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## Everyday territories: homelessness, outreach work and city space

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This article develops a situational approach (Goffman, 1983) to the study of urban public life focusing, in particular, upon the production of urban territories. The central aim of the article is to examine the ways in which city space might be best understood and described as comprising multiple, shifting, mobile and rhythmised territories. We argue that territories are, in turn, best understood through an attention to their production and negotiation in everyday life. This argument is developed from more than six years of fieldwork observation of municipal street cleaning crews, Police Community Support Officers, and a specialist team of outreach workers in the city of Cardiff. We focus on this latter group – a street-based outreach team tasked to work with the rough sleeping homeless. In what follows we consider and discuss the ways in which territory figures, in practice, for this team and its clients and ask how an examination of territorial production in this particular context might contribute to a wider analysis and critique of the politics of contemporary city space.

The article is divided into five sections. In the first we return to Erving Goffman's (2010, originally 1972) foundational discussion of territories in the public life of American streets. We revisit and extend his insistence on 'the claim' as being central to the organisation of social life; an often overlooked concept, central in much of his work. We bring his foundational concepts in to dialogue with contemporary writings on territories (Kärrholm (2007; 2012), in particular) and our own empirical case. In doing so, we add a further form of practice through which a territory might be produced, a mobile practice: urban patrol. A second section describes something of this field case – homeless outreach in Cardiff – the politics of street based care work and its relationship to understandings of city space. In a third section we consider vulnerable territories and some of the ways in which rough sleepers go about staking out a claim to a territory in the middle of things in Cardiff. We move to argue that spatial claims must be not only made (visibly produced by a claimant) but recognised as such – as a meaningful claim – by other parties to the scene in order for a given claim to be accomplished. Drawing again on the work of Goffman, we describe the ways in which the recognition of the claim of the rough sleeper by the outreach worker is fundamental to opening and maintaining a (caring) relationship. In recognising the ways in which outreach workers' practices contribute to the accomplishment of, and thus work within, the territories of homelessness we move, in a fourth section, to considering how outreach workers necessarily ply their trade on territory that is not their own *twice over*: territory not their own in terms of the homeless settings to which they must negotiate entrance, and territory not their own in relation to a wider politics of urban space that can find outreach workers and the homeless alike out of place in the centre of the city. In a fifth concluding section we argue for an understanding of city territories that recognises the mobile, situational, and often intensive, yet overlooked, practical work of territorial production. In sum, the contribution of this article is in providing an empirical and conceptual discussion of ways that claims and territories are produced interactionally and how, in turn, come to shape the contours of power, exclusion, and care giving in city space.

### Urban patrol, territories, and city space

In his discussion of 'Territories of the Self', Goffman (2010) emphasises the centrality of the claim to the social organisation of co-presence and interaction in public life. Moving from spatial claims – personal space, the stall, use space – out to territories that have little to do with manifest space at all – the turn, the sheath, possessional territories, and informational and conversational preserves – Goffman shows us that territories, whether they be relatively fixed (a front garden), situational (a space occupied on a bench in a park), temporal and somewhere between (a hotel room), or 'egocentric' (in that they move with the claimant), are central to the ways in which people make, manage and maintain social relationships and, moreover, develop a sense of themselves as a full person in the eyes of the moral community (see Goffman 2010: 28-61). We suggest that the ethnological concept of 'territory' is especially suited to a sociological analysis of city space as any claim made 'is not so much to a discrete and particular matter but, rather, to a field of things – to a preserve – and because the boundaries of the field are ordinarily patrolled and defended by the claimant' (Goffman, 2010: 29). What is properly *social*, and thus what might be studied sociologically, about everyday territoriality is that claims made and observed serve a dual purpose of maintaining

distance (and thus respect) whilst enabling engagement (and thus regard). And so power can be observed in operation not only in the distinction between those who can make claims and those who cannot (seen in the distinction between strategy and tactics, for example, (de Certeau, 1988[1984])) but in the degree to which an individual might be in a position to decide what happens to their claim or preserve and thus their expectations and control over their contact with and distance from others (Goffman, 2010: 60). Territories and claims are not, then, a solely spatial matter but are inextricably tied to and implicated in the organisation of social interaction in ways that are foundational for interaction itself and the uneven and sometimes brutal experiences of everyday life. In our case, this includes how recognisable patterns of the social exclusion of particular social groups from particular central city spaces are produced by territorial practices that claim and reclaim space. This is not to say that territorial arrangements simply shape or structure interaction and experience but that territory and interaction are mutually constitutive orders that, together, colour the actor's sense of personhood and Self.

