Klondyke, because it is located on a backstreet. If it was on a main road it would be much more noticeable for people and probably more people would know about it."* In that respect, improving the visibility of these spaces might contribute to

people's connections to place. In turn, this inclusivity holds the potential to strengthen the social bonds among people, and sometimes across cultural lines. As such, some spaces are more inclusive in relation to the spectacular spaces of the inner city. Such localised "spaces of hope" (Blomley, 2007: 59) can become sites from which a more locally based grassroots culture can emerge, one that is resistant to dominant ideologies and practices. However, as some of my research participants illustrated, people may also develop ambivalent relationships and stereotypical ideas in relation to other suburbs.

This point draws attention to the role of these spaces in mediating the relationship between cultural participation and place identity. I argue that there is always a kind of relation constructed between place, culture and people. This is worked out in everyday life of the suburbs and it is often intertwined with an iterative and intrinsically dynamic process. In this way, such spaces hold the potential to become meaningful for people who do not see themselves as living in 'placeless' environments, but rather in places which are charged with symbolic meanings. This is why the suburbs cannot be considered anymore as places without social and cultural meaning.

It is not my intention to suggest any comparison between the cultural experience of the suburbs and the city, nor do I intend to imply that suburban cultural experiences are more or less important than those in the city. Instead, I want to suggest that this 'hidden culture' and vernacular creativity is at least as significant in terms of participation and engagement as those cultural activities happening in the city centre. The evidence reveals a mosaic of diverse everyday cultural practices undertaken in the suburbs. These include mundane (e.g. walk in the park), communal, cultural and leisure activities (film clubs, choirs, calligraphy classes, running, social support), to extraordinary forms of cultural consumption such as festivals. Some of these practices reveal some of the multiple possibilities for re-creating and re-imagining suburban place as a 'community'. This is related closely to the interconnections and interdependency which I distinguish between suburban place and cultural consumption. With these issues in mind, I make a clear distinction between the 'consumption of culture' and the 'practice of culture'. This distinction warrants special attention for the purposes of this thesis, as it provides a

critical counterpoint to understandings of the suburban way of life and practice. I suggest that the nexus between the consumption of culture and the practice of everyday life can provide a focal point within which people are able to negotiate their relationship with the city. The importance of this argument lies in the potential of suburban culture and creativity to be transformed into a common resource for local development and knowledge exchange. Such an approach challenges notions of the 'creative city' and sheds light on the mundane cultural practices of people in the suburbs.

### 9.2.4 The Suburban Festival as a Lens on Suburbia

In order to balance the strong bias towards festivals that take place in the city centre, in this thesis, I have focused on three festivals that take place in Didsbury, Levenshulme and Rochdale respectively. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, I used them as an empirical lens through which I examined the relationship between place and cultural consumption. Accordingly, in Chapter Eight, I discussed the transformative potentials of suburban festivals and whether they have a role in shaping suburban place identity. In this light, although suburbs lack big events and cultural venues, still they manifest a lively cultural life of which festivals are an important manifestation.

Suburban festivals should be treated more seriously as sites for understanding suburbia. As a form of cultural consumption, they provide a space for individuals and groups to negotiate their own symbolic relationship to place. Rather than a focus on wider political and economic imperatives, this approach is about the way in which cultural consumption forges place-based identifications and belonging. A major point in these regards, is the fact that they provide an opportunity for social encounters and experience to people that extend beyond those that typically characterise their everyday lives in these localities. Essentially, every festival creates a sort of place-specific ambience, transforming various everyday spaces for a brief time. I consider these spatial parameters to be significant to the production of a distinct cultural experience. This is because they enable a myriad of formal and informal interactions between attendees. In this way, festival spaces shape informal socialisation and the production of different

meanings. These are dependent on peoples' conceptualisations of suburban place, space and identity.

While each case study presents significant differences in terms of history, duration, audiences, venues, types of events, etc., participation at these three festivals demonstrates that the suburb is culturally central rather than peripheral (see: Georgiou, 2014, 2015) in the everyday life of the suburb. Accordingly, the festivals examined play a specific role in shaping the broader socio-cultural life of the suburb – both individually and collectively. However, the data indicates that some festivals (e.g. Didsbury Arts Festival) hold the potential to be personally transformative, but not necessarily collectively. This was the case for some participants that had never been to some spaces before the festivals (Beatrice, Margaret, Didsbury). For them, the intensified festival experience enabled them to develop a different view and introduce new meanings regarding their use. On the contrary, other festivals, such as Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival, provide opportunities to transform the 'bad' reputation of a place. Effectively, a festival can put a place on the map, and this enables the negotiation and redefinition of its place identity.

Even if festivals are complex sites of community building, in some cases festival participation can contribute to the way people experience and relate symbolically to suburban place. In the view of this, the case studies do not demonstrate the characteristics of 'McFestivalisation' (Finkel, 2004) or 'placeless festivals' (Ferris, 1996; Robinson et al., 2004; MacLeod, 2006; see: Chapter Four). On the contrary, they fully demonstrate why a festival can be crucial for a suburb or a satellite town. Such festivals offer the opportunity to consume a local cultural experience, while enabling the negotiation of place identity. In this direction, the participants in this research show contrasting and ambiguous feelings towards the festivals that take place in the city, while they find suburban festivals more inclusive, affordable and relatable. In fact, the festivals examined here are linked to notions of proximity and non-commercialisation. Thus, they provide opportunities for co-creation and inter-cultural exchange, thus favouring the

creation of social bonds and enriching local knowledge. These factors differentiate them from the festivals that take place in the city.

As was shown in Chapter Eight, festival participation is connected to the previous experiences, the socio-economic background, and the cultural tastes of each individual. In some cases, festivals offer a way to increase meaningful social interactions and encounters in their broadest sense. This was particularly evident in certain festival-related activities (e.g. creative writing workshop) that brought different socio-cultural groups into contact with each other. However, as my analysis demonstrates, although festivals are able to bring different people together in the same space, this alone is not enough to generate a more inclusive outcome. Festivals are sites of contestation. As Waitt (2008: 526) comments "responses to festivals are highly complex, given the pluralism of urban social life through the intersection of place with axes of identity such as class, gender, age, ethnicity and sexuality". Accordingly, the findings highlight the complexity of the lived festival experience. This is highly contested and ruptured. It is important to note here that the festival space is never fixed. It is rather comprised of informal and formal unfolding relations (Duffy et al., 2019).

This aspect of the research suggested that suburban festivals have some potential for contributing to forms of social capital, since they can strengthen existing social ties or facilitate the creation of new ones. This was the case with the festivals examined in this study. They function as a mechanism for different social groups to be in the same physical space together. This is how suburban festivals transform the hosting suburb into a staged experience where people who participate in them can develop their sociability or enhance their local knowledge. However, as it was expressed by many participants, festivals act as a mirror for the society in which they take place. In every case study, participants spoke about how different types of festivals and/or activities attract particular socio-cultural groups that share similar characteristics and tastes. In this sense, the festivals examined present various landscapes of inclusion and diversity that are, in turn, related to the multifarious individual interpretations of who is included, and who is not. As mentioned before, the accrual of social capital is the suburbs is uneven. This

reflects and reinforces wider and underlying power inequalities within these localities. In this context, the development of social capital in festivals cannot be assumed to be a positive force, which can automatically lead to socially inclusive suburbs. Even if the festivals examined contain some inclusive aspects, as they provide opportunities for people to socialise, they do not empower or unite people across diverse communities, neither they present an effective mechanism that motivates them to take local collective action or participate in decision-making.

As I demonstrated in Chapter Eight, suburban festivals can become a useful lens through which to study suburbs and the everyday. I contend that in order for a festival organisation to promote the idea of connecting people to place, it needs to focus on improving community connections and social dialogue. This can be arguably done by developing accessible activities that allow the co-creation of experience. From this perspective, "the more plural, participatory and collective a process, the greater the potential for unpacking the power of people in place in the festival context" (Perry et al., 2019: 13). Here, I recognise that a potentially broad and participatory synergy between festival organisers and other local institutions and organisations can be very positive for community engagement. By taking into consideration the views of local people, festival organisations can contribute to more inclusive versions of socio-cultural communities. However, it is important not to assume that communities are homogenous or that a festival can automatically bring disparate elements of a suburb together without explicit efforts designed to do so (see: Duffy et al., 2019). As Stevenson (2016: 27) argues "the challenge is in finding how to develop a socially inclusive approach to local festival production […] further work is required to identify methods that might lead to more meaningful inclusion of deprived communities and which may enable them to participate in community networks". In this sense, festival production must be planned and managed in an instrumental way, in order to enhance the possibilities for inclusion, intercultural exchange or co-creation. As I showed in Chapter Eight, the festivalisation of suburban place holds this potential. Through this process, festival participants are able to discover their own sense of meaning and negotiate their relationship to place. Still,

further research is required to uncover some of these complexities. It is also important to recognise that the question of whether a culturally focused community strategy is effective in addressing the social and economic conditions related to culturally disengaged social groups remains complicated and unanswered. Festivals contain a paradox: they operate simultaneously as a set of inclusionary and exclusionary practices (Waitt, 2008) and, for this reason, we should be cautious about what Rojek (2013: 31-100) refers to as the "illusory community" potentially created by festivals. Such a performance is located in a bounded time frame and is detached from the realities of everyday lives. This temporary engagement provides the illusion of action, while leaving power structures and inequalities intact. This is indicated by the fact that certain socio-cultural categories are excluded from festivals, on the basis of their economic and cultural background. In this sense, the festival experience in the suburbs might not be so different from more formal types of cultural consumption in the city centre (see: Chapter Seven).

## 9.3 Methodological Contributions

In addition to the theoretical contributions presented above, this study also sought to make a methodological contribution, which primarily draws from questions related to primary data collection in the context of researching festivals. To study festivals, I combined two methods which allowed me to further my approach to the suburbs as a lived experience: cultural mapping and semi-structured interviews. These methods enabled me to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon, thus creating a dataset designed to verify my results from different angles. In particular, during my research period in the suburbs, I planned, designed and organised cultural mapping workshops, which took place during three festivals. Indeed, these workshops served a double purpose: at the beginning of my fieldwork they helped me to gain access to the field of study and to develop mutual trust with the festival organisers. As an accessible activity, they allowed me to consider the potential impact of cultural consumption in suburban communities and understand further the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption. The workshops granted me a privileged position from which

to interact and engage with different people and establish further rapport (see: Chapter Five). Currently, my research findings contribute to disseminate knowledge about the state of contemporary suburbs, while they are of potential use for the organisation of festivals: they provide a potential research basis upon which festival activities can be further implemented and improved. Indeed, the maps offer not only a vantage point for understanding my research participants' subjective experience of places and festivals: these maps can also be utilised to build a robust and evidence-based festival narrative, with which we can better identify and plan, together with festival organisations, to overcome limitations such as the lack of engagement from particular marginalised communities.

The outcomes of the research could be then used to inform the festival's planning processes and support a more 'inclusive' festival management strategy. The general methodological purpose of this strategy is to highlight the dynamics of existing community assets such as cultural centres, traders' associations, and community and voluntary groups, whilst enhancing the potential for collaboration and synergy at a local level. This entails an approach that is consultative, informed, and democratic, and which considers culture in all of its diverse and collective manifestations, enriching people's cultural and spatial imaginaries (Evans, 2015). Such an approach may provide the basis for citizen empowerment and participation by encompassing a variety of sustainable, locally based, place-making projects that promote neighbourhood-building and more inclusive urban futures, thereby ensuring efficient group collaboration and improved decision-making in urban-scale politics (Chatzinakos, 2020). However, as I argued above, every suburb and area of the city is different, with unique characteristics and particular dynamics. Therefore, even if the methodology presented can be transferred and replicated further, we must be cautious when generalising from the data. In this sense, this thesis represents a call for research to recognise the potential richness of the suburbs and the value of festivals.

## 9.4 Limitations

The contributions made here have wide applicability in Human Geography, Sociology and Critical Event Studies. However, the present research has clearly some limitations that should be acknowledged. This demonstrate the capacity of this thesis to articulate the heterogenous, contested and many times conflicting nature of the suburban condition. To begin with, the particular research methodology that was used for data collection entails ontological limitations. On the one hand, the cultural maps collected from the nine workshops cannot illustrate the full scope of people's experiences during the festivals. A critic might argue that the maps present a 'frozen' picture of people's interpretation of suburban place and culture during a festival. Not surprisingly, this representation was expected to produce a particular vision of reality based on lived experience that was far from objective. In addition, as I became more engaged with the case studies, I started to realise that this flexible methodological framework could be further adapted, applied and reproduced in different contexts, such as at carnivals, markets and fairs, allowing researchers to gather data which can be comparable and compared. Taking this into account, it is very likely that if the workshops had taken place in another place or framework, the results would differ. On the other hand, suburbs are complex entities. This means that it is certainly not possible to map all the exchanges or social relationships that take place within them. Because of this potential limitation Spencer (2015:896) notes that:

> much of the knowledge and understanding of how urban environment influence human activity (and vice versa) can only be extrapolated from smaller scale or indirect observation [...] still, on a city-wide systematic level these questions can never be comprehensively addressed empirically, but instead one can build up fuller pictures from smaller studies. The danger in doing so is making generalisations that are not accurate or representative.

This study also involves another limitation. This emerges from the fact that it only analysed the suburban everyday experience at hand from the perspective of twenty-three festival participants, three festival organisers, and two policymakers. Therefore,

the generalisability of the research, is limited, namely, to people that are engaged with festivals. In addition, the participants in this research presented similar patterns of cultural consumption, in the sense that they share common characteristics: every participant in this research was a festivalgoer and the majority were white British. Finally, in this study there is limited geographical scope. In this light, I have discussed the relationship between suburban place and cultural consumption in relation only to two suburbs and one satellite town of Manchester. As such, it leaves open the question of how such notions are articulated within other places. Further, more geographically ambitious, work may need to be developed in order to address this issue.

## 9.5 Research Implications and Recommendations for Future Studies

This research's ultimate aim was to expand our understandings of everyday suburban life. Given this, my findings have a number of important implications for future studies and highlight how the suburbs possess the potential to become an endless fascination to researchers interested in the everyday life of the city. The suburbs are fundamental elements of the contemporary city. Only by recognising this can we formulate a broader understanding regarding the complexity and fluidity of the city. For this reason, we have to pay close attention to the everyday life of suburbia. This will allow us to keep these places visible in a rapidly changing world and imagine a more sustainable future. I content that a phenomenological approach to 'place' can be considered as more appropriate to capture the instability and complexities of the suburbs, whilst calling into question the dominant conceptions and functionalist approaches to the 'sustainable' (or the 'creative') city. This is achieved by acknowledging the perspective of those who dwell and make that place on an everyday basis. Even though this thesis has focused on one particular way of being in the suburbs, in doing so it opens up new avenues for further inquiry. These stem from the limitations explained above and the challenges that post-industrial cities will continue to face.

As mentioned in the previous section, I have focused only on two suburbs of Manchester and one satellite town, placing a particular emphasis on local geography. In other words, I did not consider other cities, towns and suburbs in the UK or indeed other countries.

Also, I did not collect broader data to do with people's relation to the city centre or to other suburbs. There remains much scope for further enquiry. For example, it is important to remember that Manchester city centre boats a whole range of underground cultural offering, which although are not the focus of this thesis, are also excluded from and often represent a resistance to, the official narrative of the 'creative' city. This aspect of the city was not captured in this research. Given this, and although this research was specific to Manchester, there are multiple opportunities for engaging with other case studies in future research. As I mentioned in Chapter One, there are many different types of suburbs. Even if they are determined by various circumstances such as geographical position, history, demographics and the wider socio-economic and political environment, each suburb should be considered as a unique case. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Manchester has long languished near the bottom of the league tables relating to issues of social deprivation and inequality (Williams, 2003), and it is one of the local authorities with the highest proportion of neighbourhoods among the most deprived in England (English Indices of Deprivation, 2019). These facts in combination with the evidence presented regarding cultural access in the city (see: Chapter Three) raise important challenges regarding the role of culture in place-based sustainability.

Some additional considerations for future research should be highlighted here. As I explained above, the findings are related to specific case studies. In relation to the two suburbs examined, Manchester's city centre is nearby, and both suburbs presented demonstrate the existence of a vibrant socio-cultural life and of leisure alternatives. On the contrary, the suburbs of Rochdale appear less so. My research could, arguably, have been further strengthened by engaging with more geographically remote areas, referred to by my participants as 'the actual suburbia' (see: Chapter Six). Thus, the everyday of the suburbs is highly contested and complicated. Manchester is made up of smaller, identifiable, and often overlapping suburbs with their own particular characteristics and recognisable identities. This leads to specific circumstances, and my findings should be understood within these limits. Therefore, further research should ideally examine a

more extensive range of suburbs by taking into consideration my place-based approach (see: Chapter Two). Thirdly, this study has prioritised the perspective of the people who live in the suburbs. Future studies could usefully identify how people who live in the city centre relate to suburban life or the cultural consumption of suburbia. There is considerable scope to study urban and suburban settings comparatively in order to see whether and how the socio-cultural significance of festivals differs accordingly: so for example future research might look into comparing the nature of social capital development in those parts of the community that engage in festivals, as compared to those that do not. In a similar fashion, research could focus on the suburban daily experiences of people who do not participate in festivals or, more generally on communities who for whatever reason (economic, cultural, religious etc.) do not engage with this or other forms of cultural consumption. In this way, future research would be able to compare how these two categories experience suburban place and how they relate to culture. This would contribute to our understanding about the role festivals play in reinforcing and reproducing existing social relations and inequalities.

In a broader sense, future studies can investigate the wider impact of suburban cultural policies on place-based sustainability, paying attention to those assets who have not received dedication attention in this thesis. What is missing, for example, is an analysis of how festival organisations, including boards and funders, can develop more inclusive events and activities, contributing to community-building. This would provide the foundation for an action research framework when researching suburbs and festivals. Such a project could aim, for example, to (1) highlight the actual policy challenges; (2) create a network of knowledge exchange among suburban festivals; (3) connect them more broadly with the cultural ecosystem of the suburbs and link them to various institutions, charities and private organisations located nearby; and (4) provide a launchpad for fruitful recommendations to local, regional and national governments.

David Harvey (1973: 22) once said that, "the city is manifestly a complicated thing. Part of the difficulty we experience in dealing with it can be attributed to this inherent complexity". Given the overall orientation of this thesis, I make the case for a more

decentralised model of governance. For the reasons that have been discussed and analysed thoroughly in this thesis, I suggest a reframing of the cultural policies that support cultural production and consumption in the suburbs. These policies should take into consideration all forms of high and popular culture and, at the same time, acknowledge the role that culture, and vernacular creativity play in the everyday life of suburbia. Over time these issues have come to be eroded and overshadowed by the dominance of the city centre.

Debates around cultural policy must better understand these processes and how they are expressed outside the centre of the city. Of importance to this debate is the suggestion that the mapping and revitalisation of community spaces and socio-cultural hubs can become more effectively established as a credible means of representing, expressing and sustaining local cultural consumption. Such spaces can highlight their suburbs and project an image of cultural vibrancy much like their central-city counterparts. Bearing this in mind, this discussion highlights a concern about the ever-changing notions of culture and its impact on suburban ways of life. I argue that the impact of cultural consumption might be better understood by grounding consumption practices and focusing upon meaning-making processes, through which people endow their relationship with particular cultural practices, and how the latter are constructed and negotiated in specific places and spaces. This also entails an understanding of how cultural practices and political and economic processes are embedded in particular locales. A key challenge that arises concerns what type of cultural infrastructure should be developed to meet a diverse and dispersed community of people that includes users and non-users of cultural institutions, including professionals and amateurs, established and emerging cultural organisations, as well as newcomers and long-term residents (see: Bain, 2013). As I have sought to show throughout this thesis, people's realities tend to slip into the shadows of dominant models in mainstream cultural policy and literature. The need to address such oversights demands a qualitative approach that is capable of providing sophisticated interpretations of the meaning of everyday suburban life, alongside a more extensive empirical grounding and a clearer theoretical articulation.

Only when researchers recognise that the suburb is an equal constituent part of the city will they be able to confidently come to grips with the full lived complexity of the urban cultural condition: only then can cultural regeneration aspire to facilitate genuinely 'sustainable' ways of life.

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# Appendix One: The Semi-structured Interview Protocol: Festival Directors

## Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival

My name is Giorgos Chatzinakos and as I wrote you in the e-mail, I am a doctoral student in the Department of Operations, Events, Tourism and Hospitality Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. Thank you very much that you agreed to participate in the interview. I am very grateful. I am conducting a research that is titled as **"Places in the Shadows of the City: The Role of Culture in the Production and Consumption of Suburbia".** My aim is to assess the role of suburban communities in shaping the cultural life of the city. In order to do that, I want to talk to different people about their everyday life in the suburbs. I am currently researching the socio-cultural impacts of suburban festivals in Manchester, focusing on aspects of community engagement and participation. After completing a detailed mapping of festivals that take place around Greater Manchester, I came to the conclusion that Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival represents the ideal case study for my research topic. The interview should last for approximately one hour. If at any time you wish to stop or do not want to answer a question, please feel free to tell me. I am going to tape record the interview. No one will hear the recording except me - I will use it to make notes afterwards. However, if you wish not to be recorded, I will just make notes throughout the interview. I will give you now a Participant Information Sheet, that describes my research, and after the interview, I will ask you to sign the Consent Form. At the end of the interview, I would like to discuss with you about the possibility offering you a research dimension to the festival further down the line. Now the intention would be for us to discuss some of the aims and ambitions of the Festival. In the longer term I would be delighted to make any research findings available to you. I have done some research and I saw that you are on the Board of Manchester Literature Festival … You also have mentioned that *Libraries "dusty places of silence" quoting* The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho. What did you meant by that?

So you are working in the festival since 2014. I would like to share with me some info regarding the history behind the festival:

a. Rochdale Borough Council funded by ticket sales and the Maskew Bequest
b. The festival team are excited to be working with a range of local organisations
c. Annie and Frank Maskew, a Rochdale couple who shared a passion for reading and thinking, and who originally met in Rochdale Library.

- So how you make decisions? How do you get organised?
- What is the role of a literature and ideas festival in Rochdale?
- You have said *"It's the Ideas that will be the legacy, especially the idea of incubating local artists."* What did you meant by that?
- It was not very clear to me if the community participates in the co-formulation of the events?
- So more or less the festival functions as a node of bringing different types of interactions together? What type of audiences participate in the festival?
- So more broadly … what does the festival aim to achieve for the local people of Rochdale?

- You have said that “what is unique about Rochdale is a fluidity of co-operation? (2014) What did mean?
- Is the festival curated by you or it is more on what audiences want?
- So, based on your experience so far, what was the major achievement of the festival over the past few years?
- You have stated that you have all the ingredients for a fabulous festival. Which are those? What is the recipe for a successful festival outside the city centre?
- Which kind of people you would like to get involve in terms of audiences?
- How effective are the relationship between the local artists and the organisation? How do you mediate them?
- If you had to start your festival from scratch what would you change?
- What would you like to improve in the festival?
- So again.. I would like to ask you how the festival is meeting local needs and desires?
- What is your connection with Rochdale? Do you live here by the way?
- How do you feel about the culture of Rochdale? I will let you define what culture is, because you are an expert in the field

## Appendix Two: Festival Workshops

| Didsbury Art Festival | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Venue** | **Date** | **Type of Event** |
| 1st Workshop | Fletcher Moss Park | 24.06.2017 | Public Art Exhibition and Music |
| 2nd Workshop | Maker's Market | 25.06.2017 | Open Market and Music |
| 3rd Workshop | Library | 29.06.2017 | Cultural Mapping Workshop |
| **Levi Fringe Festival** | | | |
| | **Venue** | **Date** | **Type of Event** |
| 4th Workshop | Klondyke Club | 01.07.2017 | Festival with Music, Food and Circus |
| 5th Workshop | Klondyke Club | 02.07.2017 | Festival with Music, Food and Circus |
| 6th Workshop | Levinspire | 03.07.2017 | English Class |
| **Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival** | | | |
| | **Venue** | **Date** | **Type of Event** |
| 7th Workshop | Touchstones | 21.10.2017 | Theatrical Play |
| 8th Workshop | Vibe | 22.10.2017 | Music, Literature and Theatre |
| 9th Workshop | Number Ten Gallery | 22.10.2017 | Creative Writing Workshop |

## Appendix Three: Mapping Workshop Participant Information Sheet

# "Mapping Didsbury's Culture"
# Participant Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to take part in my mapping workshop. Before you decide you need to understand why I am conducting this research and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and then decide whether or not to take part. If anything that you will read is not clear or you would like more information, please do not hesitate to ask questions.

- **General Information**

Recent debates around the role of culture in the regeneration and reinvention of the city have tended to neglect our suburban communities. My research is titled as **"Places in the Shadows of the City: The Role of Culture in the Production & Consumption of Suburbia"** and aims to reassess the role of suburban communities in shaping the cultural life of the city. I hope it will prove useful for what is to be understood as a suburban festival and its implications for its hosting community.

- **What do you have to do?**

I would like you to draw in this piece of paper a map of Didsbury. Can you include the culture of Didsbury? I would invite you to use your imagination and creativity open and freely. Trust your own knowledge and memory and paint a picture of your everyday life. I would like to gain an insight into the way you see your place of residence: How do you feel about your Didsburyness? What is important to you, where and how do you spend your free time and where do you socialise? How do you move across space? I wonder how do you feel about your community and how that relates to the festival. Does Didsbury Art Festival really impact your life?

- **Will your participation in the research remain confidential?**

For the purposes of this research, I would like to record some of your personal details (age, postcode). I assure you that all the information which will be collected about you will be kept strictly confidential and I will not reveal any of your personal records. If you agree to take part, your name will not be recorded, and the information will not be disclosed to other parties. Afterwards, I will produce an analysis of the findings, which I am more than happy to send you if you are interested in the topic.

- **Do you have to take part in the research?**

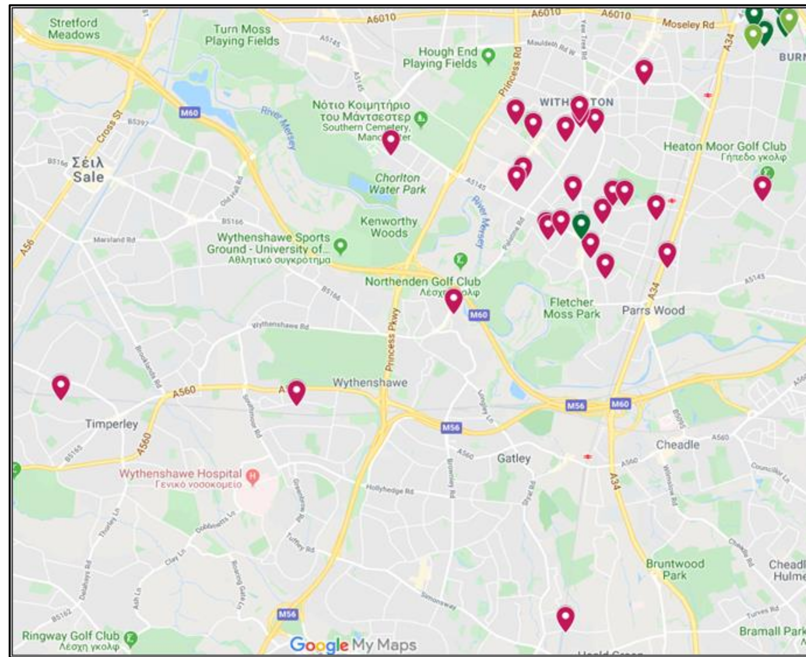
No, your participation in the research is entirely voluntary. Similarly, if you change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time.

- **Why am I doing this research?**

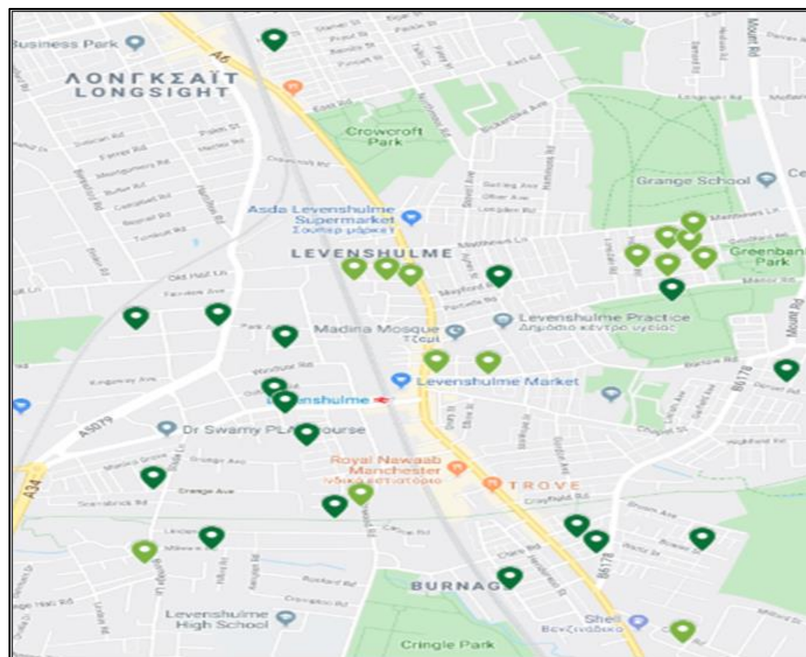
The project is part of my **MPhil/PhD degree** that I am currently undertaking at **Manchester Metropolitan University**

**Thank you very much for sharing your time with me**

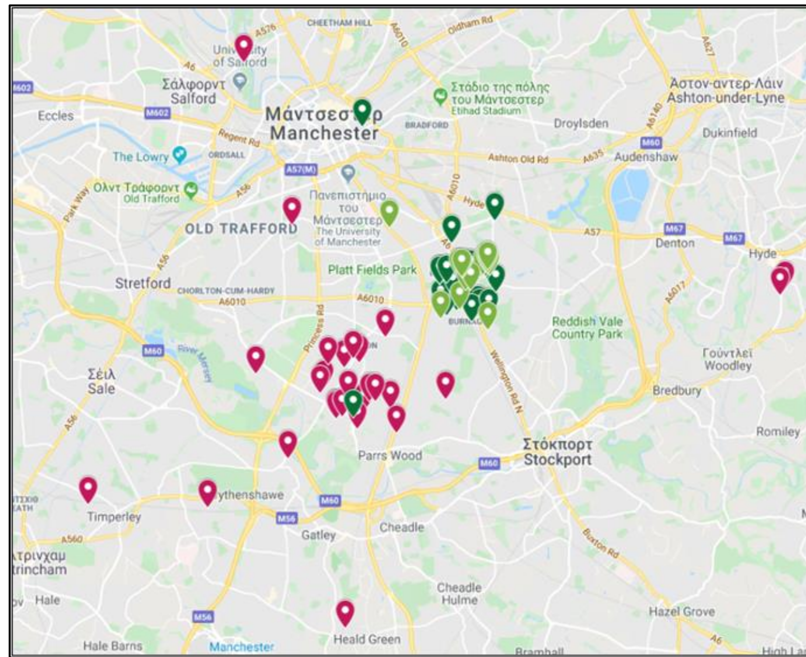
## Appendix Four: Research Participants' Place of Residence



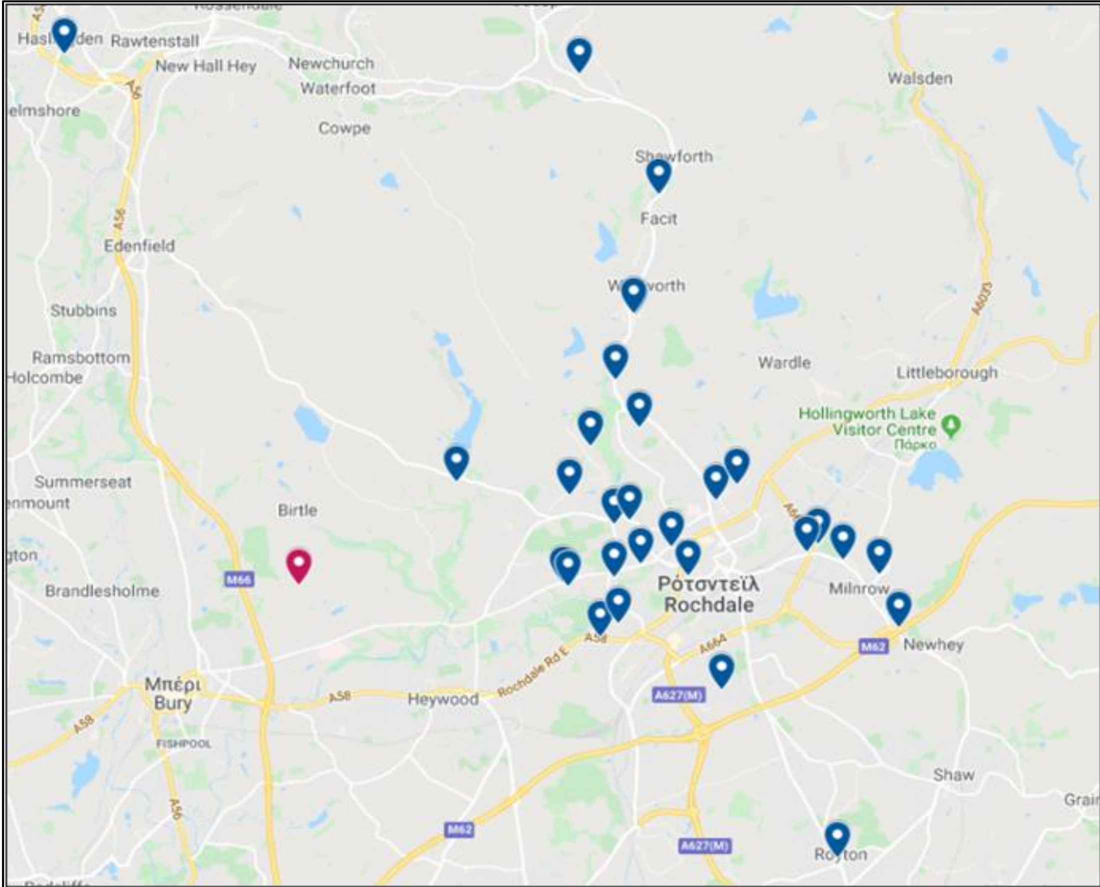

*Map 1: The place of residence of the participants in Didsbury Art Festival (with pink marker)*




*Map 2: The place of residence of the participants in Levi Fringe Festival (with green marker)*




Map 3: The place of residence of the participants in Rochdale Literature and Ideas Festival (with blue marker)




*Map 4: The place of residence of the participants in Didsbury Art Festival (pink) and Levi Fringe Festival (green)*

Map 5: A panoramic view

## Appendix Five: Interviewee Profiles

| Didsbury | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name** | **Age** | **Sex** | **Space** | **Date** |
| Margaret | 32 | Female | Starbucks City Centre | 06.10.2017 |
| Kathryn | 45 | Female | The Art of Tea | 17.10.2017 |
| Alice | 57 | Female | Private House | 20.10.2017 |
| Sarah | 39 | Female | HOME | 12.11.2017 |
| Esther | 73 | Female | Private House | 13.11.2017 |
| Molly | 48 | Female | Private House | 14.11.2017 |
| Beatrice | 60 | Female | Dish and Spoon Café | 16.11.2017 |
| **Levenshulme** | | | | |
| **Name** | **Age** | **Gender** | **Space** | **Date** |
| Aisha | 39 | Female | Arcadia Library | 14.10.2017 |
| Annabel | 26 | Female | Levenshulme Antiques Village | 15.10.2017 |
| Caren | 35 | Female | Manchester Central Library | 20.10.2017 |
| Doreen | 68 | Female | Levinspire | 24.10.2017 |

| Pierre | 31 | Male | The Buttery | 25.10.2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Steven | 38 | Male | Trove | 25.10.2017 |
| **Rochdale** | | | | |
| **Name** | **Age** | **Gender** | **Space** | **Date** |
| Eleanor | 68 | Female | Rochdale Central Library | 16.02.2018 |
| Elvira | 73 | Female | Touchstones | 16.02.2018 |
| Margery | 53 | Female | Touchstones | 16.02.2018 |
| Chloe | 42 | Female | Manchester Central Library | 17.02.2018 |
| Kumar | 38 | Male | Manchester Central Library | 17.02.2018 |
| Eddie | 70 | Male | Yates Pub | 19.02.2018 |
| Lavinia | 66 | Female | Flying Horse Pub | 20.02.2018 |
| Jack | 56 | Male | Workspace | 21.02.2018 |
| Oliver | 60 | Male | The Vibe | 22.02.2018 |
| Fatima | 35 | Female | Seven Sisters | 22.02.2018 |

## Appendix Six: The Semi-structured Interview Protocol: Festival Participants

My name is Giorgos Chatzinakos and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Operations, Events, Tourism and Hospitality Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. My research is titled as "Places in the Shadows of the City: The Role of Culture in the Production and Consumption of Suburbia" and aims to assess the role of suburban communities in shaping the cultural life of the city. In order to do that, I am talking to different people about their everyday experiences in the suburbs. Thank you once again for participating in my mapping workshop and thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. I am very grateful. The interview should last for approximately one hour. If at any time you wish to stop or do not want to answer a question, please feel free to tell me. I am going to tape record the interview. No one will hear the recording except me - I will use it to make notes afterwards. However, if you wish not to be recorded, I will just make notes throughout the interview. I will give you a Participant Information Sheet, that describes my research, and after the interview, I will ask you to sign the Consent Form.

**Doing Festivals**

- To start, I brought with me your map. It looks very nice by the way. You have already told me some information but can you please reflect on what you have drawn?
- When you drew this map you had told me... would you like to add something today?
- Did this experience influenced you somehow?
- So, looking back in time, do you remember your day/s in the festival? How was it?
- What motivated you to visit the festival? Can you share with me your experience?
- What is your opinion about the festival?
- Does the festival has any role in bringing about a different atmosphere in your area?
- If you were able to suggest something to the festival organisers, what this would be?

**Doing Suburbia**

- Tell me about your place of residence. Can you describe it?
- Can you please describe me a typical day in case study in as much detail as possible. Or What are you doing during your everyday life? Could you tell me a bit about your life in case study? How do you regularly spend your leisure time?
- How is your life in case study?
- What about the street you live on? Is there something special?
- How long have you been in *case study?*
- Why actually did you choose to live here?
- Do you like it here?
- There are some people that say life in the suburbs is boring … is that true?
- Are you engaged in any social activities? Why these particular activities?

- Is there anything special about case study?
- Please describe the physical aspects (natural environment) of case study.
- So … what are the positive and negative aspects of living in *case study?* What do you like the most and what do you like the less about case study?
- What are your favourite places in case study? Why are they important to you? Do you use any actual spaces in case study? For instance, where do you buy your food from or from where do you shop?
- Do you have any other social network outside *case study?*
- What would you desire to see happening in your area of residence?
- Are you satisfied with your life?
- Do you visit any other suburb?