Such a focus on everyday territories has not been taken up as a means of analysing the public life of cities, by which we mean the ways in which city life gets organised at street-level by the people who are involved and invested in it,<sup>1</sup> yet, in developing Goffman's insights, we suggest that an attention to claims made and lost in city space gets to the very heart of what it is to talk of the effects of power in everyday life for those living at the margins of the centre. We aim to demonstrate this through our discussion of urban patrol and, more specifically, outreach work as a professional practice and rough sleeping as an everyday experience as entangled in the shifting and enmeshed practical politics that constitute the terrain in which the workers operate and in which rough sleepers are precariously located. This is the reflexivity of territorial practice, shaping and shaped by its context. Here, then, we adopt an Interactionist conceptualisation of 'power' as emergent and processual and grounded in the activities of people in their daily rounds (Goffman, 1983; Rawls, 1987; Atkinson and Housley, 2003; Dennis and Martin, 2005). Consequently, we are not suggesting city space is to be conceptualised as existing in a liquid state of flow and flux. Territories have hard edges. And certain urban territories – like institutions – gain a stability and a presence which weighs heavy on the lives of urban populations that such productions position as marginal. Yet – also like institutions – the appearance of a recurrent and static stability can obscure the everyday work through which they are produced. Territories do exist, *de facto*, in their own right; but are *productions* and must be continually produced and reproduced. The consequences of such arrangements are easily documented, yet their production, located in everyday practices, are often overlooked.

In attending to the work of urban patrol we aim to describe the ways in which power flows through and is manifest in negotiations of territorial productions and claims not as statically arranged but as manifestations of process and practical actions. This argument is developed, in part, from the recent work of Kärholm (2007; 2012). A central proposition in this approach to territories is that a distinction be drawn between a politico-geographical approach to territoriality in which territory figures as a bounded space coincident with the assertion of control,<sup>2</sup> and a social or behavioural approach more open to shades of appropriation and imbricated claims on (the same) space. Kärholm considers urban public space in particular:

What kind of territories do we find in public places? First, urban places are not like blank pages waiting to be written on, but rather like some kind of palimpsests (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 142). There is nothing unambiguous or hierarchical about the territorial structures of a place. Territories are produced everywhere. They can be stable and enduring, or immediate and ephemeral. Territories are also produced in different ways, in different contexts, and by different means .... [encompassing] a range of phenomena ... an urban district, a parking space, or someone's favourite bench.

(2007: 440-1)

Territorial production can take different forms (strategic, tactical, associative, appropriative), yielding territorial complexity:

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<sup>1</sup> Such considerations do figure as part of Andrea Brighenti's (2010) general science of territorology, but only as part of a wider ranging framing.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, a special issue of *Environment and Society D* (e.g. Murphy, 2012; Rafestin, 2012)) and Sack (1986).

Different forms of territorial production often operate in the same place ... [a] bench could be associated as the territory of sandwich-eating students at lunchtime, whereas another group of youth could appropriate it at night. The same group could mark the bench by way of territorial tactics ... [a] street bench is also furniture and as such is maintained and regulated by way of a territorial strategy. Together, this would make the bench an object of four different forms of territorial production: It is a place consisting of several different territorial layers.

(2007: 441-2)

The 'territorial layers' organized around a single bench are, then, rhythmically organized, through interaction, across time and space; the recognition of which allows for a more nuanced and dynamic engagement with city space as lived. The same space is produced in different ways, for different purposes by different groups. And the bench is itself situated within wider, nested, and shifting territories of a greater scale; a park that is open during the day, occupied by students and workers among others; itself located within an urban district undergoing a process of gentrification; the bench installed as part of a strategy of redesigning street-furniture in the area, incorporating the latest recommendations of 'security by design', shaped to discourage rough sleepers; gates are now locked at night in any case in further attempts to discourage unwanted occupants and displace from the wider area; the youths have had to climb a fence to get to the bench, and have to keep noise down to avoid attracting attention. City strategies intersect with the local practices of individuals in remaking, claiming and negotiating space. This position is, in this sense, aligned with the relational sense of space (Massey, 1994; 2004: 5-6) which finds space as "a product of practices, trajectories, interrelations" made in and through "interactions at all levels, from the (so-called) local to the (so-called) global". Importantly, despite these relations being complex and spatial identities being "essentially unboundable", Massey reminds us that "propinquity needs to be negotiated." We suggest that an empirical attention to everyday territorial gets us some way to understanding how this gets done, and who loses out. The plural (and mundane) appreciation of territoriality developed herein thus moves the analysis away from an understanding of territories as pre-existing the practices of those who inhabit city space, and thus bring these multiple territories in to being, and towards an appreciation of the ongoing, no time out, nature of territorial production, what Kärholm calls 'territoriality *in actu*' (2007: 440). Such territories can be shown as *produced* in everyday social interaction rather than found or given once and for all in advance, and they are plural: territories intersect and rub up against each other, there are layers and rhythmic shifts in what can be sensed or claimed in one place over time, in the course of a day or a year. We can also note here Brown and Capdevila's (1999) words on relations between materiality, inscription and trajectory/mobility in the unfolding of territory:

Here is why the word territory is so apposite; because the order and security it provides are not static phenomena, but mobile. Much like the space marked out by a territorial animal, territory constantly shifts as it is continually remarked and re-presented in different ways. And much as these territorial creatures can only extend their territories at great cost, so we might also note the sheer difficulty of sustaining this process of remarking'.

(1999: 41– 42)<sup>3</sup>

Urban patrols – street cleaners, the police, security guards, and so on – might then be said to be concerned with the maintenance of city territories on a more or less continuous basis. This is twenty-four hour, no time out, work that, combined, maintains the urban fabric (AUTHORS; also Degen et al, 2010). To take street cleaning patrols as an example, this should not, however, be taken to mean that the city, all of it, does get cleaned around the clock. The sheer practical effort of this activity finds

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<sup>3</sup> We acknowledge that we are using Brown and Capdevila's words here in a way that was almost certainly not meant. The original discussion, was of a 'sociology of translation' in which territory is discussed from the perspective of ANT and post-structuralism. Moreover, territory is not their object of analysis but one way of exploring theoretically the ways in which substance, force and time are enmeshed. We take their words here, instead, as instructive of an empirical inquiry in to the actualities and activities of the 'sheer difficulty' of remarking urban territories. Indeed, it is the empirics of the case that have led us to be discussing 'territories' in the first instances.

some streets, and some streets at some times, neglected. It is this rhythmmed and spatial shifting effort of repair and maintenance and cleaning that, among other things, affords opportunities for rough sleeping in the first instance. Urban patrols contribute in myriad, mundane and often muted ways to the production of territories that, in turn, come to shape the rights of access to, being in, and uses of central city space and thus possible publics<sup>4</sup>. In this way, urban patrol is a mobile mode of territorial *production*; not simply the patrolling of a border, maintaining pre-existing territories, but actively *making* territories as they do so. So, one might consider how it is that cleaning – the sorts of cleaning that gets done by city cleansing crews each morning, but other forms of cleaning too, domestic included – signal ownership and control over a particular space (see Lagae *et al.*, 2006). It certainly fits Brown and Capdevila's (1999) definition: a repeated, rhythmmed action, practised near around the clock with no small amount of effort expended, demonstrably tied to the remarking of particular city spaces in and through the business of making them presentable to residents, workers and visitors; 'quotidian regeneration' (AUTHORS). All UK cities employ cleansing crews to maintain central urban territories as aligned with the interests of private residents and city centre commerce and businesses; a territorial production intolerant of unwanted dirt and dirtiness, where appearances are paramount. A 'sanitised' city centre, perhaps. It is easy to see, or imagine at least, how it is that marginal and stigmatized groups such as rough sleepers stand to lose out against territories produced by patrols that clean or police city space. Yet, alongside cleansing crews and Police Community Support Officers, the city also employs outreach workers – mobile, street-based social workers – whose pedestrian circulations in search of and with the homeless contribute an additional, complex and ambivalent, territorial production in the city centre. And it is to this complex relation between movement, care and the politics of city space that we now turn.

#### **Outreach work in Cardiff city centre**

A formerly significant industrial port, Cardiff is a city of approximately 350,000 residents; it has served as the capital of Wales since 1955 and in 2015 its city centre is characterised by pedestrianised retail space, visitor attractions, student and 'aspirational' accommodation and glass and steel. Like all cities it has a particular identity and history, but we are concerned here with what it holds in common with a good number of urban centres in the UK and elsewhere – a small but stubborn population of rough sleeping homeless who are out of place<sup>5</sup> and up against it in the middle of the city, and *not going anywhere else*. Cardiff Council has responsibilities to these vulnerable few but also to its wider public and in this context it employs a Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal (HANR) outreach team. The team is tasked to work with the city's homeless out of doors and in public with a view to eventual rehousing. They are tasked to work with rough sleepers (and any other, howsoever defined) vulnerable adults on the streets of the city centre, those whose needs are somehow mismatched to the available provision, who, as the HANR brief has it, 'will not, do not or cannot access services'. This is no simple task, however. An initial and essential problem, unique to street-based social workers, is that in order to 'reach out' to their clients, outreach workers must, firstly and necessarily, spend a good deal of time *searching* for them. HANR clients are 'hard to reach', not only socially but often spatially, hard to track down in the city centre. Sometimes not though, given the visibility of the homeless in cleansed city centre 'retailised' territories (Kärrholm, 2012). We have discussed this element of the work elsewhere (AUTHORS), suffice to say here that Cardiff's outreach workers are proficient in the *delivery* of first-aid to the street homeless; sometimes literally – which is to say medically, physical or mental – but more often in the sense of being at hand to advise on benefits claims or (potential) accommodation options, to procure and provide essential goods (socks, blankets and rucksacks are sought after items) or simply a cup of tea and a conversation for the time it takes to smoke a cigarette. Rough sleeping bears a physical and emotional toll on the individual. Accommodation may solve a good deal of the difficulties that those sleeping rough face but is not, in

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<sup>4</sup> The relationship between public space and publics is complex. We make reference here, in passing, to the political work of scholars such as Low and Ivenson (2016: 12) who argue that "If this material and spatial context [of public space] is regulated in unfair ways and through its management and design communicates that some are not welcome, then not only public space becomes less accessible and diverse, but so does the public sphere".