**Doing Culture**

- Do you visit any other cultural facilities? (e.g. library, community centres)
- What is your relationship to the city centre?
- Do you travel to the city centre often? And if yes, how and what for?
- How do you feel going to the city centre?
- Do you visit any cultural venues in the city centre? Why do you do that? Tell me about your experience in (e.g. Bridgewater Hall etc.).
- Do you undertake any activities in the city centre?
- What do you think about the culture of Manchester?

  To conclude, I would like to ask a few personal details about yourself. (Age, employment status, post code, previous residence, how long you live in case study, etc).

**Conclusion**

Thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview! This was very helpful for my research, since it is very important for me to learn about different experiences on and opinions about suburban life. Please read this consent form, tick the boxes as appropriate and sign the form. If you have any questions about my research, please feel free to ask any time.

## Appendix Seven: Interview Information Sheet

# Participant Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to take part in my research. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being conducted and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

### General Information

My research is titled as **"Places in the Shadows of the City: The Role of Culture in the Production & Consumption of Suburbia"**. It aims to reassess the role of suburban communities in shaping the cultural life of the city. To that end, I consider you as the most appropriate person that is able to provide me with the necessary information.

### How much of your time will participation involve?

I would like to ask you some questions in one, single interview. The interview is expected to last no longer than 60 minutes and is a one-off event. When I will complete the research, I will produce an analysis of the findings, which I am more than happy to send you if you are interested in the topic.

### Will your participation in the research remain confidential?

If you agree to take part, your name will not be recorded and the information will not be disclosed to other parties. All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses to the questions will be used for the purpose of this research only and I will not have access to any of your personal records. After the completion of the project, I will delete the recording.

### Do you have to take part in the research?

No, your participation in the research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to answer all of my questions. Similarly, if you do agree to participate you are free to withdraw at any time during the interview if you change your mind.

### Why am I doing this project?

The research is part of my **MPhil/PhD** degree that I am currently undertaking **at Manchester Metropolitan University.**

**Thank you very much for sharing your time with me**

## Appendix Eight: Informed Consent Form

### Informed Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. This form explains your rights as an interviewee. If you have any queries about the project, I can be contacted at the Manchester Metropolitan University, Department of Operations, Technology, Events & Hospitality Management, which is located in the All Saints campus in Oxford Rd. If you would like to speak to a senior member of staff, Dr. Louise Platt is my supervisor. Her e-mail is: l.platt@mmu.ac.uk

**These are your Rights as an Interviewee:**

- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time
- You are free to refuse to answer any questions.
- Information obtained about you during the interview will be kept anonymous.
- Parts of the interview may be included in the final report, but your name will not.
- I will not pass your name or contact details on to any third party.
- I will keep your data safe from others not directly connected with the research.
- I will delete the recording at the end of the research.

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that
I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason,
without my legal rights being affected ☐

I agree to take part in the above study ☐

I agree to the use of audio-recording during the interview ☐

**Please Complete your Contact Details:**

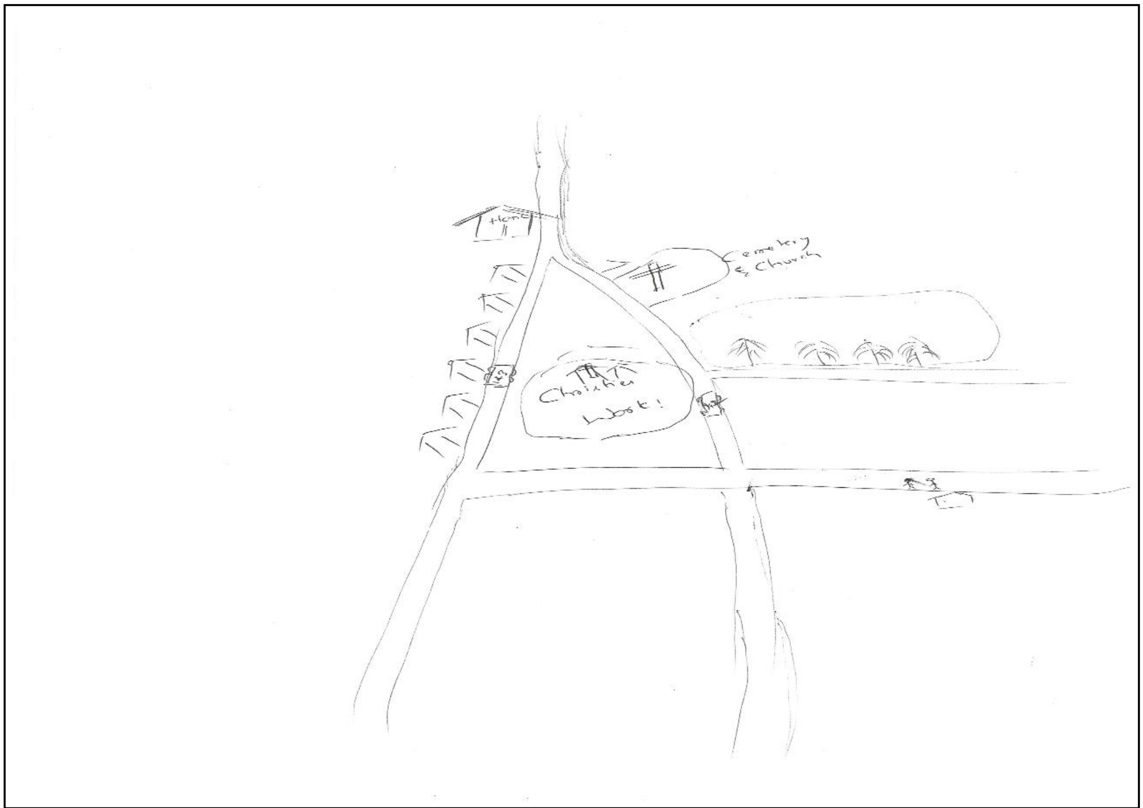
Name: ______________________________
Date of Birth: ______________________________
Post Code: ______________________________
E-mail: ______________________________
Date: ______________________________

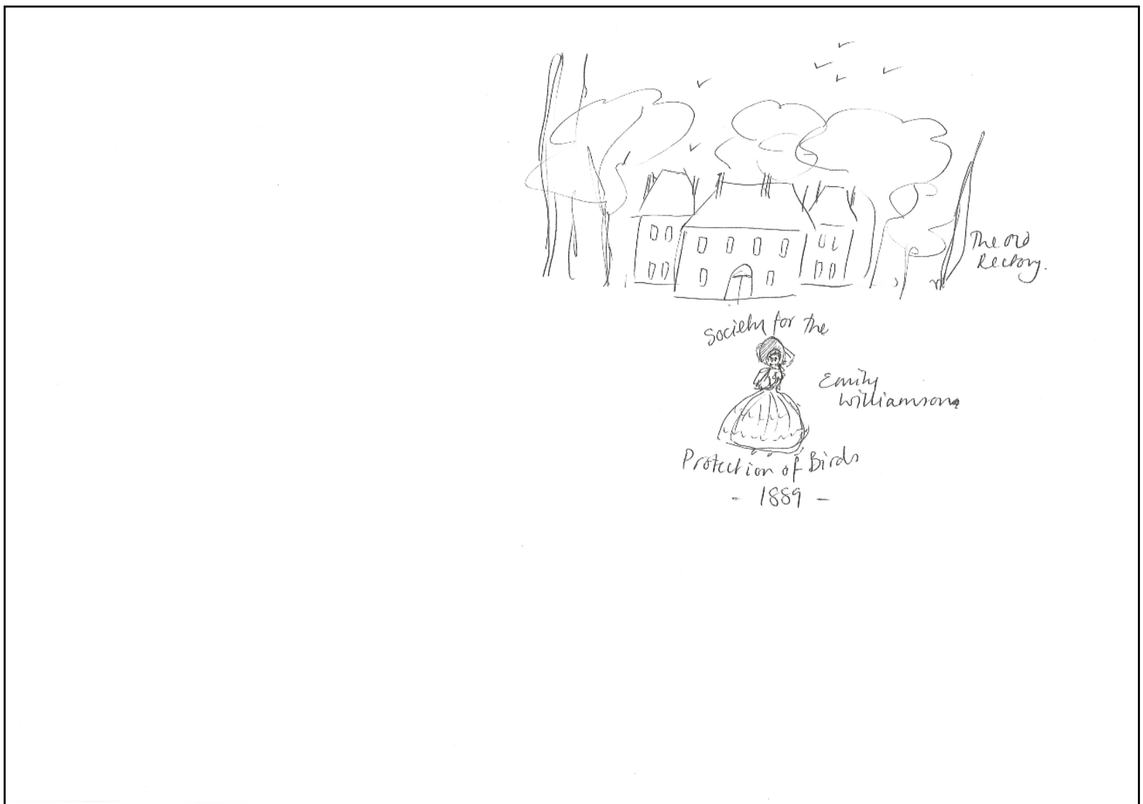
Signature:

Manchester
Metropolitan
University

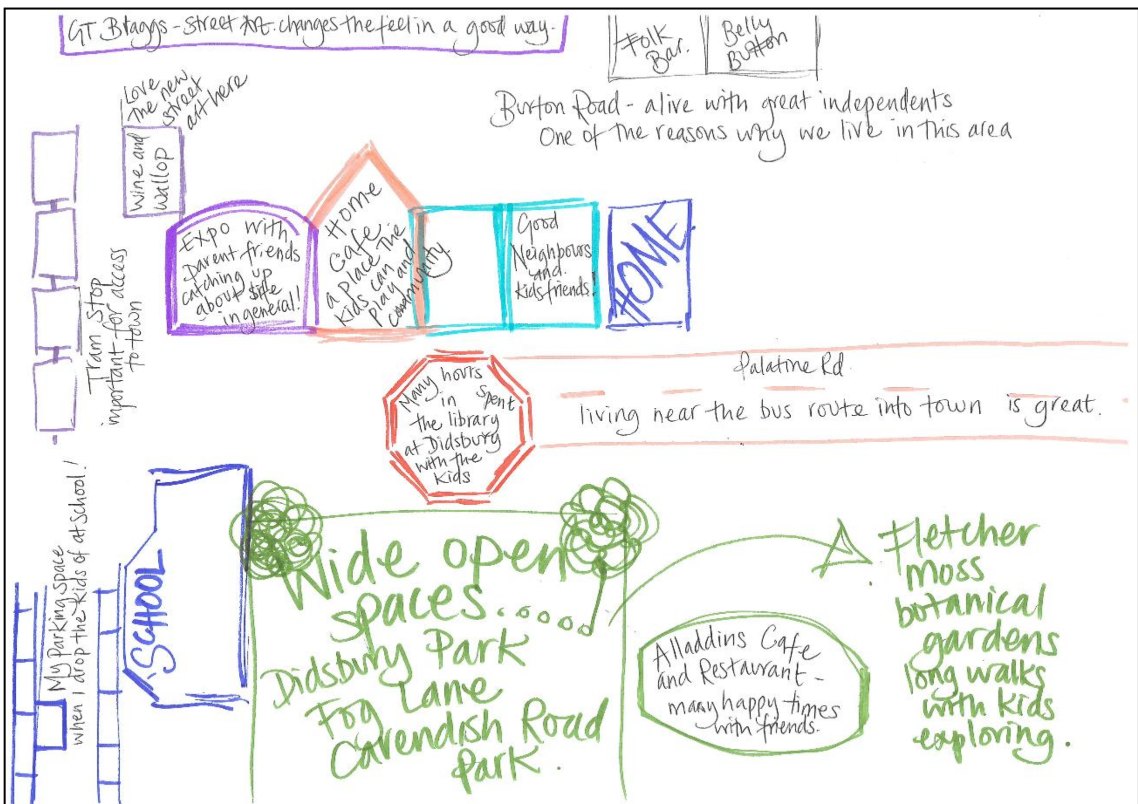
## Appendix Nine: Cultural Maps

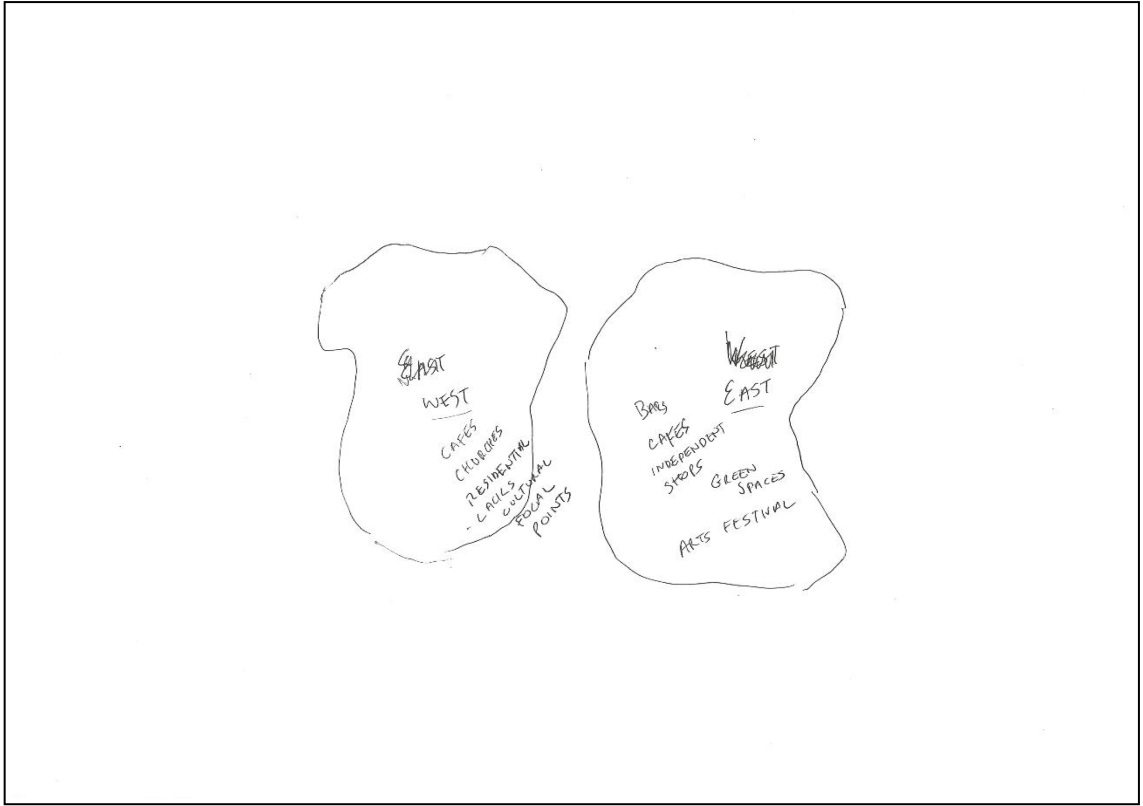
# Didsbury


Cemetery
& Church

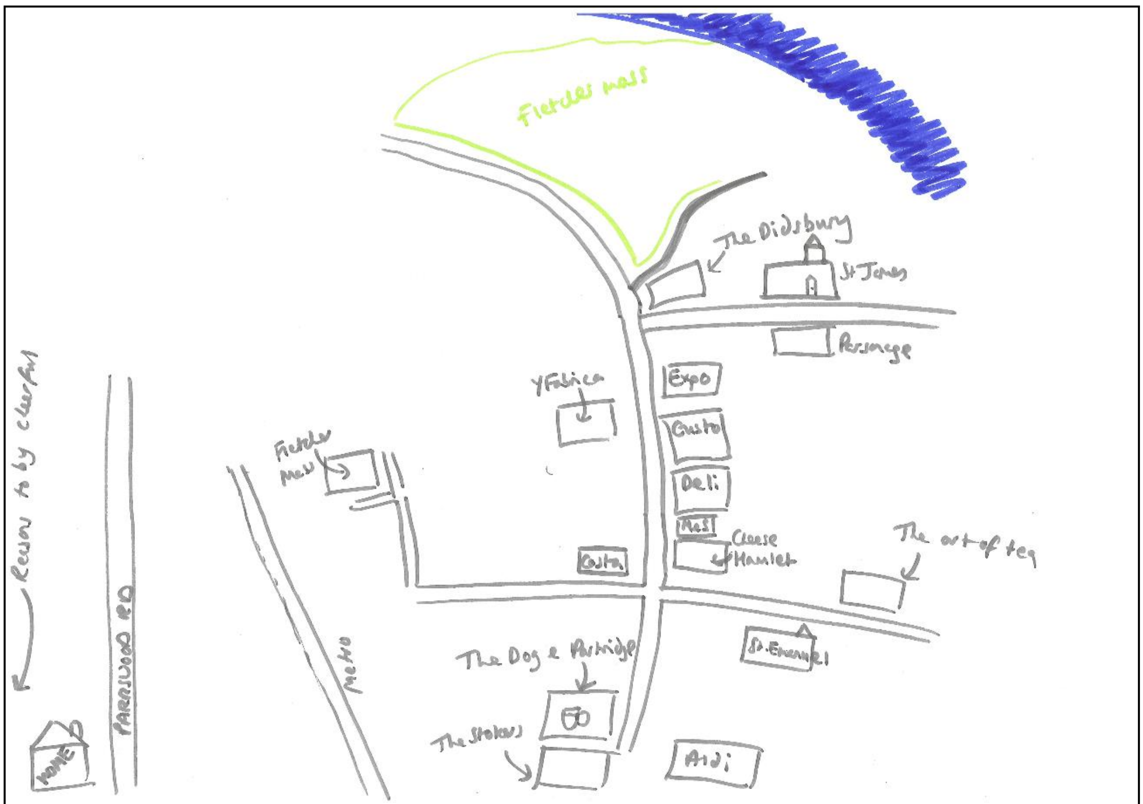

The old
Rectory.
Society for the
Emily
Williamson
Protection of Birds
- 1889 -

The Parsonage Trust
Didsbury Village
The Olde
Inn
The Didsbury


GT Braggs - Street Art changes the feel in a good way.
Folk Bar.
Belly Button
Love the new street art here
Wine and wallop
Burton Road - alive with great independents
One of the reasons why we live in this area
Expo with parent friends catching up about life in general!
Home Cafe, a place the kids can play and community
Good Neighbours and kids friends!
HOME
Tram stop important for access to town
Palatine Rd
Many hours spent in the library at Didsbury with the kids
living near the bus route into town is great.
My parking space when I drop the kids of at School!
SCHOOL
Wide open spaces....
Didsbury Park
Fog Lane
Cavendish Road Park.
Alladdins Cafe and Restaurant - many happy times with friends.
Fletcher Moss botanical gardens long walks with kids exploring.



WEST
CAFES
CHURCHES
RESIDENTIAL
- LACKS CULTURAL FOCAL POINTS
EAST
BARS
CAFES
INDEPENDENT SHOPS
GREEN SPACES
ARTS FESTIVAL

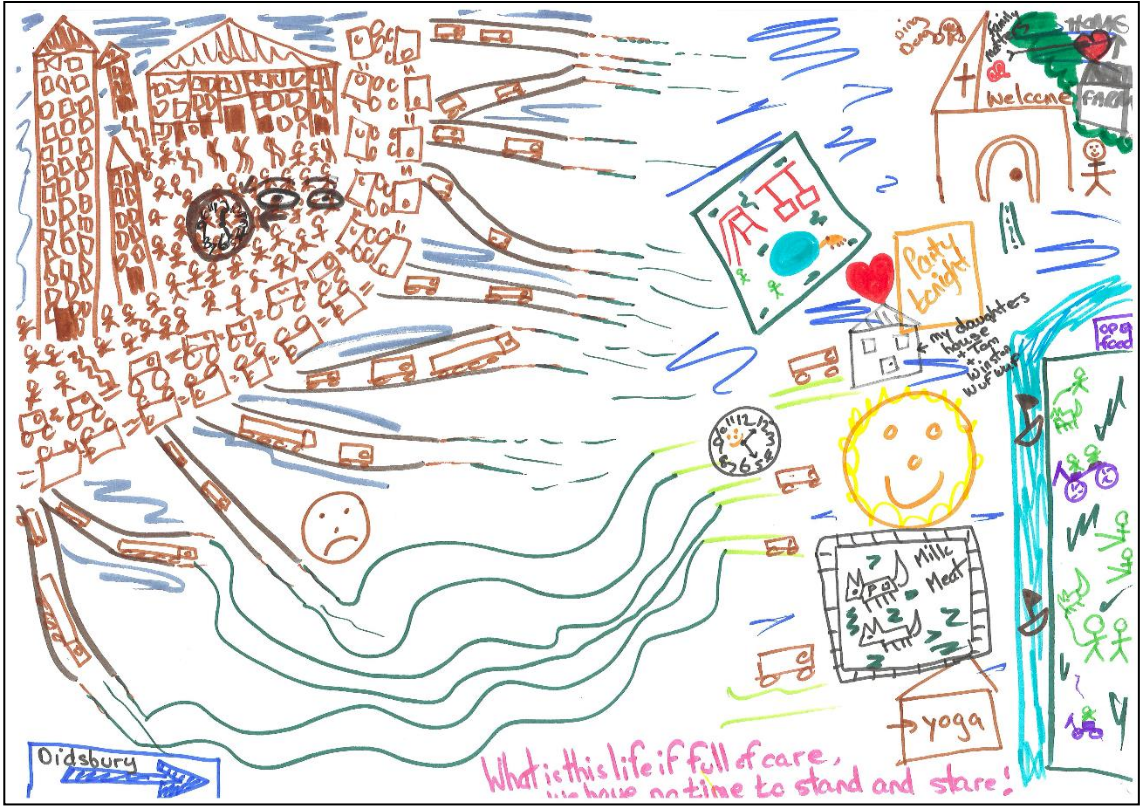



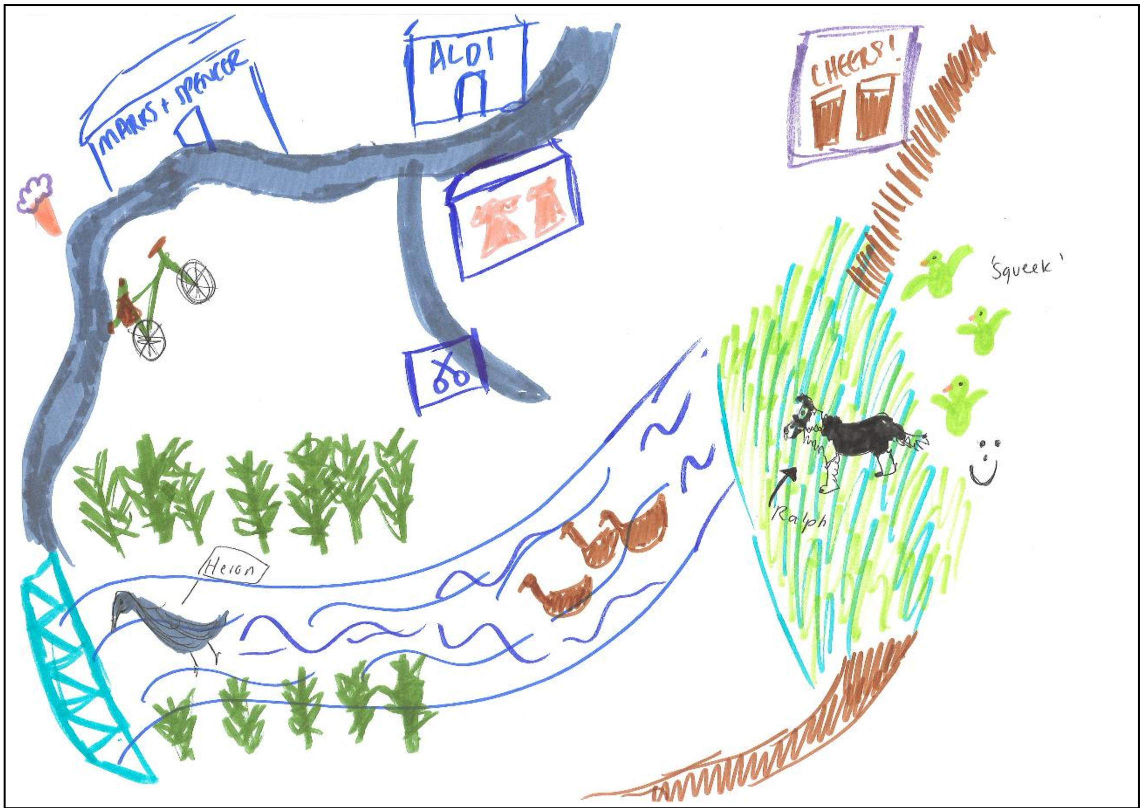
The Didsbury
St James
Parsonage
Expo
Gusto
Deli
Cheese Hamlet
The art of tea
Costa
Metro
PARRSWOOD RD
HOME
The Dog & Partridge
Aldi

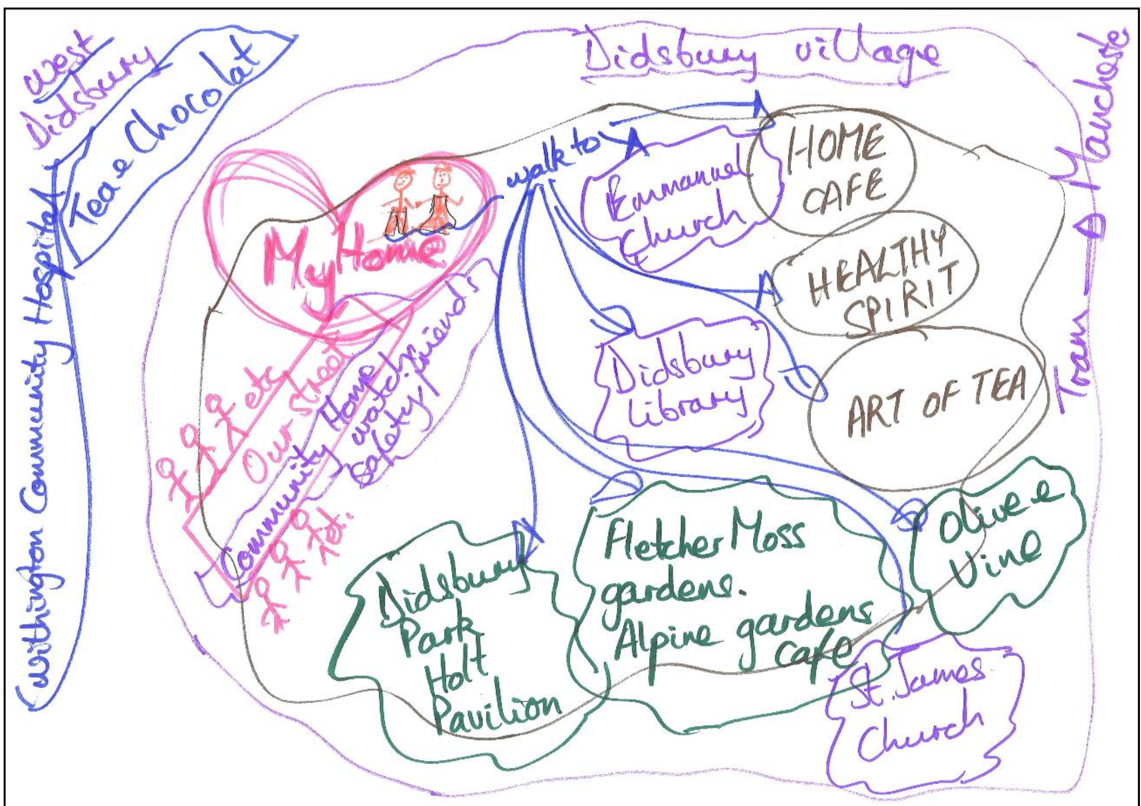
SHOPS
PARK

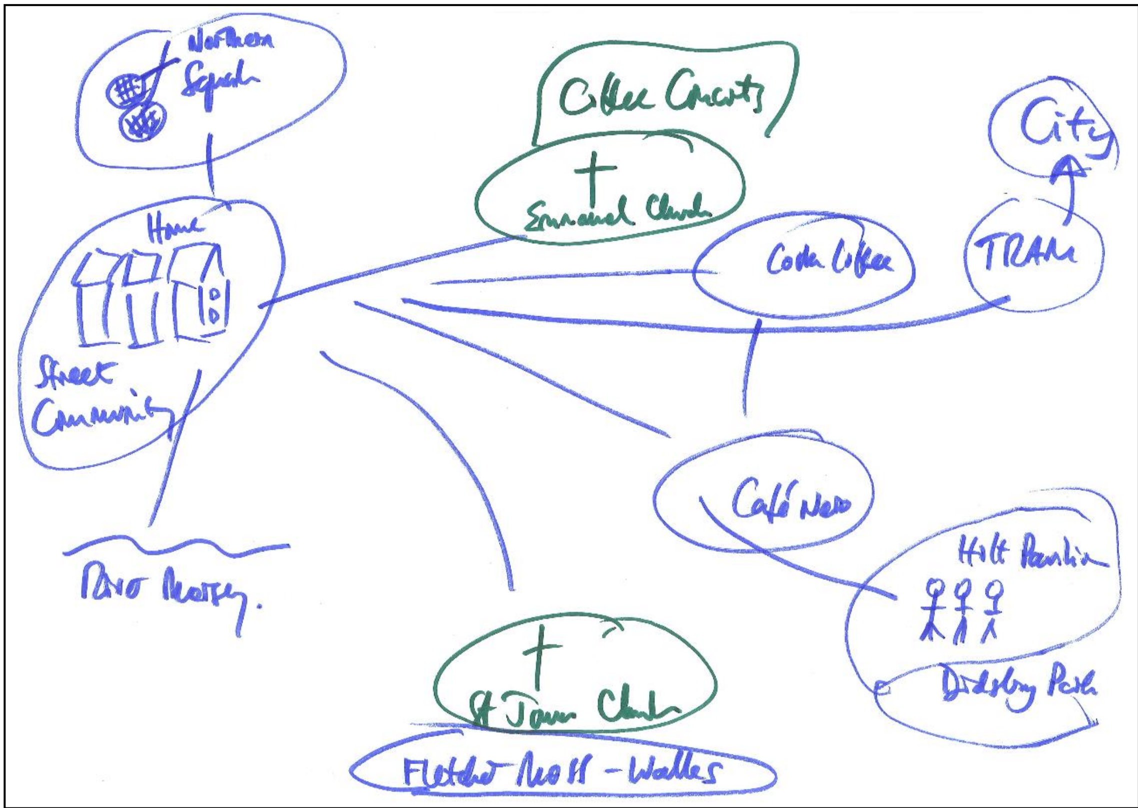
Fallowfield
Withington
Aldi
Didsbury Park
LA CANTINA
Thyme out
Coop
With. Hosp.

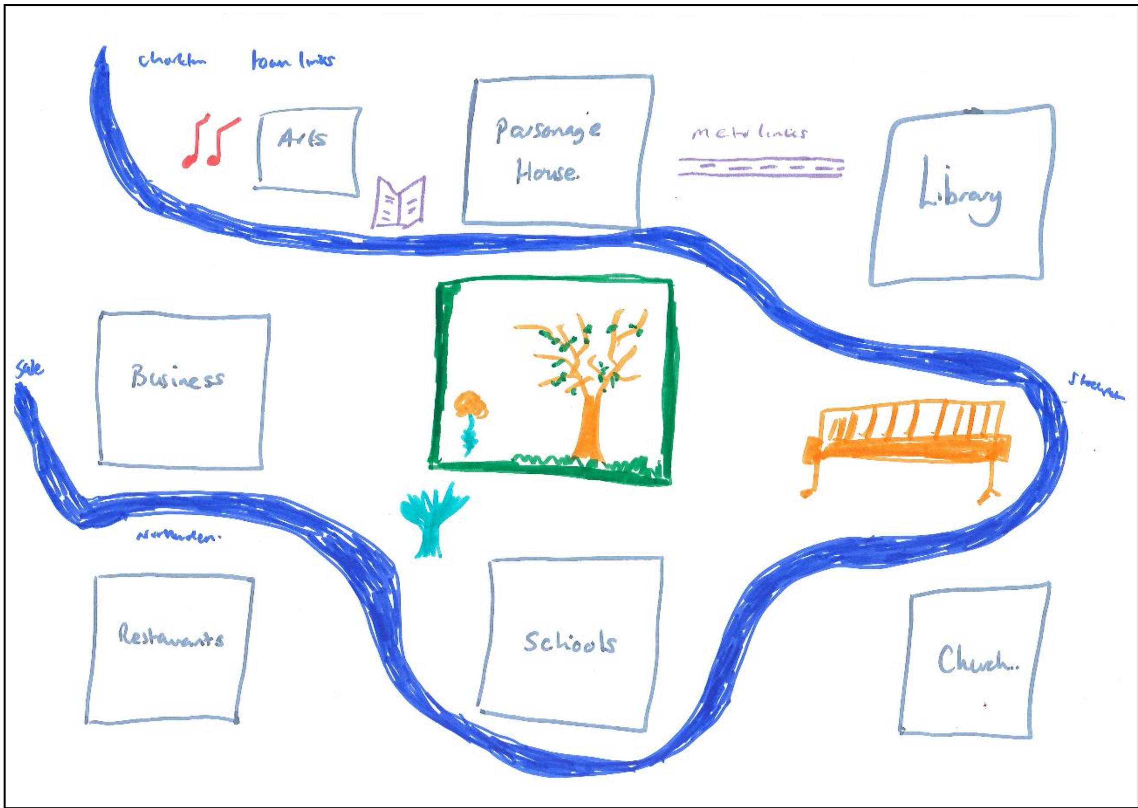
DIDSBURY LIBRARY
DRAWING CLUB
HOME COMMUNITY CAFE
DRAWING CLUB
COMMUNITY GARDEN
WITH LOTS OF
BUZZING BEES!
THE ART OF TEA
HEALTH SPIRIT SHOP AND CAFE
RIVER MERSEY
FLETCHER MOSS PARK
THE DIDSBURY
DIDSBURY PARK
THE PAVILION
CAFE IN THE PARK
GRASS
GARDENS PARK
GRASS

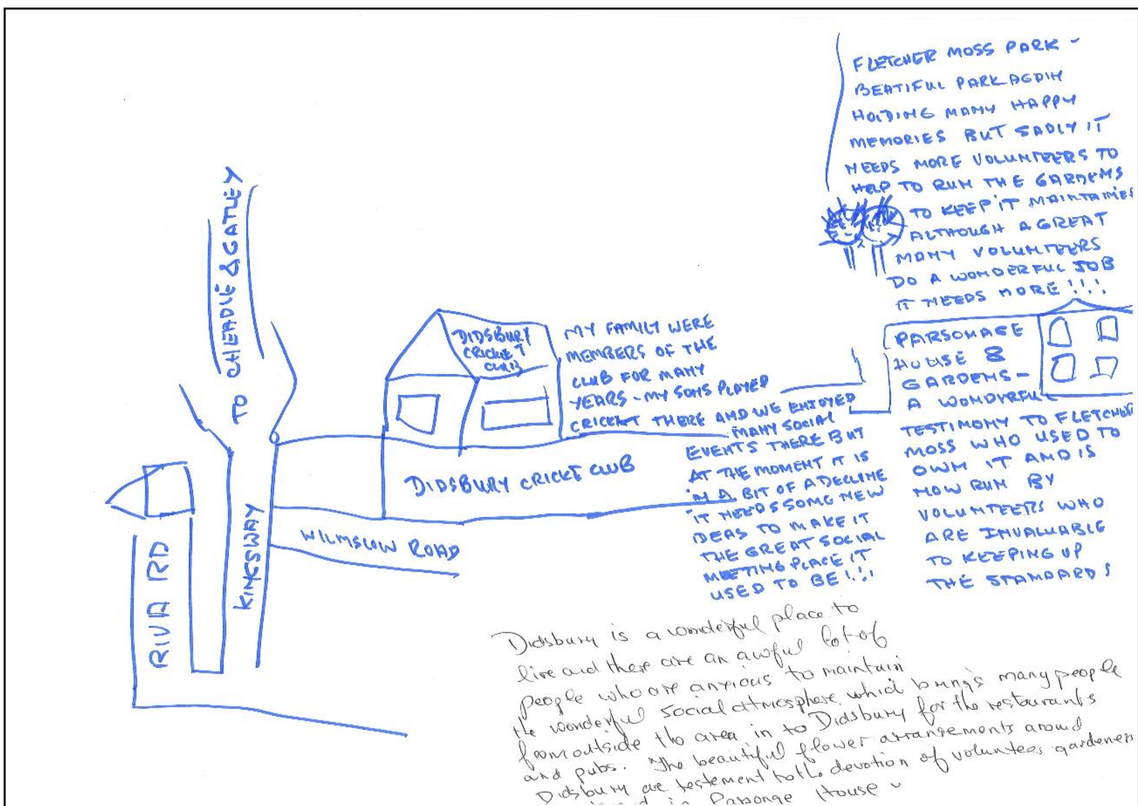

Ding Dong
family
Welcome
Party tonight
← my daughters house + Tom + Winston WuF WuF
Milk
Meat
yoga
Didsbury
What is this life if full of care,
we have no time to stand and stare!

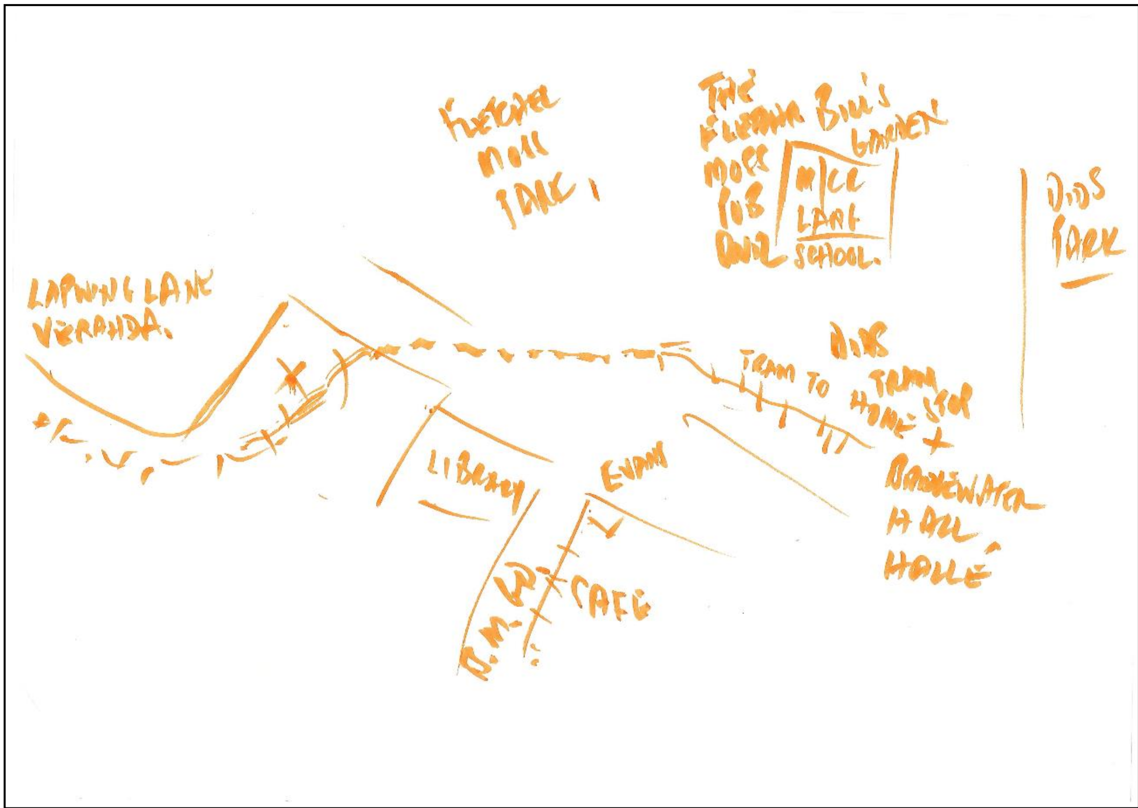

MARKS + SPENCER
ALDI
CHEERS!
'Squeek'
Heron
Ralph


West Didsbury
Tea & Chocolat
Didsbury village
Withington Community Hospital
My Home
walk to
Emmanuel Church
HOME CAFE
HEALTHY SPIRIT
Didsbury Library
ART OF TEA
Tram
etc
Our street
Community Home watch, friends, safety
etc.
Didsbury Park Holt Pavilion
Fletcher Moss gardens.
Alpine gardens cafe
Olive & Vine
St. James Church

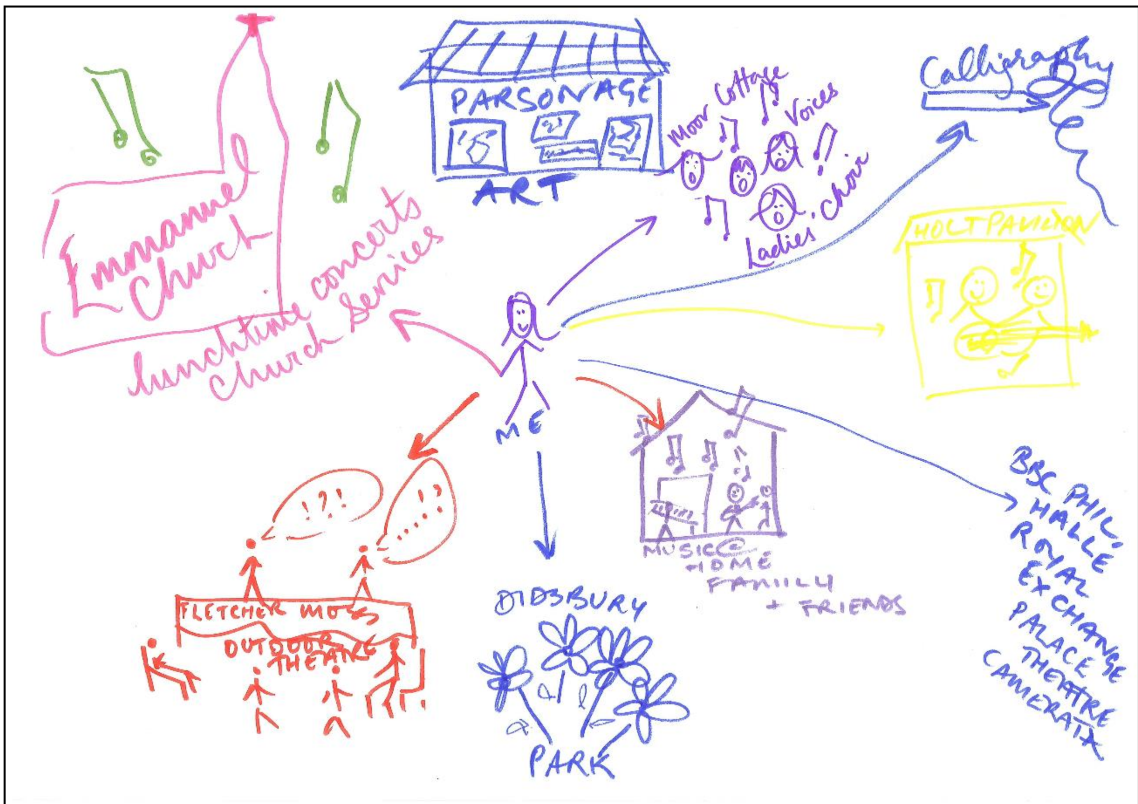

City
TRAM
Home
Street Community
Café Nero
Didsbury Park


Chorlton
tram links
Arts
Parsonage House.
metro links
Library
Business
Sale
Stockport
Northenden.
Restaurants
Schools
Church..

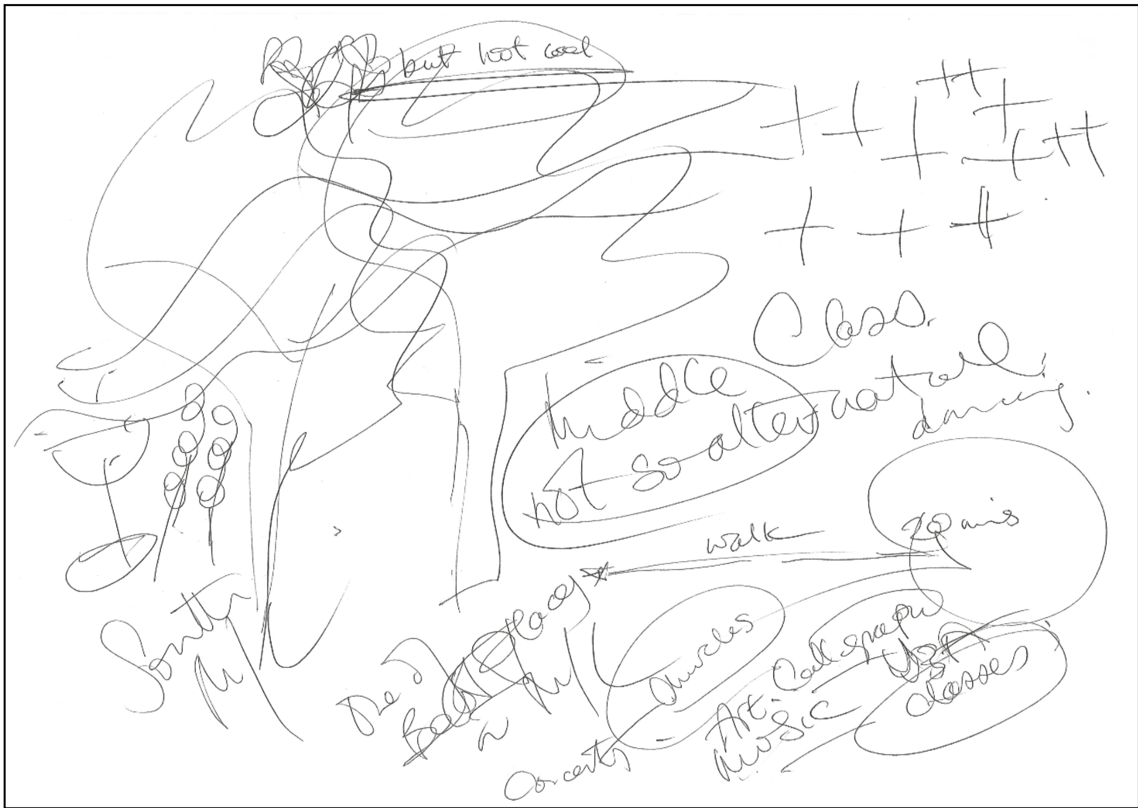

FLETCHER MOSS PARK - BEATIFUL PARK AGAIN HOLDING MANY HAPPY MEMORIES BUT SADLY IT NEEDS MORE VOLUNTEERS TO HELP TO RUN THE GARDENS TO KEEP IT MAINTAINED ALTHOUGH A GREAT MANY VOLUNTEERS DO A WONDERFUL JOB IT NEEDS MORE !!!
TO CHEADLE & GATLEY
DIDSBURY CRICKET CLUB
MY FAMILY WERE MEMBERS OF THE CLUB FOR MANY YEARS - MY SONS PLAYED CRICKET THERE AND WE ENJOYED MANY SOCIAL EVENTS THERE BUT AT THE MOMENT IT IS IN A BIT OF A DECLINE IT NEEDS SOME NEW IDEAS TO MAKE IT THE GREAT SOCIAL MEETING PLACE IT USED TO BE !!!
PARSONAGE HOUSE & GARDENS - A WONDERFUL TESTIMONY TO FLETCHER MOSS WHO USED TO OWN IT AND IS NOW RUN BY VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE INVALUABLE TO KEEPING UP THE STANDARDS
DIDSBURY CRICKET CLUB
KINGSWAY
WILMSLOW ROAD
RIVA RD
Didsbury is a wonderful place to live and there are an awful lot of people who are anxious to maintain the wonderful social atmosphere which brings many people from outside the area in to Didsbury for the restaurants and pubs. The beautiful flower arrangements around Didsbury are testement to the devotion of volunteer gardeners
Parsonage House



LAPWING LANE
VERANDA.
FLETCHER
MOSS
PARK
DIDS
PARK
MILL
LANE
SCHOOL.
TRAM TO
HOME
DIDS
TRAM
STOP
LIBRARY
CAFE
BRIDGEWATER
HALL
HALLÉ

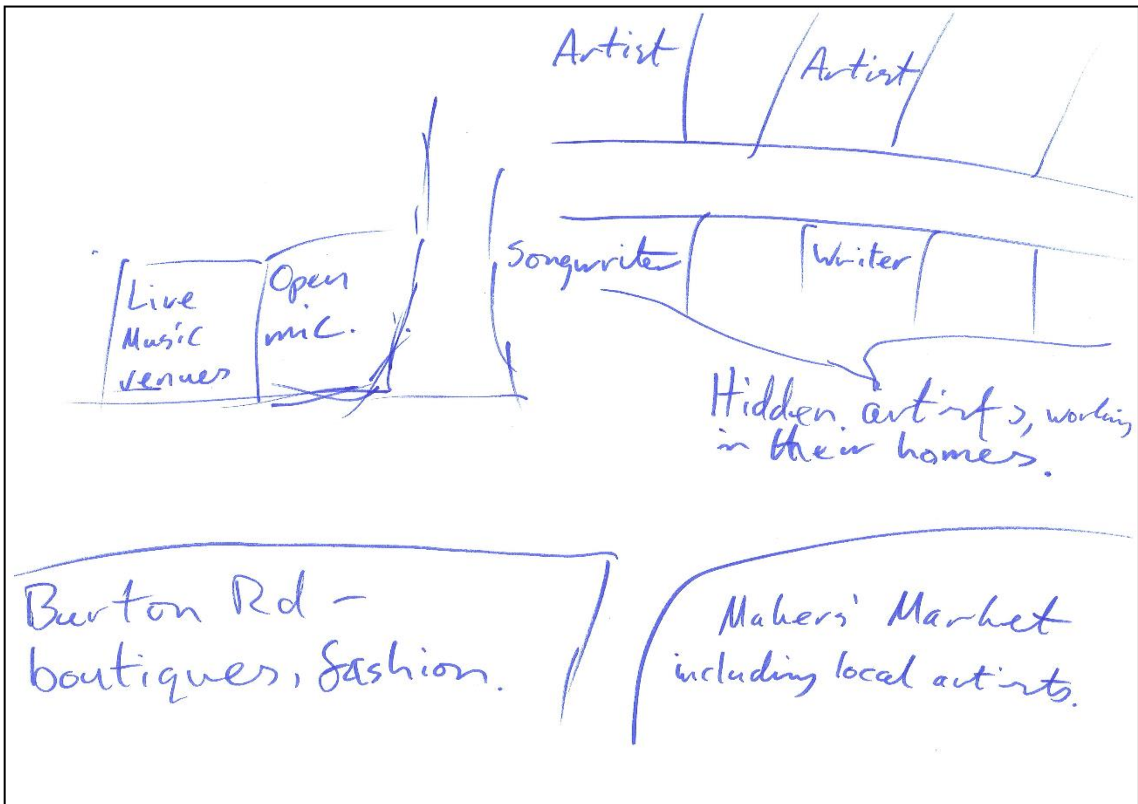



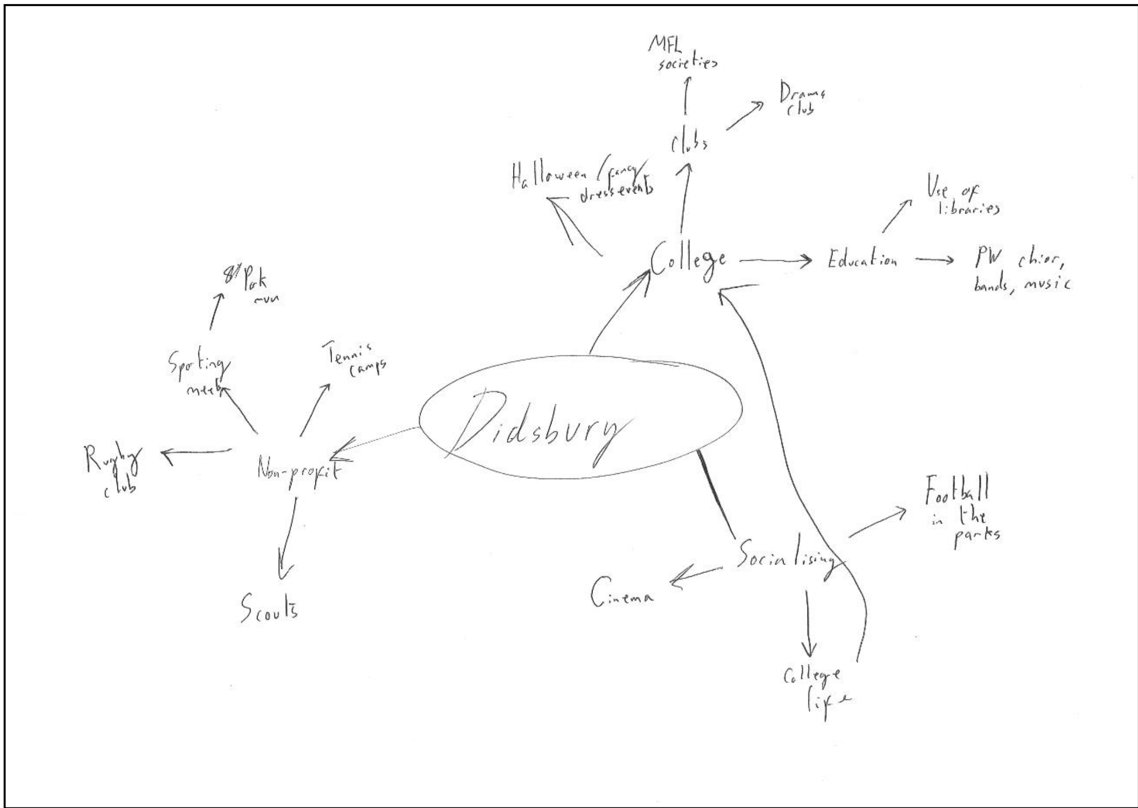
Emmanuel
Church
lunchtime concerts
Church Services
PARSONAGE
ART
Moor Cottage
Voices
Ladies' Choir
Calligraphy
HOLT PAVILION
ME
FLETCHER MOSS
OUTDOOR THEATRE
DIDSBURY
PARK
MUSIC @ HOME
FAMILY
+ FRIENDS
BBC PHIL
HALLE
ROYAL
EXCHANGE
PALACE
THEATRE
CAMERATA

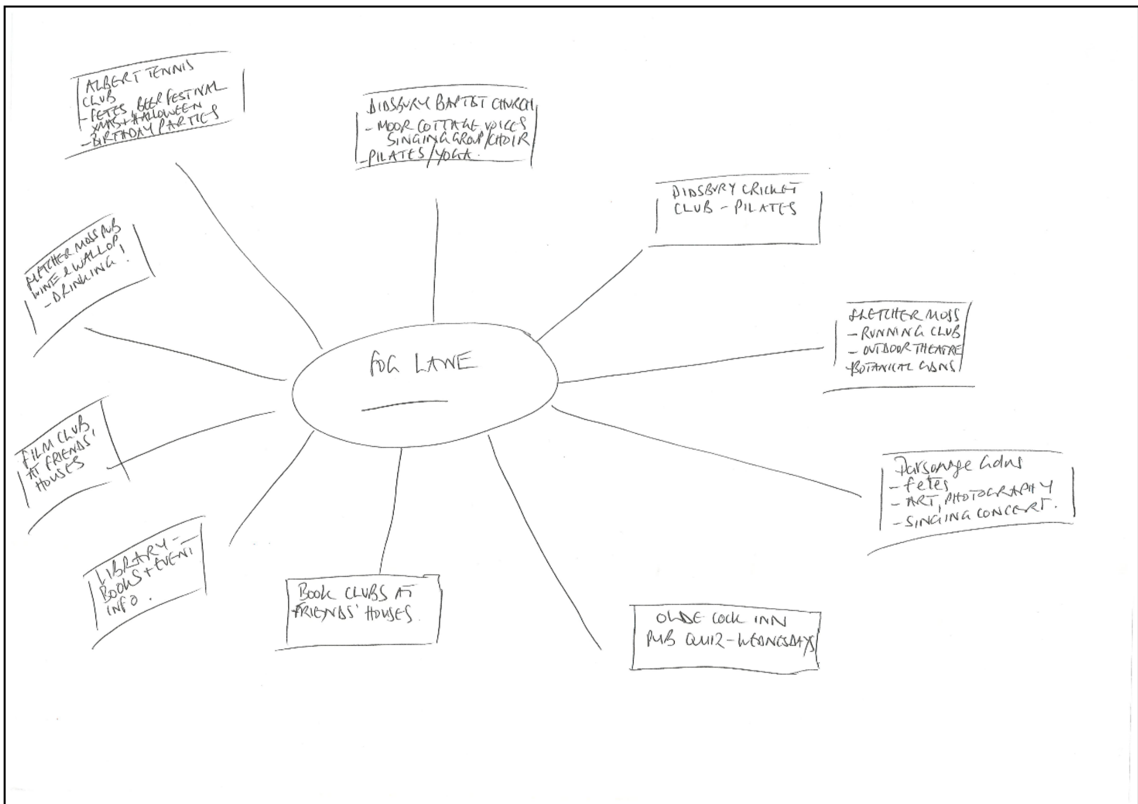

Class.
middle
not so alternative
dancing.
walk
20 mins
Churches
Art.
Music
classes
Concerts

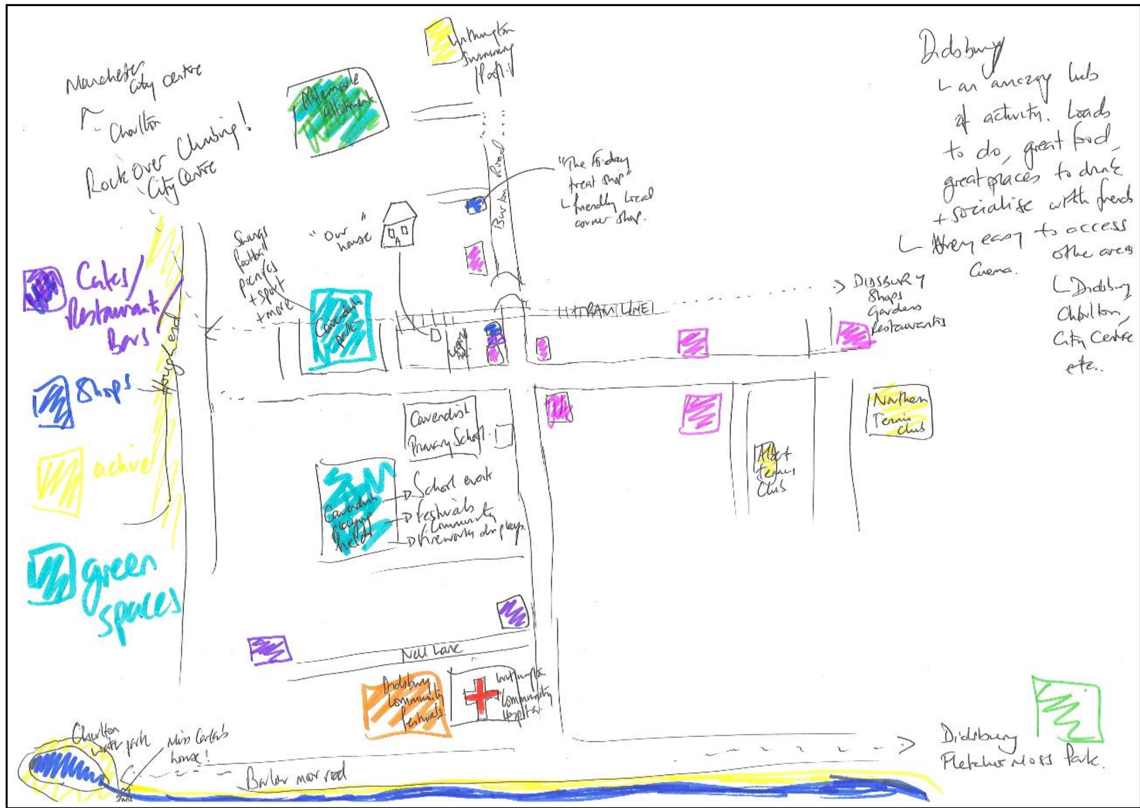
S H O P S
Didsbury
Churches
Together.
Caring.
Pub culture
Quick change
culture
-shops in + out.
Primary +
High Schools
Parks
Family
orientated.
Middle class
with working
class
Children
workers EYFS.
FOOD, Beauty + Health,
family, arts, Coffee.
Culture.
Nazarene.
Theological
College.
Community
Clean ups.
Good Neighbours.
Young
Professionals
Didsbury
Community
Church.
Gardens
Staff @ Home.
Didsbury Heritage.
Basin in Fletchers.
Nothing of
value if its
free.

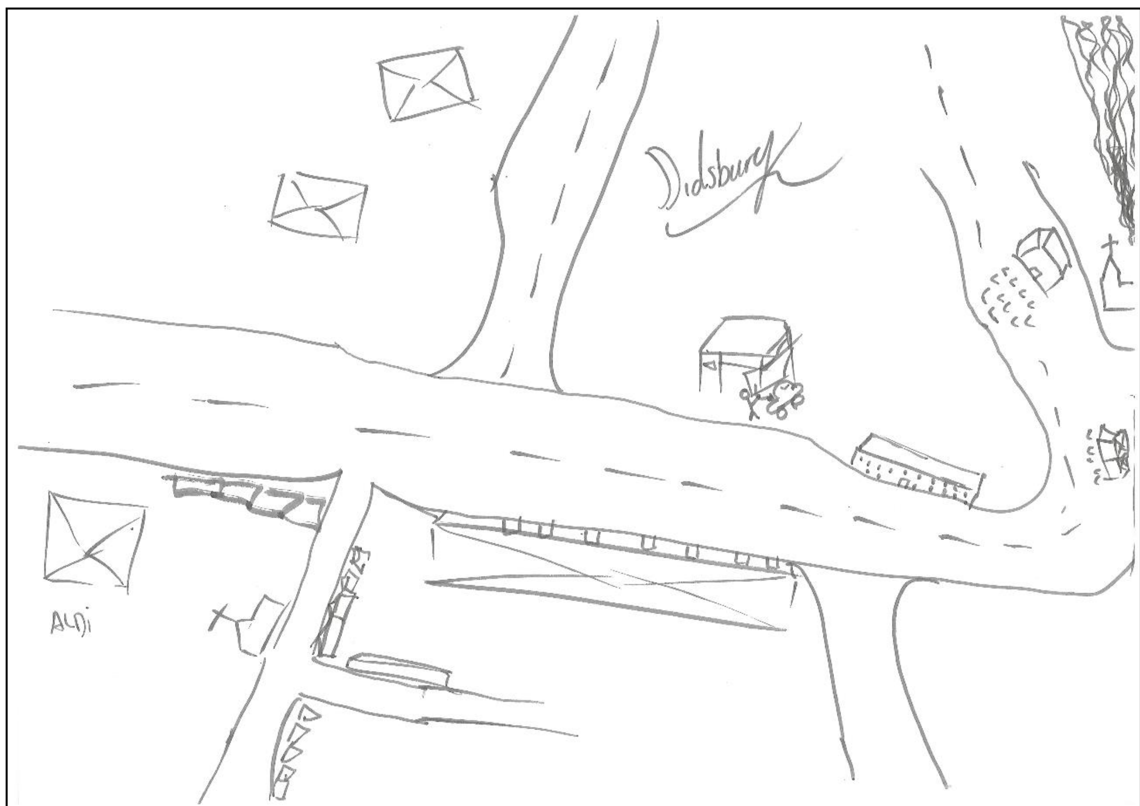
= entertainment
= high schools (I'm a youth worker)
= places of worship significant to me
= green spaces
to Northenden
Withington
KINGSWAY
Barlow Rd
Parrs Wood cinema etc
Heatons


Artist
Artist
Songwriter
Writer
Live Music venues
Open mic.
Hidden artists, working in their homes.
Burton Rd - boutiques, fashion.
Makers' Market including local artists.


MFL societies
Drama club
clubs
Halloween/fancy dress events
Use of libraries
College
Education
PW choir, bands, music
Park run
Sporting meets
Tennis camps
Didsbury
Rugby club
Non-profit
Football in the parks
Socialising
Cinema
Scouts
College life


ALBERT TENNIS CLUB
- FETES, BEER FESTIVAL
XMAS + HALLOWEEN
- BIRTHDAY PARTIES
DIDSBURY BAPTIST CHURCH
- MOOR COTTAGE VOICES SINGING GROUP/CHOIR
- PILATES/YOGA
DIDSBURY CRICKET CLUB - PILATES
FLETCHER MOSS PUB
WINE & WALLOP
- DRINKING!
FLETCHER MOSS
- RUNNING CLUB
- OUTDOOR THEATRE
BOTANICAL GDNS
FOG LANE
FILM CLUB AT FRIENDS' HOUSES
Parsonage Gdns
- fetes
- ART, PHOTOGRAPHY
- SINGING CONCERT.
LIBRARY - BOOKS + EVENT INFO.
Book CLUBS AT FRIENDS' HOUSES
OLDE COCK INN
PUB QUIZ - WEDNESDAYS


Manchester City centre
Chorlton
Rock Over Climbing!
City Centre
Cafes/ Restaurant Bars
Shops
active
green spaces
"Our house"
Cavendish Primary School
School events
festivals
Nell Lane
Didsbury
DIDSBURY Shops Gardens Restaurants
Northern Tennis club
Didsbury Fletcher Moss Park.
Barlow moor road


Didsbury
ALDi

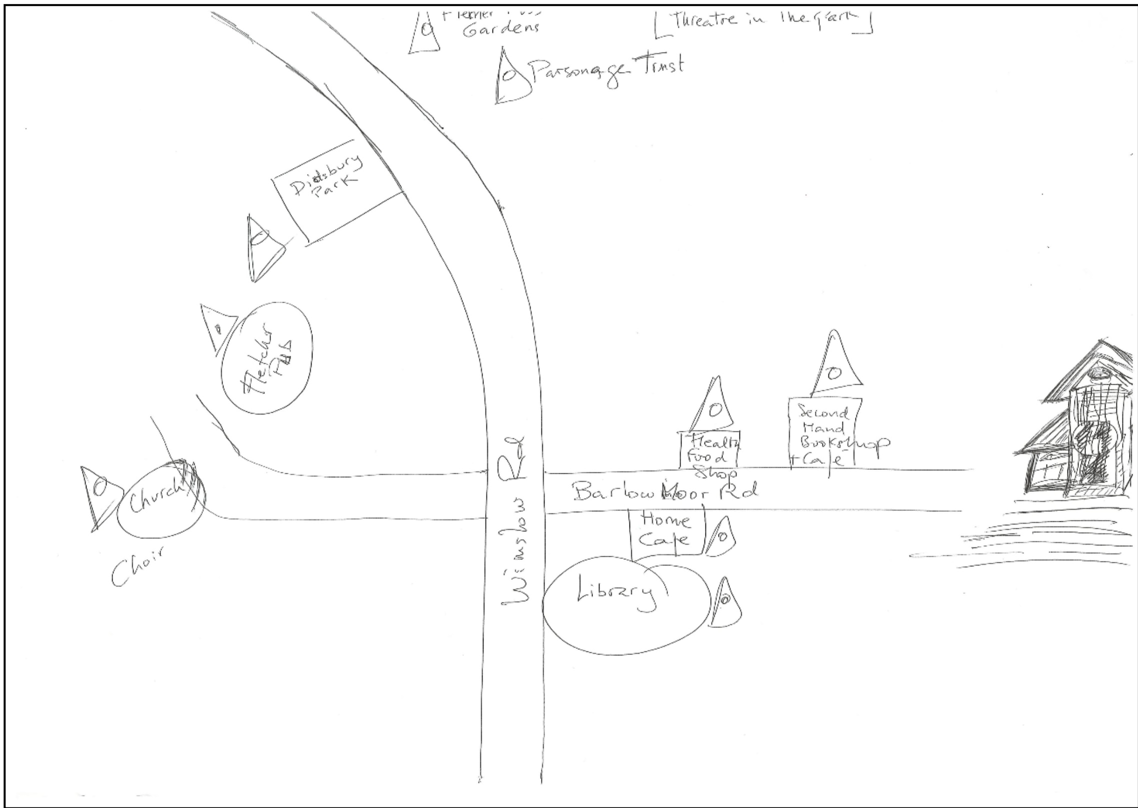
I was born in Didsbury on Clyde Rd. At that time most of the big houses were family houses with family run businesses along Lapwing Lane + Burton Rd. I never noticed the parks + open spaces - we were too busy. I didn't know my neighbours.

I married and left returning 20 yrs ago. Now I live near Didsbury Park and realise that there are so many green + open spaces. People seem to be more aware of the community - I never knew my neighbours before. Now I know them all. I make use of the cafe's, busses and the tram.

If I think of Didsbury it is very multicultural with a great variation of professions + ages. I fear the march of chain stores into the village. It will change the atmosphere.

The growth of transport facilities - motorways / trams / trains means that it is more accessible. ~~People come for the day~~

Sonia McCann.


Gardens
Theatre in the Park
Parsonage Trust
Didsbury Park
Fletcher Pub
Church
Choir
Wilmslow Rd
Barlow Moor Rd
Health Food Shop
Second Hand Bookshop + Cafe
Home Cafe
Library

HOSPITALS
FOOD SHOPS
BANKS
PUBS
CHURCH
SHOPS
LIBRARY
CHRISTIE HOSPITAL
LIBRARY
TESCO
SCHOOL LANE
EMMANUEL CHURCH
BARLOW MOOR ROAD
23, 23A BUS ROUTE
WILMSLOW ROAD
GREGGS
TO TESCO
29-6-2017

Woodstock pub – usual friday haunt when we decide to go out from work.

Didsbury.

Cemetary = Quiet.

Spire → Spire hospital

Siemens! (work!)

my office

Flower Shop!

Balloon Shop.

life savers if you need birthday gifts!

Car wash!

way home! wooo!!!

Withington tram Stop.

crossing

Hill into road.

Princess Parkway (Road to work!)

way to work if I can't get a lift!

I associate didsbury mostly with work as I live an hour or so away! To me, it is both an industrial area, and one where someone could aspire to live. I associate it with the higher classes and wealth – driving through it is much more different than driving through my town. The houses are bigger and the cars are more expensive. I find my workplace to be welcoming to many and is very diverse, with all backgrounds working in my office … it's wonderful and very interesting to hear so many stories! I associate didsbury with arts and culture too, considering the festival!
– Molly Jones :)

Old Withington Former Workhouse

Town Hall

Stop

Banks

Pool

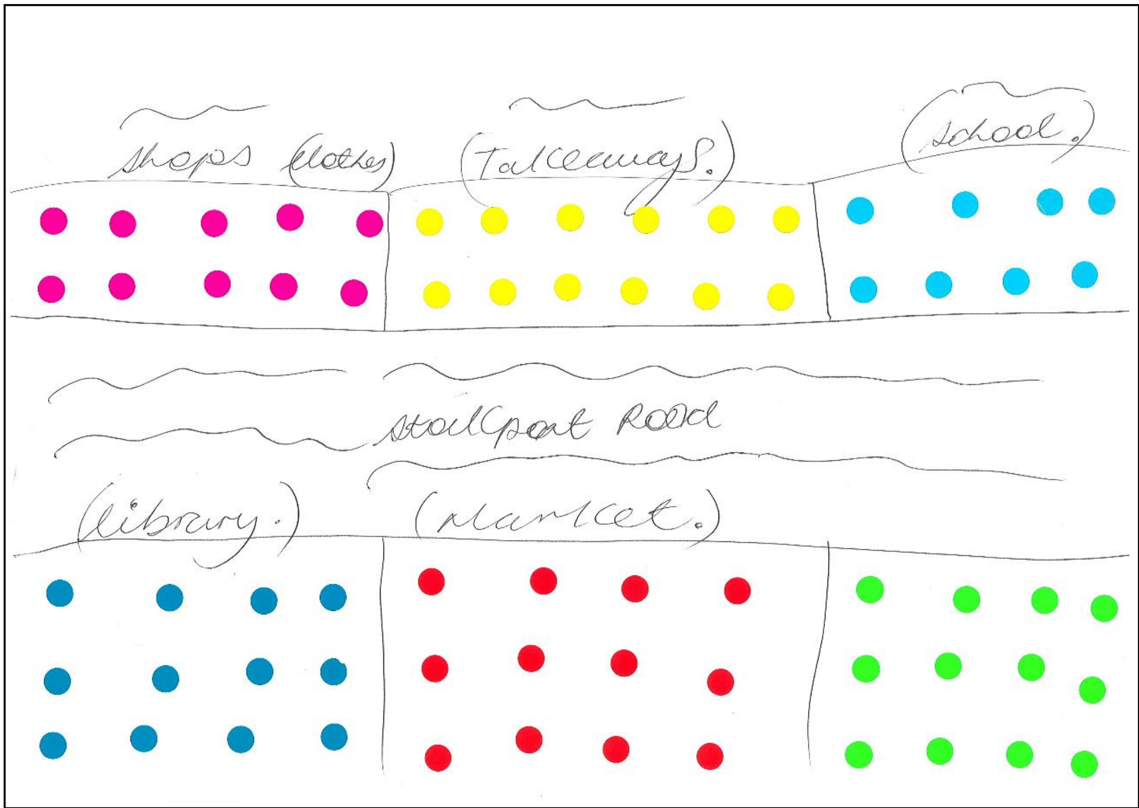
Crossing

Stop

Former railway line Now Metro link

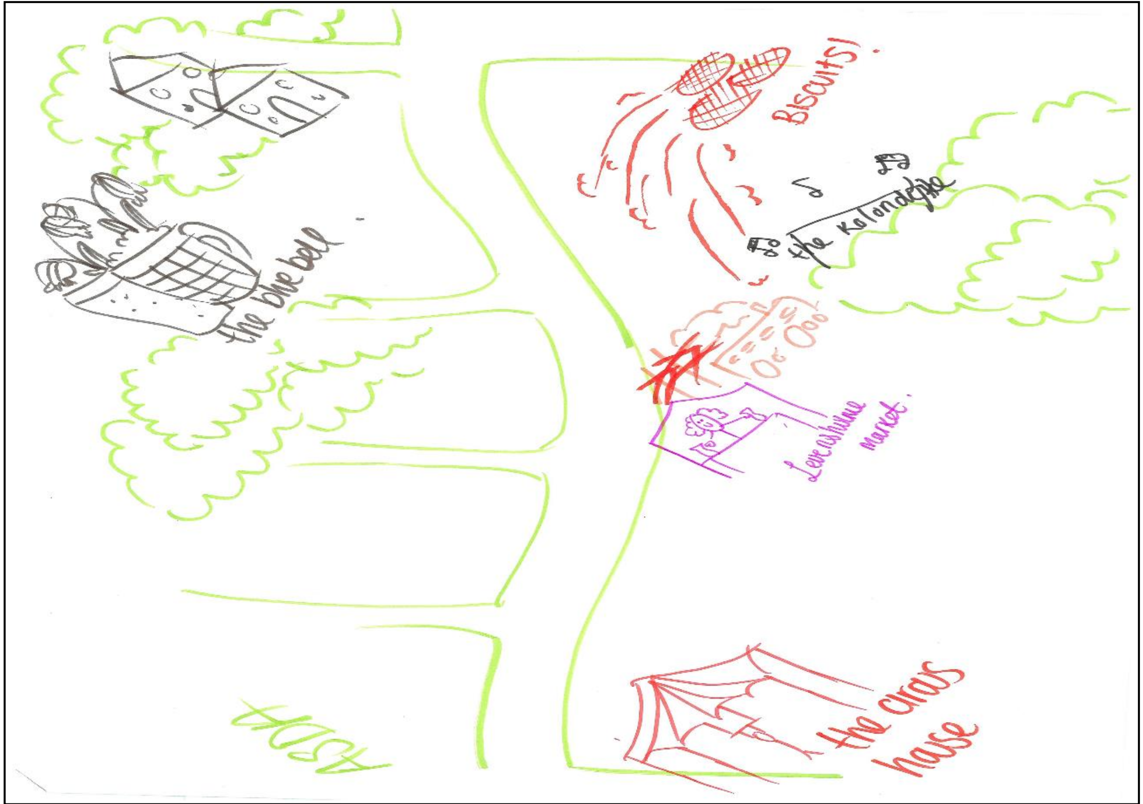
London M.