<sup>5</sup> We make reference here both to the everyday sense in which an object or individual can appear to be incongruous or not to 'fit' and also, explicitly, to Mary Douglas' (2003) oft cited discussion of dirt as matter out of place and the ways in which such material can be taken as illustrative of a system of meaning and value, rather than as 'dirt' *prima facie*. This is, of course, a fruitful way to approach the politics of public space and design (see Campkin, 2013) but, again, we are concerned with the processes that produce 'clean' so that 'dirt' can manifest in the first instance.

itself, an immediate solution. So outreach workers are employed to mitigate, as best they can, the effects of rough sleeping. Outreach work is a job of roadside repair.

In this sense, it is possible to position outreach work as part of an under-observed infrastructure of urban kindness (Thrift, 2005) which challenges the revanchist orthodoxy found in discussions of city space in urban sociology and geography. Indeed, Cloke et al (2011: 9-10) point to instances and spaces of care-giving as a counter point to the revanchist framework which describes exclusory and punitive urban strategies at the expense of recognising the 'obvious importance of welfare services for homeless people'<sup>6</sup>. Outreach workers are themselves experts in 'the homeless city' and the affective dimensions of homelessness that are often overlooked in favour of a rationalist logic which describes how the homeless 'get by' in the city (Cloke et al, 2008). And yet whilst such care work is overlooked in discussions of the city and perhaps needs to be recognised rather more than is the case, our contribution – of *street-based care* – points more to the overlooked politics of the accomplishment of such kindness itself, bound up with the difficulties of working with and repairing persons rather than objects (Goffman, 1991: 288–293; Authors). Indeed, the work of homeless outreach is suffused with a quintessentially urban politics of centre and margin and of public visibility and personal concealment.

Given the often elusive and near constantly moving client group with which they work (see Jackson, 2015), outreach work is a necessarily mobile practice. Indeed, rough sleeping has a particular geography tied to a local and particular knowledge of the city (see Kiddey and Schofield, 2011; Knowles, 2011; Wardhaugh, 2000). And outreach workers share this knowledge too – of likely spots to sleep (out of sight, but not to such an extent that escape is not easy; dry; warm, preferably), or where security guards are turning a blind eye to sleepers who are gone by 08:30, or where food can be gained, or where cardboard and blankets can be stashed for the day to be recovered come nightfall. Also who has fallen out with whom, who owes money to whom, and who is keeping a low profile that week. And they gain this knowledge through observations of the city made on patrol but also, much like the ethnographer, by getting close, physically and empathetically (Goffman, 1989) to the people they want to know about. Outreach work, as an instance of urban care, is an ambivalent, equivocal practice (see Rowe, 1999; also AUTHORS), and outreach workers know this. They are employed to befriend and assist the vulnerable. They are, however, also employed with a view to managing and manoeuvring them (off the street, eventually). They are street repairers, yes, but they are street sweepers, too. Part of the trouble, however, is that people cannot, however, be simply swept up. Getting people 'in' and off the street requires the winning of trust and confidence, and the repair of trust in a system that has repeatedly, from the perspective of clients, been a disappointment. Outreach involves the negotiation of a shared perspective between worker and client of what the problem is in the first instance and how it is that that problem might best be solved. Only this is, of course, an asymmetrical alignment. Outreach workers are attempting to convince their clients that 'the system', with all its frustrations and bureaucratic hurdles, is the correct path to take: get yourself to the housing centre today; take the emergency floor space if it is available; I know you don't like hostels much but it's not forever, stay there for a while and then we'll see, who knows, maybe a flat somewhere, a place of your own. And of course each stage in the process, from meeting an outreach worker on a street corner somewhere, through to getting a place at a hostel, requires of the client a stream of disclosure, a surrendering of their informational preserve (Goffman, 2010: 38): name, surname, date of birth, national insurance number, medical details, criminal record (if you care to divulge, without a check being run), some account of how you came to be here today (and on the street last night), and, most sensitively and tellingly, what it is that they think is *really* the trouble.

Quite in front of all of this, outreach team members mean well and undoubtedly care for their clients; most have been drawn to the work in the first place because their sympathies lie with the homeless. But, to repeat, outreach work is undertaken, and funded by the city, with the aim to intervene and bring about change, not simply to support people in a lived circumstance that goes against the grain of the majority experience of public life. Outreach workers are employed by Cardiff City Council to *take care of* homelessness or at least mitigate its visibility. In the line of duty, they gain a privileged access to the world of rough sleeping and a good deal of their work makes the most of this access by managing tensions, indiscretions, and, perhaps most of all, space and territory.

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<sup>6</sup> See also Conradson (2003a, 2003b) and Lawson (2007) for a further discussion of the production and negotiation of spaces of (institutional) care.