# Levenshulme

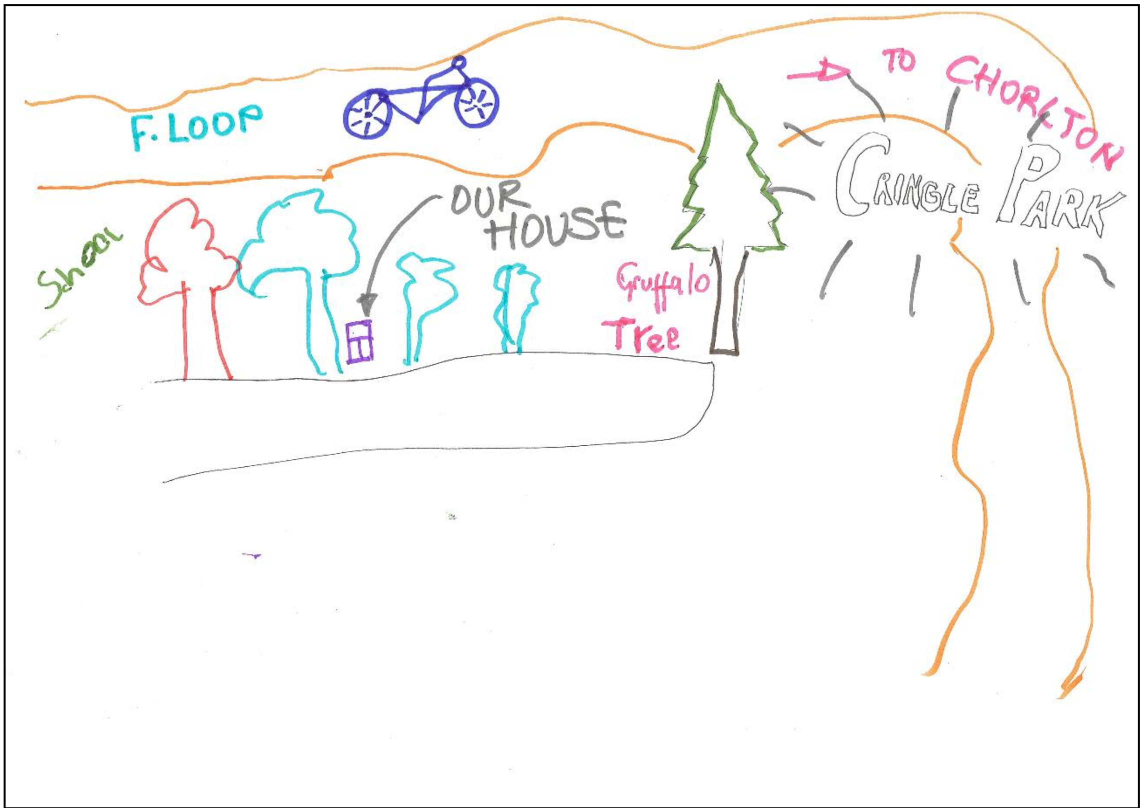


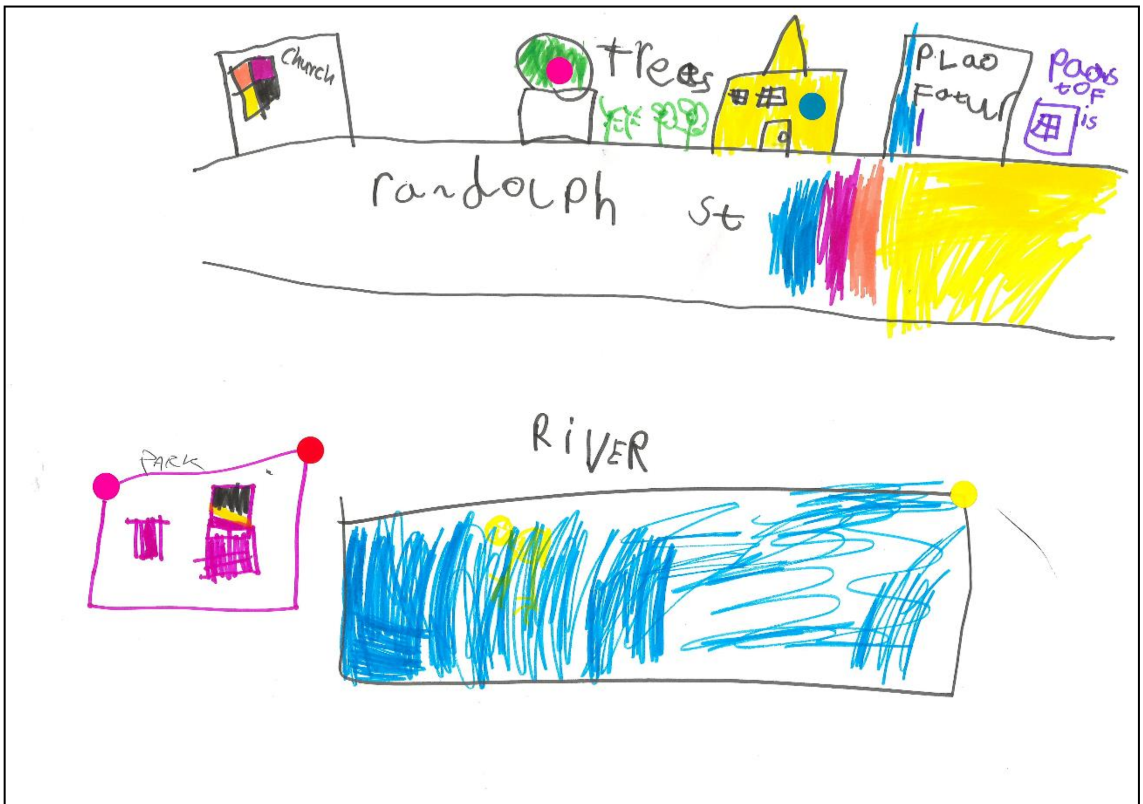
shops (clothes)
(Takeaways.)
(School.)
Stockport Road
(library.)
(Market.)

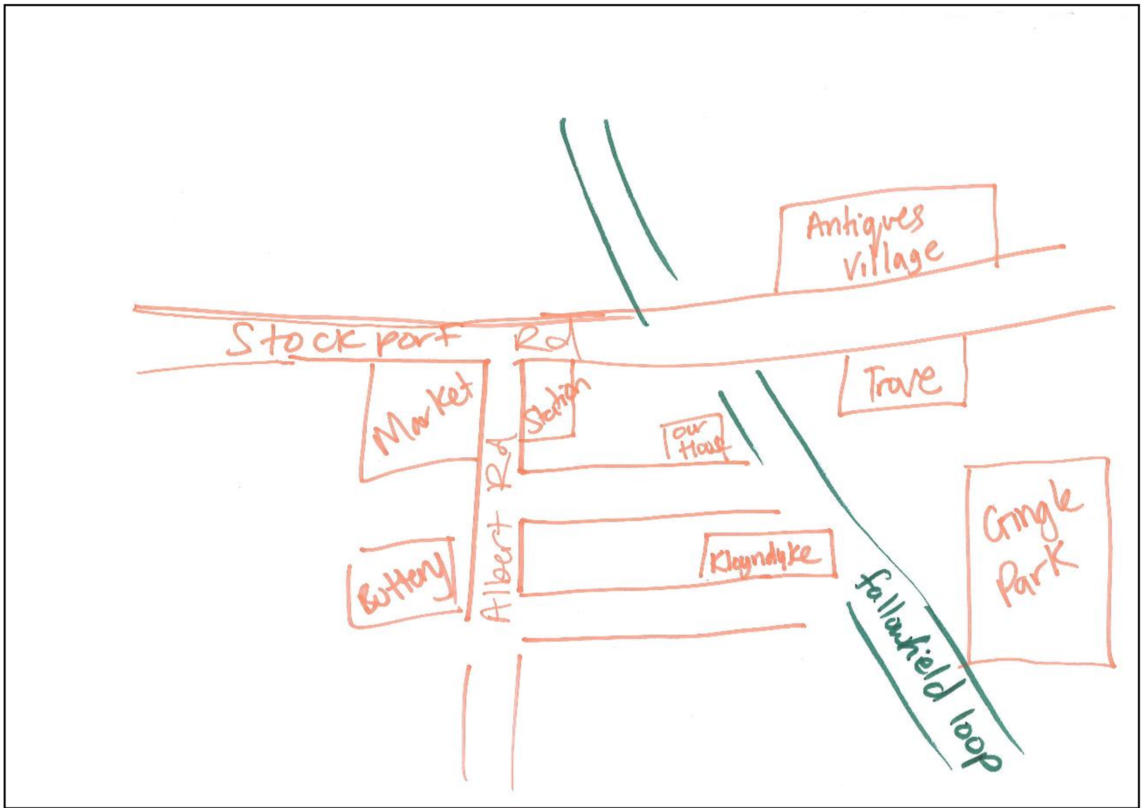
LEVY MARKET!
THE BUTTERY
ALBERT RD
ALMA RD
TESCO
ROYAL NAWAAB
ALMA PARK SCHOOL
TRAFFIC
FALLOWFIELD
LOOP
FRIENDS
BAPTIST CHURCH
ALLOTMENTS
CLARE RD
CRINGLE
McVITIES
DANFORTH GROVE
HOME

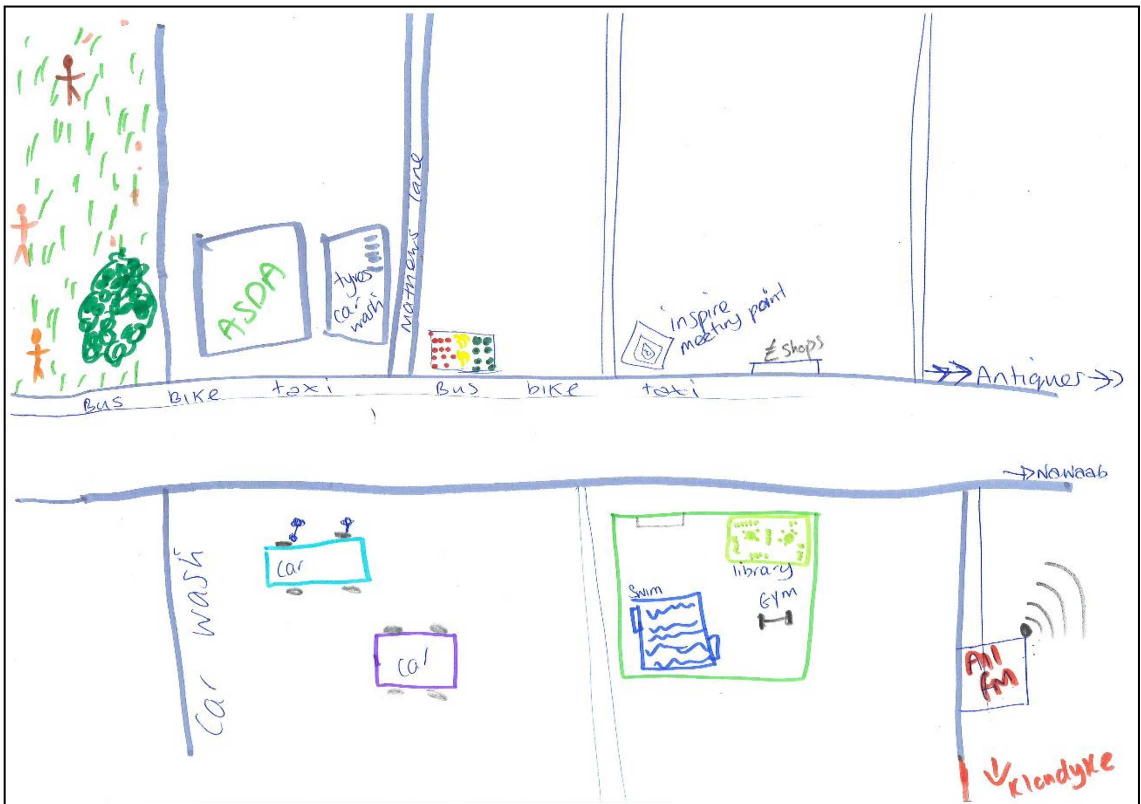

Biscuits!
the Kolondyke
the blue bell
Levenshulme market.
the circus house
ASDA

Cringle Park
Alma Park School
KLONDYKE
The Pottery
The Crescent
Arcadia
Station → town (5 mins!)
The Meeting room
McVities!
St Mary's school
LOOP!
TESCO
Nawaab
Cornered/ Printing shops
TROVE
Levenshulme
Albas
STOCKPORT
LONGSIGHT
DANFORTH GRV.
Rubbish Takeaways bla bla
FALLOWFIELD
LONGFORD rd.
BARLOW rd
Jando! (Palace!)
Inspire
Community centre
Aldi
HOME
Sure Start Centre
Nice roads
Mum + baby Groups
Highfield Country Park

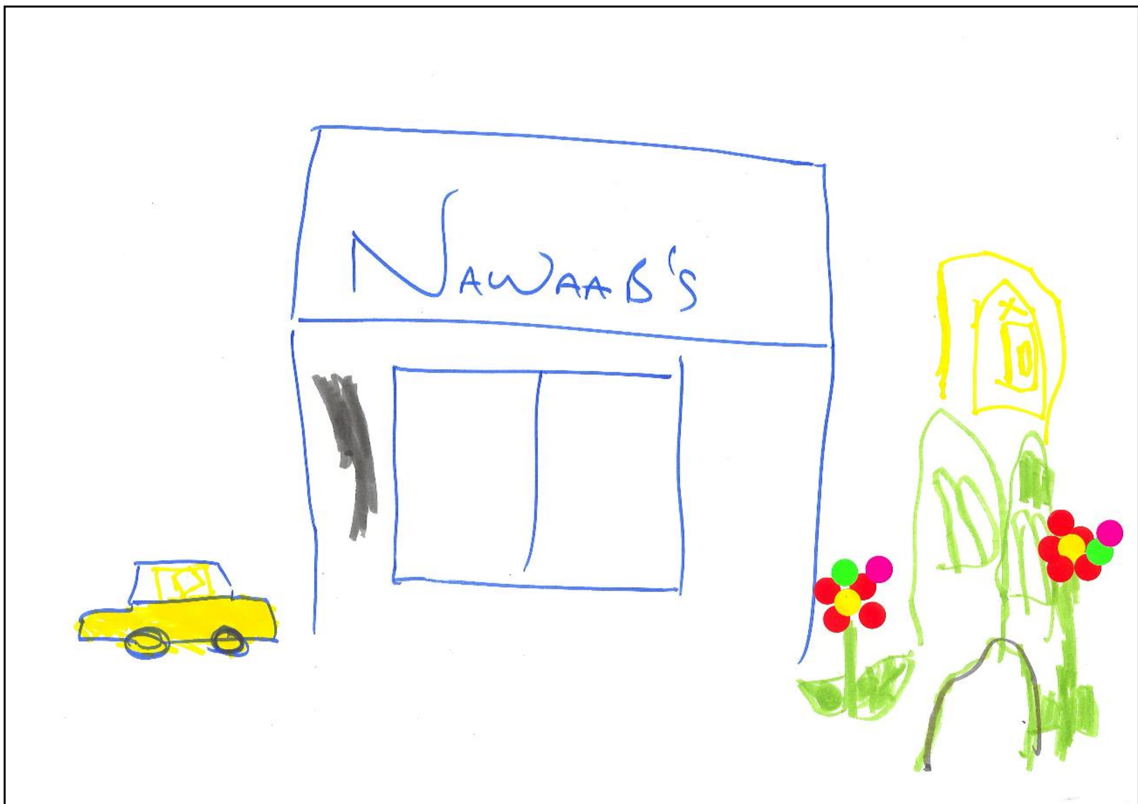

F. LOOP
TO CHORLTON
CRINGLE PARK
OUR HOUSE
Gruffalo Tree

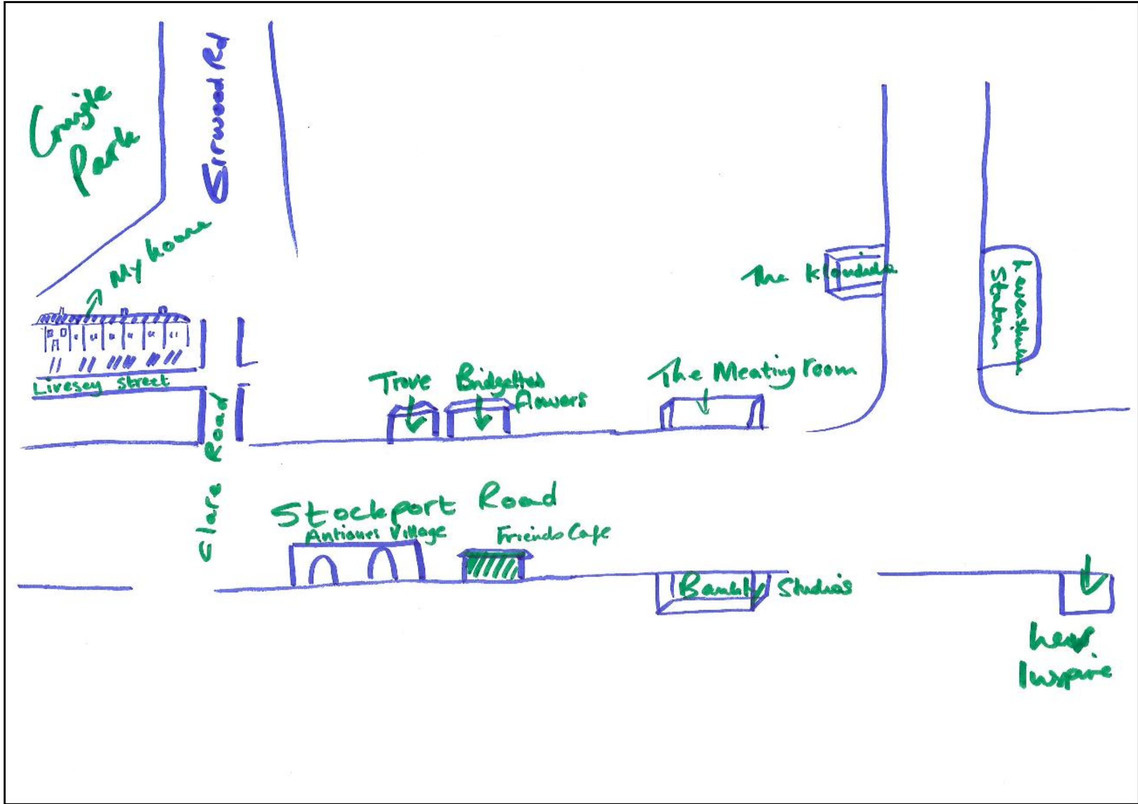

Church
trees
randolph st
RIVER
PARK


Antiques Village
Stockport Rd
Market
Station
Trove
Our House
Cringle Park
Buttery
Albert Rd
Klondyke
fallowfield loop


ASDA
tyres car wash
Mathews lane
inspire meeting point
£ shops
Antiques
Bus
BIKE
taxi
Bus
bike
taxi
Nawaab
Car wash
car
car
library
swim
GYM
All FM
Klondyke

Asda
Matthews Lane
Levy Market
Train Station
A6
Green-bank Park
Albert Rd.
Fred's Ale House
Klondyke
Tesco
Union Inn
Nawaab
Inspire Church??
Barlow Rd
Bluebell
Cringle Park


NAWAAB'S


Errwood Rd
My house
Livesey Street
Clare Road
Trove
The Meating room
Stockport Road
Antiques Village
Friends Cafe
Studios

LEVENSHULME
3RD FLOOR
ST PETER
INSPIRE CHURCH
CAFE
HIMALAYA RESTAURANT
BANKLEY GALLERY & STUDIOS.
STAINED GLASS WINDOWS
HALL
ST MARY CHURCH
MARKET
STOCKPORT ROAD
METHODIST.
NAWAAB RESTAURANT
CRINGLE PARK
POD
THE BUTTERY
ALBERT ROAD
Klondyke Club
ST MARY'S SCHOOL
MY HOUSE

Highfield Country Park

The Brick Works

Bishopdown Close

Stockport Rd.

Mount Rd

Nutsford Vale

NETTO

Matthews Lane

Playing Field

Levy Library

Arcadia

Love Chorus Choir practices :)

Beech House (British Legion)

Love Market in the Station car-park

Train Station

Manchester this way

Inspire Centre

Cultural stuff goes on here (& tea!)

Albert Road

Klondyke

Stuff happens here!

Tesco

More takeaways

Fred's Bar, coffee place

Gigs & 'secret diners'

Loads of takeaways!

Tattoo place

Where the vegans & hipsters live :)

Trove Bakery

Antiques Village

Cafe (lots of cooked breakfasts!)

Broom Lane is just a boring Road and all the corner shops closed (except Durbers)

This is where I live & work

Crayfield Road

This is the awesome Sustrans bike track I can't use yet because my bike needs new brakes!

Stockport Road (A6

Bowler Street

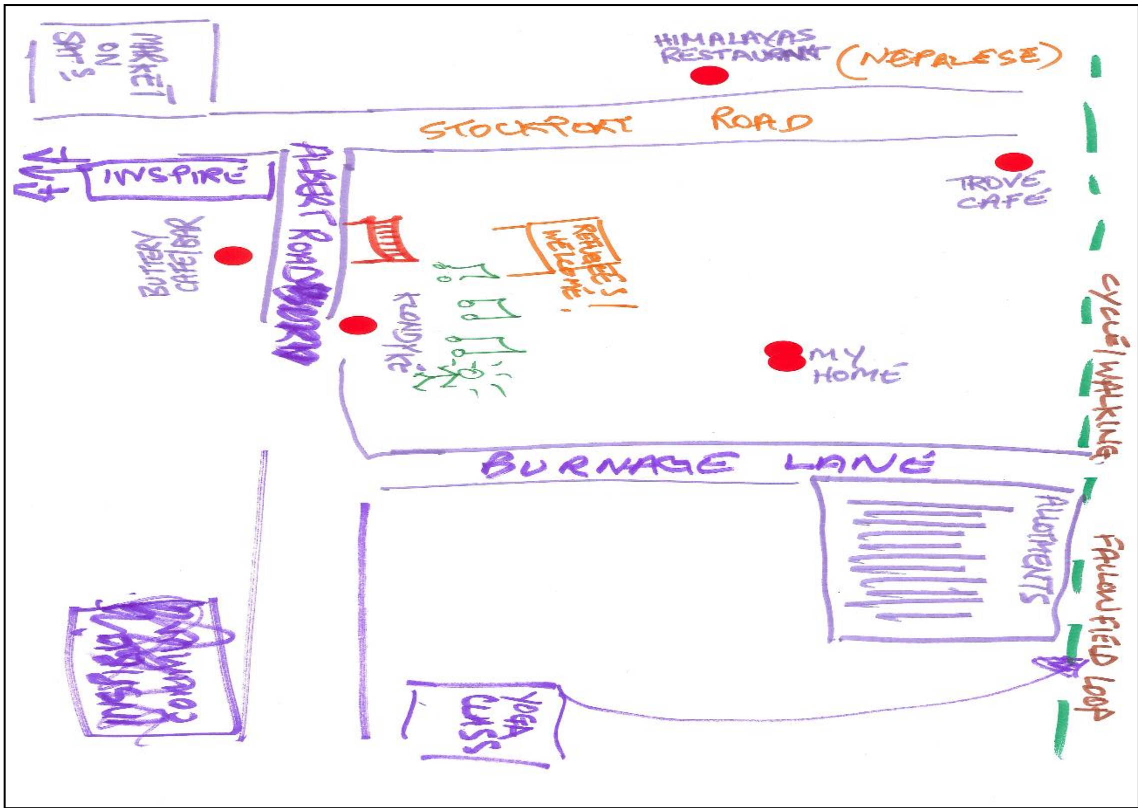
Highfield Park is at the end of my street

Post Office

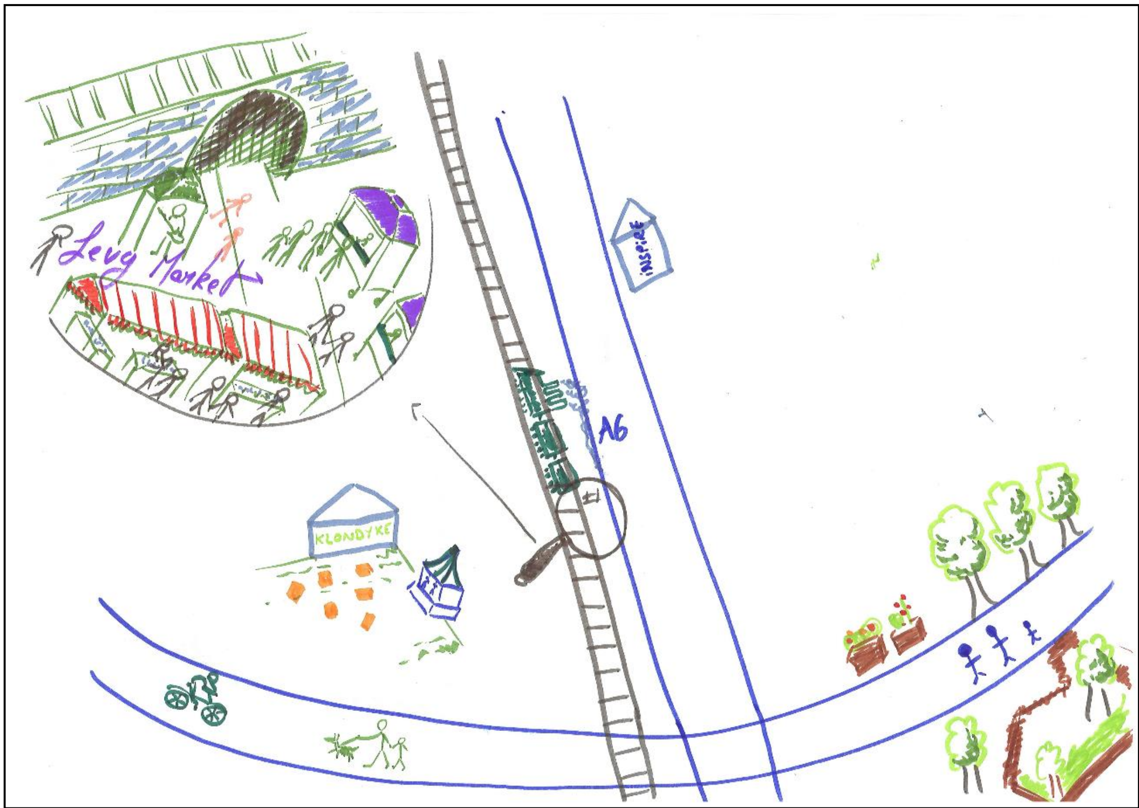
by Maxine Sayleft Green (chaoshunny.com)

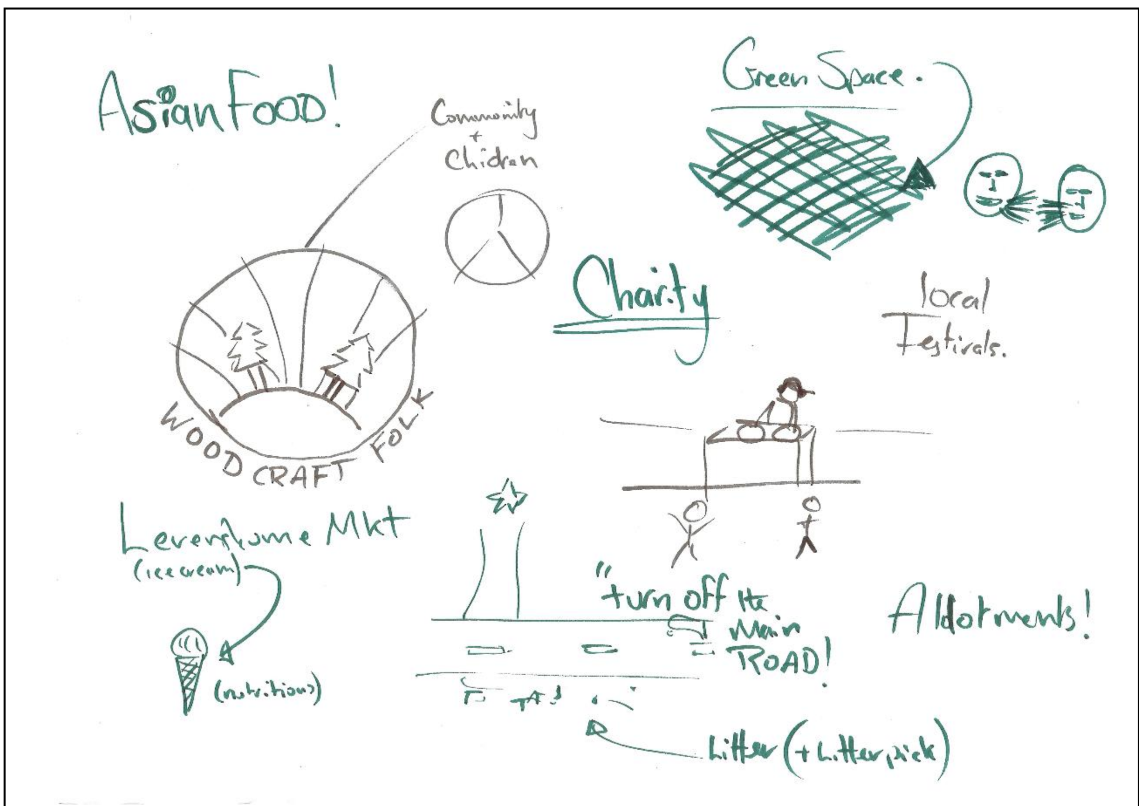
Stockport this way

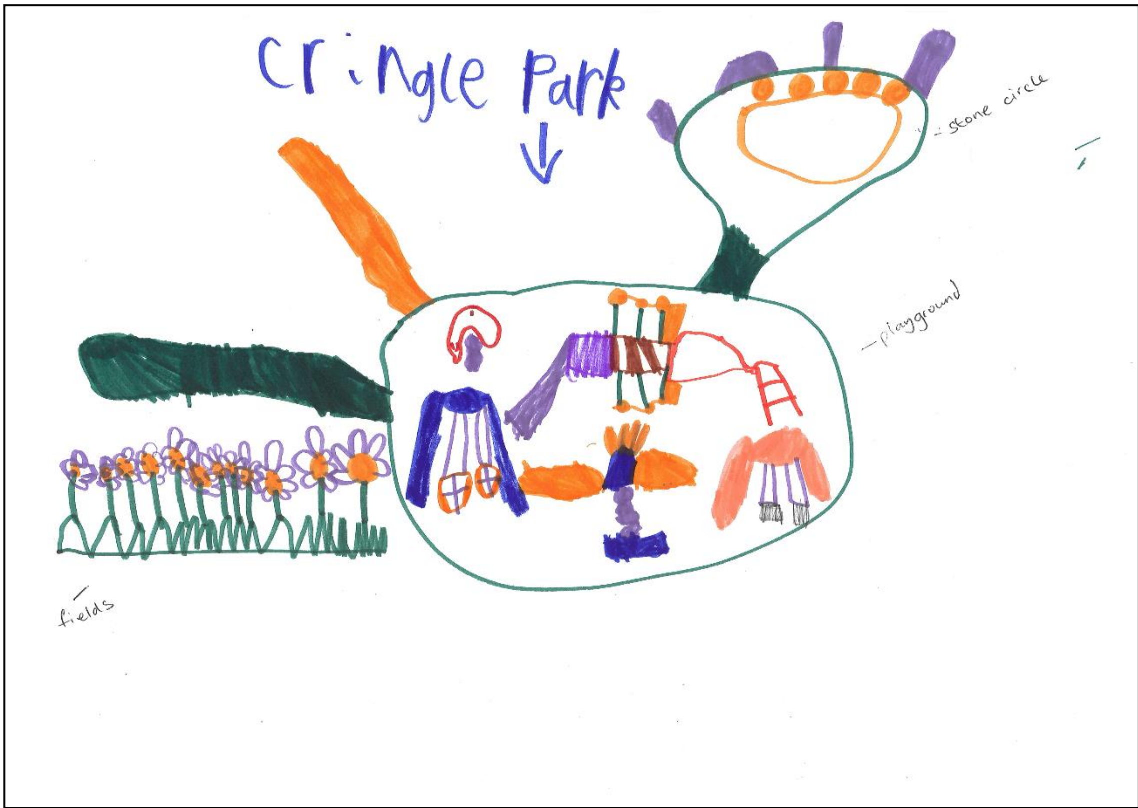
I do aerial silks classes in Stockport


HIMALAYAS RESTAURANT
(NEPALESE)
STOCKPORT ROAD
TROVE CAFÉ
MARKET ON SAT'S
INSPIRE
ALBERT ROAD
BUTTERY CAFE/BAR
KLONDYKE
REFUGEES! WELCOME!
MY HOME
BURNAGE LANE
ALLOTMENTS
CYCLE/WALKING
FALLOWFIELD LOOP
YOGA CLASS

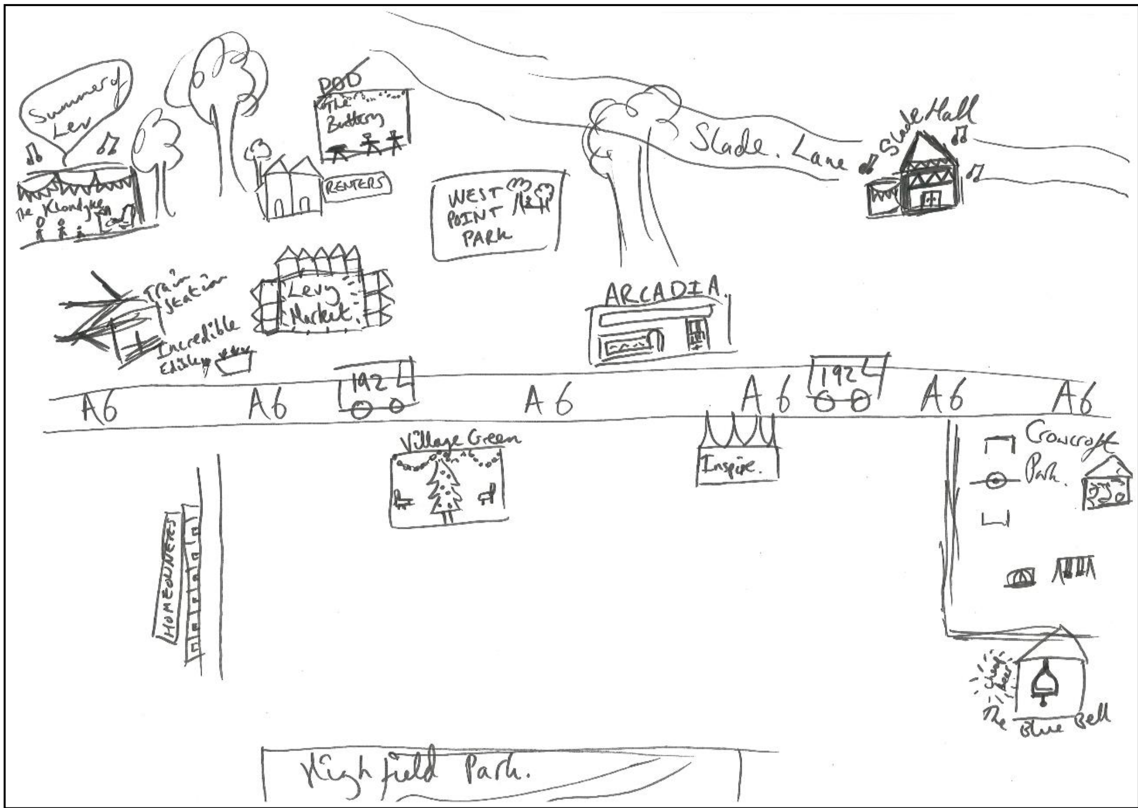
Tall flats
Home
Chip shop
Bargain booze
Park / woods / Dogs
Park (with bad dogs)
Bluebell pub
herb garden
Park
Bentley studio
Antiques centre
Snooker shop
Station
Tesco
Trove cafe
Corner shop
Fallowfield loop
Buttery
Klondyke (snooker)

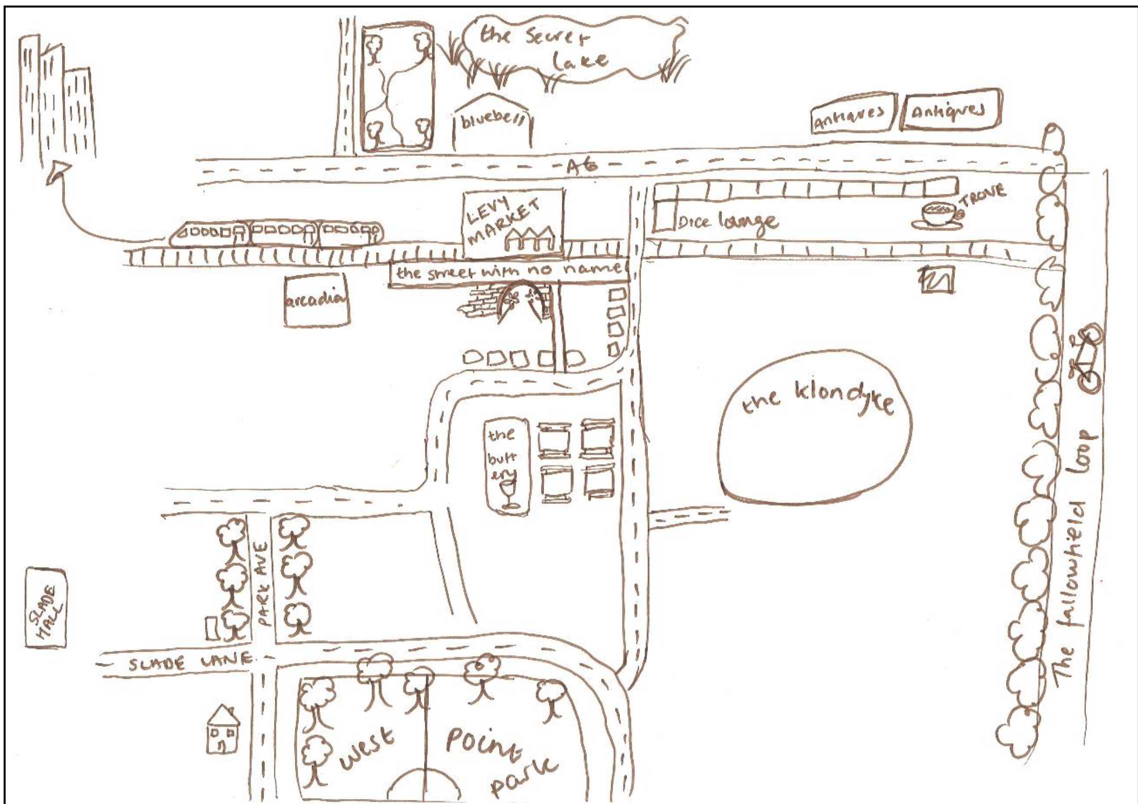

Levy Market
INSPIRE
A6
KLONDYKE

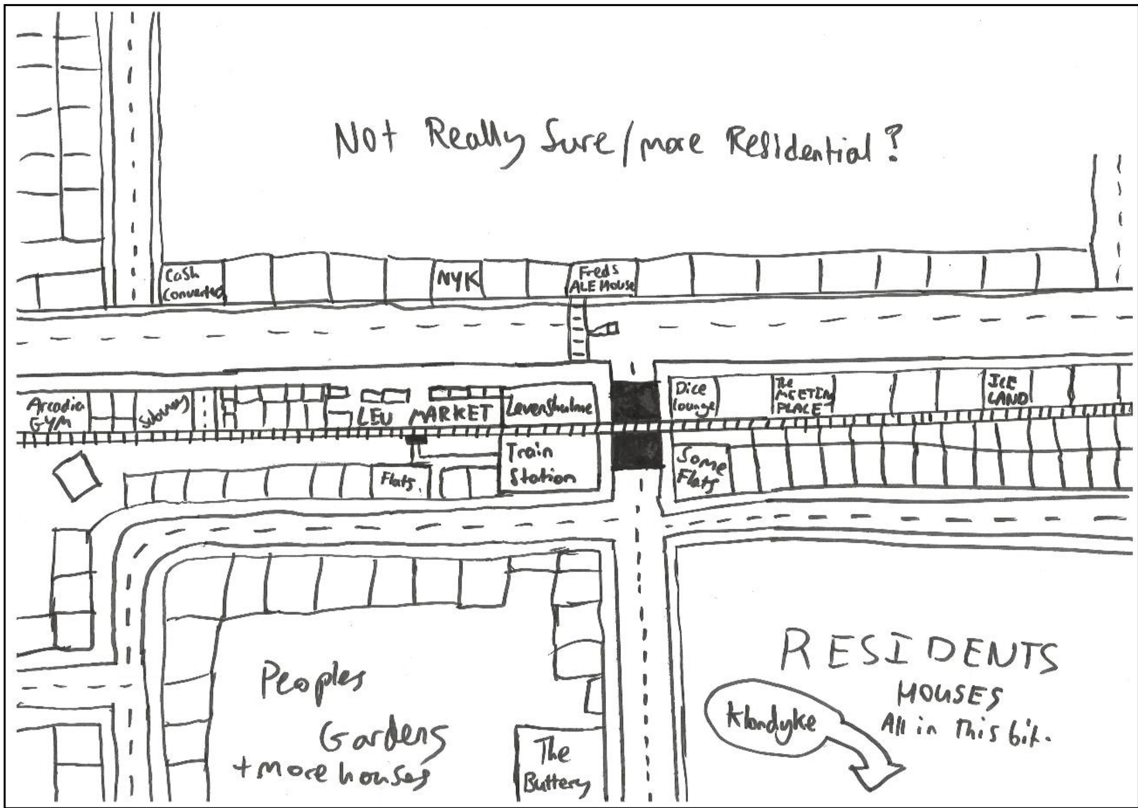

Asian Food!
Community + Children
Green Space.
Charity
local Festivals.
WOOD CRAFT FOLK
Levenshulme Mkt
(ice cream)
(nutrition)
"turn off the Main ROAD!
Allotments!
Litter (+ Litter pick)

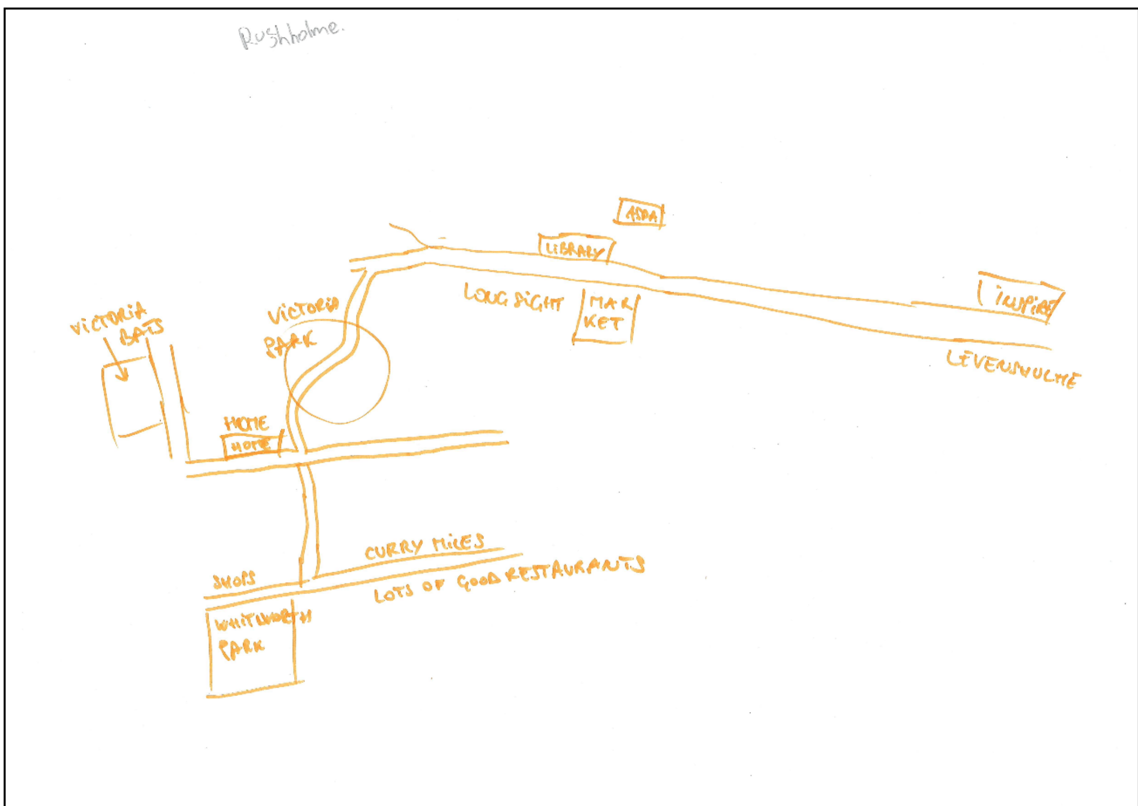

Cringle Park
stone circle
playground
fields

MINI MOVERS
INSPIRE
ARCADIA
A6
MARKET
POST
BUTTERY
STATION
HOME
Albert Road
KLONDYKE!
CRINGLE PARK
ANTIQUE VILLAGE


Summer of Lev
The Klondyke
The Buttery
RENTERS
WEST POINT PARK
Slade. Lane
Slade Hall
Train Station
Levy Market
Incredible Chilli
ARCADIA.
A6
A6
192
A6
A6
192
A6
A6
Village Green
Inspire.
Crowcroft Park.
HOMEWRITERS
The Blue Bell
Highfield Park.


the secret lake
bluebell
Antiques
Antiques
A6
LEVY MARKET
Dice lounge
TROVE
the street with no name
arcadia
the klondyke
the buttery
PARK AVE
SLADE HALL
SLADE LANE
west point park
The fallowfield loop


Not Really Sure/more Residential ?
Cash Converters
NYK
Freds ALE House
Arcadia GYM
Subway
LEV MARKET
Levenshulme
Train Station
Flats.
Dice lounge
THE MEETING PLACE
ICE LAND
Some Flats
RESIDENTS
HOUSES
All in this bit.
Klondyke
Peoples
Gardens
+more houses
The Buttery


Rushholme.
ASDA
LIBRARY
LONG SIGHT
MAR KET
INSPIRE
LEVENSHULME
VICTORIA BATHS
VICTORIA PARK
HOME
HOME
CURRY MILES
SHOPS
LOTS OF GOOD RESTAURANTS
WHITWORTH PARK

Levenshulme

mosque

library swimming pool

shops

postal

crispy

Asda

- Levenshulme is very convient place for me to go around and find things what ever I need
- I like Bus services here to commute ~~to~~
- I like library to go in / would love to join swimming class
- I go mosque of Levenshulme there I socialize with my friends and ppl around there. And like to pray there
- ~~It~~ on Levenshulme street there are many place of like to taste different varieties food I Love food
- Also grocery stores are near me like Asda I go there and shop ~~at~~ also I visit madina store to buy Halal meat and fruits some times

M C R

The Library

Museum of Science and Industry

Pubs

The Church

Bus Stops

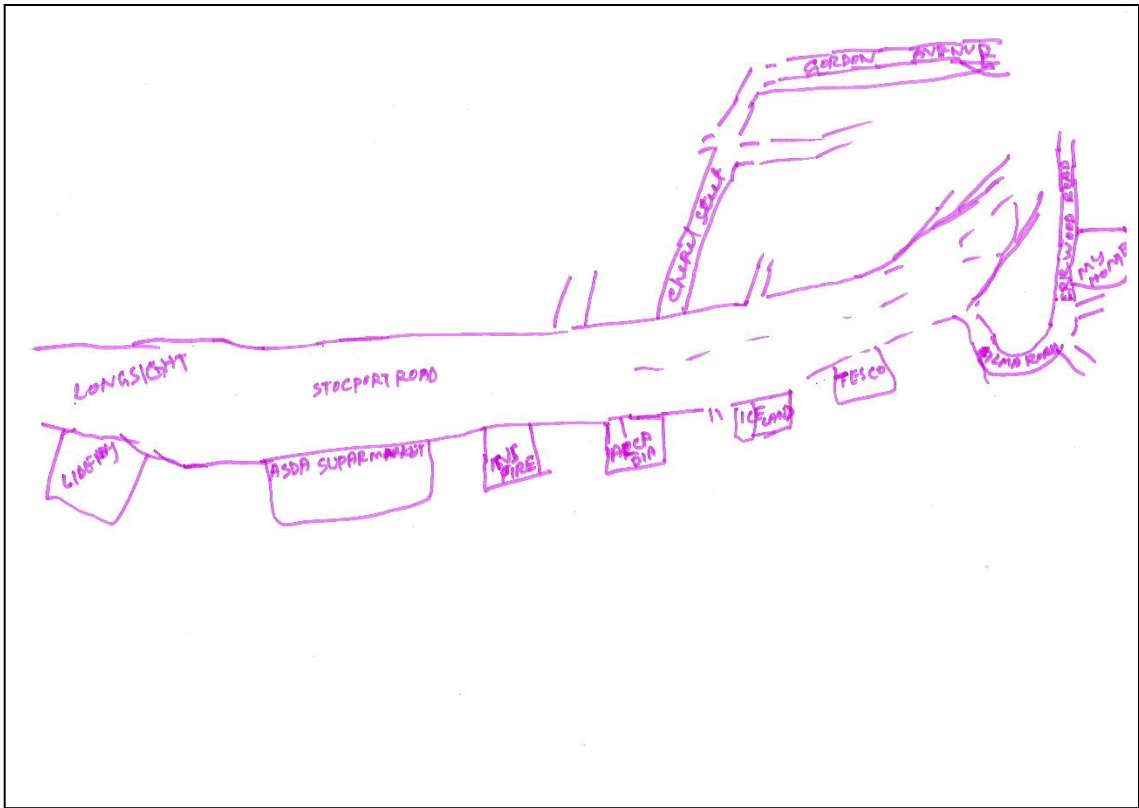
Mine

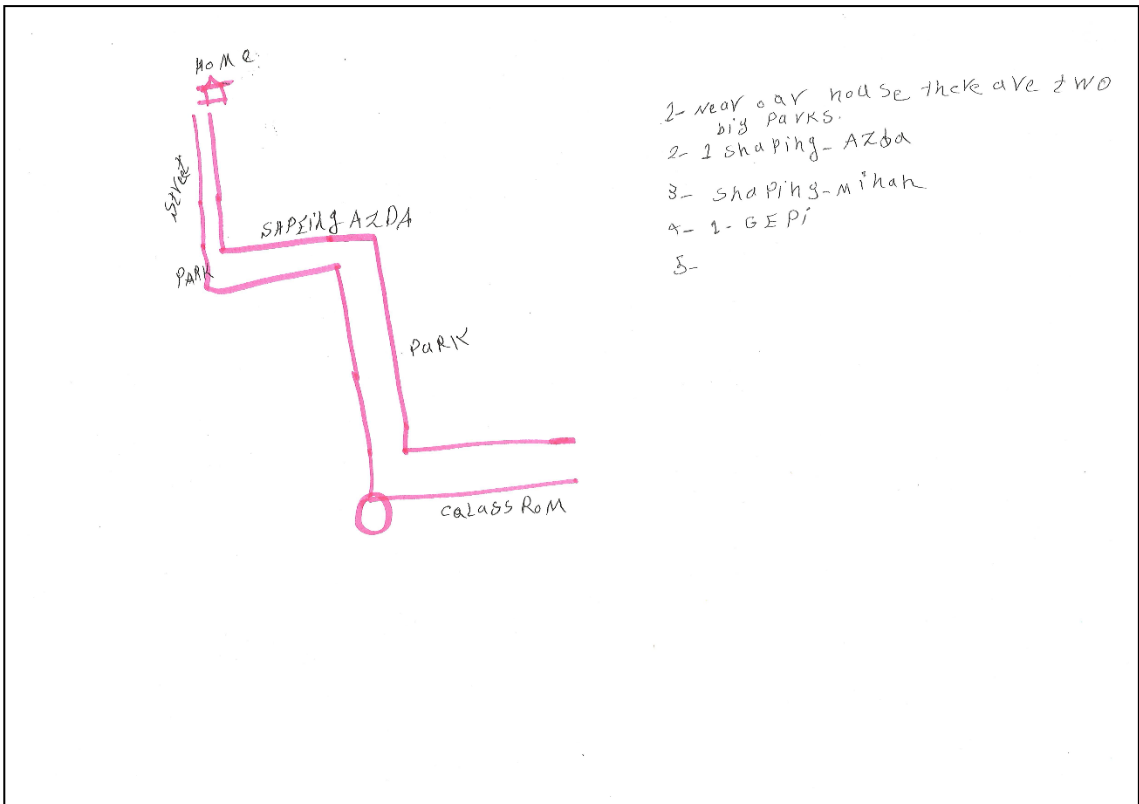
My House

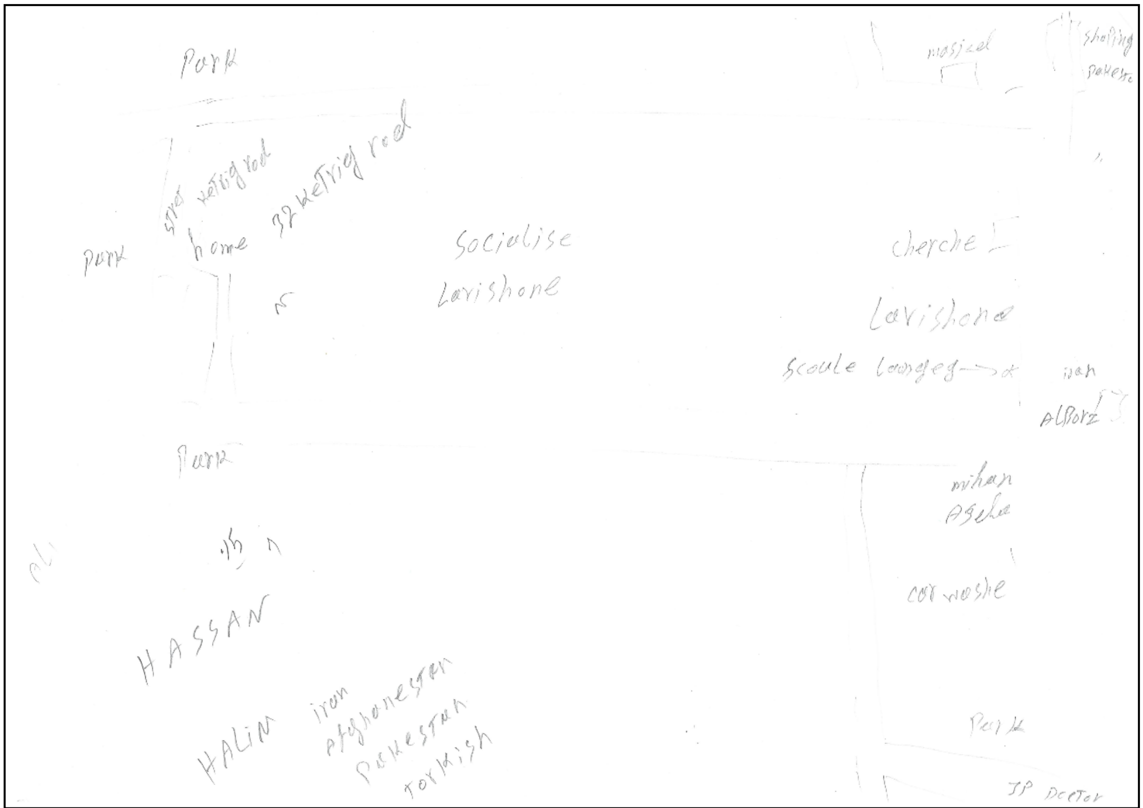
A6

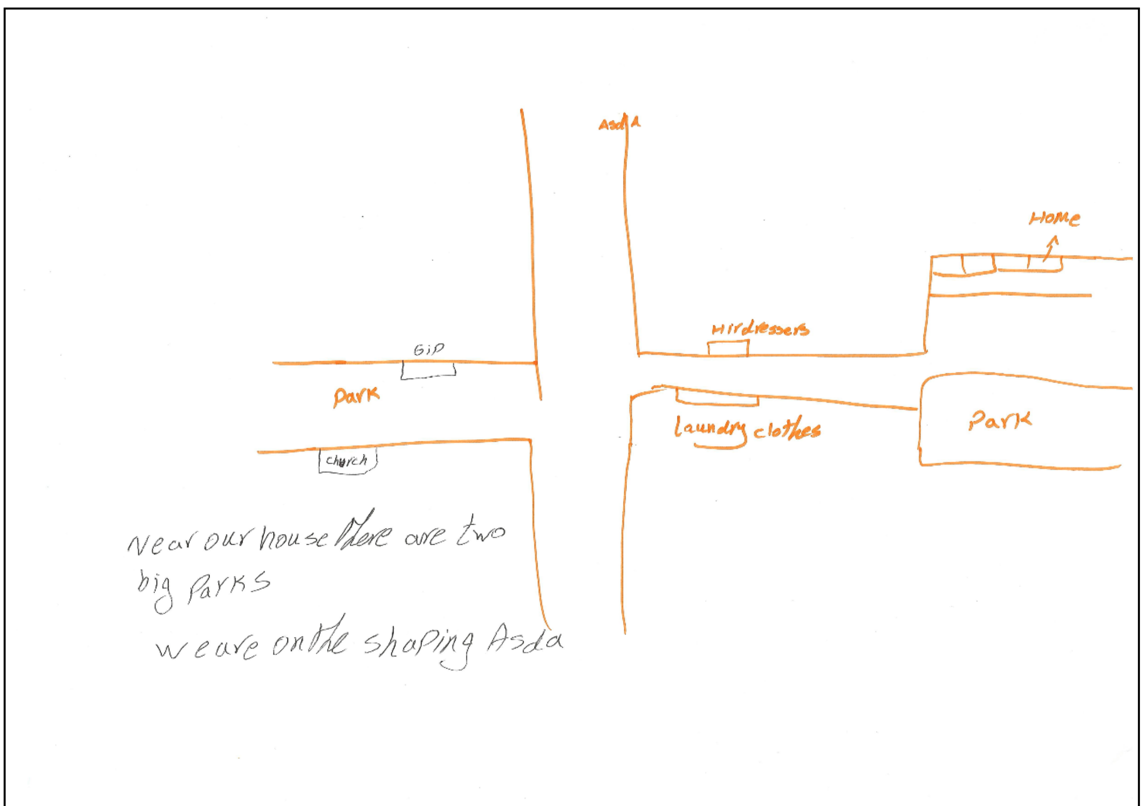
Hadrien Dalègre

Etudiant Français venu pour améliorer son niveau d'anglais.


GORDON AVENUE
MY HOME
LONGSIGHT
STOCPORT ROAD
TESCO
ASDA SUPARMARKET


HoMe
SAPIng AZDA
PARK
PaRK
CaLaSS RoM
1- Near oar house there are two big parks.
2- 1 shaping- AZda
3- shaping-mihan
4- 1- GEPi
5-


Park
Park
home
Socialise
Larishone
cherche
Larishene
Park
HASSAN
Park
JP Doctor


Asda
Home
Hirdressers
GP
Park
church
laundry clothes
Park
Near our house there are two big Parks
we are on the shaping Asda

Royal

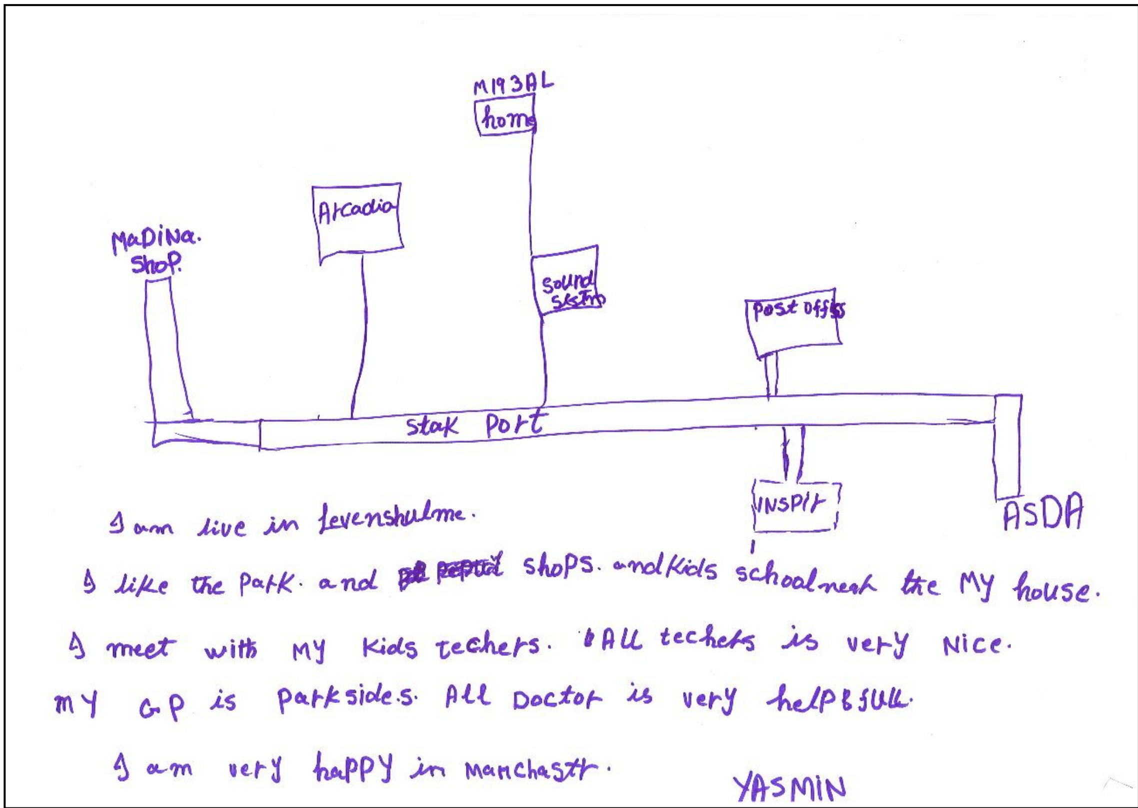
Library. Stokport Road pound soap Nawaab Resturent

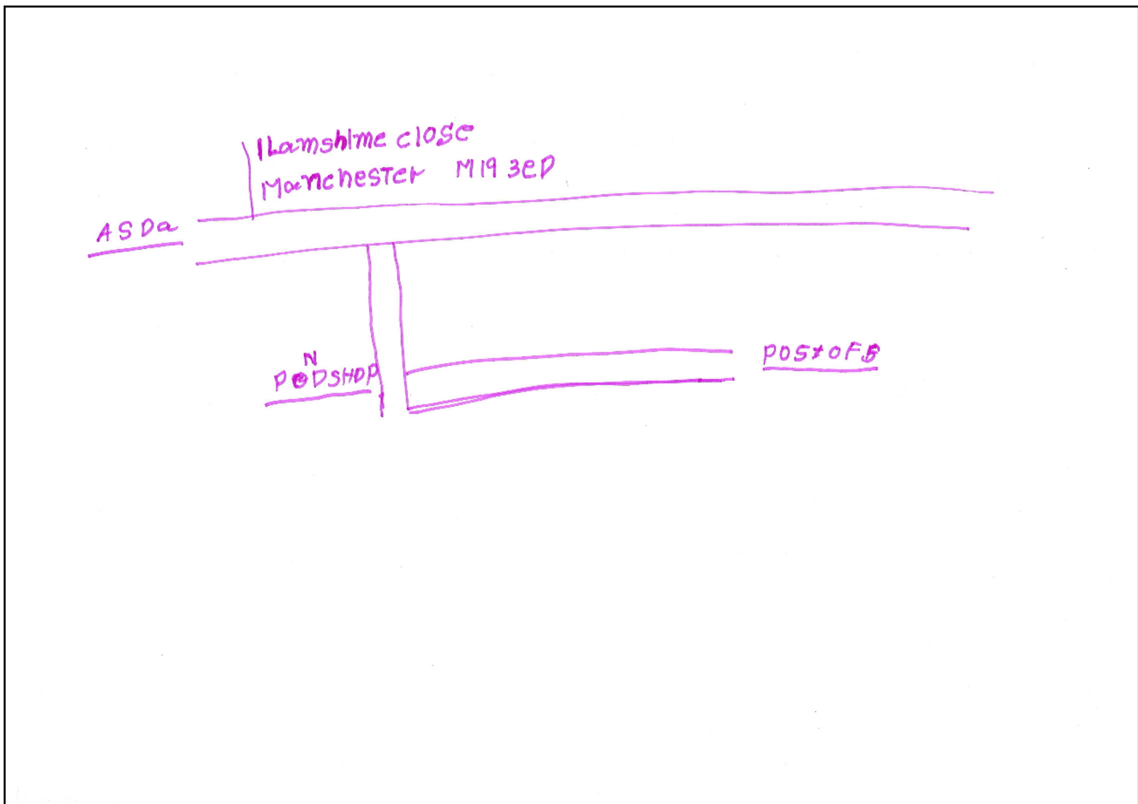
ASDA INSPIRE ASDA CROWCROFT. PARK

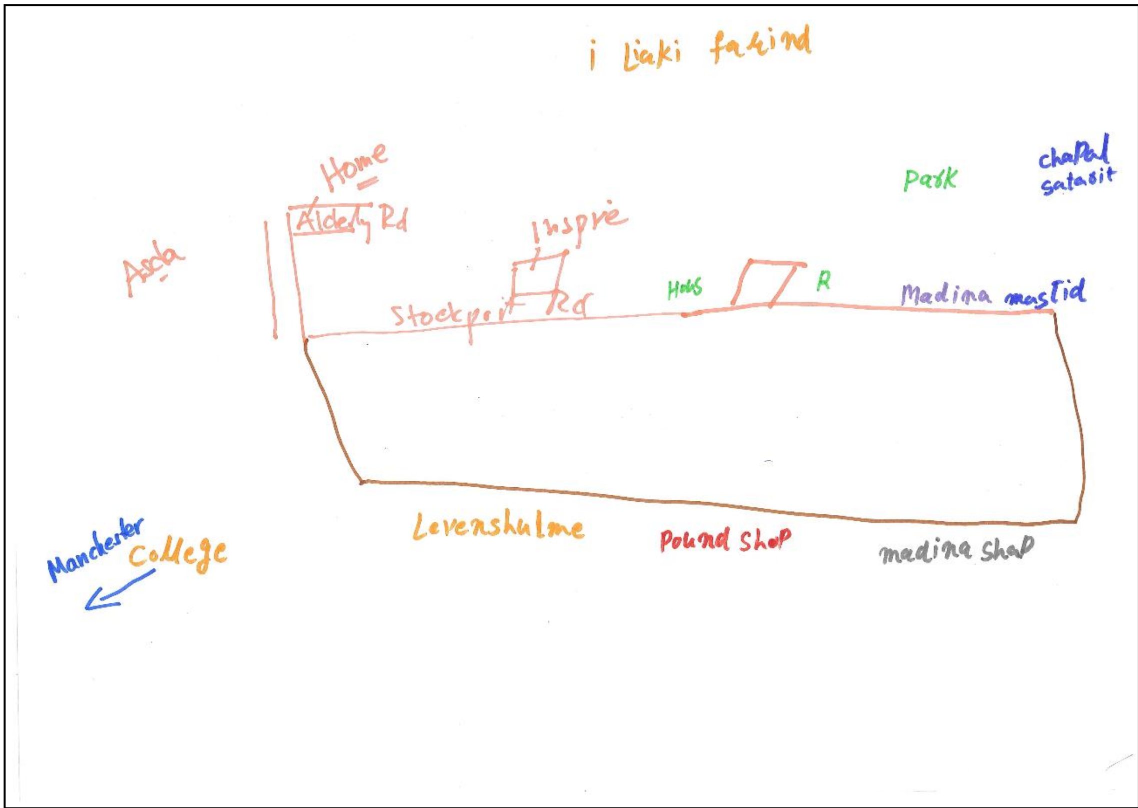
INSPIRE CROWCROFT Park

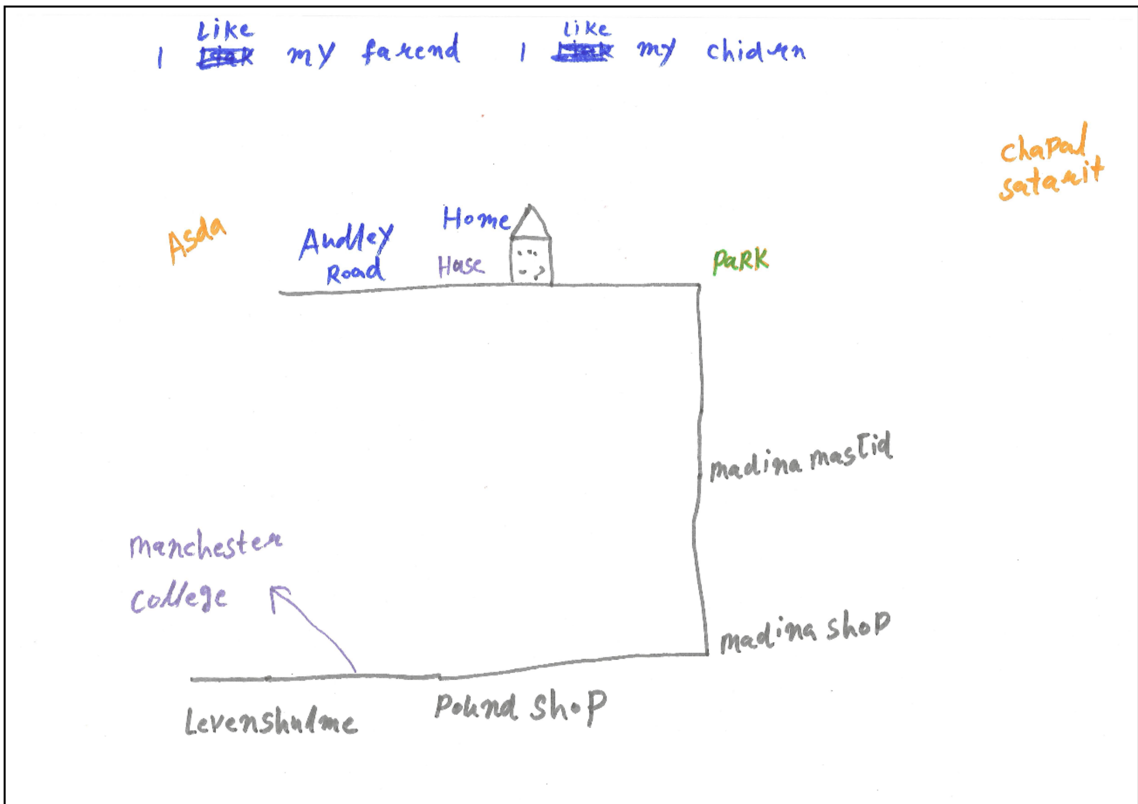
Stokport Road

Nawaab Resturent pound soap ice Land

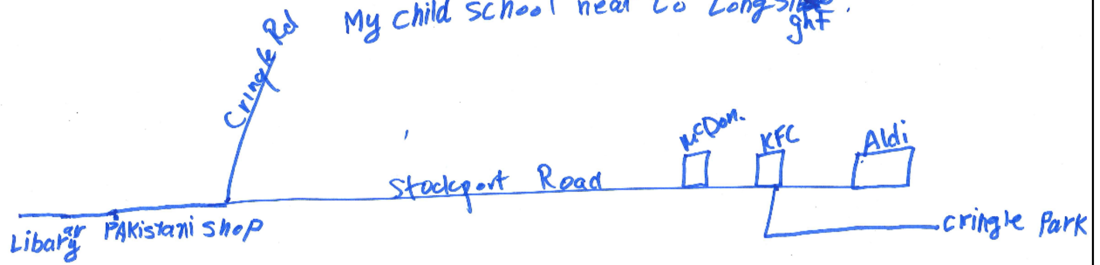

M19 3AL
home
Arcadia
MaDiNa. Shop.
sound system
post offis
stak port
INSPIr
ASDA
I am live in levenshulme.
I like the park. and shops. and kids school near the MY house.
I meet with MY Kids techers. All techers is very Nice.
mY G.P is parksides. All Doctor is very helpfull.
I am very happy in Manchastr.
YASMIN


1Lamshlme close
Manchester M19 3eD
ASDa
POSTOFF
PNDSHOP

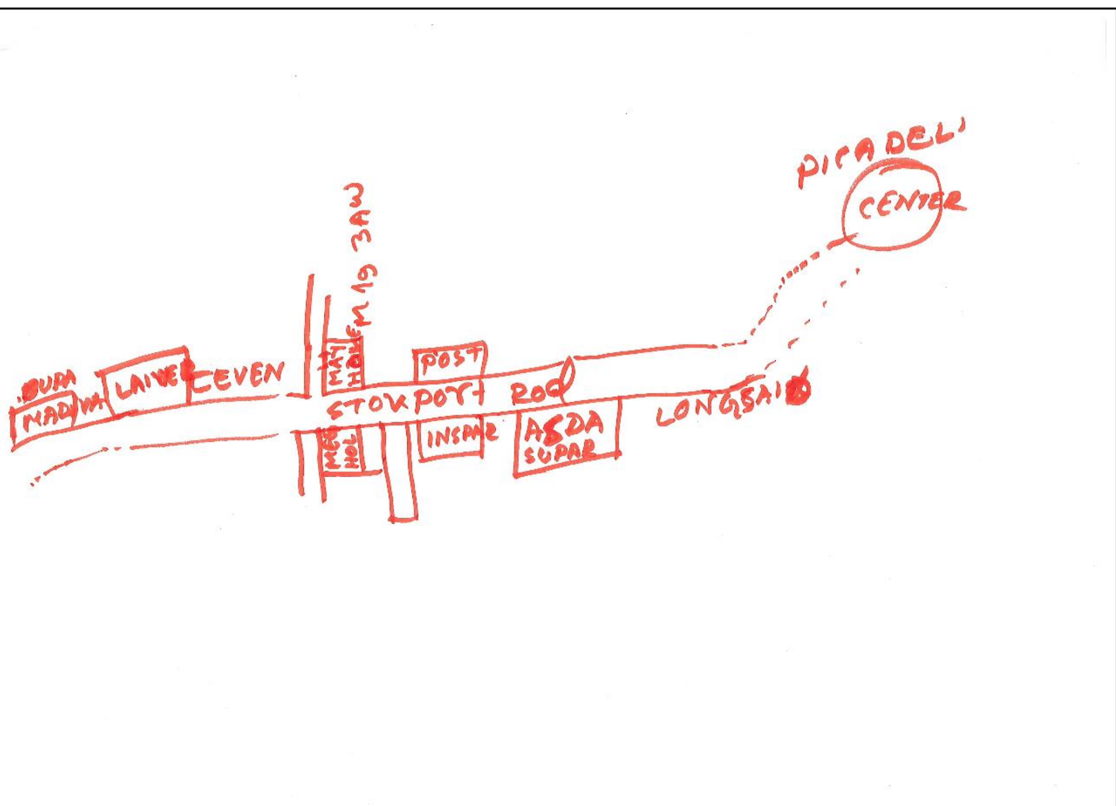

i Liaki fa.rind
Home
Aldesly Rd
Inspre
Asda
Stockport Rd
Hoss
R
Park
chapal satasit
Madina mastid
Manchester College
Levenshulme
Pound Shop
madina shop

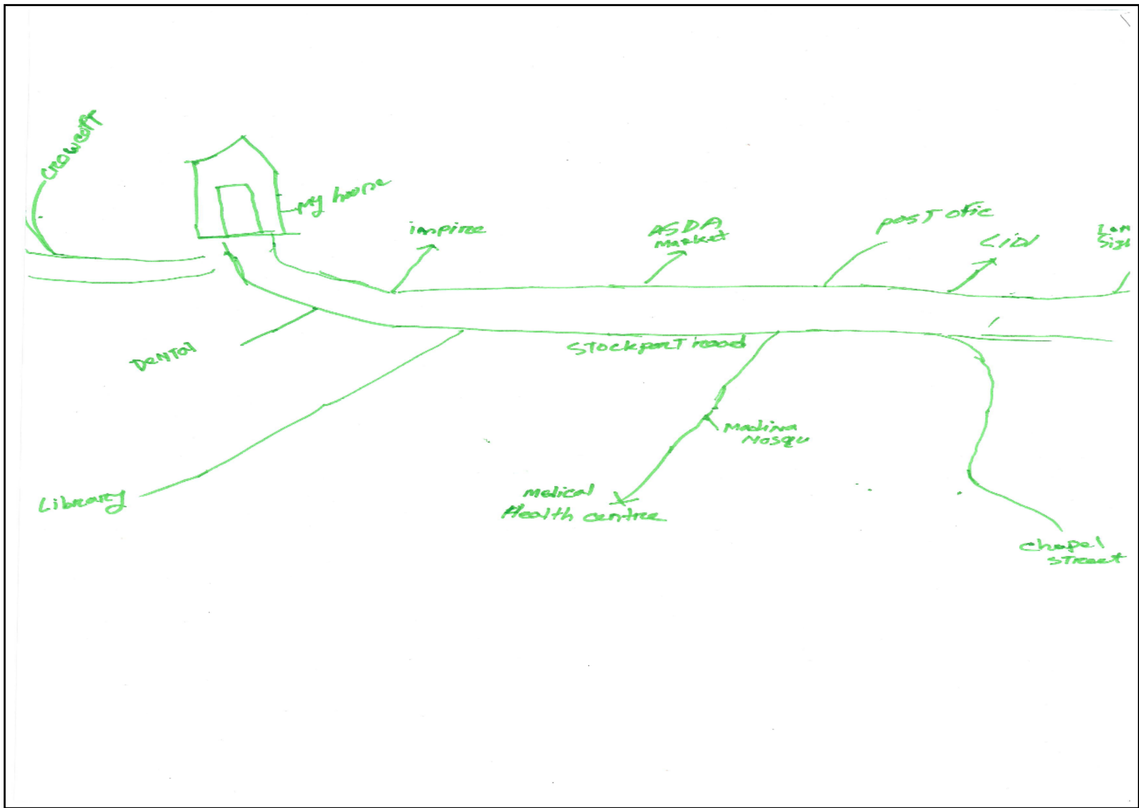

I Like my farend I Like my chidren
chapal sataxit
Asda
Audley Road
Home
Hose
Park
madina mastid
manchester college
madina shop
Levenshulme
Pound Shop

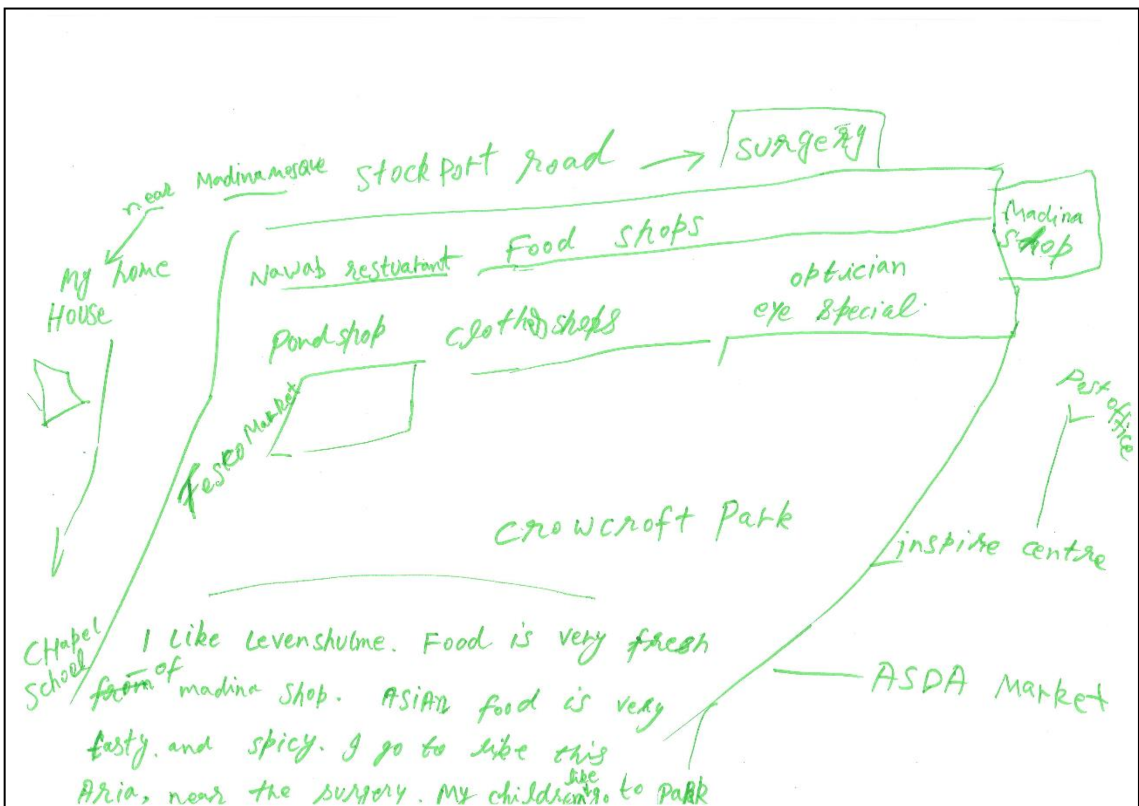
I Like to meet my friends near School.
My child school near to Longsight.