Outreach workers, like most interstitial agents, hold a good few of the available cards – at least in the context of their interactions with clients. Nor do they too readily show their hand, their agenda; which is therapeutic but essentially non-negotiable. Homelessness is bad (see Sayer, 2011: 8); people ought not to (have to) live this way; outreach workers aim to do something about that. Yet no experienced outreach worker would begin a conversation with a homeless alcoholic along these lines, assuming agreement. You start where someone is at. On their own precariously held preserve in the middle of the city, needing a(nother) drink and a clean pair of trousers and not wanting anyone to tell them what to do. Starting out from our case of outreach workers and their encounters with rough sleepers, we want to suggest that this focus – on the mundane ways in which small patches of city space are respected or lost – is a productive way to analysing not only relations of mobility, need and care in the city centre but also the contours of contemporary public space more generally. Whilst previous work (such as that of Cloke et al, 2008; 2011) has relied on interviews and elicitation exercises with the homeless, often in hostels, an ethnography of outreach workers' daily practice, and the spaces and territories which they produce and traverse offers an insight in to the very coinage of the 'strange spaces' of encounter and vulnerability that exist outside of dominant framings of service spaces and are more fluid than even the imagery of 'less formal but still regulated places such as parks' (Cloke et al, 2008: 242). Outreach workers do not operate in purpose made spaces – territories of their own – but work in and with those of others, wherever they are at. It is to this case to which we now turn.

### Homeless outreach

The key principle of outreach work<sup>7</sup> is to meet with clients (and clients in the making), on their own terms and turf. A principle practised through patient inquiries in space and then, once a modicum of shared ground is established, the slow and sometimes frustrating gaining of trust from those with good reason to be distrustful. It is no good meeting potential clients – people who have gone public with their suffering and need – in the confines of an office in order to encourage them to access the services that they might need; to encourage them to see that they are in need in the first instance. Outreach workers reach out of necessity. And so we can note at this point that the homeless and outreach workers, for good institutional and practical reasons, come to have something in common. Both groups spend a good deal of their time on city streets. Both spend a good deal of time moving on those streets, schlepping and traipsing across and around the city. And both the homeless and the outreach team lack a space of their own in the city that is particularly suited to or designed for the requirements of their daily rounds and needs. Outreach work is 'homeless' outreach in the two senses of the word that Rowe (1999) intends: work that gets done with the homeless, but also a trade that lacks its own space, that might itself be said to *be* homeless. And so the circulations and encounters that concern us here are 'homeless encounters' in 'homeless territories'. To build on that point, these homeless encounters often take place in territories of different scale that do not quite belong to anyone, at least not in any situational sense, or which are not routinely patrolled or maintained or claimed through cleaning or other forms of patrol and mobile territorial activities. We develop this point below, but suffice to say that even 'securitised' city spaces, Bryant Park in New York for example (see Zukin, 1995; Atkinson, 2003), contain such situational tolerances. A bench, any bench or other such seating, can be claimed temporarily by a rough sleeper to take a load off their feet, to place their bags down for a while (whilst the wider territory remains unaffected; hostile, even).<sup>8</sup> Temporality is, of course, important here, and the claim to a bench can, within some territories, be fleeting – but *possible* nonetheless. We suggest it is as well to pay attention to such possibilities as to adopt some smoother grand narrative of city space. Perhaps the far corner of the basement floor of a multi-storey car park can be occupied for a few hours, for a whole night even – perhaps it has come to be *associated* as a homeless territory, over the course of a couple of days, by security staff with other fish to fry, who have left it alone, for now – provided things are kept clean and customers are not troubled, provided there is no mess and no *trouble*, provided there is every indication that everyone there will pack up and go should anyone in uniform require this. A stalled building site, a common enough occurrence following the economic downturn and only now being

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<sup>7</sup> Following not much more than a few hours spent observing outreach work in New York, we suggest that this principle holds. In many respects it appears that the practice of outreach (and the characteristic troubles faced by outreach workers on patrol) is much the same on either side of the Atlantic.

<sup>8</sup> This is not a hypothetical comparison, but based on observations in Bryant Park itself.

resuscitated, is a lapsed territory, not patrolled by security, the builders and foremen themselves long gone, and provides as such an opportunity for appropriation by a group of rough sleepers and an enduring claim (potentially and relatively) to be made<sup>9</sup>. Just so long as the encampment stays under the radar and does not begin to signal concern for surrounding territories. What one sees, at street-level, is not a static line of exclusion but rather a shifting pattern of small claims of varied temporality nested *within* or sometimes between wider, more established territories. Thinking of street-level territories in this manner, as plural, nested and mobile phenomenon, allows us to recognise the ways in which the rough sleeping homeless might still find space in a city centre undoubtedly less tolerant of undesirables than it once was but never wholly so – because, as Kärrholm has it, territories are constantly being, and must constantly be, (re)produced; everywhere, in all manner of ways and contexts and by different means. As mentioned above, this affords a more nuanced way in which to think critically about city space and territory than that afforded by revanchist imagery of city space wrested away from undesirables once and for all (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2010).

Remaindered space in the middle of Cardiff, squeezed by regeneration efforts but not wholly erased (and on occasion brought on by the same developments that look set to overtake it), is where you might find not only the city's homeless but HANR outreach workers too. Dirt and neglect, perhaps confusingly at first, are apt indications of conditions of possibility for care and attention – shared food, a sympathetic ear, housing advice, medical attention, needs assessment, all this administered crouched down in the muddy space behind a sheet of tarpaulin strung between bushes under a road bridge. Where the setting is more conventionally public, things are tucked away temporally instead, into those few remaining hours when the city is not operating at full bore – the lapsed territorial production of shared space on the museum steps at dawn, for example. Such settings are as precarious for outreach workers as they are for the homeless. This time tomorrow the camp under the road bridge may be gone, cleared by (another arm of) the local council, following complaints from nearby business interests; in half an hour's time the museum doors open, before which everyone must be gone. This uncertainty poses a challenge to outreach, as we have discussed elsewhere (see Authors), and is certainly acknowledged by outreach workers themselves. No sooner do workers begin to establish relations with a client – developing trust and familiarity and establishing agreed goals – than the client is gone, kicked into motion (again) and needing to be rediscovered before the threads of whatever practical or therapeutic intervention might have been begun can be up picked up once more: *'Where's Davey to? He's got his first appointment with Shoreline [an alcohol abuse treatment housing project] this morning.'* Yet for outreach workers these settings would remain precarious even if they could be guaranteed in space and made to stay still. Just doing outreach is a precarious undertaking, because risky. How so?

The terrain itself is often challenging. Outreach workers (not unlike street cleaners) dress in clothes made to withstand the rigours of a dirty occupation; they wear tough shoes and boots (absolutely no open-toed sandals!), easy-clean, council-badged fleeces in a dark blue; they carry surgical gloves and tubes of hand sanitizer; they have their hepatitis jabs up to date. They can expect to encounter rubble, broken glass and faeces. Nor are these hazards to be (simply) avoided – they are the likely signs that an outreach worker is on the right track; if there is a bad smell and a litter of hypodermic needles underfoot then there is work to do, somewhere near. And the work itself, the reaching out, may be risky too. If there *is* a person somewhere here, behind the tarpaulin, a client in the making, then that person may have good enough reason to be alarmed or aggressive, certainly suspicious, in the face of an approach from a stranger (which is what an outreach worker is, on first encounter, by definition). And the suspicion is reciprocal insofar as any possible client is a stranger too, about whom outreach workers know nothing in advance other than that he or she is *there* in a sleeping bag by a wheelie bin in the corner of the bus station. Engaging a stranger under difficult circumstances, in need and possible distress is risky (outreach workers do not patrol alone but only in twos). And if an outreach encounter with an unknown needy other is to come to anything at all then the ethic of the job requires that things get off on the right foot, with the sort of careful, respectful first approach that might signal good intentions and make it possible for a homeless person to risk reaching back. This is crucial. Outreach work must honour and affirm the tentative territorial claims of others if it is to accomplish its goals. Indeed, the possibility of outreach work is born of the kinds of relations and relationships afforded by homeless territories. To go back to Goffman, it is the very nature of the possible material forms of territory available to the team's rough sleeping client that

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<sup>9</sup> A nice and readily found, then at least, example of Massey's (2004) relations of the '(so-called) global and (so-called) local'.



allows access in the first instance. Remember we have said that a large part of the team's job is developing trust or at least a relationship of some sort with their (potential) clients. Rough sleepers do not always wish to receive a wake-up call from an outreach worker, poking their nose in, disturbing what little sleep has been caught with nothing more, really, to offer than perhaps a cup of coffee. Yet, the public character of homeless territories, perhaps no more of a stall than a spot for sleeping bag and belongings on the floor of a passenger stand at Cardiff's central bus station, means that they – the rough sleepers and their personal and material territories, that is – are unavoidably available for encroachment by parties who make it their business to do so. So, what we are arguing here is both that the loud but friendly 'Good morning Pete!', followed by a gentle shake on the elbow if no response is forthcoming, accomplishes, socially, the territory of the rough sleeper in and through an action which is only possible due to the vulnerability and public character of that territory in the first instance. Territories, produced in such a way, thus allow for engagement, for 'comings-in-to-touch' (Goffman, 2010: 60), and the beginnings of the sorts of therapeutic relationships that characterize outreach work.

The vulnerability of the territory plays out in another two ways. The first is obvious. The rough sleeper has little or no protection from encroachment in to his or her territory on the part of anyone who might wish to do harm, either to the claim made or the person making it. Concealment, then, can often be a consideration in establishing a rough sleeping preserve. Strength in numbers is also a common strategy, turning a personal preserve into a collective claim in an attempt to protect it and its incumbents from threatening members of the public (drunk young males in particular) or from one of the other urban patrols – the police or street cleaners. In a more nuanced way, we can observe that whilst the vulnerability of the territory might allow for homeless outreach encounters to occur in the first instance, that very vulnerability, if one has it in mind to treat it with proportionate respect, becomes a real obstacle for the outreach worker who, in their recognition of the territory *as* a territory (rather than, say, a singular incursion in to a wider territory that must be policed or protected) become themselves vulnerable to rebuttal. Other city centre patrols – the police, cleaning crews, private security guards – stand on no such ceremony; but if an outreach worker is told 'no thanks', or 'get lost' (or worse), he or she can go no further without risking a breach of the respectful recognition of another's right to the city upon which the work is significantly premised. And here we get to a sense of how it is that outreach workers, as they make their way across their city centre patch, sometimes lighting out beyond it if needs be, in search of rough sleepers and traces and spaces of vulnerability and need, produce a particular type of territory – a moral territory, of a sort, the limits of which demark the reach of responsibility and obligation of the city to its most vulnerable clients. As we have suggested here, it also outlines a shifting and rhythmmed territory of city space that is tolerant to the possibility of a temporary claim made by someone in need (of a place for their need). Outreach workers might be said to patrol the limits of this tolerance. In a finer grained sense, we have argued that they also contribute to its production; that their respectful approaches to rough sleepers and their preserves act to confirm the claim that is made. Things do not necessarily have to play out that way. These are vulnerable territories, after all. In keeping with the approach to urban territories, situational and mobile, that we have been developing here, we want to also to develop further the understanding that these respectful and tolerant minor territorial productions that are the stuff of the outreach encounter – sometimes involving nothing more than kneeling down to talk to make the client feel comfortable where they are sat – occur within, rub up against and overlap with other productions that take place in and shape public space in the centre of the city. For just as the vulnerable territories of the homeless are found, precariously, within larger more dominant and stable territorial productions, so too is the territory of care and engagement produced by the outreach team. If homeless outreach can be said to take place on territory that is not the outreach workers' own – remember the redundancy of the office – then the recognition of the imbrication of this work within sometimes conflicting territorial productions finds the team working on territory that is not their own, twice over.

### **On territory not their own**

The ambivalence we have indicated thus far goes further, however, and has to do with the territories within which both rough sleepers and outreach workers operate. HANR outreach workers are not interlopers in the city centre. They are supposed to be there. The same does not hold for the team's clients, however. And there is the rub. Cardiff's homeless are *not* supposed to be there, are not supposed to be in the very spaces in which outreach workers routinely encounter and engage with

them. HANR outreach workers are council employees – the same council that has ambitions for the city to rank as a ‘world class European capital city’<sup>10</sup> and employs street cleaners to work around the clock to keep the streets and parks clean and tidy and ready for business. What qualifies outreach work as a necessary presence in the centre of the city is the fact that the ‘problem’ to which it is directed is a problem that can only be considered ‘solved’ if it goes away. Often enough homeless outreach accomplishes just that. Some of the team’s clients are, eventually, persuaded to enter treatment programmes and/or take up hostel accommodation. Such outcomes (seldom so very neat or concise) typically count as a ‘success’ for the team, and in this sense HANR outreach workers come close to being street cleaners themselves – an uncluttered public realm is the measure of their work. But there are other measures and other priorities. If outreach work was a matter of taking sides, HANR outreach workers asked whose side they were on would certainly say they were on the side of their clients. They work for their clients, first and foremost, even as they are employed by the city on whose streets those same clients are unwelcome. And that work is done on terms which acknowledge the primacy of the client. Outreach workers meet their charges where they are at and do not attempt to impose solutions on those not yet ready to make the sorts of move the team might nonetheless hope to win them round to, in time. In this way, the work of outreach stays close, instinctively, to the circumstances in which an encountered client is to be found.

This brings complication. If a couple of rough sleepers have set themselves up in the front doorway of a commercial premises, then the proprietors may request an early morning call from the outreach team (well before the building needs to be opened up for the day). Perhaps the team can ‘solve’ the problem of these difficult, perhaps intimidating, territorial intruders. But the team will not solve anything other than by arriving in the very location at issue, and once arrived they will have some regard for the (problematic) territorial claim made – the primacy of the client. ‘*Morning, morning! Who’s that there? Is that you Lee? And Simon is it? Come on, lads, time to get up.*’ Such outreach greetings are also acknowledgements. The team is not just here, but here to *visit* (and they will be bearing gifts: cups of coffee, bacon rolls). But such acknowledgement must be balanced with regard for the fact that outreach interactions take place on territory that ‘belongs’ to neither outreach worker nor client. ‘*Come on, lads, time to get up. We’ll see you at the van. It’s just across the road.*’ A standard outreach gambit under such circumstances, an operating rule: no ‘breakfast in bed’. For Lee and Simon to receive whatever services and support are available that day, they must move themselves from the doorway to the street, perhaps only a very few yards away, where the team will have produced their own territory by parking the van at an angle, perhaps across two or three parking spaces, the rear door open and swung up, creating a roof over this small, temporary and mobile preserve where outreach worker and rough sleeper might spend a few minutes in conversation – sharing hot tea, information, recognition.

Here we see something of the way that outreach work, as patrol, contributes to and *produces* city territories and claimed spaces. And in this way it really does matter where outreach work ends up getting done. It matters to outreach workers themselves insofar as they see their work as only ever beginning on a client’s own turf; and it matters to others with a stake in the same space, precisely because the attentions of homeless outreach might ratify a location as ‘homeless’, as something other than an illegitimate incursion into an established territory. As Goffman (2010: 57, our emphasis) has it: ‘[e]very social relationship, both anonymous and personal, implies some joint tenure, and some ... imply a great deal’. Owners – *in law* – of commercial premises and doorways and other locations in which the homeless might briefly gain a foothold, whilst initially grateful for the intervention of the HANR team, seldom if ever wish for the location in question, or its immediate surrounds, to be validated as a personal territory for much longer than a morning or two – necessary, perhaps, but only in order to get something done about the problem. HANR’s presence can be just about tolerated so long as its (corroborated) productions remain temporary and precarious, and so long as they result in something else altogether – an absence, no homeless encampment, no outreach workers. On those occasions that the city’s homeless (through error or obstinacy) establish themselves out in the open and conspicuously *in the way* of mainstream retail and commercial purposes, HANR outreach workers are unlikely to be ‘called out’ at all, not if that means bringing sandwiches. Instead they will be tasked to help move the homeless on, to explain that this is not the right place. Sometimes they will be called on to do so in the company of the police (their typical role in such cases being one of mediation between the determination, and possibly inexperience, of the

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<sup>10</sup> See [www.cardiffpartnership.co.uk](http://www.cardiffpartnership.co.uk)

police and the probable reluctance of the rough sleeper). They may still offer services under such circumstances, but only *over there*, round that corner, out of the way. Not here. Finally here, there are occasions when the HANR team is directed *away* from somewhere, told by senior management not to call at a homeless encampment that has established itself a little too visibly or definitively. In such instances the withdrawal of outreach (very often against the wishes and professional instinct of HANR team members) is part of a wider response aimed at breaking up an unwelcome territorial production of which outreach work has become a part: suspend outreach, dispatch the cleaners, call the police.

In this way the provision of care by outreach workers is doubly precarious. The work itself seeks out and (where it can) affirms the territorial productions of vulnerable others, productions that workers must then negotiate as best they can, as visitors. Yet even as they appeal to potential clients for permission to engage – pausing for an annunciatory cough at the entrance to a derelict outbuilding, or ‘knocking’ on the frame of a sagging tent in a corner of the memorial gardens, “Hello? Anybody home?”, thus recognising another’s preserve – workers may have their authorisation to do so withdrawn from the other direction: they may be told by their manager, (who has received a call from the assistant director of housing, who has just left a Cardiff Partnership meeting where a chain store has lodged a complaint) that the team must stop calling there.<sup>11</sup> Directed away from a space that was never theirs to begin with, outreach workers must begin again, somewhere else. They join their clients in mobility and circulation in and around the city centre. The territory on which they work is not their own, twice over, even as their duties implicate them in its continuing production.

### Conclusion

In the course of this article we have drawn on the case of rough sleeping and outreach work to develop a situational understanding of city territories and their production. We have described such territories as existing not in isolation – an archipelago of spatial, situational and egocentric claims and conflicting interests – but in shifting, rhythmised palimpsest, produced in and through various practices through which preserves are made and unmade, protected and surrendered. We have discussed the role of urban patrol in the production of territories – police patrol, street cleaners and, of course, the outreach team – and, in doing so have considered the ways in which the work of homeless outreach and the necessary interactional validation of homeless territories finds outreach workers operating on territory that is not their own twice over. We suggest, in closing, that an attention to the situations in and through which city space is claimed and patrolled, and won or lost, in everyday life enables a much needed precision in describing and challenging dominant modalities of urban public life.

In highlighting the mobile and shifting contours and territorial palimpsest that constitute urban space, we have not simply suggested that all is in flux. There are, of course, territories that are more stable and more readily remarked than others. Such territories are usually tied to legal ownership of land and property, are supported by law and come with responsibilities and obligations that ensure their presence and remarking. Yet the point remains: remarking is still required. An unpatrolled, unmarked territory lapses as such. We have also noted that city territories are not productions that one can so readily demarcate from a distance. To do so is to risk losing sight of the ways in which territorial productions are rhythmised and nested. Homeless territories disappear from view and one is left with the impression that rough sleepers are operating somehow in between pre-established and exclusory territories. Empirical scrutiny shows what is amiss with that picture. Territorial production is not so amenable to mapping, and certainly a map showing legal ownership of space in the city does not tell the story of the quotidian production of such spaces as socially recognised territories. Sure enough, the map is not the territory. But even the territory is not the thing itself (as is implied by conventional use of Korzybski’s dictum). In developing the work of Goffman (2010) and Kärrholm (2007), we have argued against an *a priori* treatment of territory as a spatial phenomenon existing in advance of practices through which it is produced and recognised. Here, then, an ethnographic, situational attention paid to the ways in which urban space is organised and experience territorially is posited not simply as a complement or even a counter to theoretical treatments of urban space but, rather, as contributing a fundamental reworking of the ways in which territory is conceived of in sociology and urban studies more generally. A situational understanding of public life and city space brings in to question the idea of territory as a place held, once and for all,

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<sup>11</sup> Cardiff Partnership involves communication between council staff and managers, local business interests and other agents, notably the city centre Neighbourhood policing team.

from which others are either excluded or, if not excluded, then able only to operate tactically – at odds with the place. Rather than think of territory as a bounded space coincident with the assertion of control we have directed attention, through the case of outreach work and urban patrol, to territorial production, to a shifting pattern of territorial claims and shades of appropriation (Kärrholm, 2007). Given which, the politics of urban public space may lie not in the observation that city space – public space, that it to say – is being privatised, is being made a territory formed around particular interests and ambitions, but rather in the examination of the ways in which city space is organised, in everyday life, as a meshwork of practical, mobile and situational territorial productions.

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