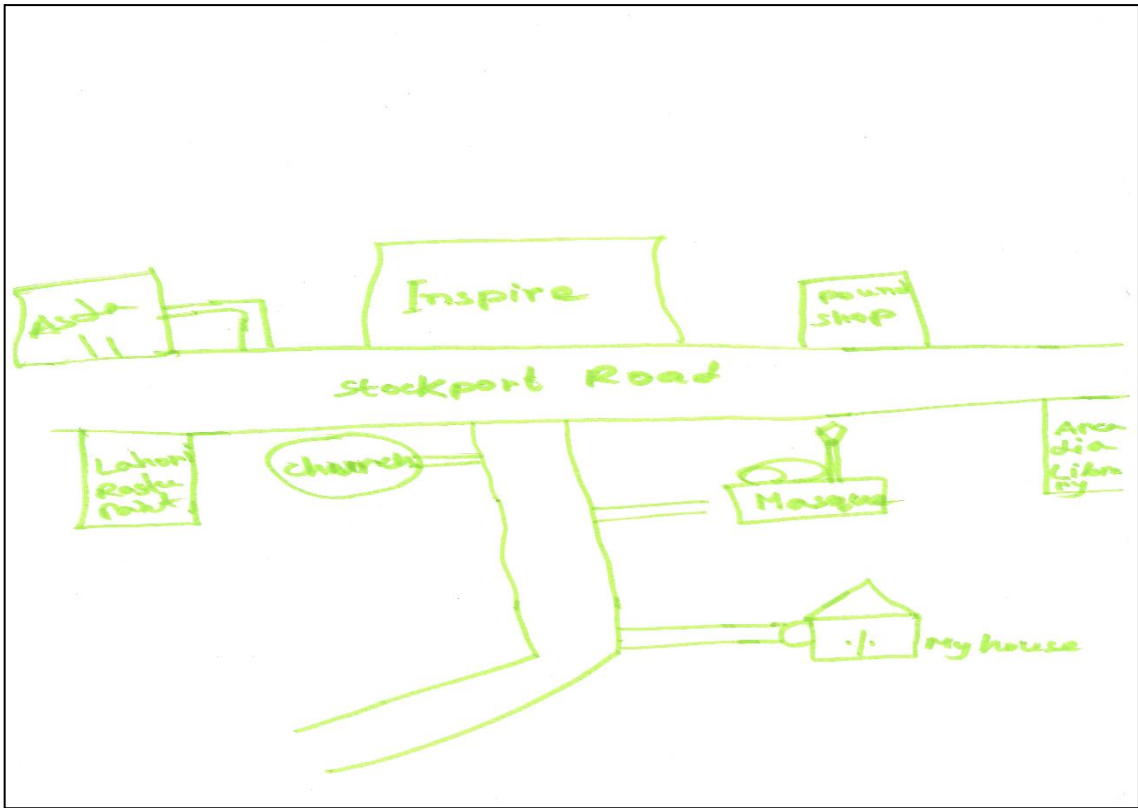


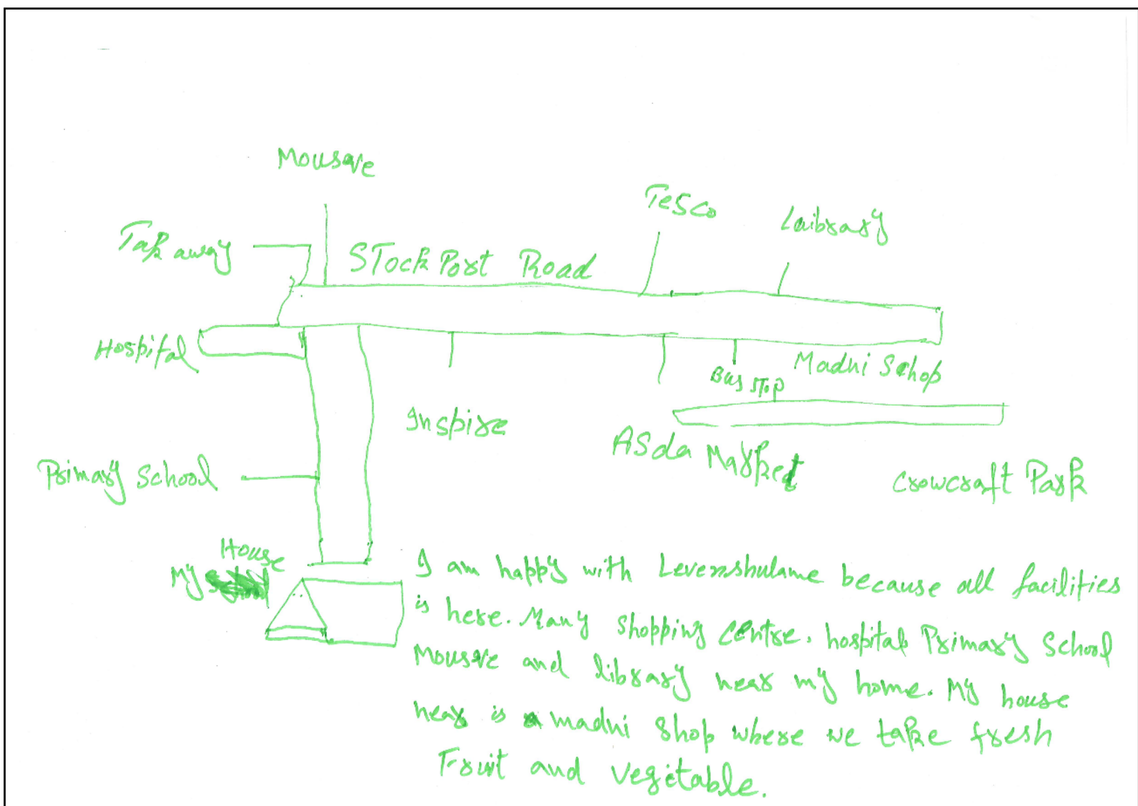

I go to drop my children go to school. I like bus services to commute. I like park I go for walking there and take some fresh air.

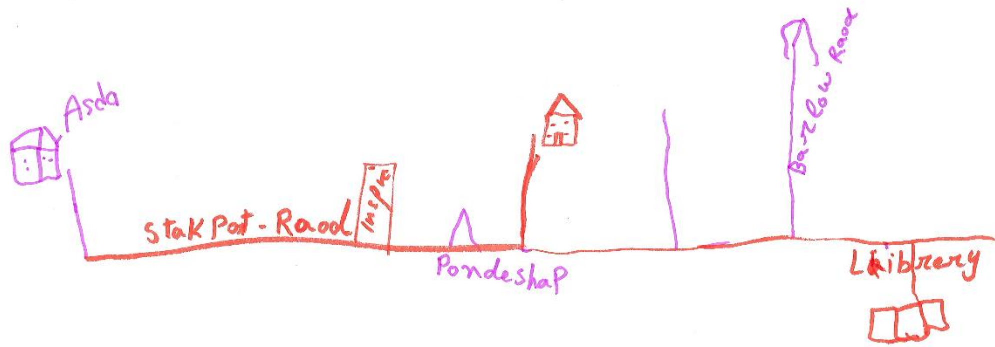


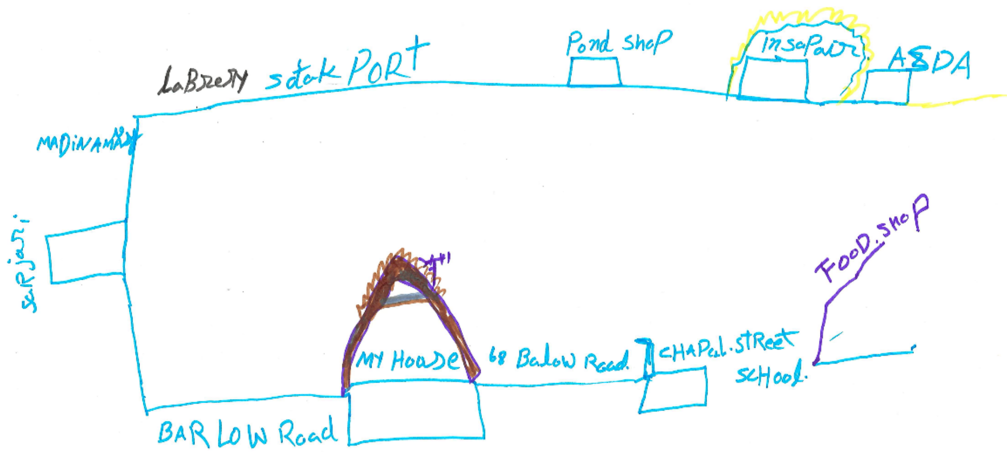

Crowcroft
my home
ASDA Market
post ofic
Lidl
Denton
Stockport road
Library
Madina Mosqu
Medical
Health centre
Chapel Street

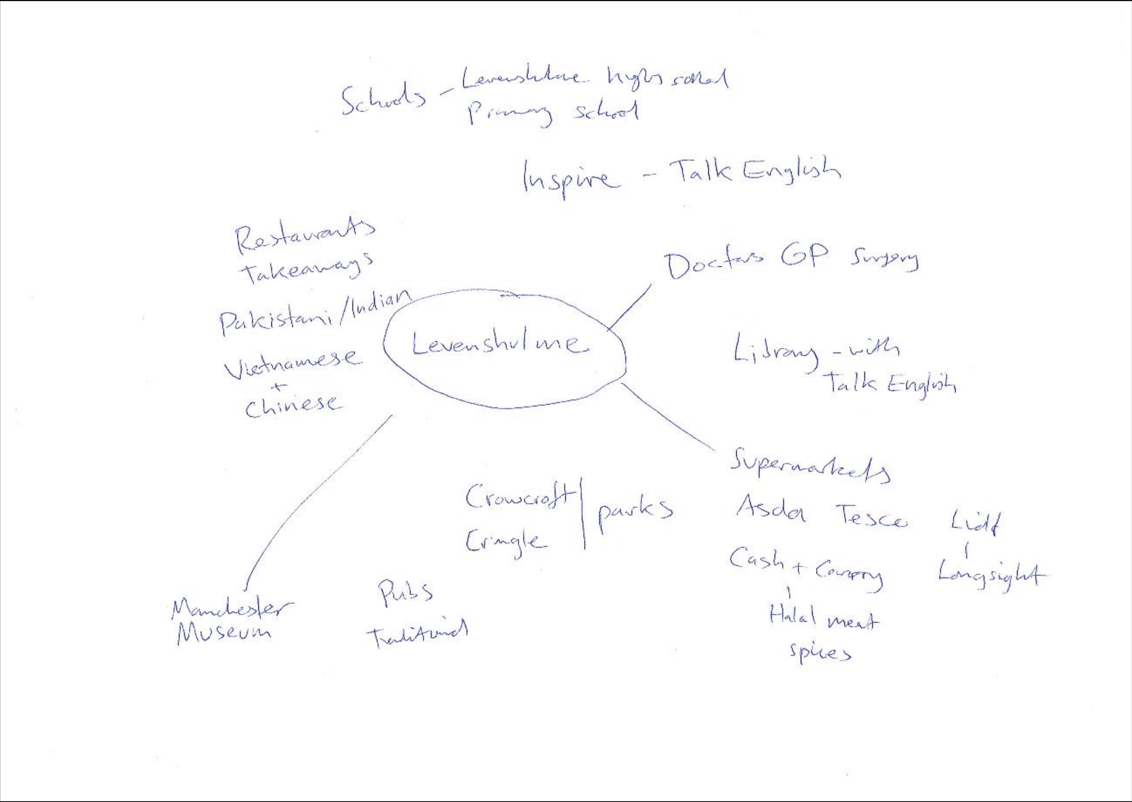

near Madina mosque
Stockport road
surgery
Madina Shop
My home
House
Nawab restuarant
Food shops
optician
eye special
Pond shop
clothes shops
Tesco Market
Post office
Crowcroft Park
inspire centre
Chapel School
ASDA Market
I like Levenshulme. Food is very fresh
of madina Shop. ASIAN food is very
tasty. and spicy. I go to like this
Aria, near the surgery. My children like go to Park


Asda
Inspire
Pound shop
Stockport Road
church
Mosque
Arcadia Library
my house


Mousqe
Tak away
Stock Port Road
Tesco
Laibrary
Hospital
Bus stop
Madni Shop
Inspire
Asda Market
Crowcraft Park
Primary School
My House
I am happy with Levenshulme because all facilities is here. Many shopping centre. hospital Primary School Mousqe and library near my home. My house near is madni shop where we take fresh Fruit and vegetable.


Asda
Barlow Road
StakPot-Raod
Pondeshap
Library
I go To shoping ASda, iclend and Tesko
I am hapy with my aria levenshuom


LaBrery
stak PORT
Pond shoP
ASDA
MADINAMA
SURjari
FOOD shoP
MY HoUSE
68 Balow Road
CHAPel.STReet
SCHool.
BAR LOW Road
My Name is SHAHida.




Shops & facilities are very good in Levenshulme.
Safe & comfortable, not dangerous.
Everyone likes the climate in England!
Area is not very clean compared to other European countries.
England is best for education, but Italy is cleaner!

centre of Manchester
Levenshulme
Trafford Centre
cinema
Media City

Mosque
Inspire
Asda
Nawwab
Mehan
green park
Stockport Road - buses / taxis / walking / cycle / motorcycle / Lorries

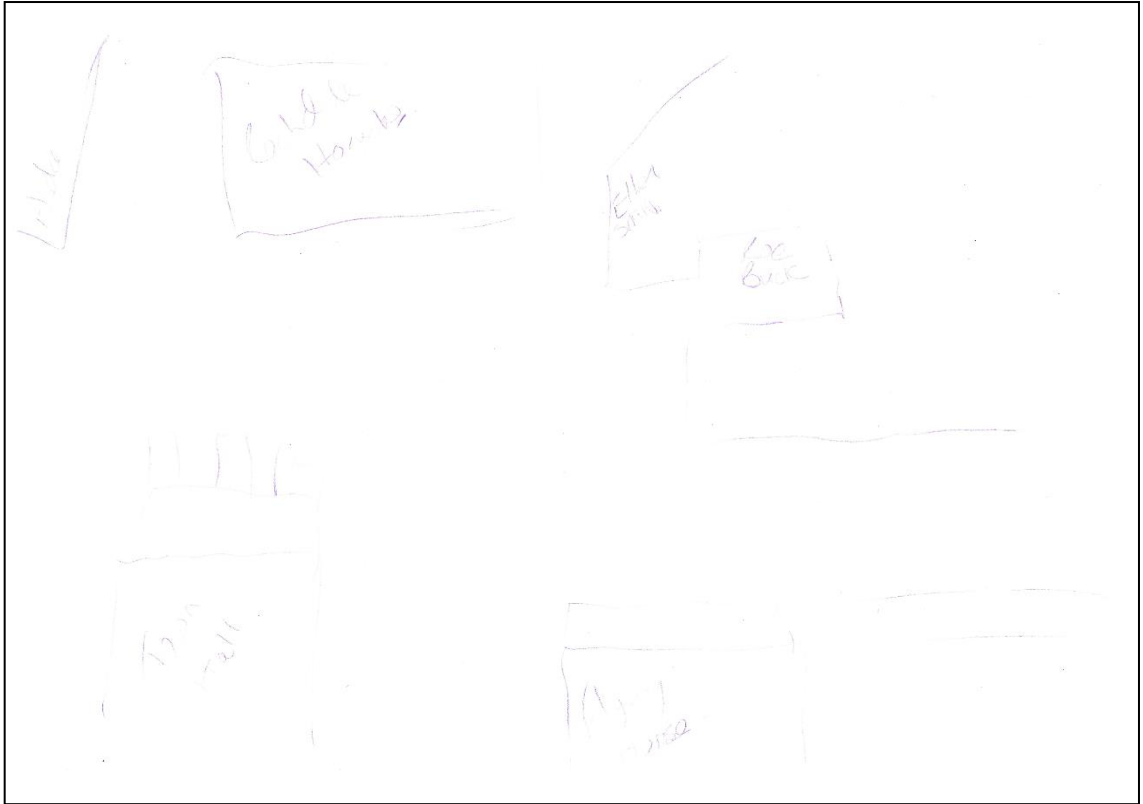
post office
library
gym
school -
take-away
Poundshop
Medenna
Cash a Carry
Church
Iceland
Tesco
~~[illegible]~~
Walk-in centre

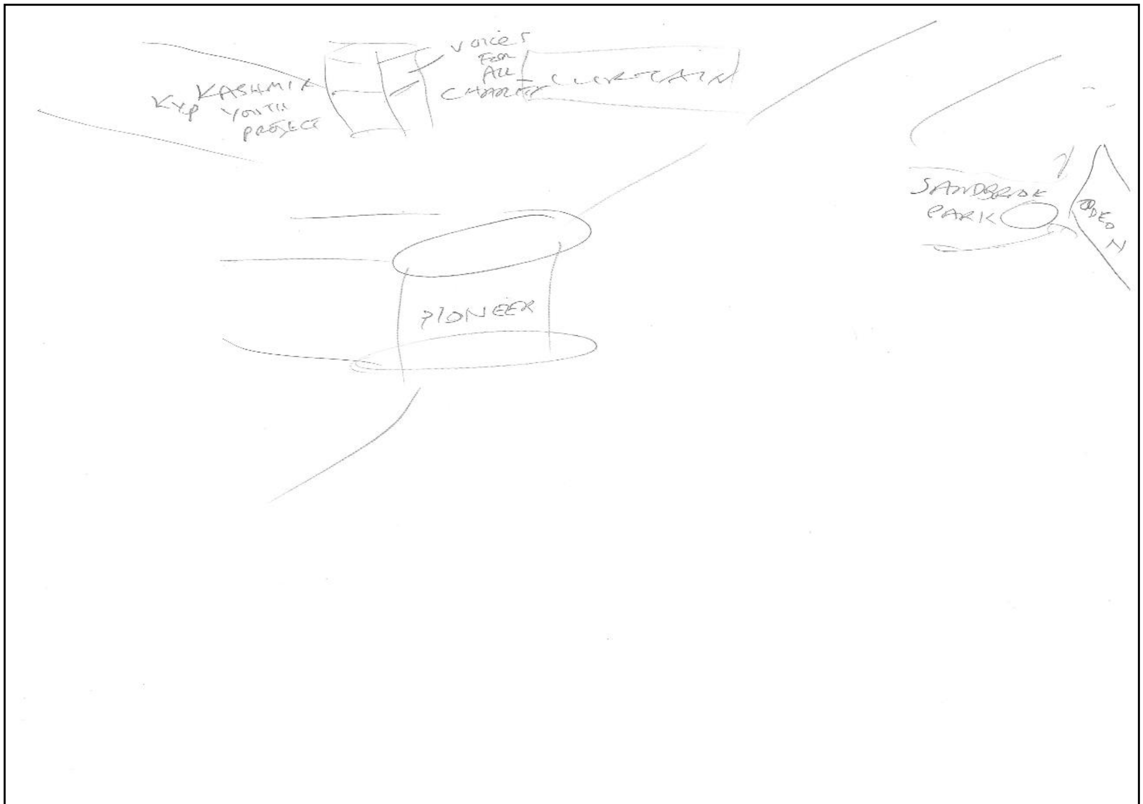
g.P's
pharmacy

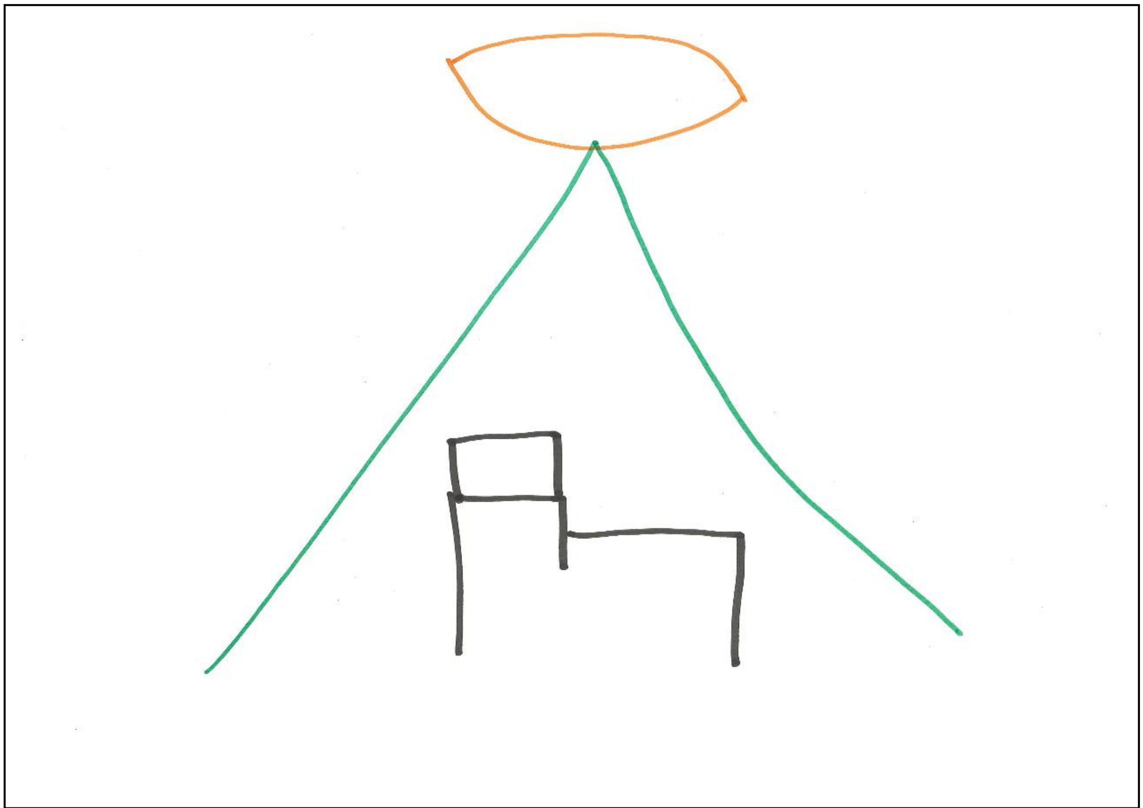
Monday, July 10th
Monday, July 17th
Summer holiday

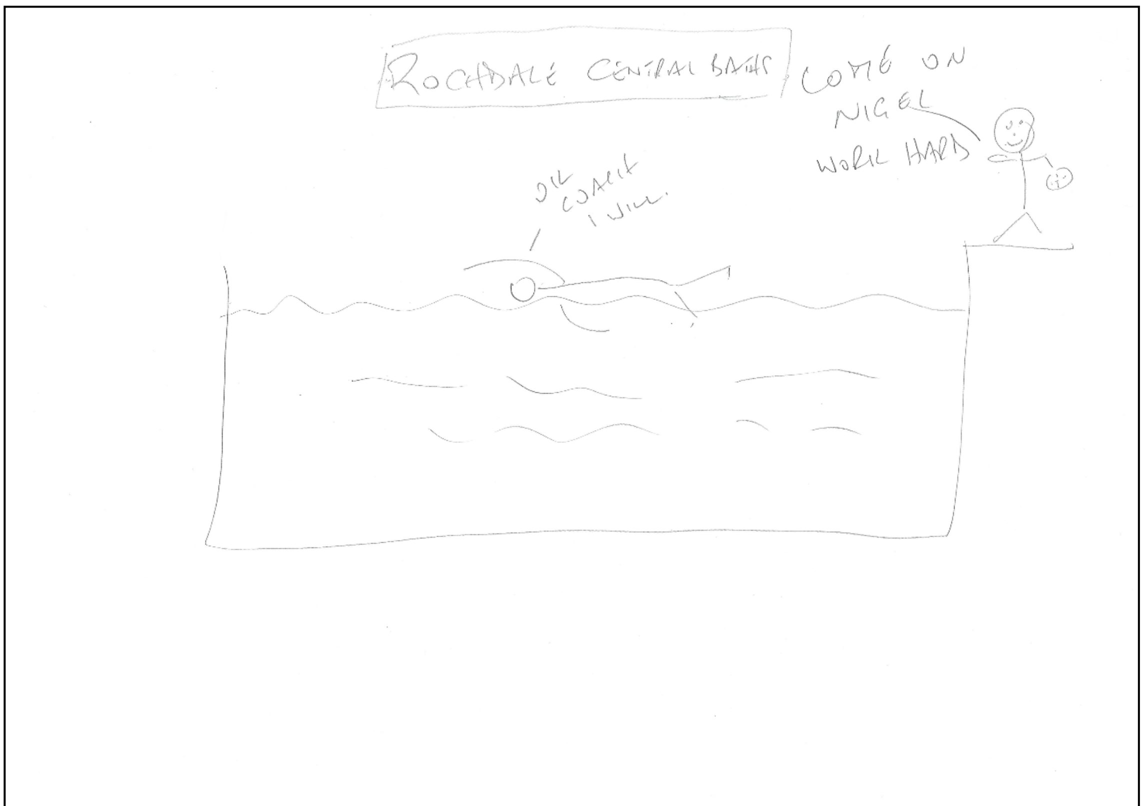
What street do you live on?
How long have you lived in Levenshulme?.
I have lived in Levenshulme for ? years.
Where do you come from?
I come from ___

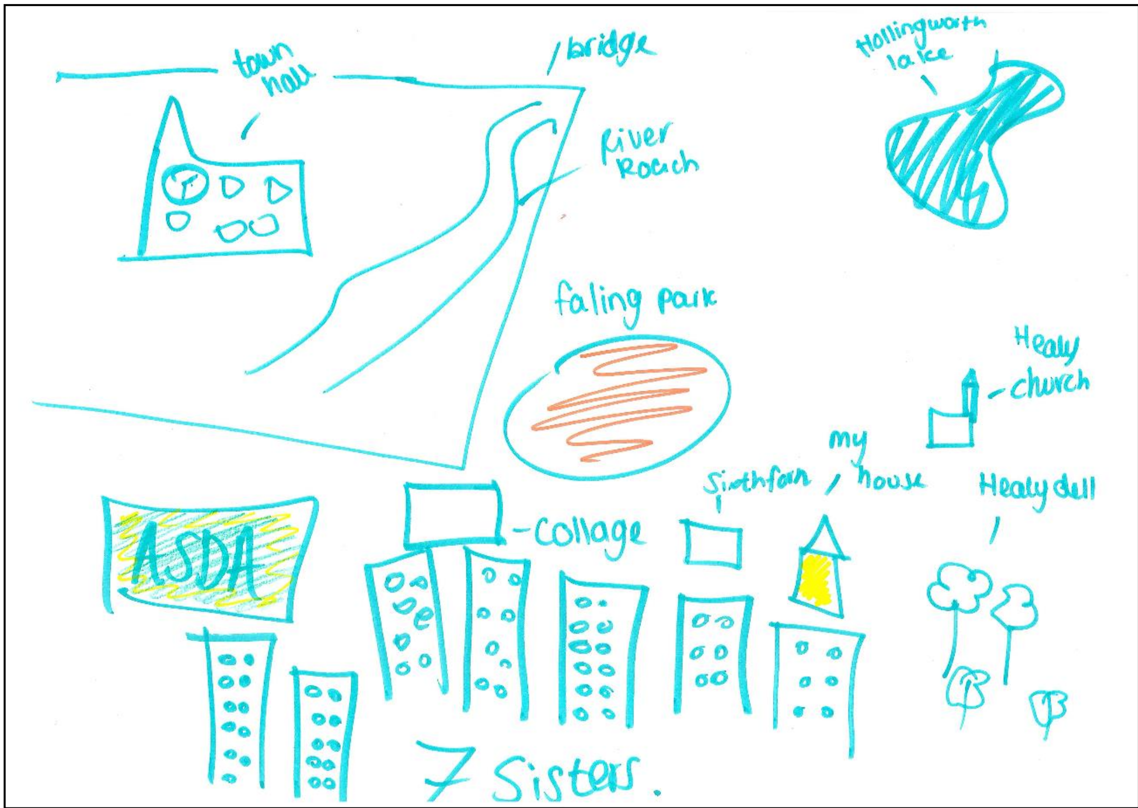
# Rochdale

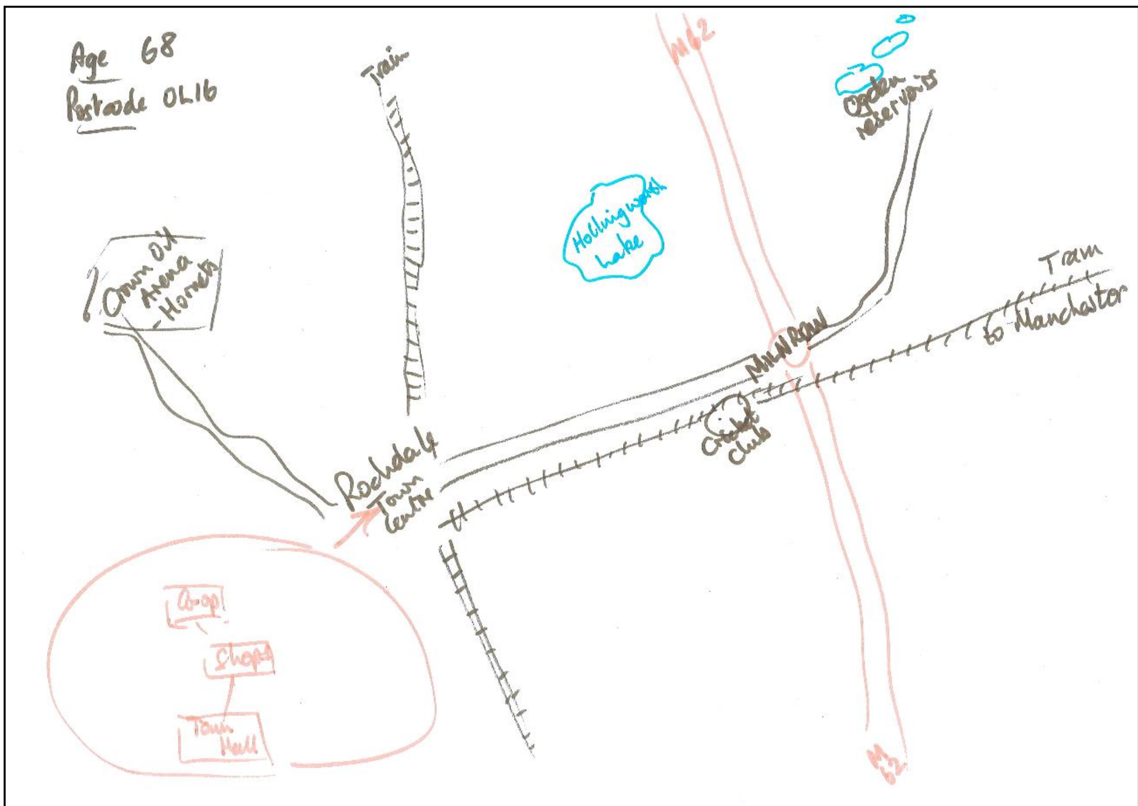


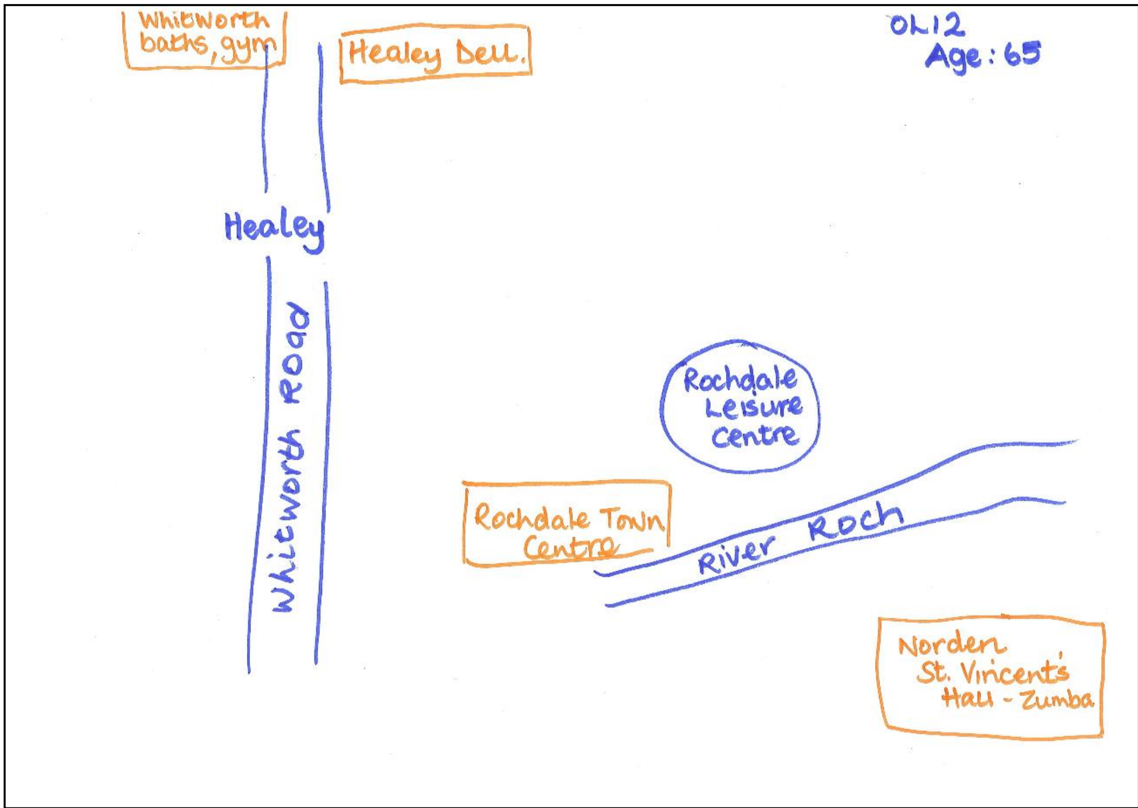

KYP
KASHMIR
YOUTH
PROJECT
VOICES
FOR
ALL
CHARITY
CURTAIN
PIONEER
PARK
ODEON

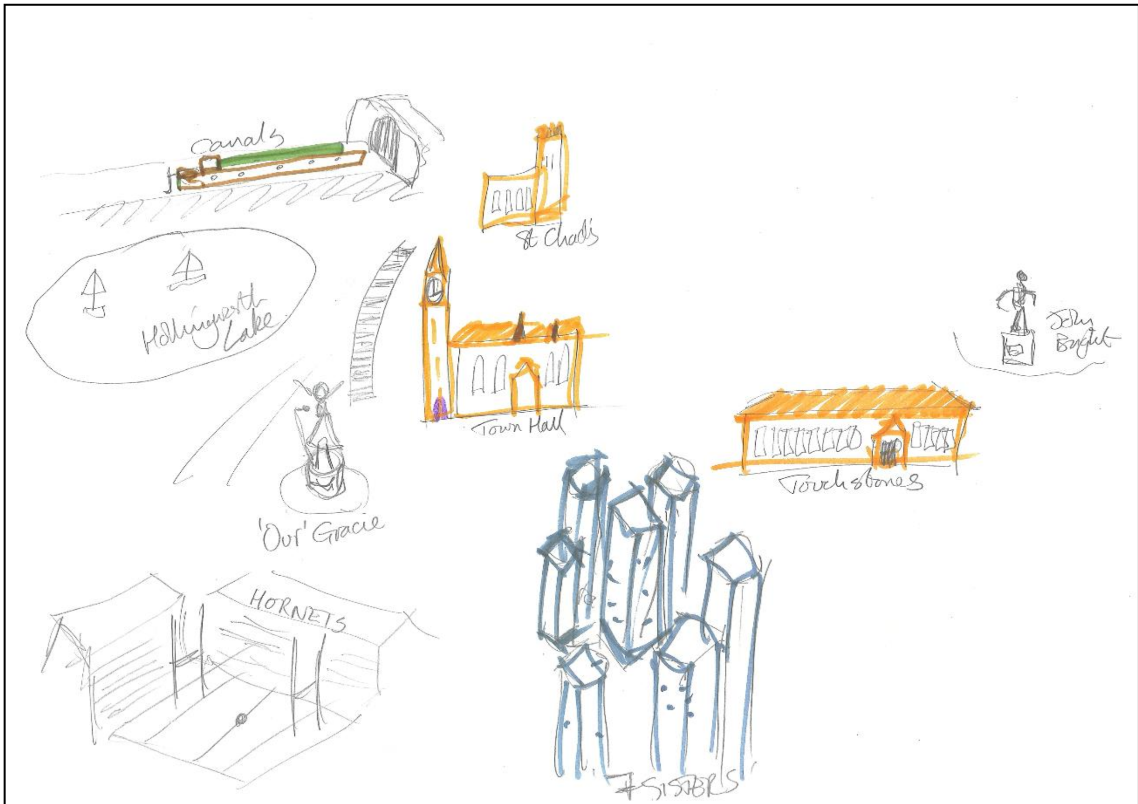


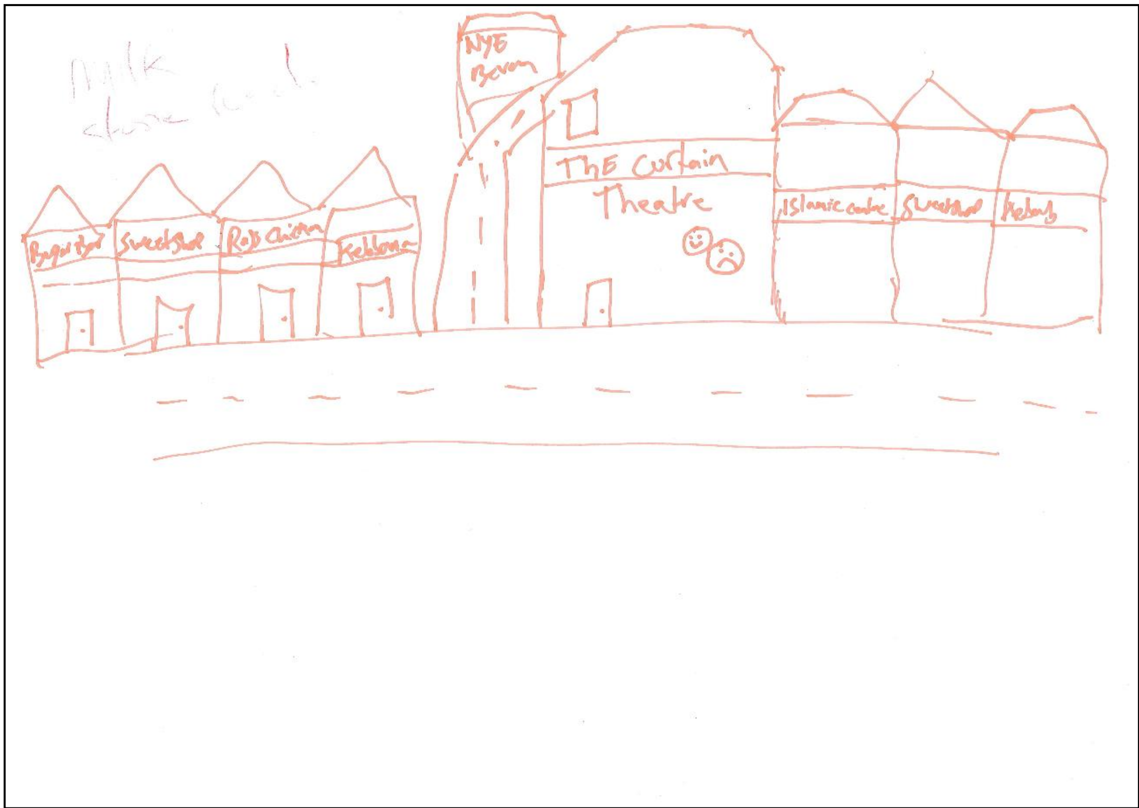

ROCHDALE CENTRAL BATHS
COME ON NIGEL WORK HARD
OK COACH I WILL.

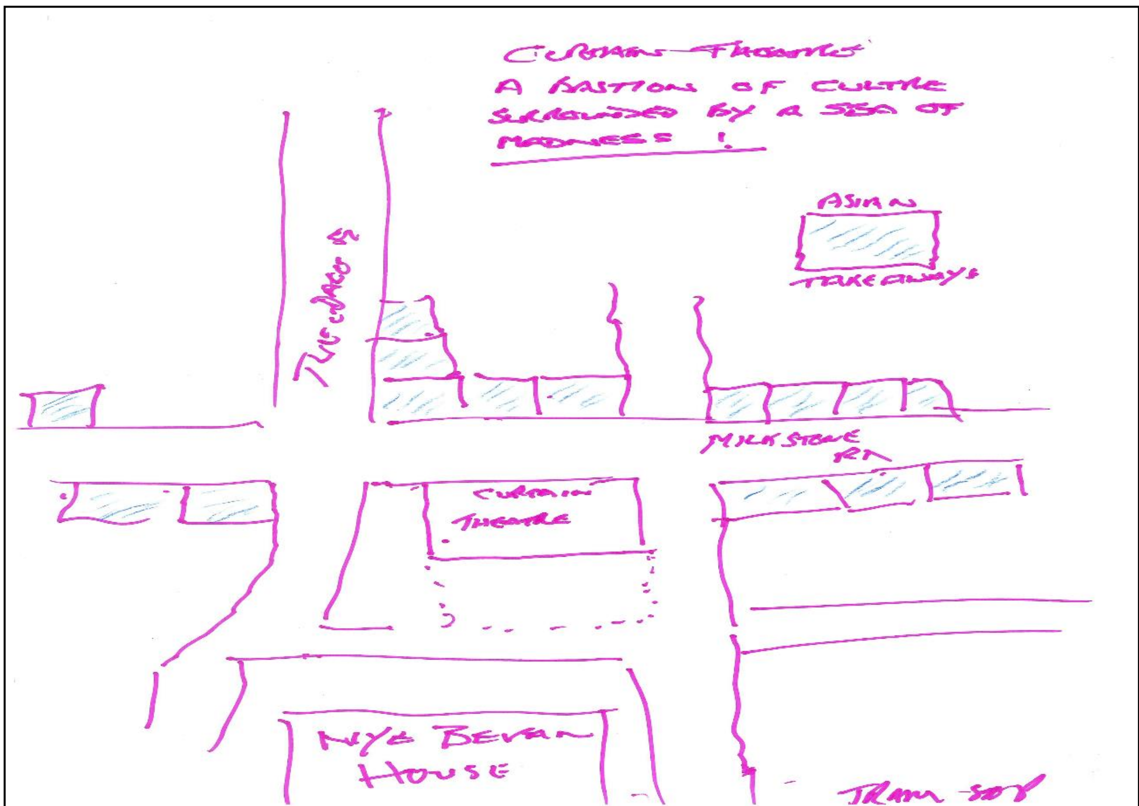

town hall
bridge
River Roach
Hollingworth lake
faling park
Healy
church
my house
Sixthform
Healy dell
ASDA
collage
7 Sisters.


Age 68
Postcode OL16
Train
M62
Ogden reservoirs
Hollingworth lake
Crown Oil Arena Hornets
Tram
Cricket club
Rochdale Town centre
Co-op
Shops
Town Hall
M62

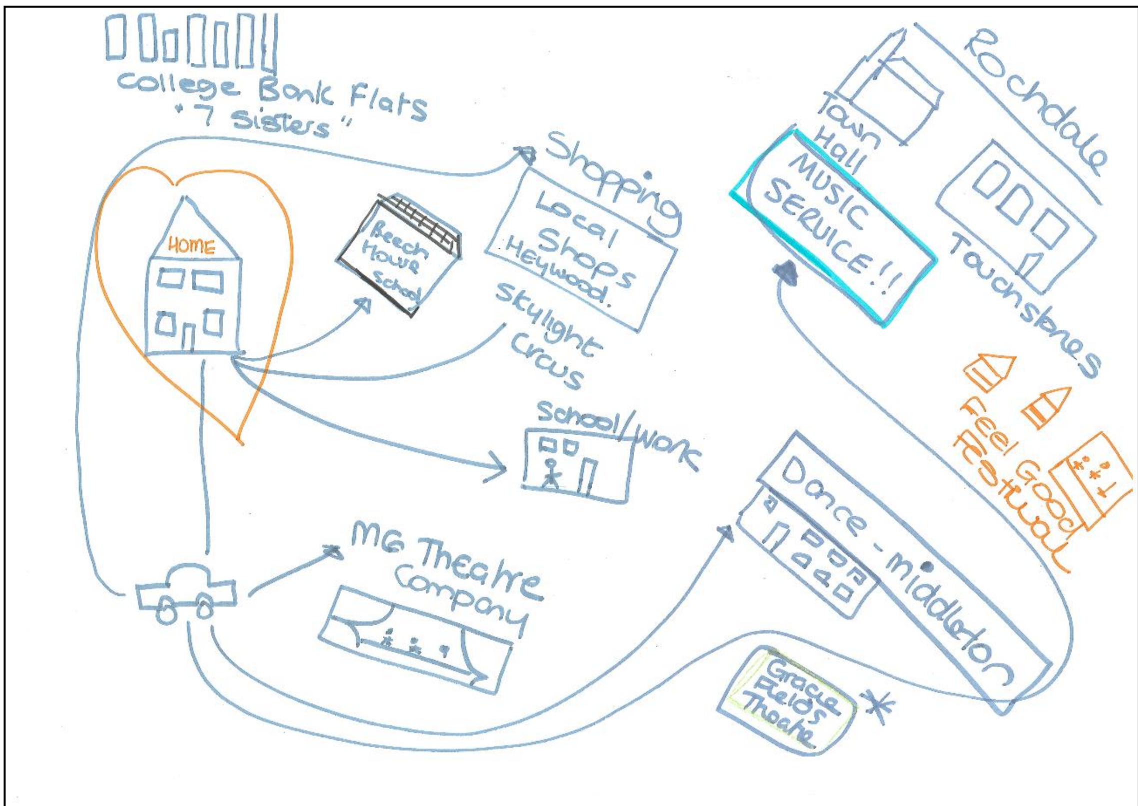

Whitworth baths, gym
Healey Dell.
OL12
Age: 65
Healey
Whitworth Road
Rochdale Leisure Centre
Rochdale Town Centre
River Roch
Norden St. Vincent's Hall - Zumba


Canals
St Chads
Lake
Town Hall
Touchstones
'Our' Gracie
HORNETS
7 SISTERS

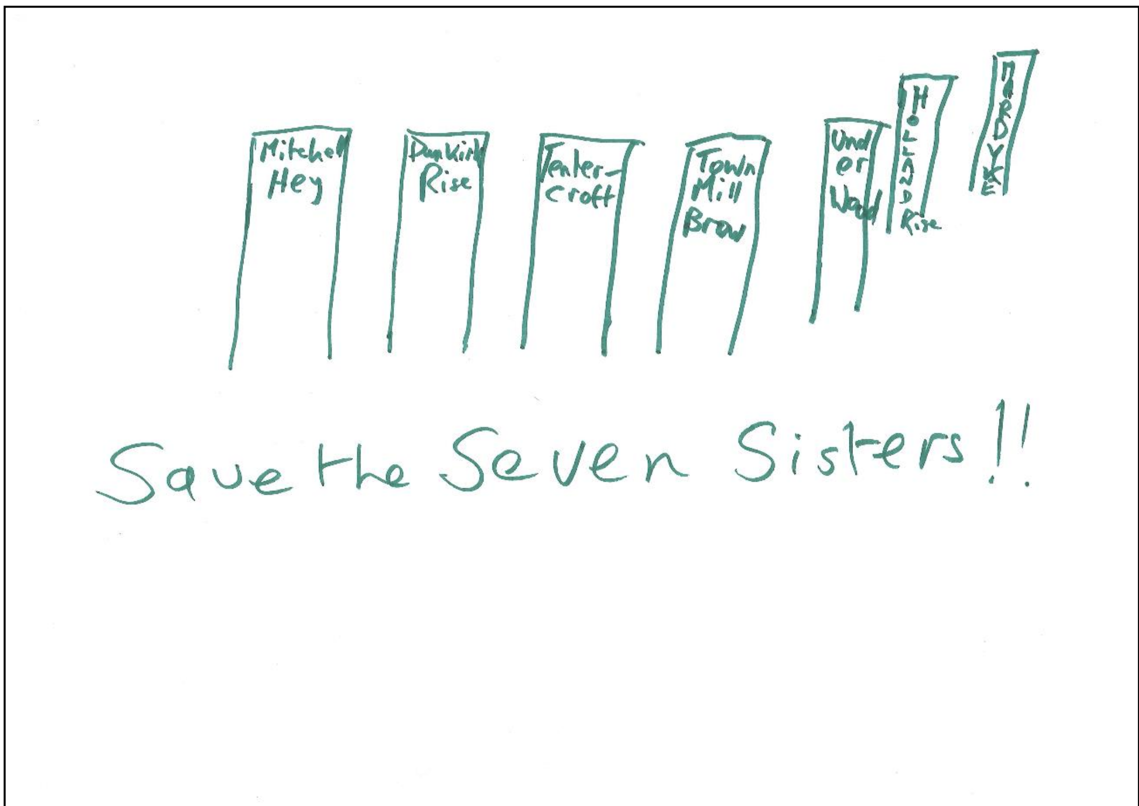

NYE Bevan
THE Curtain Theatre
Islamic centre
Sweetshop

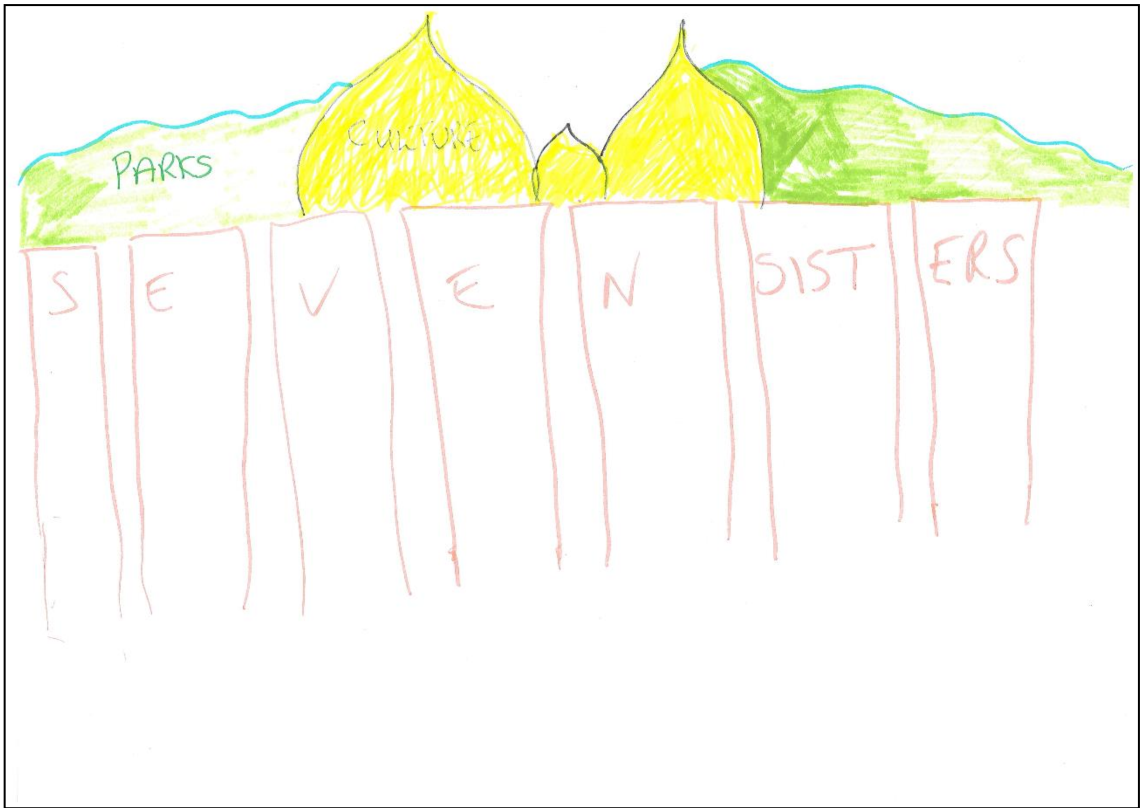

A BASTION OF CULTURE SURROUNDED BY A SEA OF MADNESS !
ASIAN TAKEAWAYS
MILKSTONE RD
CURTAIN THEATRE
NYE BEVAN HOUSE
TRAM STOP

Dance
st chads
Church
Touch stones
Home
the seven
Sisters
Skylight
circus arts
train station
mosque
Town hall
Choir
Beech house school


College Bank Flats
"7 sisters"
Shopping
Local
Shops
Heywood.
HOME
Beech
House
School
Skylight
Crcus
School/work
MG Theatre
Company
Town
Hall
MUSIC
SERVICE!!
Rochdale
Touchstones
Feel Good
Festival
Dance - middleton

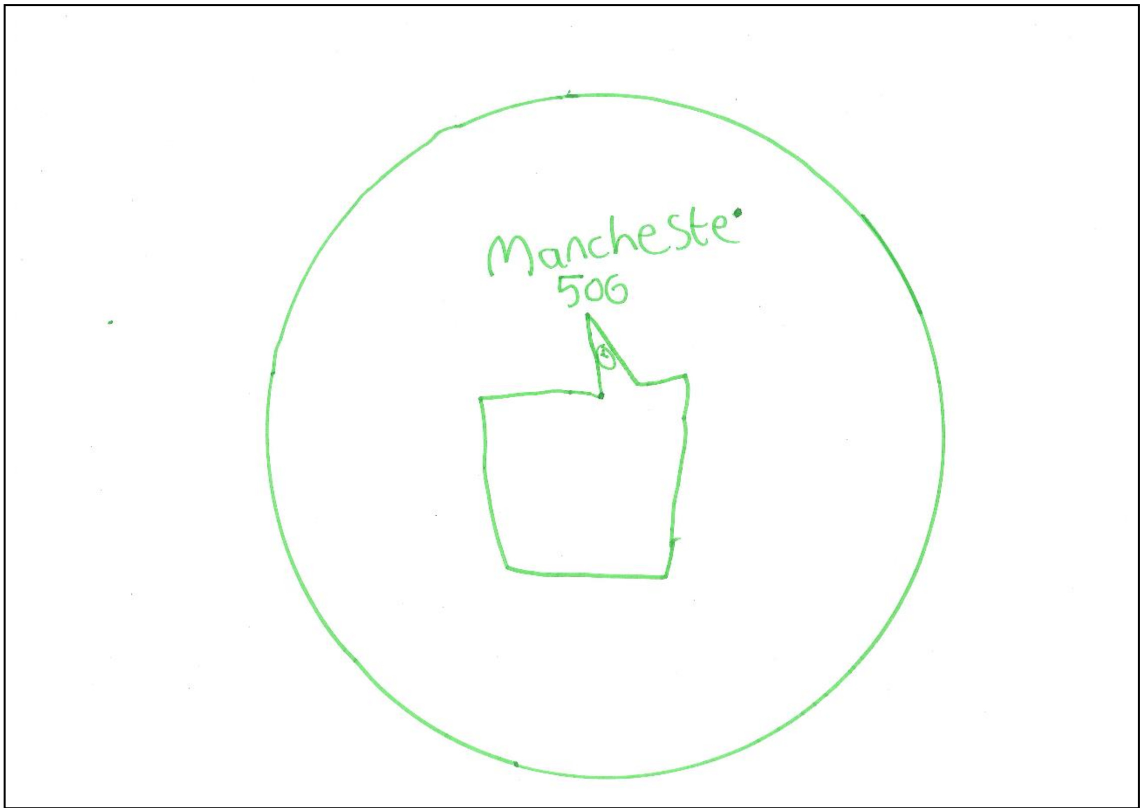
over the hill in Littleborough . . .
Hollingworth Lake
Arcades
Milnrow
Sweet home Milnrow
Carnival
Park
Remembrance Day
John Milne PUB
Working mens club
Tim Bobbin Pub
Blue Plaque
John Bright
Too many nights in the flyer
Mates
Drama
The flying horse
Real ale
Bands
Pub Quiz
Jam nights
Yates
Empire
Avin' a proper laugh
Town Centre
Ellen Road
Seven sisters.
Town hall
up theeeeee Dale!
up the Dale!
up the Dale!

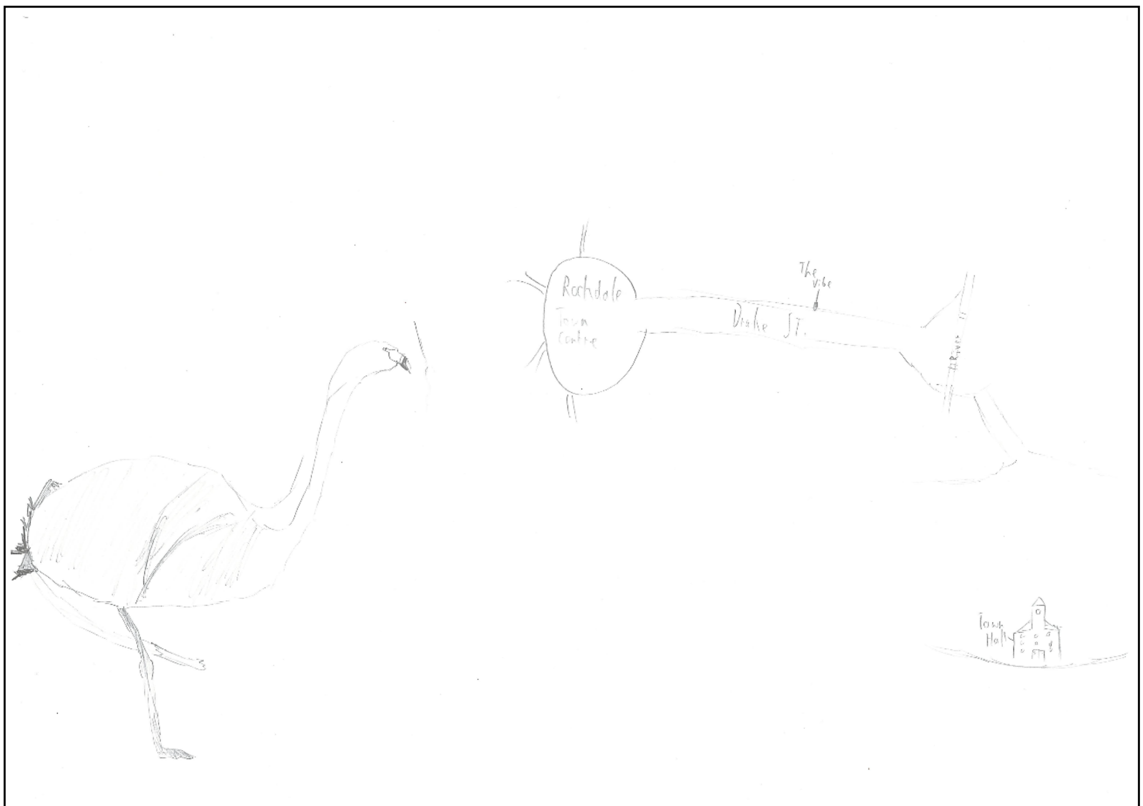

Mitchell Hey
Dunkirk Rise
Tentercroft
Town Mill Brow
Underwood
Holland Rise
Hardyke
Save the Seven Sisters!!

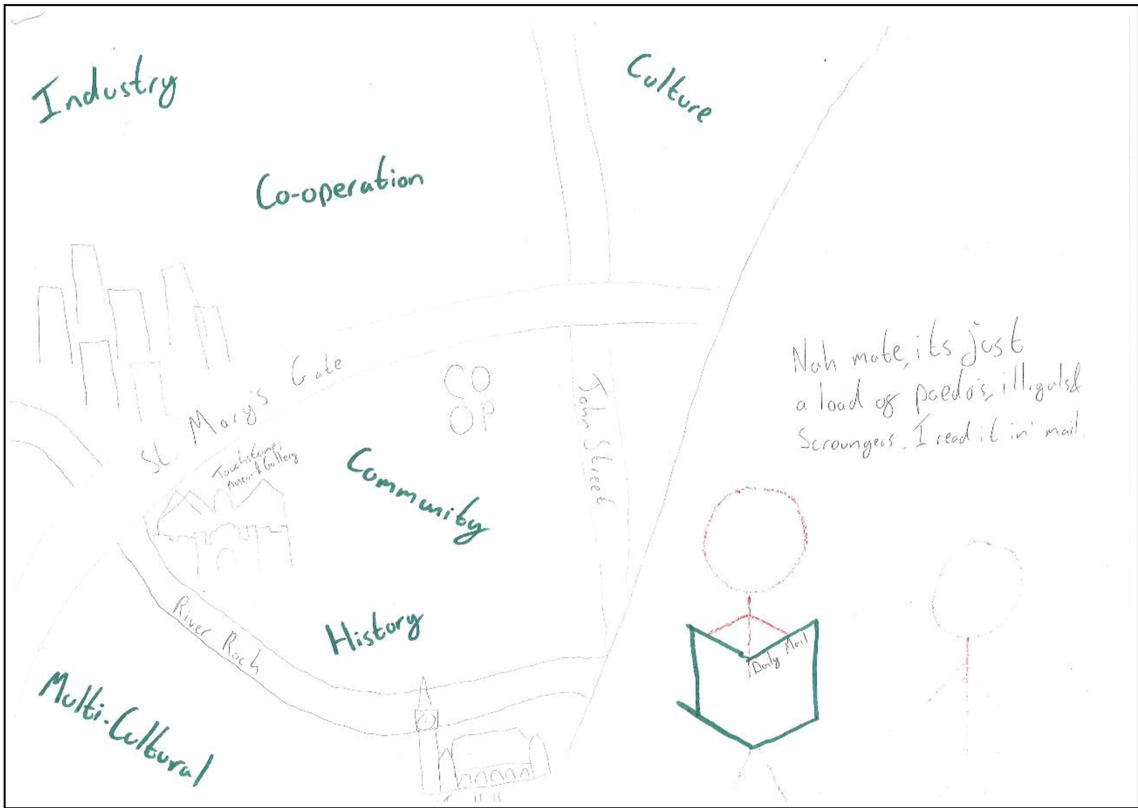

PARKS
CULTURE
S
E
V
E
N
SIST
ERS

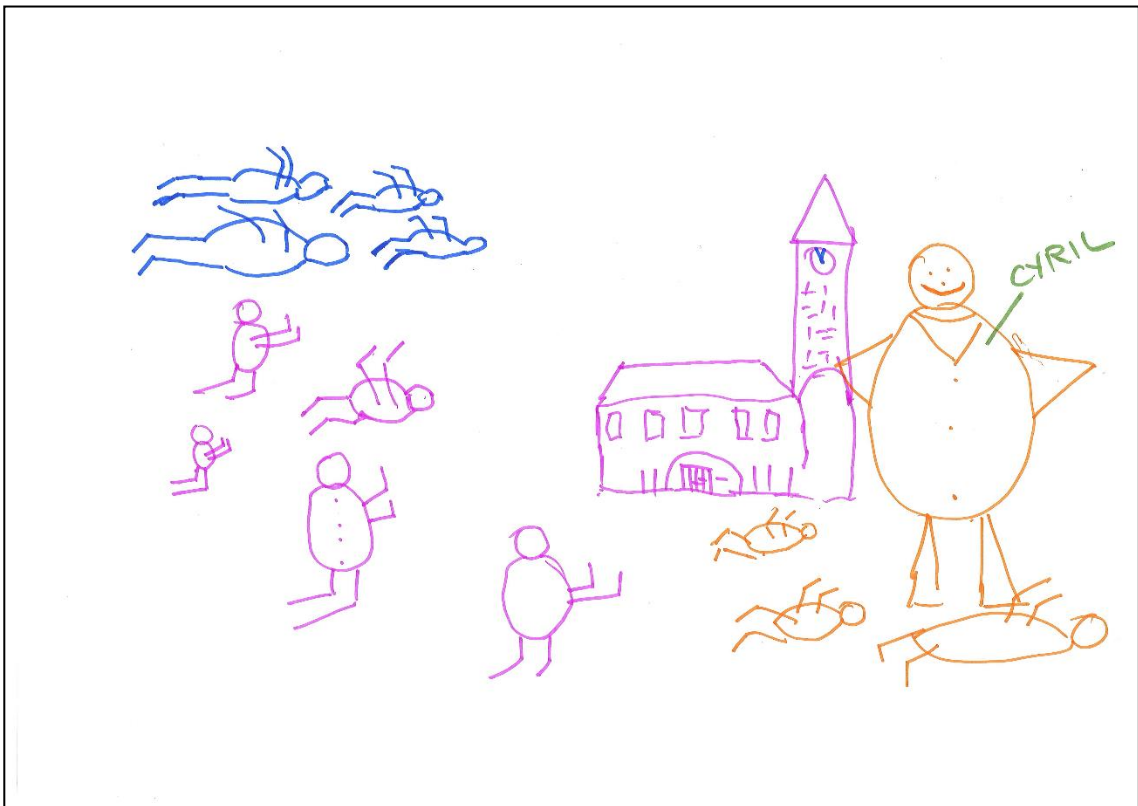
GREATER MANCHESTER
ROCHDALE
BEAUTIFUL!
BURY
SOLD ITS SOUL TO A SHOPPING CENTRE
OLDHAM
DEPRESSING
BOLTON
FRED DIBNAR
WIGAN
PIES!
MANCHESTER
FABULOUS
DIDSBURY
POSH
2014 JOHN COOKE

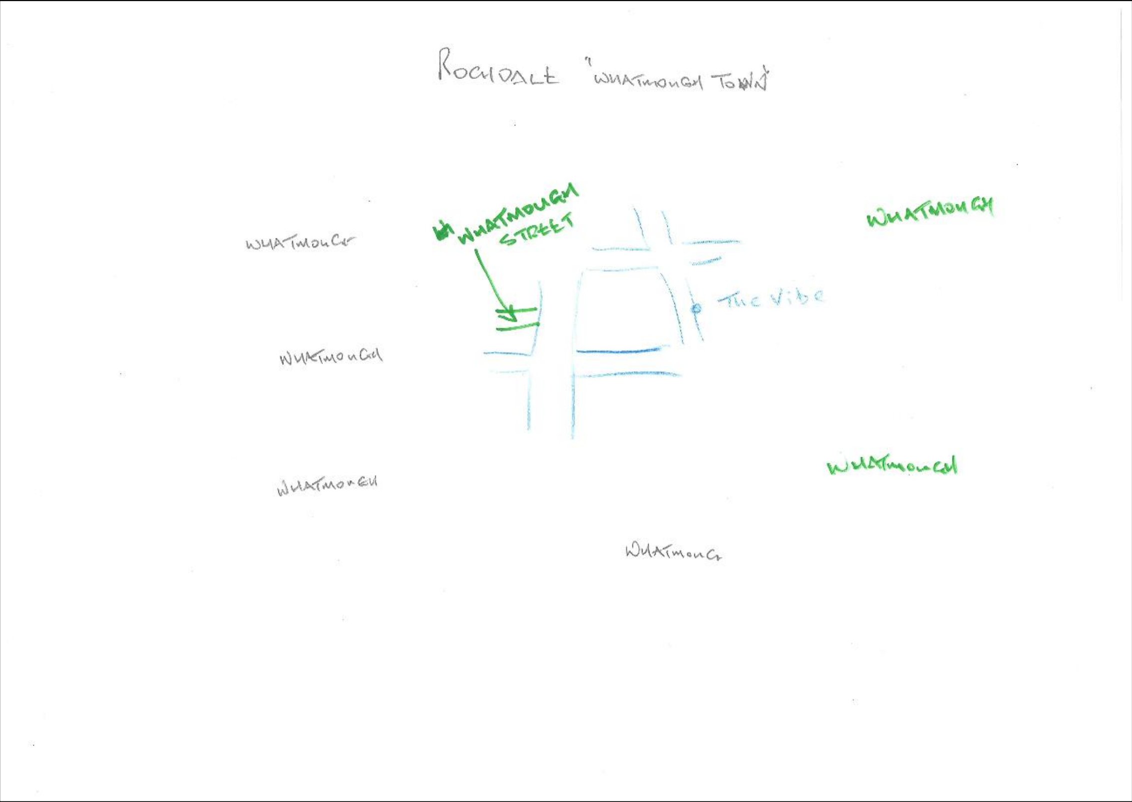
Touchstones!
Esplanade.
Town Hall ?


Mancheste
506

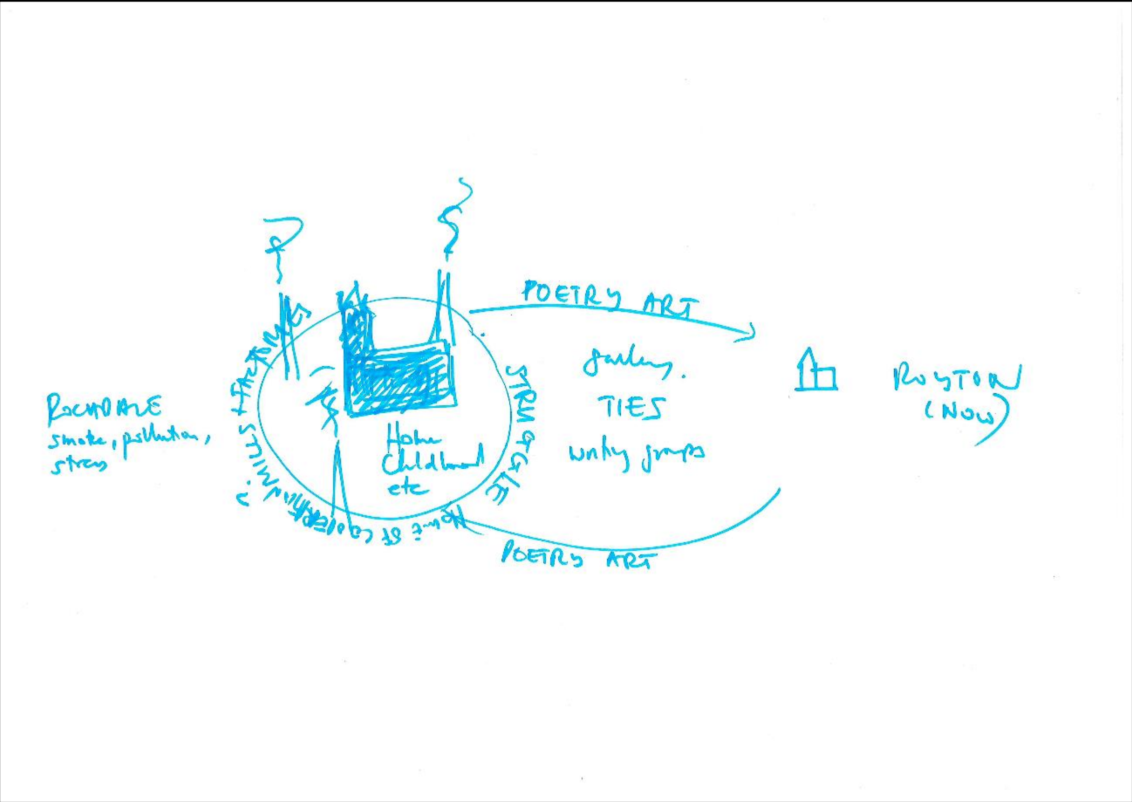

Rochdale
Town
Centre
The
vibe
Drake ST.
River
Town
Hall


Industry
Culture
Co-operation
St. Mary's Gate
CO OP
John Street
Community
Noh mate, its just a load of paedo's, illigals & Scroungers. I read it in' mail
Daily Mail
River Roch
History
Multi-Cultural

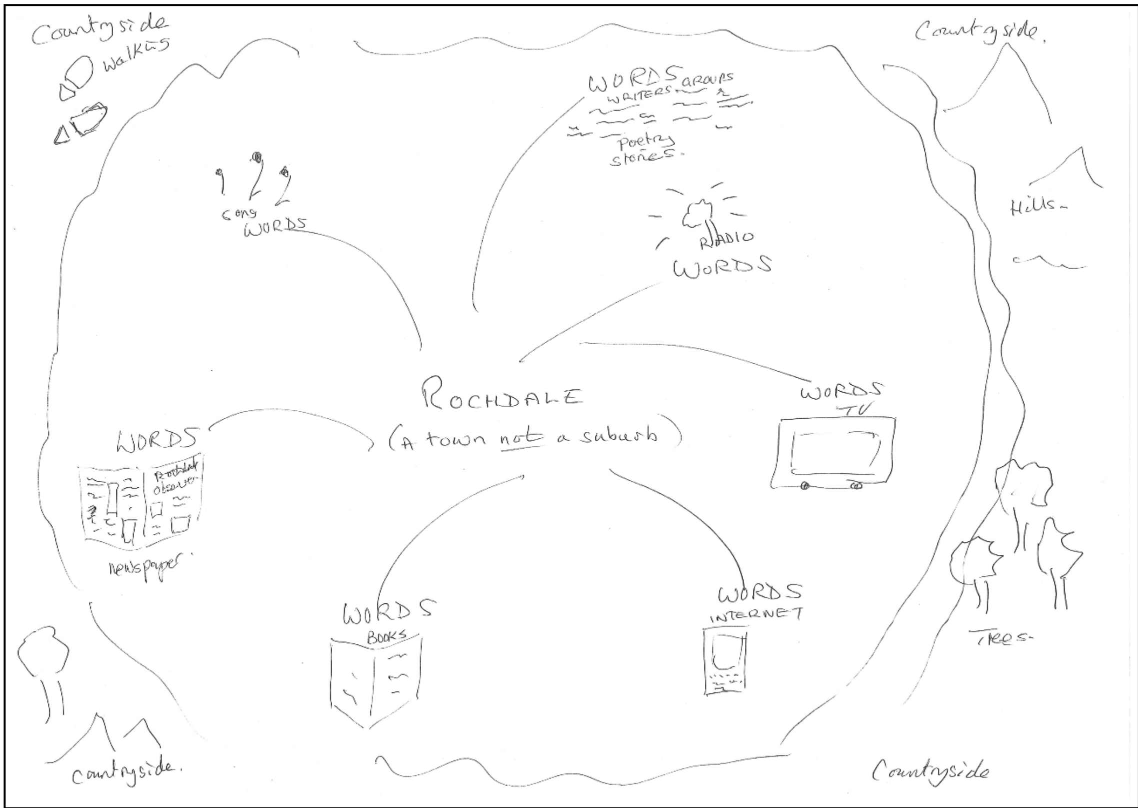

CYRIL

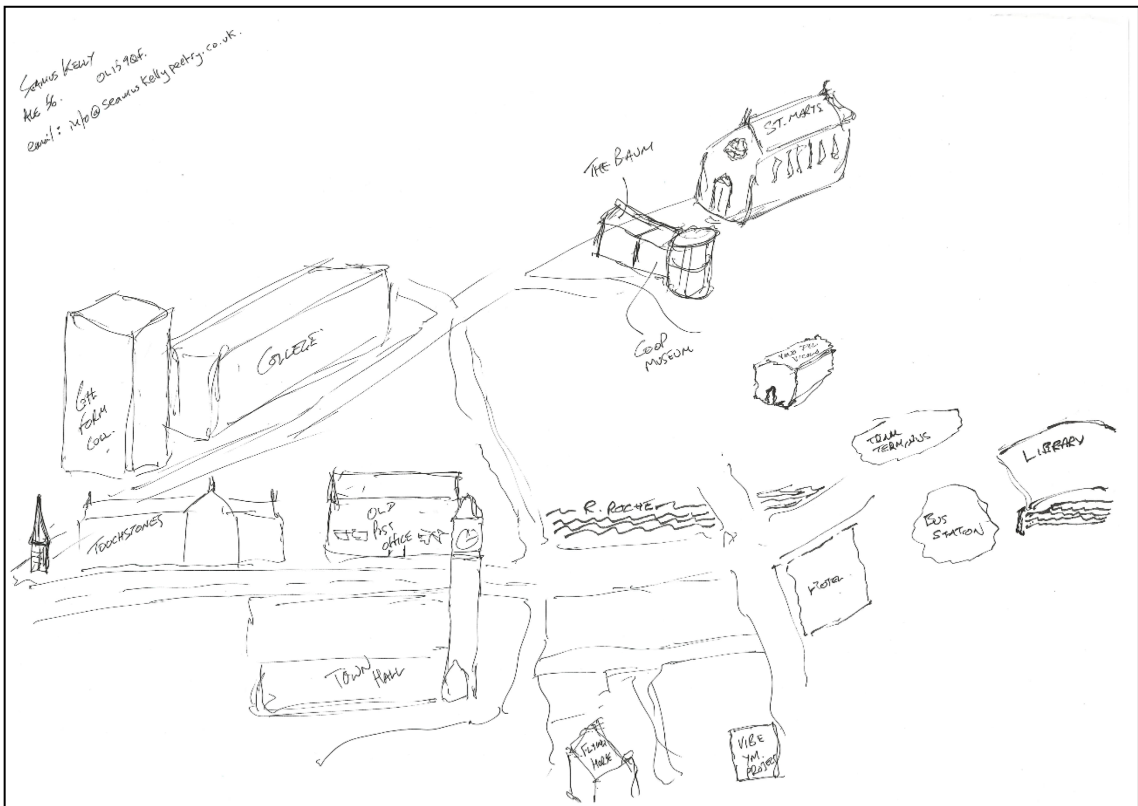


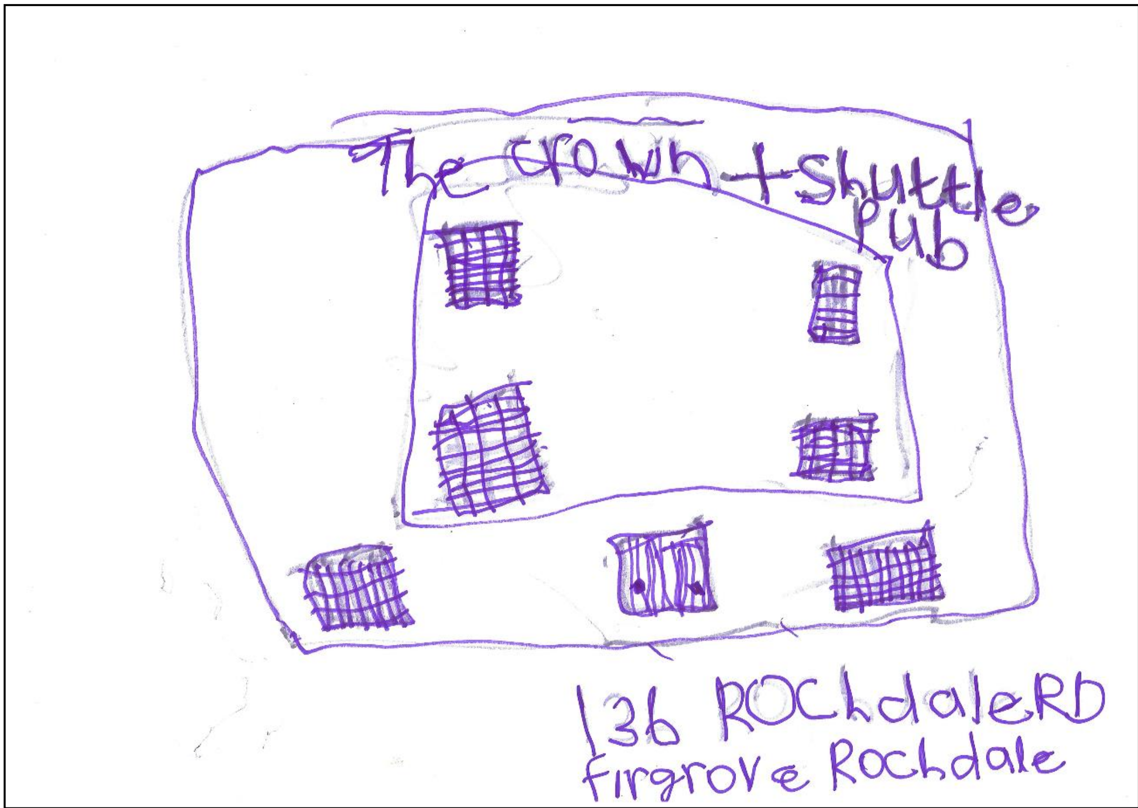
ROCHDALE 'WHATMOUGH TOWN'
WHATMOUGH
WHATMOUGH STREET
WHATMOUGH
WHATMOUGH
The Vibe
WHATMOUGH
WHATMOUGH
WHATMOUGH

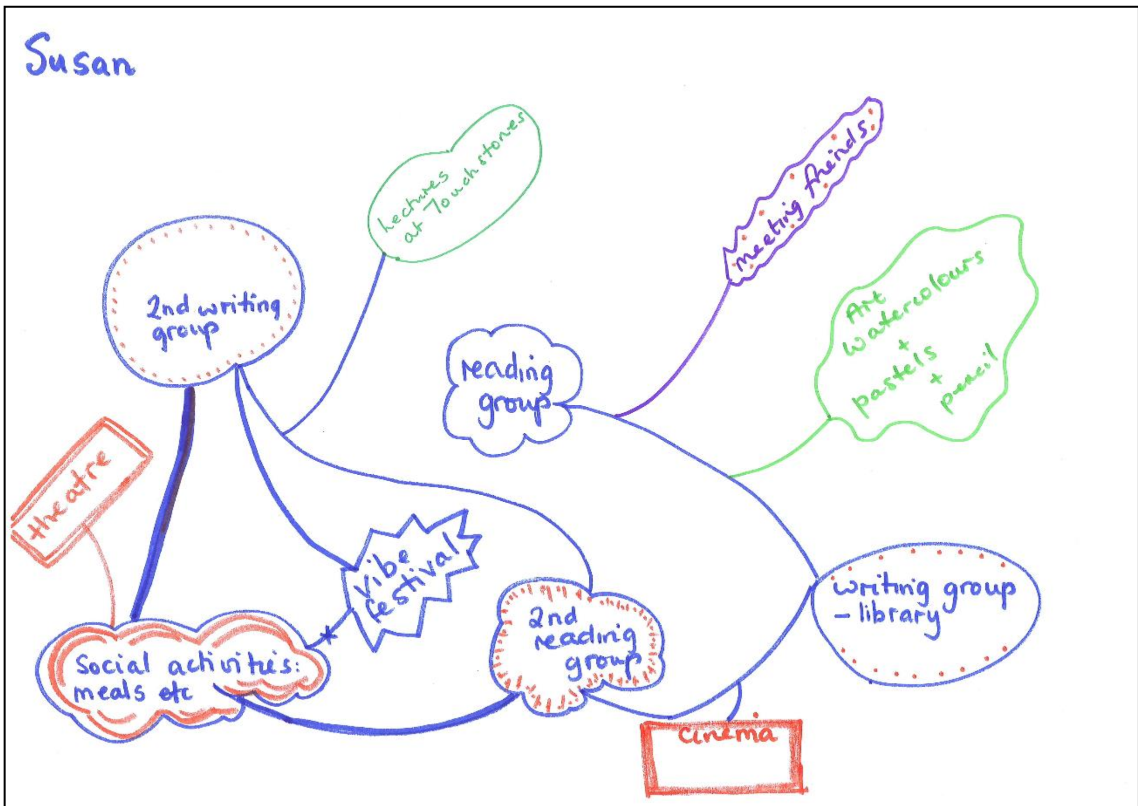



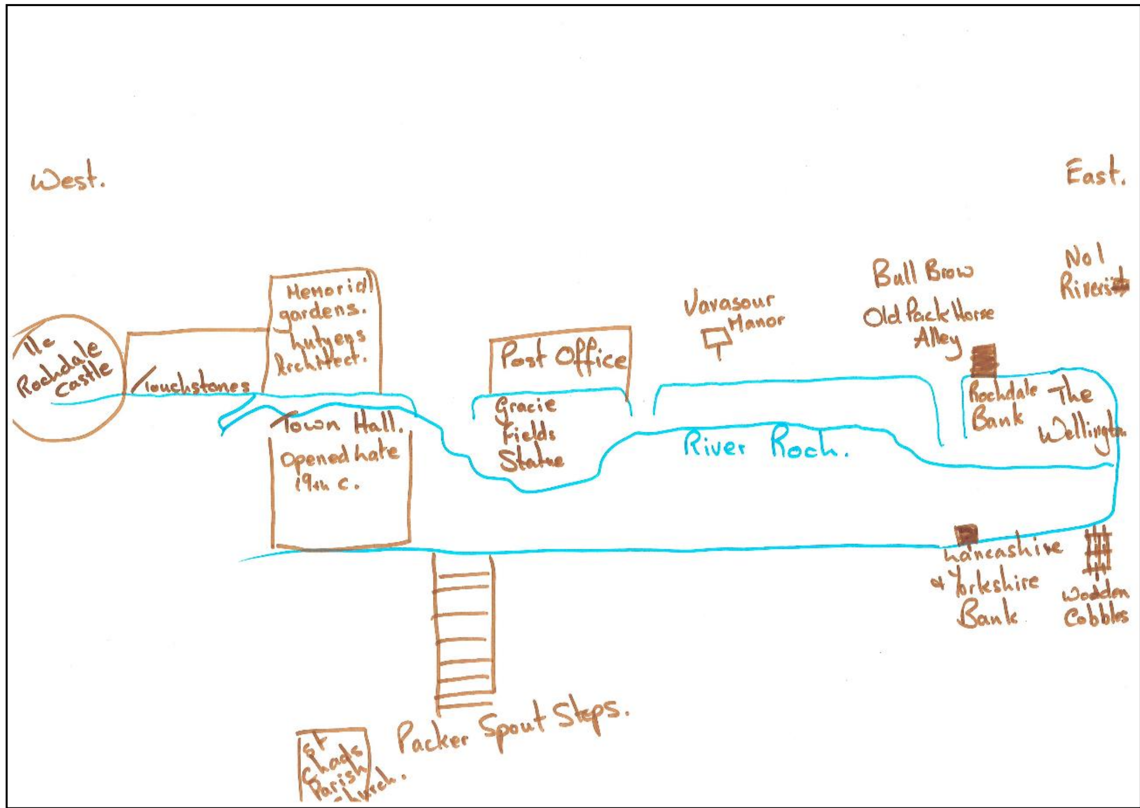
POETRY ART
ROCHDALE
smoke, pollution, stress
Home
Childhood
etc
STRUGGLE
TIES
ROYTON
(NOW)
POETRY ART

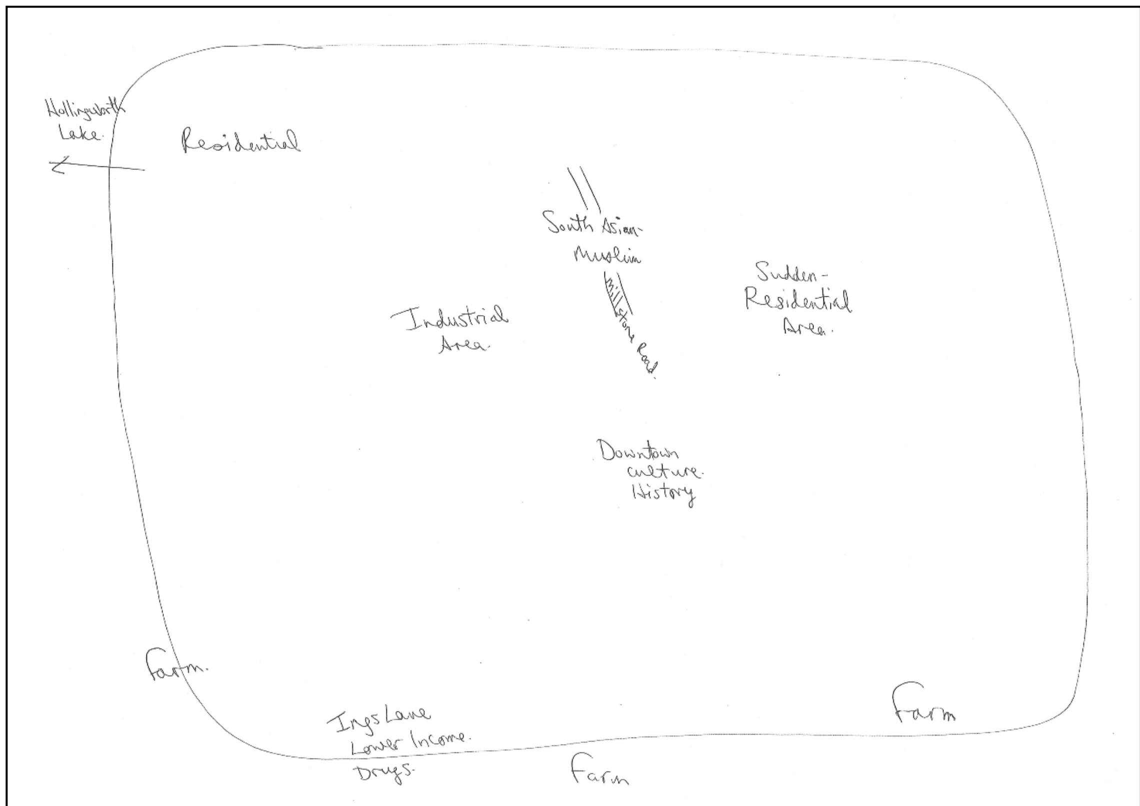

Countryside
walks
Countryside.
WORDS groups
writers
poetry
stories.
songs
WORDS
RADIO
WORDS
Hills
ROCHDALE
(A town not a suburb)
WORDS
TV
WORDS
Rochdale Observer
newspaper
WORDS
BOOKS
WORDS
INTERNET
Trees
countryside.
Countryside

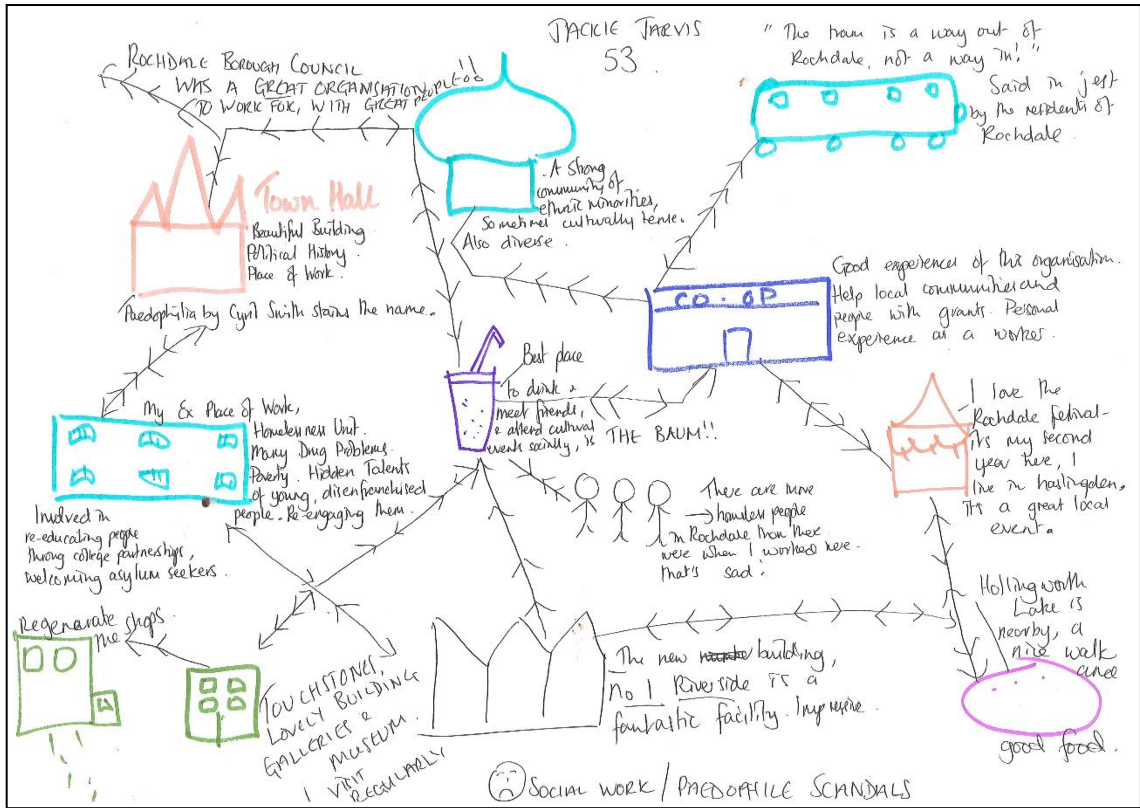

Seamus Kelly
Age 50. OL15 9QF.
email: info@seamuskellypoetry.co.uk.
THE BAUM
ST. MARYS
COOP MUSEUM
COLLEGE
6th FORM COL.
TOUCHSTONES
OLD POST OFFICE
R. ROCHE
TRAM TERMINUS
LIBRARY
BUS STATION
HOTEL
TOWN HALL
VIBE YM. PROJECT


The crown + shuttle pub
136 ROChdaleRD
firgrove Rochdale

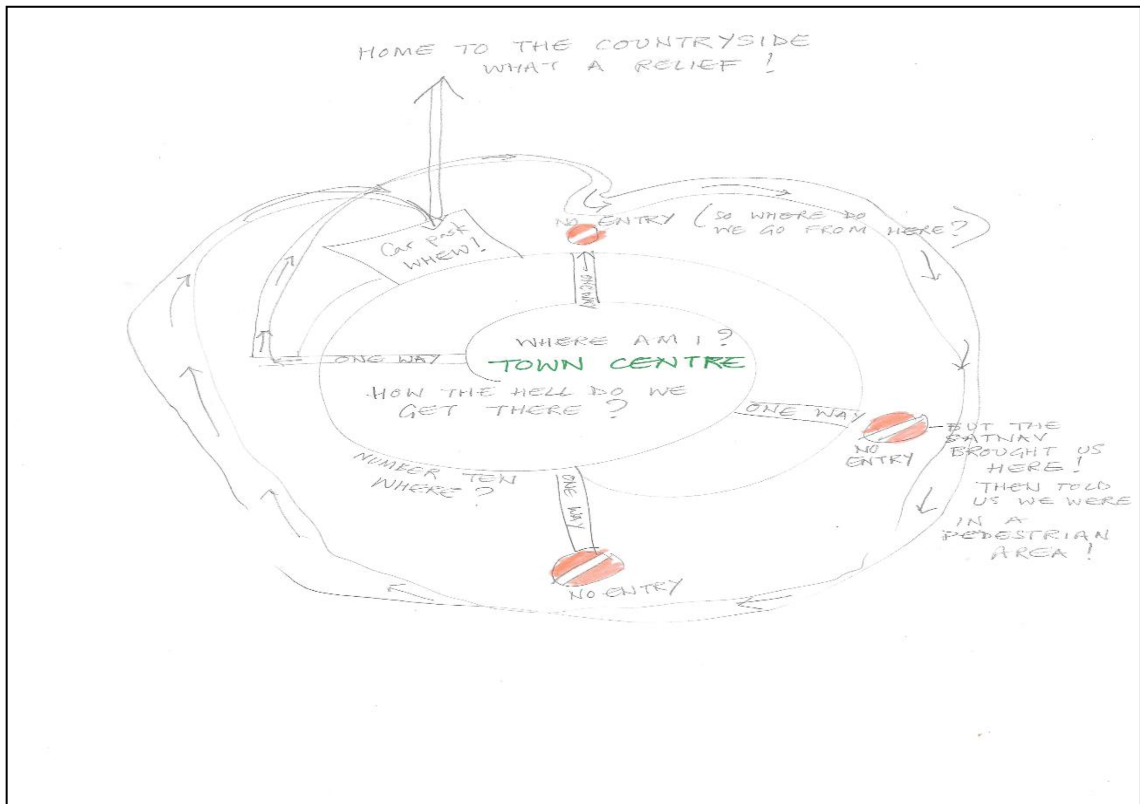

Susan
lectures at Touchstones
meeting friends
2nd writing group
reading group
Art watercolours + pastels + pencil
theatre
vibe festival
writing group - library
2nd reading group
Social activities: meals etc
cinema


West.
East.
The Rochdale Castle
Touchstones
Memorial gardens. Lutyens Architect.
Town Hall. Opened Late 19th c.
Post Office
Gracie Fields Statue
Vavasour Manor
Bull Brow
Old Pack Horse Alley
No 1 Riverside
Rochdale Bank
The Wellington
River Roch.
Lancashire & Yorkshire Bank
Wooden Cobbles
Packer Spout Steps.
St Chads Parish Church.

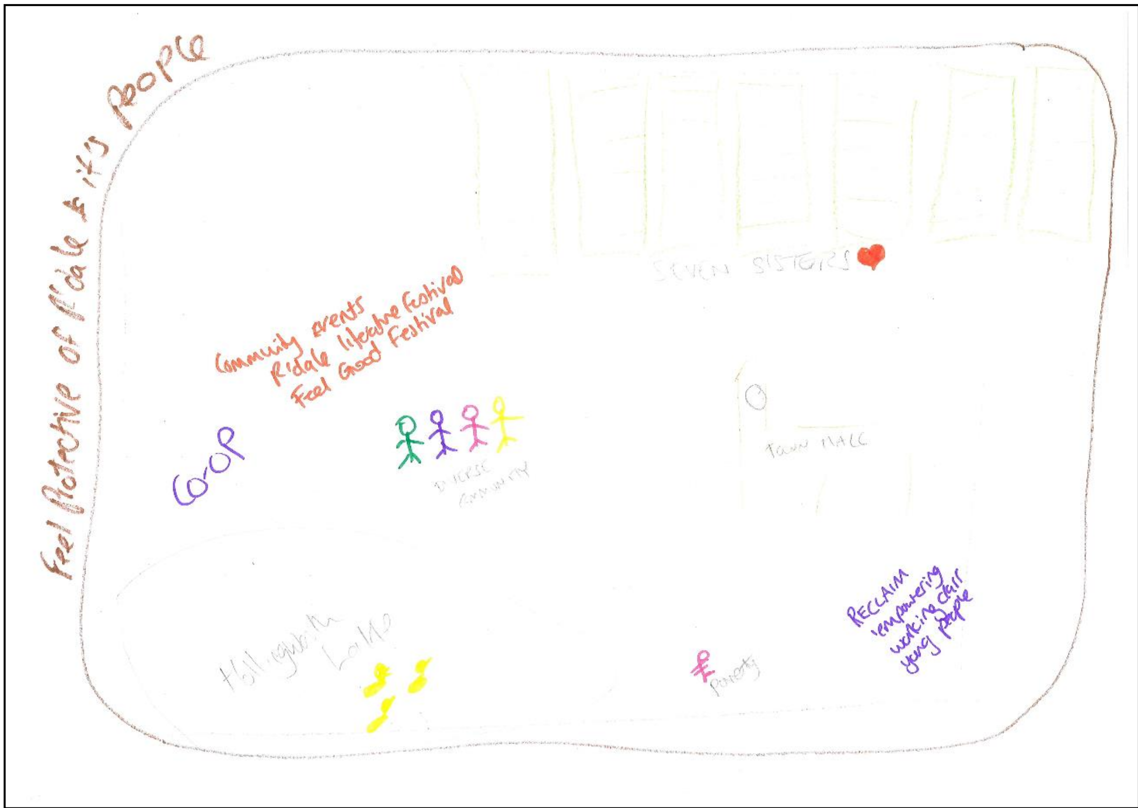

Hollingworth Lake.
Residential
South Asian-Muslim
Millstone Road.
Industrial Area.
Sudden-Residential Area.
Downtown culture. History
Farm.
Ings Lane Lower Income. Drugs.
Farm
Farm

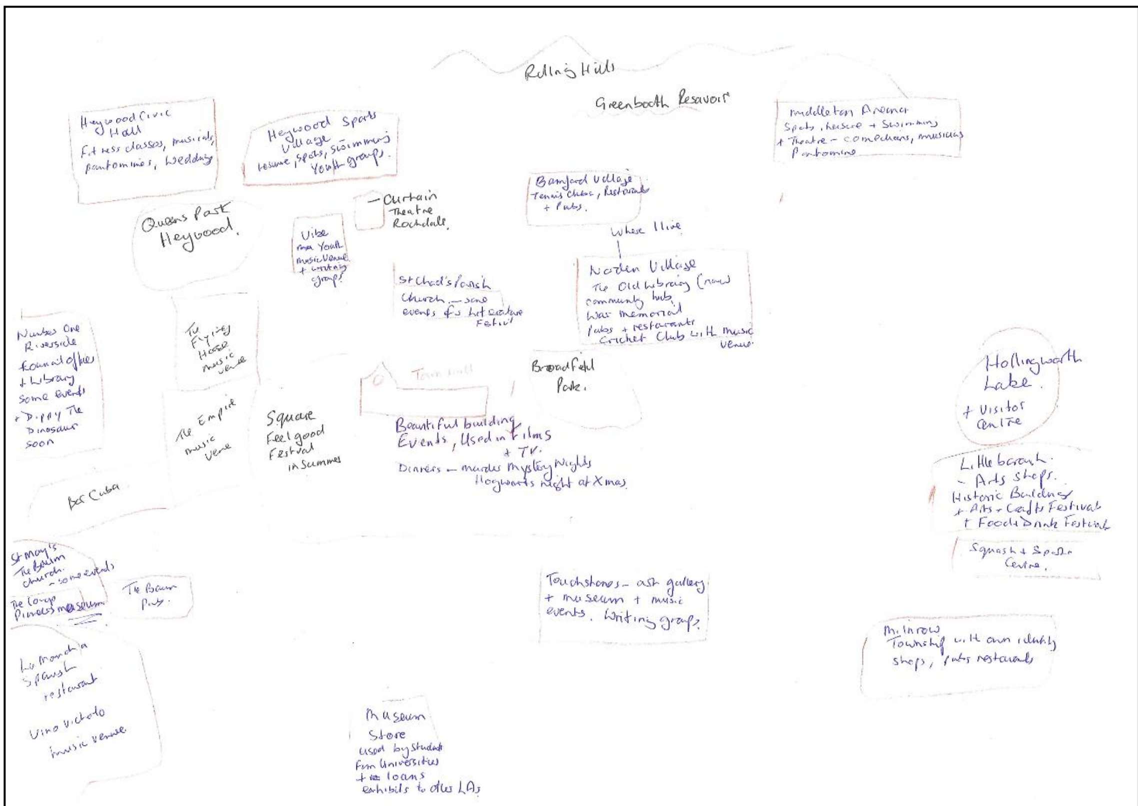


JACKIE JARVIS
53.
"The tram is a way out of Rochdale, not a way in!"
Said in jest by the residents of Rochdale
ROCHDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL
WAS A GREAT ORGANISATION TO WORK FOR, WITH GREAT PEOPLE!!
Town Hall
Beautiful Building
Political History.
Place of Work.
Paedophilia by Cyril Smith stains the name.
A strong community of ethnic minorities, Sometimes culturally tense.
Also diverse.
Good experience of the organisation. Help local communities and people with grants. Personal experience as a worker.
CO-OP
Best place to drink & meet friends, & attend cultural events socially, is THE BAUM!!
My Ex Place of Work, Homelessness Unit. Many Drug Problems. Poverty. Hidden Talents of young, disenfranchised people. Re-engaging them.
Involved in re-educating people through college partnerships, welcoming asylum seekers.
There are more homeless people in Rochdale than there were when I worked here. That's sad.
I love the Rochdale festival - it's my second year here, I live in haslingden. It's a great local event.
Hollingworth Lake is nearby, a nice walk and good food.
Regenerate the shops.
TOUCHSTONES LOVELY BUILDING GALLERIES & MUSEUM I VISIT REGULARLY
The new building, No 1 Riverside is a fantastic facility. Impressive.
SOCIAL WORK / PAEDOPHILE SCANDALS

HOME TO THE COUNTRYSIDE
WHAT A RELIEF!
Car park WHEW!
NO ENTRY (SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?)
ONE WAY
WHERE AM I?
TOWN CENTRE
HOW THE HELL DO WE GET THERE?
ONE WAY
NO ENTRY
BUT THE SATNAV BROUGHT US HERE!
THEN TOLD US WE WERE IN A PEDESTRIAN AREA!
NUMBER TEN WHERE?
ONE WAY
NO ENTRY


Feel Protective of R'dale & it's People
SEVEN SISTERS
Community events
R'dale literature festival
Feel Good Festival
CO-OP
TOWN HALL
RECLAIM
empowering
working class
young people


Rolling Hills
Greenbooth Resavoir
Heywood Civic Hall
Fitness classes, musicals, pantomimes, Weddings
Heywood Sports Village
Leisure, Sports, Swimming
Youth groups.
Middleton Arena
Sports, leisure + Swimming
+ Theatre – comedians, musicals
Pantomime
Curtain Theatre Rochdale.
Bamford Village
Tennis Clubs, Restaurants
+ Pubs.
Queens Park Heywood.
Where I live
Norden Village
The Old Library (now community hub
War memorial
Pubs + restaurants
Cricket Club with music venue.
St Chad's Parish Church – some events for Literature Festival
Number One Riverside
Council offices
+ Library
Some events
+ Dippy The Dinosaur soon
Broadfield Park.
Town Hall
Hollingworth Lake.
+ Visitor Centre
Square
Feel good Festival in Summer
Beautiful building
Events, Used in Films + TV.
Dinners – murder Mystery Nights
Hogwarts night at Xmas
Bar Cuba
Littleborough
– Arts shops.
Historic Buildings
+ Arts + Crafts Festival
+ Food + Drink Festival
Squash + Sports Centre.
The Baum Pub.
Touchstones – art gallery + museum + music events. Writing groups.
Milnrow
Township with own identity
shops, pubs restaurants
Museum Store
used by students from Universities
+ loans exhibits to other LAs

ASIam Shops.

MIX CulTurs

MusLim MosQue

worldwide

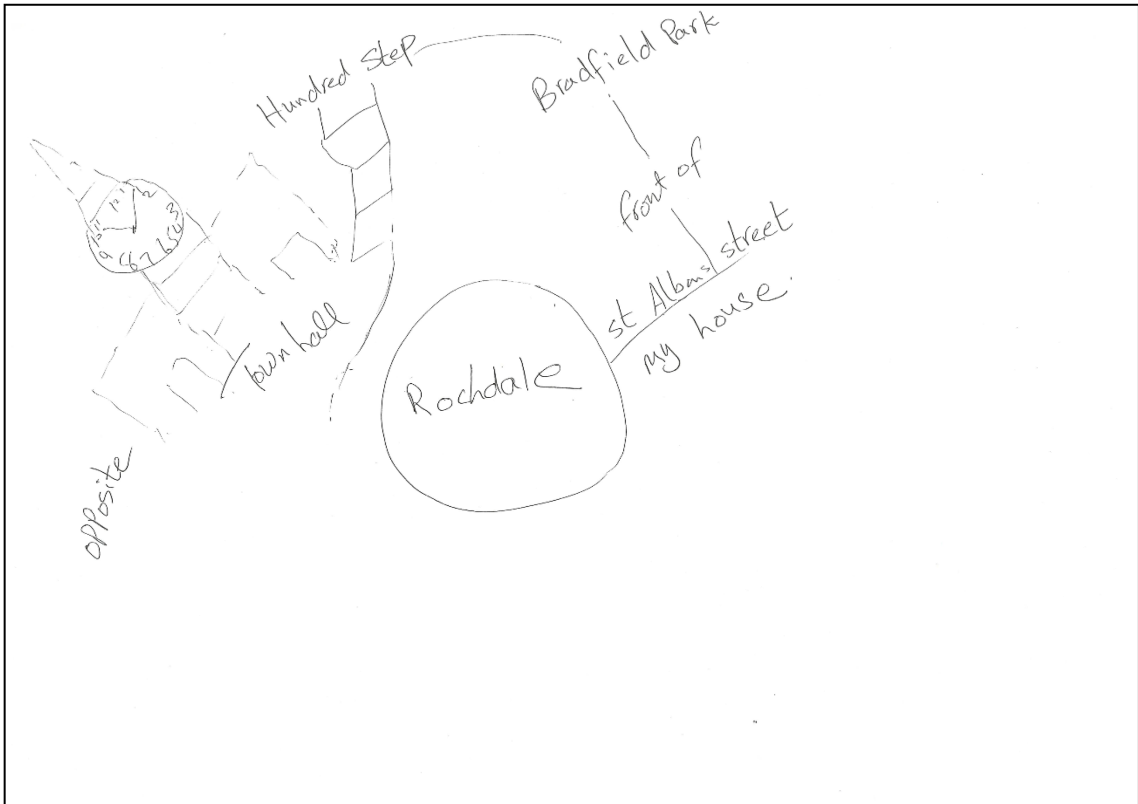
Rochdale

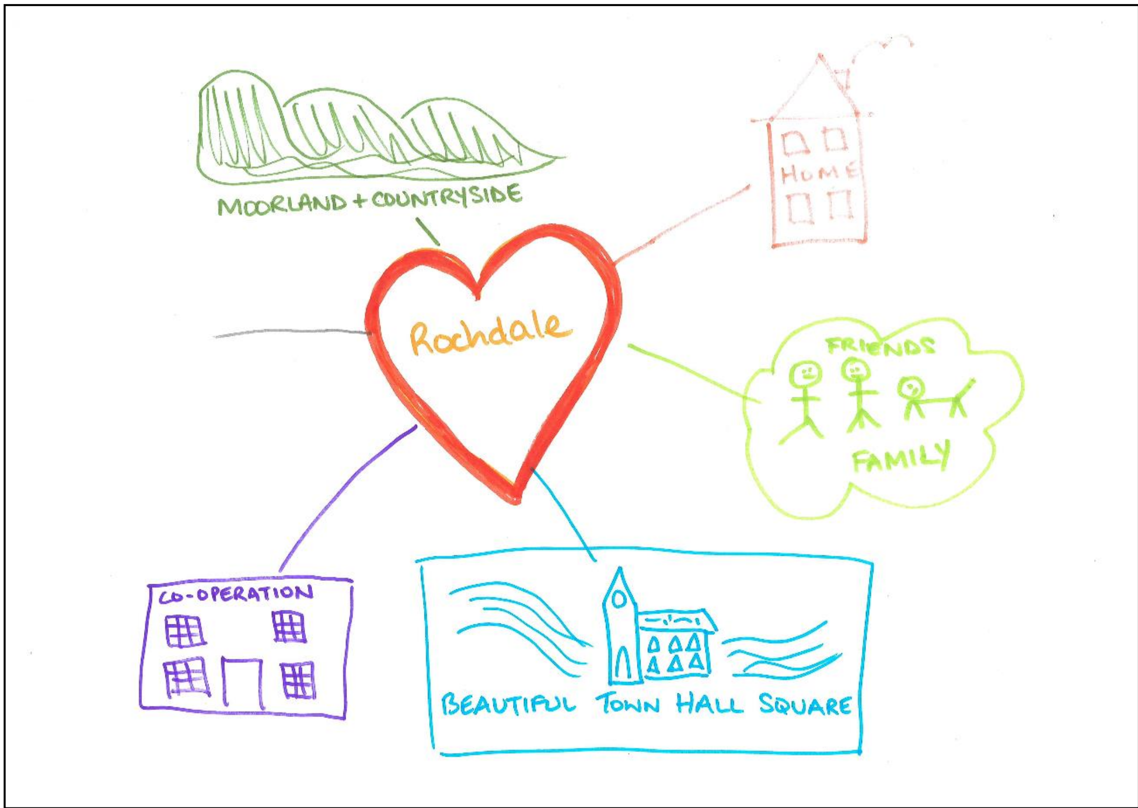
ROCHDALE TOWN.

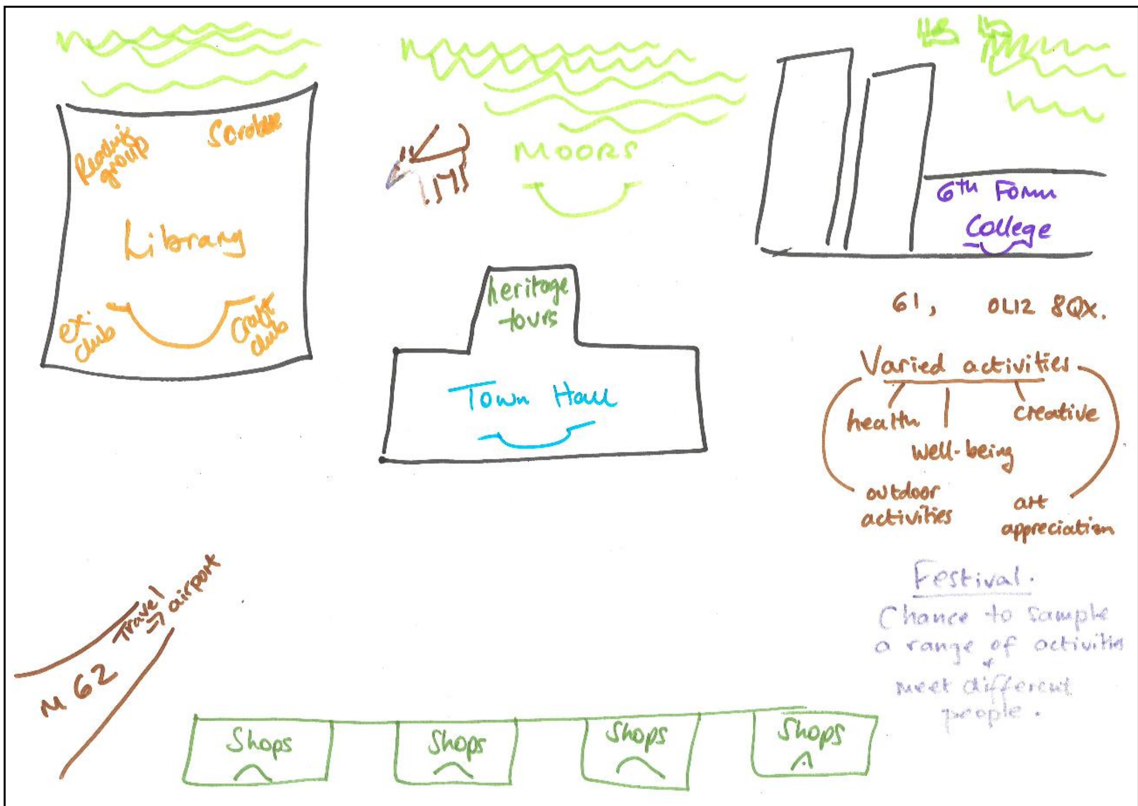
More Shops

More thing for youth for youngers.
More Jobs. more droping centre for
the Pensioner. and. support for youngs one.
more benifit advisoring.

Need more improvment in
ROCHDALE CENTRE More
STalls. and more Shops.




MOORLAND + COUNTRYSIDE
HOME
Rochdale
FRIENDS
FAMILY
CO-OPERATION
BEAUTIFUL TOWN HALL SQUARE


group
Library
club
craft club
MOORS
6th Form College
heritage tours
Town Hall
61, OL12 8QX.
Varied activities
health
well-being
creative
outdoor activities
art appreciation
Festival.
Chance to sample a range of activities + meet different people.
M 62
Travel → airport
Shops
Shops
Shops
Shops

*“The inferno of the living is not something that will be;*
*if there is one, it is what is already here,*
*the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together.*
*There are two ways to escape suffering it.*
*The first is easy for many:*
*accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it.*
*The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension:*
*seek and learn to recognise who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space*”

**Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities**