Power to Change: A Foucauldian Analysis of the Irish Direct Provision System

Thesis submitted to the University of Limerick in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy, Sociology

by

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Submitted to the University of Limerick

December 2014
Abstract

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In April 2000 the Irish state implemented a policy of Direct Provision and Dispersal through which the state provides accommodation, food and other basic requirements for asylum seekers and their families while their applications for asylum are being processed. Initially conceived of as a temporary measure, the Irish Direct Provision system has come in for much criticism for the poor quality of accommodation and food it provides, for removing the right to work from asylum seekers, for preventing integration, for being an unsuitable environment to raise children, for the adverse effects living within the system can have on an individual’s mental health and for the prolonged periods asylum seekers are required to remain within the system while their applications are processed.

This study constitutes an investigation of the Direct Provision system according to the testimonies of those who live within it. It employs an action research based methodology which prioritises the perspectives and experiences of its participants. The key areas investigated include: how the Direct Provision system operates, the various relationships that permit the system to operate in this manner, how the system impacted upon participants, how participants subverted, exceeded and ultimately shaped the system themselves and how the system might be transformed in the future.

The study employs the ideas of French philosopher Michel Foucault, an advocate of the power of ‘raw’ and ‘local’ knowledges, and his theorisations of power, conduct, discipline, governance, bio-politics and subjection in order to interpret the Direct Provision system as described by those closest to it. It reveals that Direct Provision is an intensely disciplinary and subject forming system, but also highlights the indomitable nature of those who live within it and their capacity to assert their autonomy and effect change.

Key Words: Direct Provision, Asylum Seeker, Foucault, Discipline, Power, Resistance.
Acknowledgments

I am using this space to thank just some of the people who have helped me throughout the production of this research and without whom this study would not have been possible.

Firstly I would like to thank the members of the University of Limerick Sociology Department who have always done their best to support me and facilitate my work during my time at the University. I would especially like to thank my supervisor Dr Breda Gray who has been an endless source of information, assistance and encouragement. I realise that it is traditional for students to enthusiastically acknowledge the help they have received from their supervisor, but I genuinely cannot thank or praise Breda enough for all she has done for me. I feel very fortunate and privileged to have worked with her.

I would also like to thank my friends and family for supporting me while I carried out this work. I would especially like to thank my parents for assisting me in every way possible since I started my undergraduate degree ten years ago and providing me with everything from financial assistance to critical reading and advice along the way. I would also like to give specific thanks to my partner Colette who was always available to help in any way possible and managed to put up with my erratic schedules, commitments and moods.

Finally, I want to thank the participants who conducted this study with me. The courage they exhibited during a phenomenally difficult time in their lives was inspirational and their value to this study incalculable. I hope that the knowledge produced by our work can in some way contribute towards the challenges and protests building against Direct Provision nationwide and that this inhumane system will soon meet its long overdue end.
List of Tables and Appendices

List of Tables

Table 1: Breakdown of Participants’ Nationalities 86

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Rejected Ethical Application 291

Appendix B: Approved Ethical Application 305

Appendix C: University of Limerick's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' Ethics Committee - Initial Response. 320

Appendix D: University of Limerick's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' Ethics Committee - Rejection of Ethical Application. 322

Appendix E: Information Sheet Provided to Potential Participants 324

Appendix F: Research Consent Form 327
## Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................... i

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................................... ii

List of Tables and Appendices ................................................................................................................ iii

Introduction .......................................................................................................................................... vii

Chapter One: Establishing Context: A History of Asylum in Ireland ....................................................... 1
  1. From Diverse Origins to Citizenship ................................................................................................ 1
  2. The Second World War and Anti-Semitism .................................................................................... 4
  3. Ratification of the UN Convention and Hungarian Refugees ......................................................... 6
  4. Programme Refugees and European Harmonisation ................................................................... 11
  5. Direct Provision and Dispersal ...................................................................................................... 15
  6. Citizenship Discourses and the 2004 Referendum ........................................................................ 20
  7. Asylum in Ireland Today ................................................................................................................ 26
  8. Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................... 29

Chapter 2: Theorising Power and Subject Formation in the Direct Provision System.......................... 32
  1. A General Theory of Power ........................................................................................................... 32
    1.1 Alternative Theorisations of Power ........................................................................................ 33
    1.2 Foucault and Power ................................................................................................................ 37
  2. Modalities of Power ...................................................................................................................... 39
    2.1 Sovereign Power ..................................................................................................................... 40
    2.2 Disciplinary Power ................................................................................................................... 42
    2.3 Governmentality, Bio-power and Racism ............................................................................... 46
  3. The Subject, Objectification and Subjectification ......................................................................... 55
  4. Neoliberalism ................................................................................................................................ 58
  5. The ‘National Abject’ .................................................................................................................... 63
  6. Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................... 66

Chapter 3: Formulating and Implementing an Action Research Methodology .................................... 68
  1. Objectives and Concerns ............................................................................................................... 69
    1.1 Theoretical Concerns .............................................................................................................. 69
    1.2 Methodological Concerns ....................................................................................................... 73
  2. Action Research ............................................................................................................................ 75
  3. Research Design ............................................................................................................................ 82
    3.1 Preparation ............................................................................................................................. 82
    3.2 Analysis ................................................................................................................................... 87
# Table of Contents

4. Fieldwork ....................................................................................................................................... 90
   4.1 Preparations and Ethics .......................................................................................................... 90
   4.2 The Limerick Direct Provision Discussion Forum .................................................................... 93
   4.3 The Limerick Asylum Seeker and Refugee Network ............................................................... 96
   4.4 Awn’s Interviews ................................................................................................................... 100
   4.5 Reciprocity and Aftermath .................................................................................................... 101

5. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 103

Chapter 4: A Dense Site of Disciplinary Power: The How and Why of the Direct Provision Centre ... 106
   1. Discipline and Direct Provision ................................................................................................... 107
      1.1 The Implementation of Discipline via the Examination ...................................................... 108
      1.2 The Implementation of Discipline via Resources and Rewards .......................................... 116
      1.3 The Implementation of Discipline via Control of Mobility ................................................... 123

   2. The Legitimisation of Direct Provision ........................................................................................ 131
      2.1 Immediate Staff..................................................................................................................... 132
      2.2 The Irish Public ...................................................................................................................... 135
      2.3 National and Global Interests ............................................................................................... 138

   3. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 142

Chapter 5: ‘No way to be the same’: Subjectification and State of Mind in Direct Provision ........... 146
   1. Being Made Different: Experiences of Inactivity, Dependency and Emasculation ..................... 147
      1.1 Inactivity ................................................................................................................................ 151
      1.2 Dependency ............................................................................................................................ 154
      1.3 Emasculation ......................................................................................................................... 158

   2. Hopelessness and Despair .......................................................................................................... 162

   3. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 168

Chapter 6: Everyday Life as Revolution: Autonomy, Excess and the ‘Care of the Self’ .................. 171
   1. Asylum and Autonomy ................................................................................................................ 172
   2. Exceeding the System ................................................................................................................. 175
      3. A ‘Care of the Self’ .................................................................................................................... 189
   4. Michael’s Story ........................................................................................................................... 198

   5. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 205

Chapter 7: ‘All Fingers are not the same’: Connections and Contestations in the Category ‘Asylum Seeker’ ........................................................................................................................................ 210
   1. A Heterogeneous Population .................................................................................................... 211
   2. Building on Connections .......................................................................................................... 214
Introduction

Ireland’s history of institutionalising individuals in industrial schools, psychiatric hospitals and Magdalene Laundries has received considerable public attention in the past decade, giving rise to official denouncements and the suggestion that such institutionalisation is a thing of the past. For example, on the 19th of February 2013 in Dáil Éireann, the Irish Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, issued an unreserved apology to all the women who had suffered in Ireland’s ‘Magdalene Laundries’. In response to the publication of the McAleese Report, which revealed the extent of state collusion in the Laundries’ operations, Enda Kenny wept as he branded the institutions and their subsequent cover up ‘a national shame’ (Brennan 2013). Appealing to the notion of a more sensitive state and society, he stated that ‘today we live in a very different Ireland, with a very different consciousness and awareness. We live in an Ireland where we have more compassion, empathy, insight and heart’ (O’Brien and O’Shea 2014). Little over one year later, more of Ireland’s institutional skeletons were dredged up as reports indicated that just under 800 children may be buried in an unmarked mass grave at a former orphanage for unwed mothers in Tuam Co. Galway (The Irish Independent 2014).

Enda Kenny’s apology and the discovery of the grave in Galway constitute just two key events in a wider national unravelling of and coming to terms with Ireland’s institutional past. As Ireland slowly becomes more secularised, the rationalities that underpinned what Bruce Arnold has labelled ‘the Irish gulag’ (2009) seem increasingly distant, illogical and ripe for criticism. In the early days of Irish independence, it was ‘Catholic morality’ that infused state policy regarding ‘nation building, citizenship’ and the crafting of ‘social roles’; providing the ideological basis for the Magdalene Laundries and mother and child homes (McCarthy 2010,
p.164). Today Ireland has largely, but not entirely, left behind rationalities based on religious morality, embracing instead the tenets of ‘neoliberalism’ and a ‘cosmopolitan post-nationalism’ (Harrington 2005, p.424). As revelations emerged regarding Ireland’s institutional past, expressions of anger and outrage, directed at church and state, have been almost ubiquitous. An Irish state that could impose such an oppressive ideology on some of the most vulnerable sections of its population seems almost incomprehensible in Ireland today.

Yet amidst this recent condemnation, some voices have sought to point out the parallels between past practices of institutionalisation and similar practices in the present which persist with impunity. As revelations and criticisms mounted with regard to the Magdalene Laundries and mother and child homes, a less vocal clamour arose concerning a similar system that currently encloses 4,434 people, 1666 of whom are children (RIA 2014b, p.7). This is Ireland’s Direct Provision system. A system which both former Supreme Court Judge, Catherine McGuinness, and Ombudsman, Emily O’Reilly, have predicted may one day require an apology similar to the one offered to former residents of industrial schools, the Magdalene Laundries and mother and child homes (O’Brien 2014c; Baker 2013).

Established in April 2000 as a temporary measure, the remit of Direct Provision is to provide essential services to asylum seekers and their families as they await a decision on their application. The introduction of this system coincided with the removal of asylum seekers from the general social welfare system. The system also denies asylum seekers the right to work so that the essential services provided under the Direct Provision system include everything from accommodation and nourishment to sanitation facilities. Asylum seekers are also allocated a weekly payment of €19.10 per adult and €9.60 per child to meet additional ‘non-essential’ needs. Individuals resident within the system are allocated a place within one of 34 centres dispersed across the country while their claim is being considered. The average
waiting period for a final decision status is four years, with 13.6 per cent of current residents living in the Direct Provision system for over seven years (RIA 2014b, p.19). Only three of the buildings currently operating as Direct Provision centres were purpose built. The majority of the centres are comprised of former hotels, hostels and bed and breakfasts, all but seven of which are privately owned and operated (RIA 2014b, p.14). In 2013 the Irish government paid €45.735 million to these private contractors for their services (RIA 2013, p.31).

Those drawing parallels between the Direct Provision system and the Magdalene Laundries and mother and child homes tend to focus on how both systems propagated poverty, social exclusion, long term institutionalisation and, for some, profit. In August of 2014, the *Irish Times* ran a ‘Lives in Limbo’ four-day series of articles which identified the current situation facing asylum seekers in Ireland as being reminiscent of ‘an era we look back on with shame’ (O’Brien 2014c). The series used interviews with Direct Provision residents to reveal a system plagued by overcrowding, poor facilities and a lack of maintenance; while also highlighting the vast amounts of money the system generates for private companies (O’Brien 2014b). Journalist, Colette Browne also cited the ‘cramped institutionalised conditions’ that exist in the ‘purgatory’ of Direct Provision to back up her claim that ‘history is repeating itself under our nose’ (Browne 2014). Legal editor of the *Irish Independent*, Dearbhail McDonald, suggested that the ‘mass containment’ of asylum seekers is ‘surely’ one of ‘the new Magdalene scandals happening in our midst’ (McDonald 2013). In a similar vein, UCD law lecturer, Liam Thornton, claims that ‘the mantra of “never again” rings hollow’ when one considers the ‘Dickensian’ ‘practices in containment and control’ that exist within the Direct Provision system (Thornton 2013).

Some commentators have chosen to focus on the children who grow up in what an Irish Refugee Council report documents as ‘state sanctioned child poverty and exclusion’ (Arnold
In an editorial for the *Irish Independent*, Colette Browne asks what chance do children born and growing up in ‘institutionalised living conditions’ have of becoming ‘well-adjusted adults’? (Browne 2013). While Fiona Finn, CEO of NASC Immigrant Support Centre, argues that for the sake of the Irish state’s obligations to its children, the national ‘outpouring of regret’ regarding the Magdalene Laundries must translate into reform of the Direct Provision system (NASC 2013).

As the calls to acknowledge and address the parallels between Ireland’s institutional past and its institutional present have gathered momentum, there are some indications that those in government are listening. Upon being made Minister for Justice and Equality in 2011, Alan Shatter, who in opposition compared Direct Provision centres to ‘prisoner of war camps’ (O’Connor 2014), acknowledged that systematic reform was required. However, the reform he had in mind was not in relation to the living standards endured by residents, which he regarded as ‘significantly better than that in operation in many other member states’, but to the time they spent within the system (Deegan 2013). By the time Alan Shatter resigned from his position in May 2014 no systematic reforms to Direct Provision had been enacted. Upon succeeding Alan Shatter as Minister for Justice and Equality, Francis Fitzgerald critiqued the ‘current system’ and ‘related delays’ and indicated that the establishment of ‘a single protection procedure’ was a ‘priority’ for her (Deegan 2014b). Similarly, the new Minister of State for Equality and New Communities, Aodhán Ó Riordáin, identified the Direct Provision system as being ‘unacceptable’ and in need of ‘radical reform’ (Holland 2013); stating that the system ‘is responsible for poverty, marginalisation and stigmatisation of asylum-seeking residents’ (Thornton 2014b). In August of 2014, Minister Fitzgerald announced that a ‘working group’ would be convened in order to ‘review the Direct Provision system’s conditions’ and ‘look at issues such as welfare payments and restrictions to third level education’ (Barry 2014b). Such pronouncements, along with a general escalation of debate
regarding Direct Provision have led Liam Thornton to suggest that, ‘for the first time in 14 years there seems to be serious momentum building as regards the need to bring some closure to the whole issue of Direct Provision’ (Thornton 2014a).

However, optimism regarding the reformation or abandonment of the Direct Provision system is necessarily tempered. Although momentum does seem to be building on the subject, calls to abandon the system have been persistent since its conception. Yet, after 14 years of criticism and condemnation, not even the weekly allowance of €19.10 has been altered by a single cent. Furthermore, the nature of the changes being mooted at the time of writing only address certain aspects of the system and seem to be primarily concerned with financial rather than human costs. The ten year appraisal of Direct Provision conducted by the Reception and Integration Agency in 2010 suggested only cost-cutting measures and was responsible for a policy of closing down centres across the country, forcing residents to relocate in order to reduce ‘excess capacity’ and save money (RIA 2010c, p.67). The changes that former Minister Alan Shatter sought to make to the system before resigning seemed to be similarly motivated by financial concerns. Abandoning his previous reference to ‘prisoner of war camps’, he described attempts to correlate Direct Provision centres with the Magdalene Laundries as ‘grossly misleading’ (Deegan 2013). Instead, he claimed that the system facilitated the economic use of resources ‘in circumstances where the state is in financial difficulty’ (ibid.). Thus, the major changes he sought to enact were in relation to the multi-layered asylum process, claiming that ‘for me, the length of time spent in the Direct Provision system, rather than the quality of provision within the system itself, is the real issue’ (ibid.). Similarly, Minister Francis Fitzgerald’s suggested reforms are focused upon the establishment of a single protection procedure. She cites the cost of ‘the overall high number of judicial reviews’ as being a key motivation behind her proposed changes (Deegan 2014a). However, she is less enthusiastic about enacting changes that would permit asylum seekers access to the
wider social welfare system or even the right to work, claiming that such actions could have ‘unpredictable and potentially very costly impacts across the full range of public and social services’ (ibid.). While Minister of State, Aodhán Ó Riordáin’s comments suggest greater concern regarding the conditions prevalent within the system, he has also chosen to focus on the time asylum seekers spend within Direct Provision, claiming he ‘won’t stand over a system of people living in limbo for years on end’ (McMahon 2014).

Thus, although there seems to be a growing recognition across Ireland, and indeed within political circles, that the Direct Provision system is in need of transformation, if not outright abolition, there seems to be little appetite from those within government to enact such changes. This raises the question: how might one explain such a seeming inconsistency? Along with many others, Gavan Titley documents the parallels between the Magdalene Laundries and Direct Provision. He identifies the evident systemic abuse as something which Irish people would prefer to think of as a remnant of an ideological past, ‘a past often represented as a long dark night of conflict, emigration, and the suffocating hegemony of the Catholic church’ (Titley 2012). Titley claims that the ‘definitive break’ with this past is often attributed to the ‘fundamental shift in values’ symbolised by the ‘Celtic Tiger’, a period where ‘neoliberalism and the liberalisation of society were in harmony’ (ibid.). In spite of the financial crisis and recession, these values of autonomy, cost/benefit calculation and the pre-eminence of the free market, still inform Irish policy today. While the Magdalene Laundries and mother and child homes were built upon an ideological foundation of Catholic morality, it is the values of neoliberalism that underpin many of Ireland’s modern institutions.

Although there might be a ‘definitive break’ between contemporary Ireland and its ‘long dark night of conflict’, which makes it possible to outrightly reject the country’s institutional past, the rationalities that inform Ireland’s institutional present remain dominant and seemingly unassailable. At a time when the Direct Provision issue is arguably at its most insistent since...
the system’s inception 14 years ago, there exists an abundance of obstacles and questions regarding the nature of the system and the possibilities of changing or eradicating it. Exactly what kind of system is Direct Provision? How does it function? What is the purpose of the way it functions? What kinds of subjects are produced by it and to what effect? Who benefits from such a system? Who wants to change or eradicate it? Which people are capable of doing so? What exactly does change entail? What are the obstacles to enacting it?

This is a study which addresses these questions and others regarding the Direct Provision system, its functioning and the possibilities that exist with regard to change. However, unlike many of the calls for change documented above, this study does not undertake its analysis from an exterior or morality-based position. Instead, its starting point is from within the Direct Provision centres themselves, where the relations of power that constitute the Direct Provision system play themselves out daily and practices of resistance and change are frequent and numerous. This study works primarily with current and former Direct Provision residents in order to benefit from their perspectives with regard to how the system functions, how it impacts and alters them as individuals, how they exceed it and how they exercise their agency to reshape it. Thus, systematic change is not conceptualised as an ‘all or nothing’ moment dependant on government decree, rather it is understood in terms of the perpetual shifting of a multiplicity of relationships and arrangements. Taking the focus away from well documented government pronouncements and policies, this study engages with the voices and perspectives of those who live within the Direct Provision system. It presents and analyses that system through their words and conceptualises change and resistance in their terms, thereby taking on a transformative character of its own. To this end, the three main objectives of this study are:

1. To analyse the role played by, and various manifestations of, power in the legitimisation and maintenance of Ireland’s Direct Provision system.
2. To identify barriers to change, and to locate and explore possible spaces of resistance.

3. To provide a platform for asylum seekers’ experiences, perceptions and their attempts to initiate change.

In order to meet these objectives this study adopted an ‘action research’ methodological approach that involved its participants in decision making processes; recruiting them as co-organisers and researchers. Participation and depth of involvement were fluid and open to anyone who had spent time living within the Direct Provision system. The majority of the fieldwork involved the discussions and activities of two groups established by myself and the other participants; the Limerick Direct Provision Discussion Forum (LDPDF) and the Limerick Asylum Seeker and Refugee Network (LASRN). These two groups were centred on participants’ experiences of the Direct Provision system, seeking to combine and document their knowledge and use that knowledge to create and maximise spaces of change and resistance within the system. The fieldwork took place during a 14 month period between September 2011 and November 2012 and involved 25 male participants and one female participant of various nationalities.

Before beginning the fieldwork it was necessary to familiarise myself with the various debates and discourses pertaining to migration and asylum, in Irish, European and global contexts. Chapter 1 reviews this literature and explores Ireland’s history of immigration alongside the events and discourses which underpin modern asylum policy and the Direct Provision system. The chapter contextualises the study and provides a background for the topic of the thesis.

The study combines its methodological approach with a theoretical approach based on the ideas of Michel Foucault. Foucault’s work is intensely connected with many of the key
concepts this study focuses on, such as race, power and its various manifestations, resistance and change, subject formation, neoliberalism and subjugated knowledges. In Chapter 2 I outline the core Foucauldian ideas employed throughout this study as well as some of the other key concepts that recur throughout. The chapter begins by establishing a general theory of power as developed by Foucault as this informs the study itself and its findings. It details the three core modalities of power identified by Foucault; sovereign, disciplinary and governmental, and briefly reviews his theorisation of racism and bio-politics. It also considers Foucault’s understanding of power as a potentially subject forming phenomenon, by looking at how it objectifies and subjectifies individuals and how those individuals can internalise this subjectivation and even become participants in their own subject formation. In line with and moving beyond Foucault, the chapter also discusses neoliberal rationalities that permeate modern Ireland and how they can play a role in shaping, not just asylum policy, but also the experiences, motivations and subjectivities of participants. Finally, the chapter takes up Imogen Tyler’s concept of the ‘national abject’, applying it to the negative social construction of asylum seekers in Ireland.

Chapter 3 addresses the methodological approach taken in the study. It documents how I came to see the action research paradigm as compatible with the study’s objectives and theoretical framework. It does so by exploring various incarnations of action research, from the first generation of action research to deconstructionist and post structural approaches, and by detailing how these approaches substantiated or alleviated my concerns about adopting a participative and change-oriented paradigm. The chapter goes on to outline how this methodological approach informed the study’s design and how that design manifested itself in the actual fieldwork and analysis.

Chapter 4 documents and examines the space of the Direct Provision centre from the perspective of residents. Participants’ everyday experiences build a picture of all the
relations, interactions and contestations that permit Direct Provision to function in the manner that it does. The space of Direct Provision is analysed as an intensely disciplinary space in which techniques of discipline are routinely employed in order to conduct the conduct of residents. The chapter details how practices analogous to Foucault's descriptions of 'the examination' and the 'punishment-gratification' dynamic, produce knowledge and hierarchies through which it is possible to allocate resources, regulate mobility and generally incentivise behaviour. The second part of the chapter examines the ways in which the disciplinary system is legitimised and made possible through the actions and beliefs of its staff, the Irish public and wider global interests. It employs Foucault's ideas regarding institutional legitimacy and Zygmunt Bauman's notion of distance to explain how Direct Provision can function in a manner seemingly in contradiction with its stated goals and also addresses the question as to which groups are benefiting from the ways in which the system is currently being operated.

Having establishing how and why Direct Provision centres function in the manner they do, the study documents the effects this can have on the people living within them. Chapter 5 details the various ways in which participants felt the system was impacting on and shaping them. The first section focuses on how a life within the disciplinary space of Direct Provision can subjectify residents in certain ways. It identifies inactivity, dependency and a state of emasculation as conditions through which participants felt they were being 'made different', internalising both their experiences and their objectification. The second section addresses the impact these conditions had on participants’ mental wellbeing and moves to account for this in terms of hopelessness and despair; emotions which relate to a loss of purpose, the resolution of which requires a sense of closure which does not seem to be available to asylum seekers.

In spite of the fact that it is only possible for asylum seekers to gain full closure at the
moment when they cease to be asylum seekers, participants exhibited a plethora of other ways in which they resisted, subverted and even changed aspects of the Direct Provision system, escaping states of hopelessness and despair. In Chapter 6 I document the multiplicity of resistances that take place within the Direct Provision system, via what Nicolas De Genova refers to as 'the revolutions of everyday life' (2013, p.3). The chapter refutes any notions that asylum seekers in Ireland are passive subjects within a system that can only be changed from the outside. Beginning with a discussion of the 'autonomy of migration' perspective that identifies the actions of asylum seekers and migrants in general as primary and the controls which seek to conduct and direct them as reactionary, the chapter proceeds to document exercises in agency and autonomy outlined and enacted by participants. These took on multiple forms including moments of excess, resistance, subversion, counter conduct, practices of the self and the exercise of power through the conduct of others. The chapter concludes with a retelling of 'Michael's story', a revealing account of a series of events described by one participant in which he and other residents within his centre were able to not only resist many of the techniques and pressures applied to them, but also to influence and shape the relations and spaces in which they lived.

The final empirical chapter looks to go beyond the many revolutions of everyday life and examine the possibilities for wider systematic change from within the Direct Provision system. This was something that this study and many of its participants had looked to develop through the fieldwork, but which ultimately never materialised. Chapter 7 makes the case that one of the main impediments to asylum seekers organising on a scale large enough to agitate for such change is their deep diversity. Having established that the category ‘asylum seekers’ is inherently heterogeneous, the chapter details how this heterogeneity created obstacles to achieving consensus within both the LDPDF and the LASRN. The chapter then questions the categorisation of such a diverse group of people within a single,
abject social construction. It notes the ways in which participants refused the category, preferring to cultivate solidarities based on religion, nationality and language. The chapter goes on to explore the ways in which both the adoption and imposition of their abject status was evidently distressing for participants and concludes that a contingent and organic approach to effecting change, as practiced by asylum seekers nationwide, holds more potential than one based on a categorisation and series of supposed common interests which do not exist.

The study ends with a concluding chapter which summarises the main contributions of the thesis and documents the major insights produced by the study. It reflects on the theoretical implications of these insights and speculates as to how they might be practically employed by other researchers or activists.
Chapter One: Establishing Context: A History of Asylum in Ireland

In this chapter I identify and outline some of the core events and discourses that have shaped debate and policy in contemporary Ireland with regard to asylum. The chapter provides a brief history of immigration and asylum in Ireland in order to establish the context within which this study was undertaken. Although it would be impossible to isolate an Irish history of asylum from parallel developments in global and European approaches, this chapter will endeavour to focus on wider events and debates from an Irish perspective, making reference to outside influences and debates when pertinent. In the interests of clarity the chapter is divided into seven roughly chronological sections, each of which details a significant period of history relating to asylum in Ireland and the relevant debates and discourses prevalent during that period. Although attempts have been made to maintain a chronological structure, in some instances degrees of overlap between events and debates were unavoidable.

1. From Diverse Origins to Citizenship

There is no Irish race. We are a parcel of mongrels (George Bernard Shaw, cited in Izenberg 2011, p.56).

Contrary to perceptions of Ireland as a mono-cultural nation of Celtic decent recently coming to terms with the diversity introduced by immigration, Ireland has been subject to various influxes stretching back throughout recorded history. Celtic, Viking, Norman, English, Scottish, Spanish, Huguenot, and Jewish migrants all arrived in Ireland in varying numbers before the dawn of the twentieth century. The contemporary discourses that exist concerning these groups are often greatly varied and ‘intensely political’ (Garner 2004, p.140). For example, despite the similarities between the invasive nature of the Vikings and the British,
the former are acknowledged as having made strong contributions to the indigenous Gaelic culture while the latter have often been construed as its antithesis (ibid.).

In contrast with present day discourses that portray issues of immigration as a modern phenomenon, Ireland’s borders actually have a permeable history from the Vikings up to the twentieth century. It is estimated that as many as 10,000 Huguenots arrived, settled and remained in Ireland after having their religious liberty revoked in seventeenth century France. In 1709 the Irish House of Commons authorised the entry and settlement of 3,000 Palatinate refugees fleeing present day Germany (Healy 2006, p.221). It has also been indicated that until the eighteenth century, Ireland had one of the largest black populations in all of Europe (Hart 2003, cited in Garner 2004, p.141). This relatively relaxed approach to in-migration would come to an end with the advent of the nation state and modern notions of sovereignty. Sandra Lavenex locates the emergence of these ideas in the French and American revolutions, which reconceptualised sovereignty as residing, not with a monarch, but a people (2001, p.8). Tellingly, it is also within this period that Foucault identifies the birth of the bio-political state and modern racism (2004, p.215-237). This new way of thinking conceptualised people as citizens belonging to a certain territory and being in possession of all the rights and obligations that citizenship of that territory entails. However, these rights didn’t extend beyond the territory’s borders and the very notion of sovereignty and borders themselves presupposed some degree of exclusion. From the eighteenth century onwards this exclusion became amplified as did the popularity of nationalist discourses which had begun to link people to places by venerating common ancestries and cultures (Lavenex 2001, p.9). By the end of the First World War a number of measures and controls had been implemented in order to regulate the record number of refugees the conflict had created. Passport requirements initially established for security purposes were retained in many countries as one by one they began to close their borders.
Nationalist discourses were becoming increasingly popular in Ireland during this period and the nineteenth and early twentieth century saw few migrants arrive on Irish shores. By 1921, with Ireland subject to the same nationalist fervour and pressures sweeping the rest of Europe, the country officially abandoned its open border policy. The following year, after winning independence from Britain, the Irish Free State drafted its Constitution and established its definition of, and criteria for, citizenship. Contained in article three of the Constitution, citizenship conferred it’s ‘privileges’ and ‘obligations’ on anyone resident in the country at that period; who was born in Ireland, whose parents were born in Ireland or who had been living in Ireland for a minimum of seven years (Daly 2001, p.372). This relatively rare conception of *jus soli*, or ‘right of the soil’ citizenship was based in dominant nationalist discourses of the period which relied on a territorial conception of the Irish people (Ryan 2005, cited in Tormey 2007, p.70). This provision was consolidated in the 1935 Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act. In 1937 Eamon De Valera’s Fianna Fáil Party rose to power and embarked on a nationalistic and autarkic approach to governing the country in an attempt to break links with Britain and build a post-colonial Ireland capable of standing alone (Harrington 2005, p.430). This new national sense of independence and patriotism was reflected in the drafting of a new Constitution which John Harrington describes as codifying ‘a distinctive Biopolitics of self-sufficient development’ (ibid.). However, despite its many breaks with the past, the 1937 Constitution of Ireland maintained the *jus soli* conception of citizenship. As Ireland exercised its independence, citizenship provided the basis for rights such as welfare, education and healthcare as the country engaged in the practice of ‘nation building’ (Fanning 2002, p.2). This nation building was conducted through processes of political, religious, social and economic modernisation and was institutionalised and reproduced through the instruments of the state; such as schools and the Catholic Church. The result was a narrow, nationalistic understanding of ‘Irishness’ that romanticised a fixed,
unchanging, homogenous peoples and excluded minority communities who didn’t conform to these ideals (Fanning 2002, p.3).

2. The Second World War and Anti-Semitism

Following the establishment of national borders and the introduction of citizenship, responsibility for immigration processes in Ireland was split between three government departments: the Department of External Affairs vetted visas from refugees at embassies abroad; the Department of Industry and Commerce dealt with applications for work permits; and the Department of Justice was given the final say as to who would be permitted entry. This essentially meant that the Minister for Justice had absolute authority over arrivals and deportations, as vested in the position by the 1935 Aliens Act until it was declared unconstitutional in 1999 (Fanning 2002, p.73). Such a concentration of power was open to abuse, particularly through the manner in which different racial and ethnic groups could be fast-tracked or black-listed at the Minister’s discretion. The two main considerations concerning asylum applications in the decades following the introduction of borders were the ability of an applicant to support herself/himself and national security concerns. These considerations were invoked to justify the exclusion of Jewish refugees who were considered ‘political undesirables’ and a threat to Irish society, leading to accusations of anti-Semitism (Fanning 2002, p.74). A draft Department of Justice memo from September 1945 outlines the state’s official position during this period:

"It is the policy of the Department of Justice to restrict the immigration of Jews. The wealth and influence of the Jewish community in this country and the murmurs against Jewish wealth and influence are frequently heard. As Jews do not become assimilated with the native population, like other immigrants, there is a danger that..."
any big increase in their number might create a social problem (National Archives of Ireland, cited in Fanning 2002, p.80-81).

This official endorsement of an anti-Semitic immigration policy continued throughout the Second World War. In 2012, Minister for Justice and Equality, Alan Shatter, conceded as much, admitting that ‘practically all visa requests from German Jews were refused by the Irish authorities’ (Browne 2012). After the Holocaust, Ireland was initially reluctant to provide new homes for survivors, the state refusing to take in 100 children who had survived concentration camps. It was only after considerable protest and debate that a small number were admitted under strict conditions on a temporary basis (Cullen 2000, p.5). The Department of Justice continued to purvey anti-Semitic rhetoric and practice until Ireland’s ratification of the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) in 1956 (Fanning 2002, p.76).

The hostility exhibited towards Jewish immigration stood in contrast to the hospitable welcome extended to Catholic immigrants who were perceived as more likely to assimilate into the native population. This policy was formalised in 1938 with the institutionalisation of the ‘Irish Co-ordinating Committee for the Relief of Christian Refugees’ (ICCRCR). This Committee was a Catholic voluntary organisation that sought to obtain visas, predominantly for Catholic refugees, and ensure that provisions were made available for them on arrival. The ICCRCR was given responsibility for the vetting of refugee applications and providing maintenance for the applicants they approved. No case could be put before the Minister for Justice without passing through the ICCRCR (Fanning 2002, p.79). This suited an Irish state heavily influenced by Catholic morality and rationality and opposed to the introduction of insoluble and potentially burdensome elements (2002, p.77).
3. Ratification of the UN Convention and Hungarian Refugees

By the end of the Second World War there were 21 million people across Europe either homeless or displaced (Cullen 2000, p.8). In 1946, during its first plenary session, the United Nations’ (UN) General Assembly outlined the need for states to co-operate in order to deal with the refugee situation. Following over a year of negotiations regarding the rights and obligations of both asylum seekers and sovereign states, the 1948 Declaration of Universal Human Rights was finalised, providing all people with the right ‘to seek and enjoy, in other countries, asylum from persecution’ (UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, Article 14). This basic principle was reasserted and codified in the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The Convention, which along with its 1967 protocol remains the basis for international refugee law today, also made additional provisions for asylum seekers including the establishment of the principle of ‘non-refoulement’, which prohibits states from forcibly returning a person to a territory where he or she might be at risk of persecution. Lavenex identifies this principle as ‘the strongest humanitarian provision in the international refugee regime’ (2001, p.30).

For the first decade after the Second World War, the Irish state persisted with an immigration policy based on volunteerism and susceptible to discrimination, declining to sign up to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees until 1956. Nevertheless, Ireland’s eventual ratification was considered a momentous undertaking for the young nation and it provoked an apparent change in the state’s disposition regarding the admittance of refugees. This change manifested itself in a ‘pronounced enthusiasm’ to take in 1,000 of the 200,000 refugees who had fled Hungary following the Soviet repression of the 1956 Hungarian uprising (Fanning 2002, p.88). Much of this enthusiasm appeared to be based on foreign
policy considerations and an attempt to ingratiate Ireland into the international community (ibid.). This view is shared by Elis Ward who claims

it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Government was primarily, if not exclusively concerned with its prestige abroad – how it presented itself as a new member of the UN – rather than with the welfare of the Hungarians (Ward 1996, p.140).

Prior to the arrival of the first Hungarians the media and the Catholic Church echoed the government’s enthusiasm, preaching ‘solidarity’ with the ‘ancient Catholic nation of Hungary’ and lauding its ‘heroic men and women in Budapest with no weapons save faith and courage’ (Fanning 2002, p.88-89). The promoted perception of the newly arriving refugees was not just of a deserving people, but also a grateful people full of ‘admiration and gratitude’ (ibid.). The positive framing of the refugees by the media and from the pulpit elicited an equally positive response and welcome from the Irish public. Church gate collections were organised by various voluntary organisations under the auspices of the Red Cross and over £4,000 was raised in a few days. The Golden Vale and Charleville creameries donated four tons of cheese with smaller creameries donating tins of milk and offers to accommodate the refugees flooded in from around the country (Ryan 2001, p.55). The Department of Defence working with the Department of Health and the Red Cross eventually decided that the refugees were to be housed in the Knocknalisheen army barracks in Co. Clare. Responsibility for their organisation and wellbeing was delegated to the voluntary sector, specifically the Red Cross. This arrangement was based on what Bryan Fanning describes as a ‘pre-Convention’ ethos, i.e. the expectation that refugees should not constitute a burden to the state but should be susceptible to state control and interference (2002, p.89). Furthermore, the state also attempted to maintain elements of the selective approach that had characterised the anti-Semitic exclusions outlined earlier. However, the basis for selection
was now to be decided by the office of the Department of External Affairs based in Austria, which was entrusted with the task of restricting access for those deemed ‘incompatible with Irish society’ (ibid.). A Department of Defence memorandum from November 1956 outlines precisely the type of refugee the state was looking for.

By selecting suitable families it is hoped (a) to maintain the basic Christian ideals of family life in a way to ensure that the best possible care and attention will be given to the moral, spiritual, educational and physical welfare of the family as a unit and (b) that the problems of subsequent resettlement and employment would be reduced if they can be limited to the bread winner in each family (National Archives of Ireland, cited in Fanning 2002, p.89-90).

The selection policy had two key objectives: limiting the number of refugees who would enter the Irish labour market and maintaining the idealised structure of the Catholic family enshrined in the Constitution. The policy was implemented ‘rigorously’, with Hungarians who didn’t fit the ideal having their applications rejected (Fanning 2002, p.90).

Those that did make it to Ireland faced problems from the beginning. A quarantine period was initially imposed on new arrivals which Fanning alleges was part of a conscious strategy of containment. When these periods elapsed the local Gardaí were employed to illegally limit the refugee’s mobility and, as a last resort, arrest those who left the camp without permission (Fanning 2002, p.109-110). Although refugees retained the right to work, subject to trade union consent, restrictions on movement made it difficult for them to do so.

Relations within the Knocknalisheen camp were equally constraining. In early January reporters from nearby Limerick city attempted to investigate complaints that the huts the refugees were being housed in were cold and leaking. The camp authorities responded by prohibiting residents from giving interviews (Limerick Chronicle 1957, cited in Ryan 2001,
A camp committee was elected which the Red Cross refused to recognise, posting notices around the camp which declared the committee dissolved and sending information about the main ‘agitators’ to the Government Interdepartmental Committee along with requests for their removal (Fanning 2002, p.91-92). After these requests were rejected amidst government fears about bad publicity, the Red Cross focused on the camp’s elected leader, Laszlo Pesthy. They manufactured a series of unfounded accusations against Mr Pesthy, alleging engagement in intimidation and threats and with ‘undesirable women’ (ibid.). These accusations were compiled and sent to the Department of Taoiseach along with a request that he be removed. Eventually moves were made to relocate Laszlo Pesthy to the UK (ibid.).

Around this time, only two months after the first Hungarian refugees had arrived and with only 517 admitted, it was decided to abandon plans of resettling them in Ireland and commitments to take in 1,000 refugees in total. The Department of Defence outlined new plans to have the refugees sent to the UK or Canada claiming ‘the only solution to our problems is emigration for the main bulk of refugees’ (National Archives of Ireland 1957, cited in Fanning 2002, p.91).

Conditions within the camp remained poor, eliciting complaints from the residents about dampness and low temperatures which had led to several of the children contracting bronchitis (Ryan 2001, p.56). The food in the camp was disparaged as being ‘soggy and stale’ (2001, p.57). A memo was sent by residents to the United States’ Congress appealing for help on the grounds that they were being ‘kept in unheatable wooden huts, on unhealthy food and without the possibility of schooling’ (Limerick Chronicle 1957, cited in Ryan 2001, p.57). One Irish Department of Defence report referred to the camp conditions of being reminiscent of ‘an internment camp’ (National Archives of Ireland 1956, cited in Fanning 2002, p.93).

On the 27th of April 1957, with no improvement in conditions and with the Irish government refusing to respond to a list of grievances compiled by residents, 271 of the Hungarian
refugees went on hunger strike. The strike was called off on the 2nd of May after a refugee committee meeting with government officials, the Bishop of Limerick and Red Cross representatives. It was agreed at the meeting to speed up the relocation of the Hungarian refugees to other countries and place them in another facility if needed. Over the next eighteen months arrangements were made with other states to admit the refugees. For those that remained there were discussions about moving the camp to Templemore, Tipperary. However, objections from the Templemore Urban Council, the refugees themselves and Limerick traders, who were estimated to have made over £1,500 from the refugees, meant that no such move transpired (Limerick Chronicle 1957, cited in Ryan 2001, p.57). On the 15th of December 1958, with 438 of the 537 Hungarian arrivals having already left Ireland, the Knocknalisheen camp was finally closed.

The Hungarian refugee episode was a debacle that highlighted several deficiencies and misapprehensions that were inherent in the Irish state’s post-Convention approach to asylum. At the forefront of the issue was the state’s belief that it could continue with its pre-Convention approach, with a few minor alterations, and apply it to post-Convention commitments without compromising these commitments or the state’s sovereignty. By ratifying the 1951 UN Convention the Irish state signed up and committed to the discourses of national co-operation and humanitarianism prevalent after the Second World War. However, these discourses and the commitments they elicited from the Irish state were completely incompatible with state’s desire to maintain an idealised Irish population. For example, there were attempts to continue with selective policies with regard to applications, emphasising commonalities, weeding out the different and creating ‘an institutional monoculturalism’ (Fanning 2002, p.92.). However, these attempts to cherry pick a compliant selection of refugees were not feasible when dealing with over 500 people who had experience of struggle and a willingness to mobilise against authority. Such attributes were
completely at odds with an indigenous Irish culture that had grown passive and deferent (ibid.). The state failed to take responsibility for the refugees and instead persisted with a model which delegated authority and welfare provision to the voluntary sector. The Irish Red Cross were evidently unable to cope with such a large group of people, especially when the group was aware of their rights and entitlements and had no compunctions about demanding them. The Red Cross’s response was to attack the character of the residents, marking them out as selfish and insubordinate. An Irish Times interview with General Secretary for the Irish Red Cross, J. A. Sweeney, alleged that about 200 of the residents were ‘communist sympathisers’ and that there was a ‘pervasive influence’ at work in the camp (Limerick Chronicle 1958, cited in Ryan 2001, p.58). This was a far cry from the ‘heroic men and women, in Budapest with no weapons save faith and courage’ (Fanning 2002, p.88-89). By the time the Knocknalisheen camp closed in 1958 it was abundantly clear that the Irish pre-Convention model of selection and delegation was completely unsuitable for dealing with large numbers of refugees. However, rather than develop a new model in accordance with those being implemented across Europe, the Irish state retreated from its earlier commitments to humanitarianism and co-operation and persevered with the pre-Convention model, making ad hoc changes when deemed necessary.

4. Programme Refugees and European Harmonisation

In the decades following the Hungarian refugee situation, the Irish state abandoned dialogue regarding burden sharing and instead operated a refugee and asylum policy that involved doing the ‘bare minimum’ required to appease the international community (Cullen 2000, p.4). The total number of programme refugees admitted to Ireland in the forty years post ratification of the 1951 UN Convention (including the Hungarians) was under 1,500, this was
actually 500 refugees less than the total number admitted in the twenty years prior to ratification (Fanning 2002, p.94). With regard to Convention refugees, i.e. those arriving and seeking asylum of their own accord, their number never exceeded 50 per year until the 1990s. Even this low figure was depressed by the ‘strong arm tactics’ of Irish Immigration authorities, which illegally engaged in the practice of *refoulement*: ‘many a dazed Cuban or Russian who wandered onto the tarmac at Shannon was hustled back on to a waiting aeroplane before he or she could apply for asylum’ (Cullen 2000, p.7).

The next major challenge to Irish asylum and refugee policy followed General Pinochet’s 1973 military coup in Chile and the subsequent establishment of the ‘Committee for Chilean Refugees in Ireland’. This voluntary group was supported by the UN Commissioner for Refugees and they lobbied the Irish government to provide sanctuary to those fleeing the violence. Once again, the Irish state was reluctant to compromise its borders. Minister for Justice, Patrick Cooney, warned that Ireland was not a ‘cosmopolitan’ country and would face difficulties if forced to absorb even a ‘limited number of foreigners’ (Healy 2006, p.223). Eventually, after every other EU country bar Luxemburg had taken in refugees from Chile, Ireland consented to allowing twelve families admittance. Once again, elements of the government proposed screening the refugees before permitting them access and cast aspersions relating to potential Marxist infiltrators (Healy 2006, p.224). Between 1973 and 1974 approximately 120 Chileans were resettled in Ireland. The refugees were permitted the right to work and welfare, however, the state delegated all other responsibilities to the Committee for Chilean Refugees in Ireland and various religious groups who privately financed much of the resettlement and lobbied local and national authorities on the refugees’ behalf. Language and employment issues hampered the Chilean refugees’ attempts to settle in Ireland and the vast majority eventually moved on.

In 1979, the upheaval caused by the Vietnam War saw 212 Vietnamese programme refugees
admitted into Ireland. Although the Irish government did establish a ‘Vietnamese Refugee Resettlement Committee’ and provide for their initial accommodation at a reception centre in Dublin, responsibility for the refugees was again mainly delegated to the voluntary sector. The Irish Red Cross and the Catholic Church financed the vast majority of the resettlement programme, amassing £120,000 through church gate collections, a figure which dwarfed the £18,296 contributed by the state (Fanning 2002, p.96). Following an initial reception period in Dublin, the refugees were dispersed throughout the country and left to fend for themselves. Over the next two decades, as many as 582 Vietnamese refugees and their families would make Ireland their home, forming tight networks with each other and establishing a Vietnamese Diaspora in Ireland. However, some problems did arise; for example, a lack of language and educational supports has been blamed for disproportionately low levels of academic achievement and high dropout and unemployment rates among the Vietnamese community (Fanning 2002, p.98).

By the mid-eighties the European community was increasingly pursuing neoliberal, free-market objectives (Mazower 1998, p.340) which included the establishment of freedom of movement within European Union. This freedom of movement was initially encouraged via the harmonisation of labour and migration rights between all EU citizens. However, while EU citizens were enjoying increasing freedoms, asylum seekers were regarded as a threat to the sovereignty of member states and a disincentive to the gradual opening of borders. This threat was exasperated by the fall of Communism, which had seen millions of people dispersed and a dramatic rise in trafficking and applications for asylum. In order to address the rising number of applications and proceed with the free market project, the EU Commission proposed taking steps to harmonise asylum policy and engage in intergovernmental collaboration on matters of asylum (Lavenex 2001, p.84). This collaboration manifested itself in agreements made by the Ad Hoc Group on Immigration
(AHGI) and the Schengen Group. Although not a member of the Schengen Group, Ireland was a member of the AHGI, which had split from the Trevi Group in 1986 in order to focus on matters of immigration. Regarding asylum seekers, the AHGI sought to pursue ‘the elaboration of common measures against the abuse of asylum procedures’ (Halibronner, cited in Lavenex 2001, p.81). Many of the initiatives adopted by the AHGI came to mirror Schengen policy. Lavenex has attributed this to the strong links that exist between the groups, the overlapping personnel and the introduction of a six month rotating presidency system that enabled Schengen members to introduce their proposals on to the AHGI agenda (Lavenex 2001, p.91).

As the Irish state became increasingly involved in the European free market project and its various discussions and deliberations, it was gradually forced to abandon its isolationist pre-Convention approach to matters of asylum. In 1985 it took the decision to pass responsibility for programme refugees from the Department of Defence to the Department of Foreign Affairs, which Paul Cullen claims led to improvements in the treatment of asylum seekers (2000, p.6). Following these developments 26 Iranian Baha’is were admitted to the country with full employment, social welfare and public housing rights. In 1990 Ireland signed up to the AHGI drafted Dublin Convention, which was essentially equivalent to the second Schengen Agreement (Lavenex 2001, p.81). This signalled a further step away from Ireland’s selective and isolationist approach, which was incompatible with the Convention’s harmonisation and burden sharing proposals. In order to adhere to its obligations under the Dublin Convention, the Irish government established The Refugee Agency in 1991. The Agency was to be government funded and charged with full responsibility for receiving and resettling refugees. The first programme refugees to be admitted by the Refugee Agency arrived from Bosnia in 1992 and by 1999, 1,089 Bosnians had been resettled as part of a ‘comprehensive’ state programme that included employment, welfare and public housing
rights (Fanning 2002, p.97). Although unemployment was a problem among the new arrivals, the Bosnian programme provided the basis for establishing a new approach to asylum and refugee policy built on ‘best practice’, in which the state played a key integrating role. The Refugee Agency extended a similar response to the arrival of Kosovar refugees in 1999. Although they were not recognised as programme refugees, instead being granted ‘leave to remain’, the Kosovars were granted the same rights as the Bosnian refugees. In addition to this, the Refugee Agency worked alongside schools and health boards, co-ordinating training and regional reception programmes in order to aid integration (Fanning 2002, p.98). However, this ‘best practice’ model was soon to be discarded. The mid 1990s had seen a dramatic rise in the number of Convention refugees applying for asylum in Ireland. This led the Irish state to a dramatic response, the introduction of the Direct Provision system.

5. Direct Provision and Dispersal

Prior to 1994, the number of non-programme asylum seekers arriving in Ireland was negligible. In 1992, only 39 applications for asylum were submitted in Ireland. This figure rose to 91 the following year and 362 in 1994 (NCCRI/Equality Authority 2003, p.10). By the end of 1998, 4,626 applications had been received and politicians and the Irish media began to depict the rising number of applicants as constituting a ‘crisis’ situation. The Irish government responded by delaying implementation of the 1996 Refugee Act, which had been drafted prior to the rise in applications and was based on international ‘best practice’. The failure to implement the Act was explained by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform as being ‘due to the large numbers of applications being made and the backlog thus generated’ (Fanning 2002, p.100). As such, ‘the Minister came to the view that the
procedures of the Refugee Act are unworkable and that the remaining sections of the Act should not be implemented at present’ (ibid.). The ‘crisis’ also prompted amendments to the 1935 Aliens Act, increasing the authority of immigration officers to identify and determine who was permitted entry to the country. Fanning alleges that this amendment led to ethnic profiling which resulted in the deportation of black UK citizens and the illegal detention of foreign nationals on legitimate trips (2002, p.101). For example, six Pakistani business men in possession of valid documentation were imprisoned in Mountjoy jail over a November weekend in 2000 (ibid.). In 1999, deportations under the Aliens Act were judged to be unconstitutional and a new Deportations Bill was hurriedly passed in order to facilitate their undertaking. That same year saw the introduction of the Trafficking Bill which criminalised and imposed sanctions on anybody who had knowingly aided non-nationals in entering the state unlawfully. This made it far more difficult for asylum seekers to avail of the protections outlined in the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

These legislative developments occurred at a time when general migration patterns to and from Ireland were changing. The economic boom that became known as the ‘Celtic Tiger’ was making Ireland an attractive place to live. By 1996, there were 8,000 more people immigrating in to Ireland than emigrating. Net migration figures rose quickly and by 1998 had reached 22,800 (Conlon 2010b, p.98). These trends would continue from 1996 until 2010, during which time Ireland, so long a country associated with emigration, reversed historical trends, receiving more immigrants than it produced (Central Statistics Office 2012). Initially returning Irish emigrants made up 50 per cent of these figures until the inclusion of the Eastern accession states into the EU in 2004 and 2007 saw large numbers of Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian immigrants arrive in Ireland amongst others (Bartley and Kitchin 2007, cited in Conlon 2010b, p.98). These incoming migrants were viewed by the Irish government as necessary labour to fuel the Celtic Tiger. In 2000 Tánaiste Mary Harney
claimed that over the next decade an influx of a further 200,000 skilled migrants would be required to sustain the country’s economic growth (RTE News 2000). According to Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Michael McDowell, the consensus around the cabinet table was: ‘Immigration is a good thing, that we need migrant workers and that they are very welcome’ (Business and Finance 2004). During this period, figures relating to asylum applications were actually relatively small, accounting for approximately 10 per cent of immigration (Lentin and McVeigh, cited in Conlon 2010b, p.98). Yet in spite of their comparatively small numbers, asylum seekers became a major point of discussion in developing national debates on immigration. This was partly fuelled by ‘sensationalist’ and ‘irresponsible’ reporting of the situation in the media which branded asylum seekers as ‘spongers’ and criminals’ whilst exaggerating the number of those arriving (NCCRI/Equality Authority 2003, p.32). These media discourses were often recirculated by prominent political figures in a manner in which Fanning posits drew upon and recreated public racism (2002, p.102).

During the 1990s asylum seekers were entitled to the same welfare supports as the rest of the Irish population. In most cases this meant that they were able to avail of supplementary welfare allowance of £76 and if residing in private accommodation, rent supplement. The majority of asylum seekers had chosen to reside in Dublin, 90 per cent being dealt with by the Eastern Health Board (NASC 2007, p.4). By the end of 1999, the number asylum seekers in Ireland had risen, from 4,426 the previous year, to 7,724 (RIA 2010a, p.9). In October the Eastern Health Board reported a crisis situation and claimed that over 150 asylum seekers had been turned away because of a lack of accommodation (NASC 2007, p.4). The chairman of the board called for ‘bogus asylum seekers to be thrown out of the state’ (Fanning, 2002, p.102). Media and political discourses intensified, engaging statistical language to promote a discourse of numbers, resources and economics that established asylum seekers as ‘a risky
group with uncertain potential to do detriment to the country’s public resources and
institutional structure’ (Conlon 2010b, p.105). Headlines and stories depicted the new
arrivals in disingenuous, overwhelming and almost biblical terms such as: ‘bogus’, ‘deviant’
and in danger of ‘flooding the country’ (Beagly et al. 1999, p.1). This hostility reflected a
growing global propensity to problematize asylum seekers, leading Kofi Annan to claim in
2001 that refugees were becoming equated ‘at best with economic migrants, and at worst
with cheats, criminals, or even terrorists’ (UNHCR 2001). In Ireland, asylum seekers became
socially constructed as a homogenous mass of economic migrants, looking to exploit
Ireland’s obligations as a signatory of the 1951 UN Convention in order to avail of the
country’s economic boom and social provisions. Speaking in September 1999, the Minister
of Justice Equality and Law Reform, John O’Donoghue, claimed that asylum seekers had
begun to ‘target’ Ireland because of its falling unemployment and rising social welfare rates
(Fanning 2002, p.25). Within two months of these claims Minister O’Donoghue announced
plans for a pilot Direct Provision Scheme which would provide asylum seekers with full
board and accommodation meeting all their basic needs. This decision was taken at a time
when the UK was finalising its own Direct Provision Policy. Cullen claims that the
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform was, and always has been, conscious to
maintain control over national sovereignty and not create ‘pull factors’ that might result in
increasing non-EU immigration (2000, p.27). As such, the Department has always ‘slavishly’
followed in the footsteps of UK policy (ibid.). Such rationale is evident in the Reception and
Integration Agency’s advocacy of Direct Provision’s introduction on the grounds that ‘failure
to introduce a comparable system in Ireland would have resulted in the perception of Ireland
as providing favourable treatment to asylum seekers, which in turn would have led to even
higher numbers of asylum applications’ (RIA 2010a, p.9).

In April 2000, the Direct Provision and Dispersal Policy was officially implemented in

18
Ireland. The policy requires that applicants for asylum wait ten to fourteen days at reception centres in Dublin for needs and medical assessment. They are then dispersed to one of the country’s Direct Provision centres where they will await a decision on their application. These centres are located all around the country and are financed by the state in order to provide light, heating, electricity, other basic services and food. The calculated cost of this accommodation is then deducted from the basic supplementary welfare allowance, leaving a ‘residual income maintenance payment’ set at £15 (now €19.10) per adult and £7.50 (now €9.60) per child. Asylum seekers may apply for a once off exceptional needs payment with payment at the discretion of their community welfare officer (FLAC 2011). They are also entitled to apply for a medical card and their children are entitled to free primary and secondary education. The introduction of the system was met with criticism from various NGOs, trade unions and asylum seekers themselves. Inez McCormack, speaking as President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, heralded the policy as the ‘beginning of institutional racism in Ireland’, while Siobhan Phelan of the Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC) argued that ‘there is nothing in social welfare regulations which says that you have to be Irish, tall, blonde and blue eyed in order to claim benefit - merely that you are without means and living in this state. Anything else is discriminatory and racist’ (An Phoblacht 2000).

Despite these objections the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform proceeded with the scheme and one year after its implementation established the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). The Agency was charged with the co-ordination and implementation of provisions and services for asylum seekers and the integration of refugees and those granted ‘leave to remain’. In 2002, as the number of asylum applications in Ireland peaked at 11,634 (Quinn et al. 2007, p.12), research began to emerge highlighting the material and mental deprivation being experienced by Direct Provision residents (Breen 2003). The dispersal part of the policy caused discontent in a variety of communities as local hotels were converted...
into Direct Provision centres. Dublin, Kildare, Clare and Tipperary all witnessed protests directed at plans to establish Direct Provision centres in local areas, including an arson attack in Clogheen, Tipperary (Fanning 2002, p.105). In January 2003, the European Council issued a Directive pertaining to ‘Laying down Minimum Standards for the Reception of Asylum Seekers’. Ireland was one of only two of the 27 EU member states to opt out of the Directive. This enabled Ireland to continue to operate its Direct Provision system at a policy level without having to integrate it into Irish law. Ostensibly the opt-out was exercised because the Directive outlined provisions for allowing asylum applicants ‘access to the labour market’ when ‘a decision at first instance has not been taken within one year of the presentation of an application for asylum’ (Council Directive 2003/9/EC). However, by failing to give Direct Provision a legislative basis, the state was also able to continue to operate the system on an ambiguous and ad hoc basis, obscuring transparency and stalling asylum seekers’ attempts at recourse. By 2004, the number of asylum applications had begun to wane. The 4,766 received that year was less than half of the figure submitted just two years previously. This decline was not reflected in public, political or media discourses, or in policies which continued to problematize asylum seekers as disingenuous, dangerous, a threat to the nation’s sovereignty and a drain on its resources. Such discourses and the rationalities that motivated them would play a key role in the 2004 Citizenship Referendum.

6. Citizenship Discourses and the 2004 Referendum

The 2004 Irish Citizenship Referendum and the debates and discourses that shaped its conception and result can be seen as both symptomatic of the national hysteria building against immigration and also of the increasingly negative social construction of asylum seekers in Irish society. The origins of the Referendum can be traced back to the
establishment of a *jus soli* conception of citizenship in the 1922 Constitution of the Irish Free State (see section 1). Despite the retention of the concept by the 1937 Constitution of Ireland, it had never enjoyed universal approval. Speaking in the *Dáil* on the 1956 passage of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, Deputy Esmonde remarked that although the entitlement to citizenship by birth was desirable in one sense, the entitlement also carried with it ‘a certain amount of danger’ as it would open up citizenship to ‘a great number of people who would be undesirable to us in Ireland’ (Mullally 2010, p.253). However, the act was passed and re-affirmed that ‘every person born in Ireland is an Irish citizen from birth’ (ibid.). Due to Ireland’s highly selective policy on asylum and the relatively insignificant numbers of ‘undesirable people’ who made it to the country, *jus soli* citizenship remained relatively unthreatened until the 1980s. This began to change in 1986 with two cases that challenged the Constitutional rights of Irish citizens regarding family members. The first case, ‘Osheku V Ireland’, related to a Nigerian man resident in Ireland for seven years who had an Irish wife and child. The man was deported after the Judge ruled that the deportation would not infringe on his constitutional rights or those of his family. In the same year the ‘Pok Sun Shun & Others v Ireland’ case involved a Chinese man resident in Ireland for eight years with a wife who was pregnant and three children. He was denied naturalisation due to a ‘serious incident’ which occurred during his first year in Ireland. The judge declared that ‘I do not think that the rights given to the 'family' are absolute, in the sense that they are not subject to some restrictions by the state’ and that these ‘restrictions are permitted for the common good’ (Quinn 2004, p.13). What exactly the ‘common good’ entailed remained undefined until four years later.

In 1990, the ‘Fajujonu v Minister for Justice, Ireland and the Attorney General’ case went some way to establishing the rights of the ‘Irish born citizen’ against an unspecified ‘common good’. In this case two ‘non-national’ parents who had come to Ireland in 1981 and had a son
in 1983 attempted to appeal a deportation order on the grounds that as a citizen of Ireland their child was entitled to the constitutional right to remain resident in the state and to be parented by his or her parents within the state. The Supreme Court dismissed the appeal, but held that an Irish child had the right to the company and care of its parents, stating that in order to issue a deportation order and justify the breaking up of the family the Minister for Justice would ‘have to be satisfied that the interests of the common good and the protection of the State were overwhelming’ (Quinn 2004, p.11). The matter was resubmitted to the Minister who reconsidered his decision to deport. In effect, the Fajujonu ruling prioritised the constitutional right of the Irish child to its parents’ company over the right of the state to deport. However, this interpretation of the Constitution came under pressure as applications for asylum began to rise in the late 1990s and into the new millennium. Matters were further complicated in 1998, when ratification of the Belfast Agreement established the ‘birth right of every person born in the island of Ireland to be part of the Irish nation’ (Harrington 2005, p.439).

The Belfast Agreement heightened fears that asylum seekers might exploit Ireland’s citizenship laws in order to circumvent immigration controls. During this period, popular discourses which constructed asylum seekers as disingenuous, criminal, a threat to sovereignty and a drain on resources were increasingly applied to asylum seeking women. Surveys, mapping techniques and census results amongst other mechanisms were used by the state and the media to fuel a statistical discourse of health, sexuality and reproduction that rendered the bodies of female asylum seekers legible in specific ways (Tormey 2007, p.87). The figure of the ‘citizenship’ or ‘maternity’ tourist circulated in these discourses as female asylum seekers were constructed as exploiting the Constitution’s provisions for birth right citizenship and the Fajujonu ruling in order to give birth to children in Ireland and thereby obtain residency based on the Irish child’s right to his/her parents’ company and care.
Political and media hysteria about the supposed ‘loop hole’ culminated in the 2004 case of ‘Lobe & Osayande v Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform’. This case involved both a Romanian and a Nigerian family, each of which had a child born to them whilst awaiting a decision on their unsuccessful applications for asylum. The families were claiming a constitutional right to reside with their child on the same basis argued in the Fajujonu case. This time, however, the Court majority ruled that there was no automatic right to care and company within the state, on the grounds that ‘it is in the interest of the common good of the state that it should have control of the entry of aliens’ (Harrington 2005, p.440).

Further controversy was stirred up in early 2004 around a UK case heard at the European Court of Justice. The ‘Chen v Secretary of State for the Home Office’ case did not directly involve the Irish government, but nonetheless is highly pertinent. The case involved Ms Chen, a Chinese woman legally resident in Wales, who in 2000 deliberately gave birth to a daughter in Northern Ireland in order to acquire Irish, and thus European, citizenship. If born in China, the girl would have violated the country’s one child policy. The girl’s parents attempted to move back to Wales to reside there permanently on the grounds that their daughter was not entitled to residency in China. As such, the expulsion of Ms Chen from the UK would lead to separation from her daughter. When the UK authorities rejected the application for permanent residency, Ms Chen appealed and the Immigration Appellate Authority referred the decision to the European Court of Justice. In October 2004, the Court ruled that the child had the right to live anywhere in the EU and that to deny her parents residency when she was unable to look after herself contravened that right and Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights regarding respect for family life (Quinn 2004, p.6). This case caused much controversy in Ireland and was depicted as illustrating the potential for Irish citizenship laws to be exploited in order to gain entry into Europe. Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Michael McDowell, warned that ‘The legal
advice given to Mrs Chen and on which she relied will be given to many, many families throughout the world’ (Brandi 2007, p.34).

In that same year Michael McDowell made a proposal to the Dáil to hold a Referendum in order to make an amendment to article 9 of the Constitution which would state that

> Notwithstanding any other provision of this Constitution, a person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, who does not have, at the time of the birth of that person, at least one parent who is an Irish citizen or entitled to be an Irish citizen is not entitled to Irish citizenship or nationality, unless provided for by law (Constitution of Ireland).

Minister McDowell claimed that the Irish institution of citizenship had been abused and exploited by foreign mothers. He argued that citizenship was not just an entitlement, but also carried rights and obligations and that the Irish government had a duty to defend it. In his proposal he referenced ‘sufficient information’ and ‘incontrovertible evidence’ of ‘disproportionate numbers of ‘non-national mothers’ giving birth to children in Dublin maternity hospitals’ (Tormey 2007, p.77). The proposal caused ‘tumultuous’ and ‘heated exchanges’ in the Dáil (ibid.) and explosive coverage in the national media. Having previously come in for strong criticism from a variety of sources for their ‘irresponsible’ reporting on the increasing number of asylum applications in the late 1990s (NCCRI/Equality Authority 2003), the media continued to engage in sensationalist reporting on the forthcoming referendum. Although Minister McDowell’s ‘incontrovertible evidence’ concerning ‘non-national mothers’ was swiftly refuted (Lentin 2007, p.621; Tormey 2007, p.78), the media persisted in giving credibility to the notion that ‘non-national’ women were intentionally giving birth to Irish citizens and in doing so putting a strain on health services. Alarmist interviews with political and medical actors whose anecdotal experiences
corroborated Minister McDowell’s claims combined with sensationalist headlines about the ‘pregnancy crisis’ and the state being on ‘alert’ (Luibheid 2004, p.339).

Another tactic adopted by the Irish government and others advocating a ‘yes vote’ was to evoke a sense of responsibility to the rest of Europe. This involved a focus on the Chen case to argue that Ireland’s citizenship laws were providing a ‘loophole’ for those who wished to access the EU and that by retaining these laws we were failing in our ‘obligation’ to our European neighbours (Lentin 2007, p.620). The Referendum was held on the 11th of June when the amendment passed with 79.9 per cent of the 1,823,434 electorate voting in its favour and only 20.83 per cent against. The amendment was signed into law on the 24th of June. Subsequently, the government passed the 2004 Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act which amended the 1956 Act of the same name. This amended Act restricted Irish citizenship to children born of Irish citizens, those who qualified for naturalisation, or through marriage to an Irish citizen, and children whose parents had been lawfully resident in Ireland for three of the four years previous to the child’s birth. Asylum seekers are not deemed to be lawfully resident no matter how long they have been waiting for a decision. This essentially signalled the end of *jus soli* citizenship in Ireland and its replacement with a combination of *jus sanguinis* and *jus domicile* citizenship (Harrington 2005, p.443).

Following the implementation of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, a group of Irish children existed whose parents were without settled immigration status in Ireland. In order to combat this anomaly, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform implemented the INC/05 scheme which allowed ‘non-national’ parents of Irish citizens to apply to the Department of Justice to remain in the state. The Department initially received 17,917 applications, granting ‘leave to remain’ status to 16,693 applicants and refusing 1,119 (Thornton 2011). In 2007 a number of the parents who had been refused status took their case to the High Court. The case, ‘Bode v- Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform’,
centred on the constitutional rights of the child to the care and company of their parents in the country of their birth. Although the Judge stated that this right was not absolute, the court decided that the Minister was required to provide a reason for interfering with the constitutional right of the child. This ruling was then overturned in the Supreme Court on the grounds that the IBC/05 scheme was an exercise of the discretionary power of the Minister, so the matter of constitutional and human rights was irrelevant (ibid.). This decision was subsequently challenged in 2012 when a case was taken by a Colombian couple living in Belgium to the Court of Justice of the European Union. The Court ruled that the parent of a child with EU citizenship has a right to remain in the EU and also to work there in order that the child benefit from their rights as an EU citizen. This ‘Zambrano ruling’ resulted in over 1,700 applications being made to the Minister for Justice and Equality for residency rights. Of these applications, 850 were immediately approved with 700 more requiring further documentation. Six people previously deported were also given Visas to return (Duncan 2012).

7. Asylum in Ireland Today

According to the most recent report of the RIA, by the end of December 2013 there were 4,434 people recorded as being ‘live’ within Ireland’s Direct Provision system (2014a, p.7). These people are distributed throughout 34 Direct Provision centres located in 16 counties (2010a p.14). The average amount of time that those currently residing within the system have been in the asylum process is four years and two months (2010a, p.19). In 2013, of the 434,160 applications for asylum received within the EU, Ireland received 920 (Bitoulas 2014, p.4). This figure represented 50 applications for every million inhabitants, far below the EU average of 245 (ibid.). Ireland’s asylum rate has been in decline since 2002 (European
In some circles, this decline has been attributed to the implementation of tougher controls and economic recession (Cullen, 2012). However, advocacy groups have contested this claim, citing instead Ireland’s consistently low rate of acceptance, which, at 8.6 per cent in 2012 is ‘significantly below the EU average of 25.2 per cent’ (PILA 2013).

As detailed in the introduction to this study, the Direct Provision system has, and continues to, come in for a great deal of criticism. Overcrowding, poor quality food, lack of autonomy and the absence of grievance procedures are all well documented, as is the autocratic nature of the system’s administration and distribution of resources, such as food and toiletries (FLAC 2003; Vanderhurst 2007; NASC 2008; Conlon 2010b; FLAC 2010a). No independent bodies are involved in the inspection of Direct Provision centres, with inspections and assessments being the responsibility of the RIA itself. Their 2013 inspection reports, obtained under a freedom of information request, detail ‘unhygienic food preparation, overcrowded rooms, rotting floorboards, serious cleanliness issues, blocked emergency exits, fire doors wedged open, faulty showers and fire alarms’ and ‘several reports of breaches of child protection standards’ (The Irish Times 2013). The impact living in such conditions can have on an individual’s mental health has also been a subject of concern. For example, a 2011 psychiatric study conducted on asylum seekers in Cork, indicated that up to 90 per cent of participants suffered from chronic sleep problems, low moods and worries about their future. A further 70 per cent suffered from some degree of post-traumatic stress disorder and 30 per cent suffered depression and anxiety (O’Keefe 2011). Dr Syed Hussain, who conducted the study, indicated that Ireland’s high rate of refusal was ‘one of the most traumatic experiences for asylum seekers’, while other factors such as food, isolation, inaction and financial difficulties had led to almost all participants ‘suffering from some kind of psychiatric disorder’ (ibid.). Dr Pat Bracken, who works in the mental health service, has
branded the Direct Provision system ‘toxic’ to an individual’s mental health, asserting that he has no doubts that the system plays a ‘major role in damaging the mental health of those who must live in it for prolonged periods’ (O’Shea 2014a). Other experts have warned that a life in Direct Provision may even be as damaging to the long term health of its residents as the trauma from which they initially fled (NASC 2008, p.6). Ireland’s own National Intercultural Health Strategy 2007-2012 has echoed such concerns, finding that ‘prolonged length of stay of people within the Direct Provision system may have a direct negative effect on overall wellbeing … [and] has an additional detrimental effect on mental health’ (Browne 2012).

As early as 2004, Gertrude Cotter analysed the initial flurry of research which greeted the implementation of Direct Provision in Ireland and claimed that it had successfully highlighted how the system was a basic violation of human rights, lacking in appropriate services and infrastructure, isolating, socially excluding, a cause of poverty and poor health, psychologically damaging, particularly harsh on children, women and even more so on pregnant women and a cause of depression (2004, p.36). Cotter concluded that ‘all the research that exists is consistent in showing that this system is a failure’ and called for its abolition (2004, p.37). Since Cotter’s analysis virtually all subsequent research on the matter has echoed her conclusions, culminating in the current building of momentum behind demands for systematic reform and even abolition. Perhaps the greatest exception to these conclusions can be found in the RIA’s ‘Value for Money and Policy Review’. Released in 2010, this report praised the RIA for its ‘commendable work’ in providing accommodation and ancillary services to asylum seekers (2010, p.64). After weighing up the various costs of alternatives, the review concluded that Direct Provision was the ‘best choice’ due to its low cost, lack of pressure on local services and lack of appeal to potential asylum seekers (2010, p.65). The only facet of the Direct Provision system the review critiqued was its efficiency; concluding that capacity utilisation of all centres should be raised to in excess of 90 per cent,
with the contracts of centres operating below that level to be terminated and the residents relocated. As such, the review ignored a decade of damming research into, and testimonies emanating from within, the Direct Provision system, instead recommending consolidation of the system via the forced transference of asylum seekers around the country.

Towards the end of 2011, the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination condemned the negative impact Ireland’s Direct Provision system was having on the welfare of asylum seekers, expressing concern that the lengthy processing of applications was leading to health and psychological problems, including serious mental illness (Browne 2012). These concerns came to the notice of the incoming coalition government of Fine Gael and the Labour Party, which promised a broad restructuring of the immigration, residence and asylum systems; Fine Gael’s election manifesto pledged ‘comprehensive reforms’ in compliance with ‘the best international standards’ (Conlon 2011). However, as noted in the Introduction to this study, no reforms have been made to date and former Minister for Justice and Equality, Alan Shatter, defended the system on numerous occasions, while his replacement Francis Fitzgerald seems more concerned with reforming the applications procedure rather than the system itself. As momentum builds against the system, it remains to be seen what form Irish asylum policy will take in the future.

8. Conclusion

This chapter establishes the broad context of this study. It provides a historical analysis of immigration in Ireland as well as outlining some of the key debates that frame current Irish policy and attitudes with regard to asylum seekers. The first section establishes the notion of an ‘Irish race’ as a mythical concept, noting the various influxes and influences of different peoples throughout Irish history. It notes the emergence of ideas concerning the nation state
and citizenship and the influence these ideas had on creating nationalist discourses. The second section looks at Irish policy regarding refugees around the period of the Second World War. It notes the ways in which the young state engaged in anti-Semitic discrimination in its attempts to hand pick refugees who would not constitute a burden and who could be relied upon to integrate into the Catholic population. The chapter proceeds to document Ireland’s isolationist, ‘ad hoc’ approach to asylum, specifically noting the arrival of Chilean and Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s. However, Ireland’s gradual integration into an increasingly unified Europe is also discussed. This integration heralded a break with the state’s isolationist policies and a move towards harmonisation with the rest of Europe and the implementation of a ‘best practice’ model. With rising numbers of asylum applications in the 1990s, this adherence to a humanitarian agenda was abandoned in favour of one which would minimise pull factors and discourage applications. This approach led to the introduction of the Direct Provision and Dispersal system that remains in place today. In 2004, the Irish Citizenship Referendum ended *jus soli* citizenship in Ireland amidst intensifying debates and discourses that constructed asylum seekers in increasingly negative ways. Finally, the chapter documents both recent trends in and critiques of the Direct Provision system and wider asylum policy.

The history of asylum in Ireland as documented in this chapter includes a variety of sometimes conflicting, rationalities and policies. One consistent theme that runs through that history is the significance of predominant modes of thought in the formation of Irish asylum policy. From the emerging nationalist discourses that framed the first definitions of Irish citizenship, to the negative social constructions of asylum seekers as a drain on resources, that eventually redefined that citizenship, the Irish state has consistently sought to reproduce itself and its population in accordance with those rationalities that informed and defined the state during that period in time. This can be seen in the conscious handpicking of those
deemed conducive to a ‘nationalist hegemony’ rooted in Catholic identity and morality (Harrington 2005, p.425) which, over various periods, sought to filter out Jewish refugees, Marxist infiltrators and those who would not adhere to Christian ideals. It is also evident in the modern day demonisation of those deemed potentially incompatible with the core neoliberal value of autonomy and the prosperity of the free market. These practices of conscious state formation through the manipulation of population is an example of what Michel Foucault has termed ‘bio-politics’ and the construction of a ‘milieu’. In the next Chapter I elaborate on these and other theoretical concepts which I have employed throughout this study in order to interpret the information presented here and gathered through the fieldwork.
Chapter 2: Theorising Power and Subject Formation in the Direct Provision System

This chapter outlines the core theoretical framework and concepts that shape this study and its conclusions. Throughout his life Michel Foucault developed a wide series of ideas and theorisations which relate to the questions of power, resistance and change which are central to the research objectives of this study. This chapter introduces and discusses those ideas, providing a basic outline to the concepts most relevant and recurring throughout this study, as they have been developed by Foucault and others. The five key concepts identified are: a general theory of power, modalities of power, subjectification, neoliberal rationalities and abject categories.

1. A General Theory of Power

The core recurring theme that runs through this entire study is that of power. Throughout the fieldwork, issues concerning the application of power underpinned many discussions and raised many questions: how are we to understand power? Who exercises it? For what purpose? How is it applied? What are the effects of this application? In order to deal with these questions it is necessary to work with a clear and consistent theorisation of power. I eventually settled on a Foucauldian theoretical framework as being the most suitable for interpreting and outlining the myriad ways in which Ireland’s Direct Provision system is produced and replicated through power. However, before reaching this decision, I did consider other potential theorisations of power.
1.1 Alternative Theorisations of Power

Sociologist, Michael Mann has outlined a theorisation of power that divides its application into three groupings: ideological, economic and military (1984, p.112), which he identifies as being 'the means of power used in all social relationships' (1984, p.123). These 'means of power' can be exercised by powerful groups within civil society, such as religious groups, business elites and the military, and also by the state; which is brought into being and empowered by these groups who require it to perform centralized, territorial and socio-spatial functions (1984, p.125). Mann argues that once empowered, states can exercise various degrees of autonomy from civil society. He labels states that are able to act in accordance with their own perceived interests, with minimal negotiation with civil society, as 'despotic states' (1984, p.113). These states exercise an autocratic, monarchical means of control (ibid.) somewhat redolent of what Foucault terms 'sovereign power' (see section 2.1). While the influence of despotic states has oscillated throughout history (1984, p.116), Mann identifies a second, contemporary form of state power that is perpetually increasing its influence; that of 'infrastructural power'. This term relates to the modern state's capacity to 'penetrate civil society' in order to implement its 'political decisions' (1984, p.113). Sharing similarities with modalities of power that Foucault describes as disciplinary and governmental (see section 2.2; section 2.3), infrastructural power relies on the gathering, storage and utilisation of information and provisions, and, as such, is capable of penetrating everyday life to a far greater extent than despotic power (1984, p.114).

There is certainly much in Mann's theorisation of power that rings true with some of the data produced by this study. His outline of the infrastructural power wielded by the state accords with many of the processes of information compilation and service provision central to
Ireland's Direct Provision system. However, I find Mann's analysis overly focused on the state and powerful civil society groups and lacking in acknowledgement of the power and influence that can be exercised by small groups and even individuals. While this study does take into account the key role played by the state in shaping not just the Direct Provision system, but also the individuals within it, it also recognises the power and autonomy of its participants. As such, a Foucauldian theoretical framework provides a more suitable framework through which to examine and exhibit the role played by both the state and participants. Where Mann's theorisations of despotic and infrastructural power can be revealing with regard to the actions and influence of the state, Foucault's theorisations of sovereign and governmental power (see section 2.1; section 2.3) illuminate not just state practices, such as border controls and deportations, but also participants' own attempts and successes in conducting conduct and shaping their own lives.

Another theorisation of power considered was that proposed by Steven Lukes in *Power a Radical View* (2005). In this controversial work, Lukes identifies and outlines three ‘dimensional’ ways of conceptualising power. The ‘one-dimensional view’ of power outlined by Lukes is based on Robert Dahl’s premise that ‘A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not do otherwise’ (Dahl 1957, cited in Lukes 2005, p.16). Such exercises of power are ‘concrete’ and ‘observable’, with all actors presumed to be fully conscious of their interests and willing to act upon them (2005, p.17-19). The conclusion of these actions make it is possible to assess who possesses the most power by observing ‘who prevails’ in matters of ‘decision making’ (2005, p.18).

The ‘two-dimensional view’ of power outlined, supplements the first ‘face of power’, identified in the one-dimensional view, with a recognition that power also exists where ‘A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practises that limit the scope of political process to public consideration of only those issues
which are comparatively innocuous to A’ (Bachrach and Baratz 1970, cited in Lukes 2005, p.20). Essentially, this view holds that power goes beyond matters of ‘decision making’ and can also be exercised through practices of ‘non-decision making’ which confine the decisions made to ‘safe issues’ (Lukes 2005, p.22).

Luke’s ‘three-dimensional’ view of power amends the previous two by adding what he believes to be power’s most ‘insidious’ and ‘important’ mode of operation (Dowding 2006, p.137). This relates to power as a form of ‘domination’ (ibid.) and occurs where A exercises power over B ‘by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants’ (Lukes 2005, p.27). The successful operation of this power prevents observable conflicts from arising as people are prevented ‘from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things’ (2005, p.28). Lukes maintains that conflicts are still present in such situations, but that these conflicts are ‘latent’ and exist in the contradiction between the interests of the powerful and the ‘real interests’ of ‘those they exclude’ (ibid.).

The three dimensional theorisation of power outlined by Lukes contains two major elements that are potentially relevant to this study. Firstly, with regard to ‘non decision making’ as a means of exercising power, which could be applied to the Irish government’s refusal to make significant alterations to the Direct Provision system in the face of 14 years of criticism, and secondly, with regard to the way in which participants were inundated with various pressures and experiences which have the potential to shape their interests. With regard to the question of ‘non-decision making’, it certainly seems to be the case that the long term refusal of the Irish government to enter into debate regarding the Direct Provision system has been an effective strategy for maintaining status quo within that system. However, I do not believe this should be conceived of as a type of power held by the government and exercised against asylum seekers. The relationship between the Irish government and asylum seekers does not
take place in a vacuum, but exists within a vast web of relations incorporating supranational unions, global systems of migration and labour, NGOs, Irish citizens and many more. The ability of the government to continue with the status quo should not be conceived of as some sort of power that it possess and wields against asylum seekers, rather it is a matter of the capacity, or lack of, exercised by those seeking change, to conduct the behaviour of the government. In recent months, the development of various alliances and relationships between residents of Direct Provision and their advocates seems to have increased that capacity to some degree and has successfully brought the question of Direct Provision to national attention (see Chapter 8, section 3). As such, I think that Foucault’s conception of power as a ‘transformative capacity’ (Heller 1996, p.87) that flows through social relations, as outlined in section 1.2, is more conducive to theorising change within Ireland’s Direct Provision system. With regard to the way in which participants in this research could be seen to be shaped by various pressures and experiences, Lukes' third dimensional view of power raises the question of whether or not such experiences could blind them to their ‘real interests’ (Lukes 2005, p.28). Here the idea of me as an outsider passing judgement on the ‘real interests’ of my participants does not sit well with my intent to prioritise the experiences and perspectives of Direct Provision residents. In defending Lukes against accusations that his view of power necessitates a condescending attitude towards those who do not share his ideas, Keith Dowding argues that Lukes should be free to ‘analyse and evaluate the situation of others’ (2006, p.137) and that ‘it is a mistake to privilege the agent’s own rationalization’ (2006, p.138). Yet Lukes asks us to privilege his own rationalisations, specifically with regard to his belief that an individual can recognise their real interests through modes of democratic participation (Hindess 1976, p.330). While this study does emphasise the subject-forming effects of a life in Direct Provision (see Chapter 5), it does not seek to question the validity of participants' subjective interpretations. With this in mind, I see Foucault’s
theorisation of the subject, as outlined in section 3, as providing the most applicable lens through which questions of subject and interest formation can be analysed.

1.2 Foucault and Power

The theorisation of power developed by Michel Foucault differs from traditional ‘liberal-juridicio’ interpretations which conceive of it as ‘something which can be held or transferred’ (Philp 1983, p.31). This liberal-juridicio view conceptualises power as a property that a person or institution can possess and choose to pass on to others to operate on their behalf. For example, an individual may transfer his/her power to the state, which may utilise this collected power in order to pursue collective goals (ibid.). Foucault rejects this idea of power as possession, viewing it not as a ‘thing’ but rather as a ‘facility’ (Heller 1996, p.87). He claims that power ‘is not something that is acquired, seized or shared’ (Foucault 1998, p.94), rather it represents the ‘transformative capacity’ of human beings, their ability to manipulate others in order to further particular goals and the capacity to orchestrate change (Heller 1996, p.83). Foucault calls this the practice of ‘conducting conduct’, i.e. the act of directing others and their way of behaving in an ‘open field of possibilities’ (Foucault 2009, p.xxii).

Throughout this study, participants related examples of how certain people, practices and pressures at work in the Irish Direct Provision system sought to manipulate conduct in particular ways. However, they also provided many examples of how they had attempted to influence the conduct of others. In this way, Foucault's theorisation of power can be understood, not as a solely repressive phenomenon applied from the top down, as intimated by Mann, but rather as something that permeates all aspects of social living, implicit in our deepest relationships, our most trivial interactions and everything in-between. According to Foucault, this ‘power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it
comes from everywhere’ (1998, p.93). Because of its ubiquitous nature we are all perpetually partaking in an intricate web of relations through which power flows and acts upon us. It is through this web of relations that Foucault conceives of power as being constantly exercised.

it [power] is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action (Foucault 1982, p.789).

As such, the web of power relations works through the presumption of freedom to act, but it can also constrain. This web is perpetuated and sustained through the many differentiations within human society in which power is imminent and through which its exercise is made possible (Foucault 1998, p.94). These differentiations may be economic, cultural, racial, status based and so forth but they are always what define and determine the nature of specific power relations, both ‘its conditions and its results’ (Foucault 1982, p.792). It is the differentiations on which these relations are based that shape the objectives of each actor in a relationship and often dictate the means through which these objectives can be achieved; such as through gentle persuasion, or violent threats. Individuals actively pursue their own objectives within this web of relations, yet their objectives and actions are conditioned and conducted through their relations with a variety of different actors whose actions are similarly determined. Thus, ‘power comes from below’ (Foucault 1998, p.92) and even seemingly monolithic power structures such as the state are essentially the sum effects of the multiplicity of power relations at work through our relationships, the terminal forms that power adopts (Foucault, 1998, p.96).

This Foucauldian interpretation of power as a complex web of relations is compatible with
the action research based methodological principles adopted in this study. It allows for recognition of the participants’ own agency within the web of relations that constitute Ireland’s Direct Provision system, including their capacity to shape and transform that system. Without that capacity, a relationship ceases to be a relation of power and instead becomes a relation of violence in which freedom cannot exist: ‘without the possibility of recalcitrance, power would be equivalent to a physical determination’ (Foucault 1982, p.790). This study documents the various ways in which its participants exercised their own agency and transformative capacities. It examines the various ways in which they resisted, subverted and shaped the Direct Provision system, employing the Foucauldian theorisation of power outlined here in order to illuminate these examples.

2. Modalities of Power

A Foucauldian understanding of power enables us to conceive of power as emanating from myriad relationships and being applied in an equally diverse number of ways. Even at the most basic level, the exercise of conducting conduct can entail practices as divergent as the promise of reward for undertaking a task, to the threat of death for failing to do so. However, Foucault identifies certain common features as being inherent in the various groups of mechanisms through which power is applied. These features emerged over time and are generally reflective of the technologies and rationalities that were developing during these periods. Foucault uses the term ‘modalities of power’ to describe these collective mechanisms of application, of which he identifies three: sovereign, disciplinary and governmental. In this section I provide a brief outline of each one and explain their relevance to this study.

The modalities of power identified by Foucault do not operate exclusive to each other.
Although he charts their emergence in roughly chronological terms, there is no precise point in time during which disciplinary mechanisms of conduct superseded sovereign controls; certain elements of each modality have always related to and re-enforced one another (Foucault 2009, p.8). Furthermore, all three modalities of power are often present at the same time and can even work in tandem upon the same individual. Foucault gives the example of the domestic servant who is caught stealing, whose sentence is decided by the statistical probability of the crime’s success, which is passed down by the juridical system and is disciplinary in nature (Foucault 2009, p.6-7). Deirdre Conlon (2010b) has identified how all three modalities of power overlap and re-enforce each other in Ireland’s Direct Provision system. She documents how public policies and daily practices within Direct Provision centres ‘exemplify the overlapping and sometimes convergent relations between mechanisms of discipline, bio-power and the regulation of the asylum seeker population as a whole’ (2010b, p.108). This study similarly finds and documents the modalities of power at work within the Irish Direct Provision system to be generally overlapping and mutually supportive.

2.1 Sovereign Power

At its most basic level, sovereign power relies on the use of threats and physical force to conduct conduct. It is most often associated with coercive, monarchical, juridical authority; yet aspects of its implementation can be seen from the playground to the courtroom. Sovereign power exercises relations of force over a defined territory through the creation of rules and laws and fixing a punishment for whomever breaks them (Foucault 2009, p.5). Perhaps Foucault’s most famous example of sovereign power at work is his gruesome and detailed description of the 1757 public execution of Damiens the regicide, at the beginning of Discipline and Punish. Such displays were intended as both deterrents and instruments of
inclusion, uniting people within a sovereign territory and under a set of laws.

Not only must people know, they must see with their own eyes. Because they must be made to be afraid; but also because they must be the witness, the guarantors, of the punishment and because they must to a certain extent take part in it (Foucault 1991, p.60).

Foucault argues that such public spectacles had political as well as juridical purposes and were shaped by the prevalent values and rationalities of that particular point in time. For example, for a long period all crimes were perceived to be an attack on the monarch and thus executions, such as that of Damiens, were thought to restore and display the ‘all powerful’ strength of that monarch (Foucault 1991, p.49). The executions also displayed little reverence for the human body during a period where mortality and disease were high and the industrial revolution had yet to imbue it with ‘utility or commercial value’ (Foucault 1991, p.54).

Similarly, sovereign modalities of power continue to operate in a political-juridical manner today, reflecting many of our modern values and rationalities. However, for Foucault the functioning of sovereign mechanisms remains much the same whether one attributes to it the form of the prince who formulates rights, of the father who forbids, of the censor who enforces silence or of the master who states the law, in any case one schematizes power in a juridical form, and one defines its effects as obedience (Foucault 1998, p.85).

The modern nation state exercises its sovereign power over its territory and those who inhabit it. It does so primarily through its laws, borders and definitions regarding who belongs. Asylum seekers and their mobility can be perceived as problematic in this regard because
they bypass borders and can make claims on belonging. Conlon uses the 2004 Irish Citizenship Referendum (see Chapter 1, section 6) to illustrate how, in such cases, the modern state can re-configure legislation in order to exclude or target groups identified as posing such problems (2010b, p.107). In this study, discussions about sovereign mechanisms of power were relatively rare, but its presence always lurked in the background. Just as modern forms of government have come to rely less and less on sovereign mechanisms of conduct, so the conducting of asylum seekers seems to focus primarily on disciplinary and governmental mechanisms. However, the threat of sovereign intervention as a last resort was ever present. In the Direct Provision centres themselves, security guards are a permanent feature, reminding residents of the underlying physical threat if they fail to govern themselves. The threat and practice of deportation can also be understood as a form of sovereign power at work within the Direct Provision system.

2.2 Disciplinary Power

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault documents how during the latter half of the eighteenth century, mechanisms of sovereign power were beginning to lose their influence. Contrasting the gruesome execution of Damiens the regicide with the seemingly more humane set of rules and regulations drawn up for use in a Paris young offenders’ institution only eighty years later, Foucault illustrates the dramatic transformation in practices of conduct and control that took place over such a short period of time. He argues that public exercises of sovereign power had become problematic due to the emergence of new and popular ‘truths’ concerning justice and equality, and a new series of relations brought about by revolution, increases in production and wealth and new approaches to property and surveillance (Foucault 1991, p77). This created ‘a state of permanent unrest’ around the concept of punishment which
threatened to erupt in 'a confrontation between the violence of the king and the violence of
the people' (Foucault 1991, p.63-73).

These developments were part of a wider, general crisis of government and control, rooted in
the era's demographic explosion and rapid industrialisation (Foucault 2004, p.249). By the
end of the eighteenth century, this situation had come to a head and government through an
exclusive use of sovereign power came to be understood as unfeasible and outdated. Amidst
a vast re-conceptualisation and reorganisation of society, new approaches to punishment were
called for and a variety of solutions proposed. Eventually it was imprisonment, initially seen
as an expensive remnant of monarchical power, which was accepted as the method of
punishment most suitable to the modern era. This model of reprimand was derived from a
new way of thinking that had emerged in the military and was fast spreading through
classrooms, hospitals and other institutions. It drew upon the reverence to detail of the
Classical age and the focus on efficiency and mass production of the dawning Industrial age.
It placed emphasis on surveillance as a means of obtaining obedience, seeking to induce
docility in its subjects while simultaneously extracting maximum utility from them. Foucault
identifies the mechanisms of control that operate in this manner as exercising 'disciplinary'
power and he uses a close analysis of the modern prison system to outline how these
mechanisms function in the process of conducting conduct. Foucault’s analysis of discipline
and modern prison systems contains many parallels with the experiences described by
participants in this study which are documented in Chapter 4.

In order for disciplinary modalities of power to function, Foucault identifies three core means
of application: hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and the examination (1991,
p.170-195). The goal of hierarchical observation is to observe, distribute and derive
knowledge from individuals. It does so through an architecture of introspection and a series
of hierarchical, automatic relations, as opposed to the awe-inspiring ostentation of sovereign
power. Foucault famously illustrates the principles of hierarchical observation with the example of Jeremy Bentham’s ‘Panopticon’, a model for a prison designed in the late eighteenth century. In the Panopticon, the cells are arranged circularly around the central point of the guard tower. The windows allow in light, illuminating the prisoners’ cellular space to all, however, the guard tower remains in darkness from the point of view of the prisoner. In this way, the number of guards on duty is not important, as the prisoner can never be sure how many guards, if any, are present and whether or not they themselves are being watched. Thus, they would learn to supervise themselves, eventually internalising their own observation. In this manner the ideal disciplinary space ‘functions like a piece of machinery’ in which power is produced and distributed and in which even the subjects play a vital role in its operation (Foucault 1991, p.177). Although the Panopticon provides an extreme example of disciplinary power, its underlying principles can still be found at work in many modern institutions including the Direct Provision centre, where time, space and modern surveillance techniques are administered in a manner that constantly monitor and compile information on residents.

Processes of normalising judgement function through a series of penalties, punishments and rewards, which go beyond the negative prohibitions of sovereign power and seek to make punishment positive. Offenders face myriad gradated penalties, even for non-observance, or the most minor of infractions. This is symptomatic of the exhaustive nature of disciplinary power which seeks to extract greater levels of observance and utility. Foucault states that normalising judgment can also employ corrective forms of punishment, that is to say that the function of the penalty will go beyond disincentive and actually work upon that which made the punishment necessary in the first place; for example, giving a child who has fallen behind the rest of the class extra work in order for them to catch up (Foucault 1991, p.180). Another means of applying normalising judgement is through the implementation of a 'gratification-
punishment’ mechanism (Foucault 1991, p.180-181). This principle holds that it is sometimes better to encourage by desire of reward than by fear of punishment and that from such a dynamic it is possible to establish an economy of privileges and impositions.

Techniques similar to this are evidently employed throughout the Direct Provision system in order to modulate residents’ conduct (see Chapter 4). Foucault also documents how processes of normalising judgment can be used in order to create ranking systems of distribution, in which subjects are organised and ranked according to their aptitude, attitude and abilities. These ranks are determined by the knowledge produced through other techniques of discipline and can in turn further incentivise and modulate its subjects.

Foucault gives the example of the École Militaire, where one's rank was determined by one's behaviour and morals. The top ranked ‘very good class’ were distinguished by a silver epaulette and enjoyed certain other privileges, the bottom ranked ‘shameful class’ were isolated and dressed in sack cloth. This did not just serve as a tool of organisation in order to produce efficiency and aid learning, it also exercised pressure on all pupils to rise up the ranks and avoid the shame of falling (Foucault 1991, p.181-183).

Finally, Foucault identifies the ritual of ‘the examination’ as the optimal means of applying disciplinary power and as embodying its ‘ceremony of objectification’ (1991, p.187). The examination brings together elements of observational hierarchy and normalising judgement. It combines surveillance with the ability to quantify and distribute its subjects, establishing over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates and judges them. Unlike the spectacle so integral to sovereign judgment, the examination reflects discipline’s concealed nature; it is the subject who is made visible and objectified while the power that is applied to them remains hidden (ibid.). The knowledge produced by the examination is rich in potential for organisation and classification and can be employed to determine averages, ratios and distributions. Thus, through the examination, the lone individual becomes a ‘describable,
analysable object’ integrated into a collective system (Foucault, 1991, p. 190). In this manner, discipline constructs each individual as a case that can be measured and judged against the norm and acted upon accordingly. In Chapter 4 I outline how the Irish asylum process can be understood as one long examination procedure and elaborate on the ways in which techniques of hierarchical observation and normalising judgement are employed within the Direct Provision system.

In spite of its intense nature and evident effectiveness, disciplinary power, as with its sovereign predecessor, has its limitations. Foucault documents how disciplinary power is inherently exhaustive in its application and as a result is necessarily centripetal and introspective (2009, p.44). This works well when confined to relatively confined spaces and institutions where intense levels of surveillance and examination can be put into action, but is much more difficult to maintain over large spaces and populations where practices of constant observance and judgment become unfeasible. These limitations provoked what Foucault terms ‘a blockage’ in ‘the art of government’; essentially an impasse between an excessively large and unwieldy sovereign framework and a narrow and insubstantial disciplinary model (2009, p.103). This blockage was largely resolved by a new way of conceptualising the population as the target of techniques of power and by the third modality of power identified by Foucault, that of governmentality.

2.3 Governmentality, Bio-power and Racism

In spite of its limitations, disciplinary power made possible the compilation and analysis of vast amounts of information. As disciplinary techniques flourished so did the development of statistics. The ‘science of the state’, statistics had been used in the past for administrative purposes, but it was in the eighteenth century that the vast amounts of information being collated began to reveal a whole new set of ‘truths’ about those people it had been derived
from. Foucault identifies the mercantilist economies as being the first to break with conceptions of population as a symbol of a sovereign’s power, instead conceptualising it as a productive force (Foucault 2009, p.68-69). In order to ensure that a large population produced the wealth it was capable of, the mercantilists established regulatory apparatuses that sought to fix individuals through disciplinary mechanisms of conduct that guarded against emigration and idleness, promoted immigration and birth rates and defined and fixed exports and wages (ibid.). In typical disciplinary style, these apparatuses divided society into a variety of manageable units through which the population could function to optimum levels. Each unit was possessed of its own character (economic, moral and political) and contained its own mechanisms of micro governance (parents, teachers, wardens, etc.), yet they acted in continuity to regulate and reproduce society. One particular unit was given precedence over others and held up as the model from which all others should base themselves: the family. Foucault illustrates this period’s veneration of the family unit by citing Rousseau’s claim that the management of a state’s economy should be a macro version of that used to govern a household economy (2009, p.95). However, this conception of the national population as one large family failed to account for the major epidemics, labour spirals and population expansions that statistics were documenting. Furthermore, Foucault argues, it was impossible to govern a state in the ‘precise’ and ‘meticulous’ manner in which one runs a family (2009, p.103). Essentially, the family model required a degree of discipline impossible to apply at such a large level and, as such, it was ‘too narrow, weak and insubstantial’ (ibid.). Statistics themselves would provide the answer to the problems they were revealing. As their applications became more diverse, they began to reveal that the population they were gathering information from was possessed of its own regularities; it had a death rate, an incidence of disease, child mortality rates and accident rates (ibid.). Furthermore, these regularities revealed new spaces and objects of intervention. Statistics and figures
transformed ‘the domain to which government is applied’, they revealed a quantifiable, knowable, malleable population and allowed events to be ‘aggregated across space and time’ and the construction of ‘norms and processes to which evaluations can be attached and upon which interventions can be targeted’ (Rose and Miller 1992, p.186). It was this newly statistically derived and understood population that would become the target of a new type of power that was neither sovereign nor disciplinary but governmental. By attempting to manipulate these regularities rather than monitor and direct each individual, this new power takes the population as its target. It strives to ‘increase its wealth, its longevity and its health’ through campaigns and techniques that stimulate birth rates, direct population flows and manage disease (Foucault 2009, p.105). Thus, population became the end and instrument of government. In contrast with sovereign or disciplinary compulsions, populations and subjects are governed in a manner which encourages them to govern themselves.

Governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complimentary and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself (Foucault 1993, p.204).

This way of conceptualising and governing the population can draw upon statistical analysis to identify and regulate the ‘norm’, i.e. the natural level within the target population. Populations and subjects are to be encouraged through programmes and techniques to adapt themselves to this norm, self-regulating a diverse set of behaviours accordingly. Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller identify governmental activities as ‘the projects, plans and practices of those authorities… who endeavour to administer the lives of others in the light of conceptions of what is good, healthy, normal, virtuous, efficient and profitable’ (1992, p.175).

These practices and the techniques they involve are population-centric; that is to say that
although they may sometimes include an identification and intensification of resources
directed at spaces or groups of people considered abnormal, they are seldom concerned with
salvation for each and every individual. Their major focus remains the population and the
norm. For example, Foucault illustrates how the French physiocrats successfully argued
against price and export controls on grain, on the grounds that such controls would distort the
‘natural reality’ of the grain and that their removal, while doubtlessly causing some people to
starve, would be better for the population as a whole.

There was some scarcity, some dearness, some difficulty buying wheat… and it may
well be that some people die of hunger after all. But by letting these people die of
hunger one will be able to make scarcity a chimera and prevent it occurring in the
massive form (Foucault 2009, p.42).

Thus, this new conception of population and its governance is generally unconcerned with the
multiplicity of individuals, previously thought of as integral components of a functioning
society. They are now pertinent only as an instrument, a means to obtain something at the
level of population.

Foucault describes the mechanisms of governmentality that regulate the population in this
way as operating through a complex array of apparatuses, institutions, procedures,
knowledges, calculations, reflections and tactics (2009, p.108), similar to the infrastructural
techniques of power which Mann identifies as 'storing' and 'recalling' 'massive amounts of
information about all of us' (1984, p.114). These techniques survey us in a perpetual manner,
beyond the reach of disciplinary mechanisms of observation; our actions and our capacities
are constantly monitored and modulated as 'surveillance is "designed" into the flows of
everyday existence' (Rose 2000, p.325). Nikolas Rose has argued that such techniques of
‘calculation and calculability’ have been ‘central’ to Western society’s domination of not just
nature, but human beings as well. He argues that these techniques have advanced to the point that we are currently living through ‘the age of the calculable person’ (1991, p.91).

Foucault identifies three key mechanisms at the heart of governmental attempts to assess, manage and facilitate people and population: the use of statistics, the regulation of ‘the milieu’ and the development and application of ‘bio-power’. I have already discussed the vital role played by statistics, not just in facilitating population, but in identifying and conceptualising it. Despite a veneer of neutrality, statistics, like knowledge in general, can be understood as a ‘technique’; one which can be mobilized in order to ‘organize the environment according to certain values’ (Rose 1991, p.93). Without the application of statistical information it would be impossible to calculate a population’s regularities or to derive regularity based norms around which to work. With regard to this study, the gathering of vast amounts of statistical information regarding asylum seekers is a matter of public record. The RIA compiles comprehensive monthly and annual reports which detail, amongst other things, the age, gender, nationality, location and marital status of all asylum seekers resident in the country. On a larger scale, the Irish state also spends a great deal of time and money compiling information about wider migrant and labour flows, utilising this information in order to foresee labour shortages and plan migration policy accordingly (Allen 2007, p.93). Such information gathered about a population can be an invaluable tool in exercises which seek to assess and manage risk through classification and regulation of that population and the social, economic and physical spaces it inhabits.

The ‘milieu’ refers to the manipulation of physical space in order to regulate the environment inhabited by individuals rather than the individuals themselves. Foucault gives the example of the eighteenth century redevelopment of Nantes, which involved dismantling the city walls and cutting large routes through the streets for ventilation purposes. The developers worked with the material that was already there and constructed the town around these ‘natural
givens’, such as its access to water, air and its islands (2009, p.19). The designers were not concerned with reaching a point of exhaustive perfection, but sought to maximise the positive elements and minimise the negative, such as theft and disease, while acknowledging that they could never be fully eradicated (ibid.). Unlike the intense introspection of disciplinary spaces, a milieu should consist of natural and artificial givens, in which a series of related, uncertain, but subtly encouraged elements will unfold which will facilitate the population (2009, p.20-21). Indeed, the dispersal aspect of the Direct Provision system, which involves the diffusion of asylum seekers to centres which are ‘fairly evenly distributed’ across the country, can be seen as a milieu structuring practice that facilitates the circulation of the asylum population throughout the nation (Conlon 2010b, p.101).

At a wider level, elements of the milieu can be seen in the Irish state’s historical regulation of its borders in order to handpick those deemed amenable to the state’s predominant notions of morality and prosperity (see Chapter 1, section 8). Currently this practice manifests itself in the gradual reproduction of the Irish state as a territory amenable to the needs of global, neoliberal capital. This reproduction involves the manipulation and management of labour flows, ideally through governmental processes that incentivise migrants perceived to be conducive to the reproduction of a neoliberal milieu and that deter those with the potential to be a burden on the state, such as those fleeing persecution. For example, the restrictive policies directed towards asylum seekers can be contrasted with ‘Immigrant Investor’ and ‘Start-up Entrepreneur’ programmes announced in 2012. These programmes, effectively grant ‘immigrant investors’ and their families immediate residency in return for investments of between €70,000 and €2 million (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service 2012). They were announced by the Minister for Justice and Equality, Alan Shatter, at a time when he was simultaneously denying asylum seekers the right to work on the grounds that it would ‘almost certainly have a profoundly negative impact on application numbers’ (Brennan 2013).
Within a state that reproduces itself in such a manner, one way in which the Direct Provision system can be understood is as a scheme of governmental deterrence that seeks to conduct the conduct of prospective asylum seekers by encouraging them to flee to somewhere more hospitable. From its very inception, the RIA conceded that one of the key reasons behind the system was to undermine perceptions of Ireland as providing ‘favourable treatment to asylum seekers’ thus preventing ‘higher numbers of asylum applications’ (RIA 2010a, p.9). While sovereign mechanisms of control police the nation’s borders and are enforced through deportations, these subtle regulations work in their own way to maximise elements considered positive while minimising the negative, as in Foucault’s milieu. The manipulation of ‘life’ in this respect brings us to Foucault’s theorisation of bio-power.

The concept of bio-power is developed by Foucault in *A History of Sexuality, vol.1*, in which he documents how prohibitive sovereign attitudes to sex were gradually replaced by a more governmental approach that saw sexuality as a point of intervention and as a means of regulating the population (1998, p.145-146). These developments were reflective of a period in which the population was increasingly understood as both the main target and instrument of government (Foucault 2009, p.105-106). New points of intervention were emerging such as birth rates, life expectancy, public health, housing and migration. Norms were calculated and worked towards. Although it was not considered possible to triumph absolutely in such areas, it was possible to strive towards constructing a milieu and population which kept them at ‘natural’ levels.

As these new mechanisms of power became ever more intensely focused upon population, new knowledges emerged and flourished in the sciences, such as biology, economics and medicine. These new discourses were supplemented by the parallel development of the concept of the ‘nation state’, in which previously cohabiting yet insoluble groups of people came to be understood as comprising ‘one free and sovereign nation’ or population (Foucault
2004, p.235). These developments ensured that governmental mechanisms were stretching beyond the management of the milieu and being extended to the people within it. The human body was now understood as a site of intervention in itself, a space ‘imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis for mechanical processes’ (Foucault 1998, p.138).

Thus the human body is recognised as ‘the species body’ and the target of power. The governmental techniques utilised in the conduct of human bodies, and through them the regulation of population, are what Foucault refers to as bio-power. He defines it as

the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or in other words, how starting from the eighteenth century, modern western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species (Foucault 2009, p.1).

Foucault has documented how, from the eighteenth century until the modern day, there has been an explosion of ‘bio-political’ technologies which invest in the body; its health, its various modes of subsistence and habitations and living conditions (1998 p.143). These technologies intensified during the second half of the twentieth century as 'advanced liberal' states took on the role of 'regulating' and 'facilitating' their populations rather than directly intervening in them (Rose 2000, p.327-331). Thus, bio-power operates as a means of conduct which seeks to administer and nurture life rather than prohibit it; as Foucault says: ‘the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it’ (1998, p.138).

It is the dual emergence of bio-power as a means for intervention within the human species and the nation state, to which Foucault attributes the development of modern racism. Indeed, he claims that modern states cannot function without becoming involved with racism on
some level (2004, p.254). Foucault argues that whereas past conflicts had been conceived of as binary antagonisms between competing nations over resources or territory, modern racism is based on sub-divisions within the nation, where certain groups are identified and excluded for the good of the whole species. He defines this racism as ‘a way of introducing a break in the domain of life… between what must live and what must die’ (2004, p.254). Racism no longer targets external competitors, rather it is applied to internal liabilities; ‘the more abnormal individuals are eliminated, the fewer degenerates there will be in the species as a whole… the stronger I will be’ (2004, p.255).

Zygmunt Bauman has documented how modern states play the role of ‘the gardener’, looking to weed out degenerate influences that threaten the rest of the flora.

If garden design defines its weeds, there are weeds wherever there is a garden. And weeds are to be exterminated. Weeding out is a creative, not destructive activity. It does not differ in kind from other activities which combine in the construction and sustenance of the perfect garden. All visions of society-as-garden define parts of the social habitat as human weeds. Like all other weeds, they must be segregated, contained, prevented from spreading, removed and kept outside the society boundaries (2000, p.92).

Nation states throughout the modern world continue to carry out this creative ‘weeding’. Hierarchies of ethnicity, criminality, mental illness, and class all sub-divide populations into various bio-political threats that the state can justifiably manage, or even eliminate, in pursuit of life, purification and prosperity for its population (Foucault 2004, p.257).

These concepts of bio-power and governmentality are relevant to this study insofar as they can help understand some of the direct and indirect racism enacted by the state and experienced by participants. They enable an assessment of how asylum seekers are
positioned within the construction of Ireland’s neoliberal milieu. When one takes account of
the increasing restrictions placed on opportunities for asylum seekers to establish a
connection with the state (Conlon 2010b, p.94) and the intense pressure experienced by
asylum seekers to present themselves as ideal, liberal subjects (Conlon and Gill 2013 p.244),
it becomes apparent that the existence of racism in the construction of Ireland’s milieu is not
the result of aberration, but rather a fundamental part of its design.

3. The Subject, Objectification and Subjectification

Foucault has summarised his body of work as an attempt to reveal the various modes through
which human beings are made into subjects (1982, p.777). This involves the investigation of
how the individual is constituted through discourses and relations of power, which both act
on individuals and formulate them. When Foucault talks of ‘subjection’, he is literally talking
about the making of a subject through discursive processes of objectification (Butler 1995,
p.84). Foucault identifies three main modes of subjection as follows.

The first mode is that of ‘dividing practices’, these are binary divisions, the separation of the
subject from the rest of the population (Foucault 1982, p.777). This is an age-old practice
still in operation today; it separates the sick from the healthy, the criminals from the law
abiding, and the illegal from the legal. In Madness and Civilisation, Foucault documents
how both the sick and the insane were identified by prevalent discourses as being different
from the rest of the community. He documents how modern differentiations are reflective of
modern ideals, marking certain groups out as, not just different, but also detrimental to the
population and thus in need of separation and confinement.

The walls of confinement actually enclose the negative of that moral city of which the
bourgeois conscience began to dream in the seventeenth century; a moral city for
those who sought, from the start, to avoid it, a city where right reigns only by virtue of a force without appeal- a sort of sovereignty of good… imposed by force on all those suspected of belonging to evil (2001, p.56-57).

Such dividing practices serve to divide the subject from the rest of the population often spatially and always socially (Foucault 1984b, p.8). They objectify the subject, imbuing them with a social identity, but also a personal one, saturating them with a discursive series of qualities and contingencies that are attributed to the category. Asylum seekers in Ireland today are objectified in such a manner. In spite of the legality of their presence within the country, they are often branded 'illegal' or 'bogus'. They represent the 'undeserving migrant', divided from their legal and deserving counterpart. Such objectification can lead to subjection, the internalisation of their division and regulation which 'invades' and 'totalizes' them, rendering them coherent subjects (Butler 1995, p.85-86). This study seeks to examine how its participants felt objectified in this manner by the Direct Provision system and documents the ways in which they internalised or resisted particular subject positions.

The second mode of subjection is 'scientific' in nature. As scientific discourses from the seventeenth century flourished, so did the possibilities of division. Linguistics, economics, biology, genetics and many other fields of inquiry all offered a plethora of categories and classifications with which to objectivise the individual. These divisions went beyond binary splits and contained many overlapping categories and sub-categories which could apply to an individual. They also carried the weight of scientific validity. Power worked through such divisions and applied itself to everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him (Foucault 1982, p.781).
Today we are all objectified by and subject to classifications such as race, religion, nationality and numerous other categories which identify and construct us. Even the categorisation asylum seeker employed by this study is imbued with objectifying and abject connotations.

The final mode of subjection identified by Foucault is that of 'subjectification'. This is the way in which 'the human being turns themselves into a subject' (Foucault, 1982, p.778). This is a governmental form of subjection, radically different from the other two, although, as with modalities of power, they often overlap. Whereas the first two forms of subjection rely on a process of objectification applied to the subject, subjectification recruits the subject in their own objectification. Through a variety of subtle 'operations on [people's] own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct' an individual is encouraged to engage in an active self-formation (Foucault 1993, p.203). Essentially, subjectification can be understood as subjection through the active objectification of oneself. Foucault documents how such subjectification was initially the preserve of Christian institutions, branding it 'pastoral power'. This was a form of power concerned with the knowledge and direction of an individual's conscience in the name of salvation (Foucault 1982, p.783). Foucault argues that the modern state embodies a new form of pastoral power (ibid.). This state is constituted of myriad relations, implicit in which are a multitude of techniques of power, some of which are coercive, and other subjectifying technologies which encourage active self-regulation and production (Foucault 1993, p.204). Because the modern state is bio-political, the technologies concerned with self-regulation and production encourage the individual to gravitate toward the norm, while coercive technologies target, mark and exclude those who deviate. Rose has documented how 'advanced liberal societies' use a variety of 'risk management' techniques in order to 'affiliate or expel individuals from the universe of civility' (2000, p.324). Modern 'control strategies' (ibid.) mark out, classify and manage certain groups who are identified as being saturated with risk (2000, p.331). Members of
these groups are then subjected to techniques which either seek to push the irredeemably risky further to the edges of society via 'sequestration' (2000, p.332-335), or to 'reaffiliate the excluded' (2000, p.330) through a series of processes and pressures by which they can shed their risk and make their claim for inclusion. In advanced liberal societies, these reaffiliation techniques focus on the neoliberal themes of 'responsibilization' and 'self-management', demanding that the excluded subject work upon their own subject in order to produce and present themselves as an 'active individual' (2000, p.334).

Asylum seekers are often subjected to both 'sequestration' and subjectifying 'reaffiliation' techniques of risk management. Deidre Conlon and Nick Gill have documented how, in neoliberal societies, asylum seekers are constantly ‘under pressure to produce themselves as liberal subjects’ (2013, p.244); while John Harrington argues that their separation and exclusion is orchestrated by ‘neoliberal themes’ which designate them ‘admissible as labour power, excludable as a burden on welfare and as an obstacle to competitiveness’ (2005, p.442). As such, asylum seekers are often subjectified by neoliberal pressures which urge them to conform while being simultaneously objectified by risk management techniques, discourses and experiences that mark them out for exclusion. This study investigates this seemingly contradictory dynamic; examining the ways in which participants are objectivised as abject, while at the same time being encouraged to reproduce and assert themselves as subjects conducive to Ireland's neoliberal milieu.

4. Neoliberalism

From the privatisation of the state’s institutions and responsibility for care, to the pressures individuals face to reproduce themselves in a manner conducive to its rationalities, neoliberalism plays a significant role in the daily lives of asylum seekers in Ireland. Thus, it
is not surprising that neoliberalism is a recurring theme throughout this study and as such, I believe it important to have a clear conceptualisation of what exactly neoliberal rationalities entail. To take the concept of rationality first, Foucault has identified political rationalities as specific forms of normative political reason involved in ‘organizing the political sphere, governance practices and citizenship’ (1988, cited in Brown 2006, p.693). Rose and Miller have argued that such rationalities constitute ‘the changing discursive fields within which the exercise of power is conceptualised’, morally justified and through which it identifies ‘appropriate forms’, ‘objects’ and ‘limits’ of power (1992, p.175). Dominant political rationalities thus permeate our perceptions and language, shaping our ideas about what is considered possible, defining the parameters of what we say and do and providing the ‘principles to which government should be directed' (Rose and Miller 1992, p.179).

In their most elementary form, the neoliberal rationalities that are so prevalent in modern Irish society are founded upon the premise that an institutional framework of private property rights, free markets and free trade can best provide 'human wellbeing' for the population (Harvey 2005, p.2). However, it is important not to conflate free market rationalities with laissez faire politics and the absence of state and government controls. Tracing its origins back to the 1930s split between ordo-liberalism and classical liberalism, neoliberalism adheres to the ordo-liberals’ championing of the state’s ability to promote entrepreneurial dispositions and self-reliance in order to foster competition and facilitate growth (Gray 2013, p.76). Thus government has a key role to play in the regulation and reproduction of economy and society. The state is indeed permitted to intervene in society; however, such intervention is to be fundamentally concerned with securing conditions conducive to market prosperity and should not concern itself with the matter of equalising inequalities. In this sense, while neoliberalism isn't an inherently racist rationality (Lentin and Titley 2011, p.170), neither does it seek to redress racial prejudices or disparities. In fact, deepening racial inequalities
are often exploited and racial discourses, hierarchies and tensions are appropriated in order to identify, segregate and penalise groups of people perceived to be obstructing neoliberal objectives (Lentin and Titley 2011, p.165).

Conlon and Gill have outlined how the matter of state intervention has presented a problem for modern liberal thinkers and governments who have long held that ‘government should be kept in check’ in order to facilitate the free market (2013, p.241). This stance is shared by Rose who notes that ‘constructing a free market’ entails ‘a variety of interventions’ in order to create the conditions, calculations, competition and consumers which permit it to thrive (1999, p.65). It seems an inconvenient truth for proponents of neoliberal ideals, that the ‘free’ market is an ‘artificial construction’ requiring various manipulations of conduct in order to function (Conlon and Gill 2013, p.241). This was documented by Foucault himself, who recognised that the more that governmental intervention is abhorred at the level of the market, the more it is required on the technical, juridical, demographic and social levels (Foucault 2007, cited in Cotoi 2011, p.113).

This means that, commensurate with neoliberal rationalities, the state is required to constantly intervene and govern in order to keep the free market free. With regard to power and the conduct of conduct, such intervention can manifest itself in a variety of ways. On one level, it can be explicit and repressive; neoliberal ideologue, Milton Friedman, argued that the state should consider its remit the ‘protection of freedom’ from foreign enemies and ‘fellow citizens’, the preservation of law, the enforcement of private contracts and the fostering of ‘competitive markets’ (1962, cited in Klein 2007, p.5). These interventions are essentially coercive in nature, relying on the physical power of the military and the police to distribute freedom from the barrel of a gun. For example, Margaret Thatcher increased the centralisation of, and investment in, the police force in the UK in order to implement policies founded upon the ideals of competition and privatisation (Mazower 1998, p.338) and,
following his successful coup in Chile, General Pinochet tripled military funding while decimating public spending in accordance with economic advice given to him by Milton Friedman and his ‘Chicago Boys’ acolytes (Klein 2007, p.157).

While these methods of intervention are redolent of sovereign techniques of conducting conduct, the modern state is also capable of deploying far more subtle governmental mechanisms in order to facilitate neoliberal rationalities. Wendy Brown has documented how neoliberal rationalities insist that the states that adhere to them and the citizens within that state are to be constructed and construed in market terms (Brown 2006, p.694). That is to say that while states are encouraged to think of themselves and their activities in terms of profit and loss and to replace juridical principles with business norms, their citizens are likewise subject to policies that conceive of and reproduce them as rational market actors (ibid.). Rose has outlined how the art of liberal governance acts to ‘make’ the individual ‘free’; liberating them in the realms of the market, family and civil society, yet constructing and managing them through codes of civility and techniques of ‘self-understanding and self-mastery’ (1999, p.69). Thus, ‘freedom’, in neoliberal parlance, should not be understood as the negation of power, rather it is one of its ‘vital elements’ (Rose 1992, p.366). Breda Gray documents how in contemporary Ireland, market rationalities have become diffused throughout charitable and state and bodies; accounting, auditing, personal evaluation and benchmarking practices have re-configured the public sphere and its employees in market terms (Gray 2013, p.71). All these practices can be understood as part of what Thomas Lemke has identified as a series of methods that ‘code social existence as an enterprise’ (2001, cited in Gray 2013, p.77). Through such techniques, the neoliberal state places constant pressure on itself and those within it to conform to market conducive norms, producing ‘certain kinds of subjects and behaviours through market incentives and deterrents’ (Brown 2006, p.705). With regards to this study, Conlon and Gill have documented how
modern liberal states employ such techniques in the production of ‘responsible, liberal and autonomous asylum seeker subjects’ (2013, p.245). This is what Brown means when she suggests that neoliberalism is much more than just an economic ideology, as it actually articulates and shapes ‘the political, the social and the subject’ (2006, p.693). In the words of Margaret Thatcher: ‘economics are the method. The object is to change the heart and soul’ (Marquand 2009).

In this sense neoliberal rationalities provide a blueprint for, and are imbued with the techniques necessary for the construction of the market based, bio-political milieu. The material givens of such a milieu constitute not just the nation’s institutions and infrastructure, which have been slavishly manipulated in order to entice global capital, but also its population, its entrepreneurs, its workers, its families and its dependants. Via a mix of sovereign force, disciplinary institutions and governmental subjection, the neoliberal state, like Bauman’s gardener, is able to promote desirable economic growth, encourage degrees of self- regulation and even exterminate that which is considered detrimental. Naomi Klein claims that neoliberalism is essentially a ‘purist’ ideology which seeks to ‘cleanse sectors of society’ (2007, p.102-103). As such, its implementation has been tied up with a variety of ‘scientific’ and ‘rational’ ‘genocides’ that seek to eliminate those groups who do not fit its model (2007, p.101-102). However, as the neoliberal state attempts to roll back on its functions, it constantly produces more and more of these elements of population deemed detrimental and in need of management or exclusion. In this sense neoliberalism has much in common with modern bio-political projects identified by Bauman.

What is modern about any project is precisely its being a step, or two, or a hundred steps ahead of reality; what is modern about modernity is its inbuilt capacity to self-transcend, to push the finishing line further on in the course of running and to bar itself from ever reaching it (1988, p.228).
Far from being a weakness, the rationale underpinning these neoliberal practices of risk management draws strength from its failures, as they provide a ‘perpetual incitement for the incessant improvement of systems, generation of more knowledge, invention of more techniques, all driven by the technological imperative to tame uncertainty and master hazard’ (Rose 2000, p.333). With this in mind, I would amend Lemke’s understanding of neoliberalism as a force which creates ‘a social reality that it suggests already exists’ (2002, p.60), and instead posit that neoliberalism is the self-perpetuating process of constructing a Utopian reality that can never exist; that of the truly free market.

5. The ‘National Abject’

Given the significance of the concepts of subject formation and general categorisation to this study’s theoretical framework, it is important to examine and document how the category of ‘asylum seeker’ has been constructed, how it is perceived within Irish society and how it is experienced and negotiated by the study’s participants. In order to theorise how such categories come into being, the effects they produce and how they objectify those they target, this study employs Imogen Tyler’s theory of ‘the national abject’.

In her 2013 book Revolting Subjects, Tyler documents how a variety of marginalised groups in the UK, including asylum seekers, have been socially constructed and objectified as 'national abjects'. In outlining this concept of abjection, Tyler draws upon Georges Bataille's analysis of Hitler's assent to power in Nazi Germany and how abjection becomes 'a force of sovereignty, a founding exclusion which constitutes a part of the population as moral outcasts; represented from the outside with disgust as the dregs of the people, populace and gutter' (Bataille 1993, cited in Tyler 2013, p.19). On a similar subject, Bauman documents how first the classification and then the dehumanisation of the Jews were two of the key
methods employed by the Nazis in creating distance between the Jews and the rest of the population. This distance, both social and physical, is identified by Bauman as one of the key means through which morality and responsibility towards the other are eroded, sometimes with the most tragic of consequences (2000, p.216). However, practices of abjection have not been limited to far right regimes; Rose claims that since the eighteenth century most of Europe has been 'haunted' by various groups which 'seem to condense in their person, their name, their image, all that is disorder, danger, threat to civility' (2000, p.330). Through processes of abjection, certain groups are classified, objectified and managed in a profoundly negative manner and distanced from the rest of the population, sometimes physically, often socially. This abjection objectifies its subject both externally in relation to the rest of the population and internally as they internalise the abject discourses that classify and fix them.

Abjection describes the violent exclusionary forces of sovereign power: those forces that strip people of their human dignity and reproduce them as dehumanised waste… However, as a dictionary definition reveals, abjection not only describes the action of casting out or down, but the condition of one cast down - that is the condition of being abject (Tyler 2013, p.21).

This study illustrates how this theorisation of abjection might be applied to asylum seekers in Ireland today.

Through her own work, Tyler applies the concept of abjection to a variety of modern day outcasts. She relates abjection to neoliberalism, arguing that the modern neoliberal state has employed techniques of abjection in the procurement of public consent for its own poverty-inducing policies. By nurturing and playing upon the insecurity prevalent in deregulated, market economies, neoliberal rationalities combine with 'social and cultural, emotional and effective economies' to produce 'national abjects' as 'scapegoats' which legitimise power and
the role of those who wield it (2013, p.211). The production, supervision and management of national abjects also creates incredibly favourable market conditions. Tyler documents how the detention of asylum seekers in the UK is ‘driven by corporate interest’ and how the global ‘immigration business’ is a multi-billion dollar industry (2013, p.72). This profiteering and scapegoating goes hand-in-hand with a will to re-imagine the population in a bio-political and exclusionary manner, a process Tyler identifies as a ‘hygienic governmentality’ (2013, p.38). This is essentially a process of ‘state formation’ through which certain groups are identified as a threat to ‘the common good’ and in need of monitoring, government and even exclusion (ibid.). Identification of these groups is conducted through practices of risk assessment informed by neoliberal rationalities, with those deemed unwilling or unable to shed their risk marginalized accordingly (Rose 2000, p.331). Tyler claims that such practices of hygienic governmentality are best exemplified in the ‘extreme and fetishistic vilification of migrants’ (ibid.) and that migrants in general have become conflated into a ‘singular national abject’, that of the ‘bogus’ asylum seeker (2013, p.76).

It is through such governmental processes and ‘exercises in abjection’ that the modern neoliberal state is able to determine the ‘value of life’, ‘adjudicating who is expendable and who is of worth’ (Tyler 2013, p.46). Thus, one can see how the process of abjection has a key role to play in the maintenance and even legitimacy of the modern neoliberal milieu; identifying certain groups as risky and in need of management, creating distance between these groups and the rest of the population and providing justification for final exclusionary measures if they are required. This study documents the various ways in which asylum seekers have been made abject in Ireland and seeks to investigate the effects this abjection has had on its participants. It questions what it means to be designated abject, how that status is variously inhabited and rejected and examines whether or not it can be expedient to embrace that status for organisational and transformatory purposes (see Chapter 7).
6. Conclusion

This chapter reviews the central theoretical concepts employed in this study, some of which are addressed in greater detail and developed in relation to wider debates in the empirical chapters. The concepts outlined in this chapter make it possible to cast a fresh gaze to the Irish Direct Provision system. The Foucauldian theorisation of power chosen and outlined establishes the transformatory capacity of asylum seekers as actors within the web of relations that constitutes Direct Provision and raises questions as to how this capacity is acted upon and what possibilities it holds. The three modalities of power outlined illuminate the variety of techniques employed in the Direct Provision system with regard to the conduct of conduct, while the concept of subject formation raises questions regarding how some of these techniques are internalised, or alternatively resisted, by those they target. A clear conceptualisation of neoliberalism is essential to this study as neoliberal rationalities are seen to influence everything from global systems of migration, security and labour, to participants’ inner-most thoughts and self production. As a pervasive theme running through the study, neoliberalism raises questions regarding participants’ awareness of its compulsions, how it shapes their own subjectivities and whether or not it is possible to organise, or even live outside of neoliberal rationalities. Finally, Tyler’s concept of the ‘national abject’ encapsulates the negative social construction of the asylum seeker in contemporary Ireland while also establishing how such a construction legitimises and supports neoliberal systems of governance. It is on the basis of this understanding that this study investigates the role abjection plays in legitimising the Irish Direct Provision system and also the effect abjection has on those who live within it.

Having established the theoretical base for the study and identified questions that both
compliment and promise resolution to the initial objectives of the study, the following chapter outlines the methodological framework employed and how it sought to meet the study’s objectives and work with the theoretical assumptions outlined here.
Chapter 3: Formulating and Implementing an Action Research Methodology

Much of the research available on the Direct Provision system to date was conducted in its earlier years. Moreover, the voices of asylum seekers and refugees are largely absent from this early research (Cotter 2004). This initial burst of researcher and NGO-led analysis failed to produce systemic changes before trailing off over the last decade. This has led to some charging asylum seeker advocacy in Ireland with being ineffective and ‘soft’; targeting issues such as anti-racism and multiculturalism, while the ‘hard wing of the state’ has been able to implement increasingly restrictive laws and ‘influence public opinion in a security conscious way’ (Titley et al. 2009, cited in Lentin and Titley 2011, p.209).

Upon its inception this study sought to be different from what went before in two major ways: firstly by incorporating the voices and subjugated knowledge of those people who live within the Direct Provision system; and secondly by analysing and facilitating that knowledge’s transformatory potential. This chapter outlines the study’s objectives, the rationale behind how the methodology developed to incorporate them, the decisions taken, the frameworks chosen, the population studied, what participation entailed, how the fieldwork was conducted and how the data were analysed. In order to reach decisions about these matters, I needed to be confident that the theoretical framework I had chosen was compatible with the objectives of the study and then settle on a methodological paradigm that was amenable to and facilitated both.

I begin by addressing the main objectives and concerns of the study and how I sought to facilitate them. After this, I look at how I reconciled these objectives and concerns with the study’s Foucauldian theoretical framework. I go on to outline how I chose a research
methodology which was epistemologically and ontologically compatible with this framework while also being capable of meeting the objectives of the study. I then outline the research design I employed and how the data was gathered and analysed. Finally, I give a direct account of the fieldwork itself, the preparations involved and how it all unfolded.

1. Objectives and Concerns

At its inception, the three main objectives of this research were:

1. To analyse modalities of power at work in the legitimisation and maintenance of Direct Provision.

2. To identify barriers to change and explore possible spaces of resistance.

3. To provide a platform for asylum seekers, their contributions to public discourses and their attempts to initiate change.

In practice however, my attempts to achieve these objectives encountered a number of obstacles on both theoretical and practical levels. These obstacles are discussed below.

1.1 Theoretical Concerns

One of the initial reasons I was drawn to the ideas of Foucault for the purposes of this study, was his focus on ‘subjugated’, ‘unqualified or even disqualified’ knowledges (2004, p.7). I also found Jacques Rancière’s belief that in order ‘to learn about domination and emancipation, the intellectual will have to be taught by those who suffer and rebel’ (Deranty 2003, p.140), instructive and sought to incorporate this approach into the study. However, further reading raised concerns that the Foucauldian theoretical framework that had inspired
the research might actually be limiting in investigating the potential for resistance and transformation as identified in the study’s second and third objectives.

Critics have argued that a Foucauldian theoretical framework, rooted in the rejection of universalising discourses, dogmatic prescriptions and essentialist categories, ‘cuts the ground from under his feet’ (Bevir 1999a, p.70). Foucault's disdain for any claim to universal justice or common consciousness may restrict resistance to the immediately local, rendering it relatively ineffectual. Arguably, it deprives the Foucauldian scholar of any reference point from which to advance or advocate for change. It is on these grounds that David Harvey attacks what he terms ‘postmodernist thinking’ for ‘opening up a radical prospect’ of ‘authentic’ voices, while simultaneously disempowering them, shutting them off from ‘access to more universal sources of power by ghettoizing them with an opaque otherness’ (1989, p.117). Harvey argues that Foucault locks himself into small struggles with minimal effects, citing Stephen K. White’s critique of postmodern reflection, which he claims denies itself ‘the sort of normative armament capable of conducting a successful fight’ (1991, cited in Harvey 1993, p.51). The result of these local struggles, fought with limited capabilities, according to Harvey, is ‘predictable enough’ (1993, p.46). He argues that ‘when a relatively coherent class force encounters a fragmented opposition which cannot even conceive of its own interests in class terms, then the result is hardly in doubt’ (ibid.). Without wishing to engage in class reductionism, it is increasingly apparent that there are vast elements of ‘class conflict’ at play in the politicisation of, and recent developments in, issues of asylum and migration in general (Tyler 2013, p.99). Bearing in mind concerns regarding the failures of ‘soft’ NGO advocacy in contrast to the ‘hard’ state, Harvey’s pessimistic prophesy regarding ‘fragmented’, ‘postmodern’ organisation cannot be easily dismissed. Thus, one of my central concerns was to ensure that a Foucauldian theoretical framework would not hamper the transformatory objectives of the study.
It is incorrect for critics of Foucault to claim that he was incapable of proposing alternatives to the agenda driven practices we take for granted, or that he was averse to exercising power. Foucault believed power in itself to be neither inherently good nor bad, ‘what counts, therefore is how power is used: is it used to increase the freedom of others or to capture them in relations of dominance?’ (Heller 1996, p.103-104). Foucault advocated the utilisation of power in practices that offered a ‘proliferation of possibility’, a coexistence with unlimited room for transformation (1996, p.104); such as in ‘alternative body practices’ via consensual Sado-Masochism, or in the experimentation and indulgence of drugs which ‘produce very intense pleasures’ (cited in Shusterman 2000). These personal resistances and the relationships which mediate them can indeed be seen as transformative and are elaborated upon in Foucault’s work on the ‘care of the self’ (see Chapter 6).

With regard to more wide ranging, systematic transformations, Foucault advocated taking resistances and struggles as a ‘starting point’ and looking at different types of resistance as ‘chemical catalysts’ that bring to light obscured relations of power (Foucault 1982, p.780). The goal of the researcher here is not to apply some sort of dogmatic framework to a history of struggle, or to simply interpret and categorise people’s experiences, but to question and document the ‘way in which knowledge circulates and functions’, to make clear ‘intolerables’, to identify a ‘technique, a form of power’ (Foucault 1982, p.781), thereby opening up ways of challenging or undermining it.

Foucault believed that over time, the work of the researcher or genealogist could contribute to a generation’s ‘archive’, that is the discourses and events that define an era and constitute its ‘episteme’. According to Foucault change consisted of a series or irruptions on the surface of the archive. The transition from one era to another occurs when the statements that act as bubbles on the surface
of the archive combine in their effect to disrupt the archive itself (Bevir 1999b, p.349).

More immediately, the targeting of ‘intolerables’ and the exposure of power at work can undermine narratives of progress, justice and fairness, it can ‘make us aware of the constraints and exclusions built into our practices’ and create uncertainty (Foucault 1968, cited in Pickett 1996, p.445). In spite of his disdain for hierarchical organisation, Foucault was able to recognise that in order to achieve a ‘goal’, there was a requirement for ‘revolutionary action’, through the ‘simultaneous agitation of consciousness and institutions’ (Foucault, cited in Miller 1993, p.199).

Rancière shares similar ideas, arguing that certain acts and events can open up a ‘dissensus’ or ‘third space’ that can produce ‘a fresh sphere of visibility for further demonstration’ (1999, cited in Tyler 2013, p.102). Imogen Tyler has applied these ideas to more recent events, drawing attention to the ways in which the actions and protestations of asylum seekers in the UK have contributed to a ‘critical practice of counter mapping which creates an unravellable fabric of potential resistance within the state and beyond its borders’ (2013, p.104). Echoing Foucault’s enthusiasm for the ‘local’, Tyler argues that it is the ‘accumulation of small acts which strains against the invisibility and inaudibility of abject lives’ (ibid.).

Thus I concluded that a Foucauldian theoretical framework for this study would not contravene its transformatory objectives and actually held the potential to contribute towards them. I hoped that with the right methodology, the research would be able to document the workings of power and facilitate change at various levels, from the personal, to the communal, to the minute ‘irruptions’ that bubble up and undermine generation-defining ‘epistemés’ (Bevir 1999b, p.349).
1.2 Methodological Concerns

Having resolved dilemmas regarding the theoretical framing of the study, it was important to develop a methodological approach that would meet the overall objectives within this theoretical frame. It was immediately obvious that any methodological approach chosen would have to involve some form of primary research. For, while objectives one and two could possibly be dealt with through consulting secondary sources, the third objective required interaction with and the participation of asylum seekers in order to access and document their local and subjugated knowledges. Any approach rooted in positivist assumptions was automatically ruled out on account of the inherent incompatibilities between such an epistemology and the theoretical framework. Furthermore, the objectives raised three further concerns that would shape the eventual methodological approach adopted.

Firstly, from its inception this research was focused on producing some sort of applicable, if not revolutionary knowledge and change. The second objective recognises that while the study may not be capable of producing systemic change on its own, the research may still highlight and outline how resistance and change are currently operating within the Direct Provision system and how they might be further encouraged and facilitated. As documented above, there already exists a quantity of Direct Provision analysis that is information heavy but application light and I was determined that this research would not fall into the same trap.

Secondly, any research initiated in an academic setting that purports to ‘provide a platform’ for others, as stated in the third objective, treads an ethical tightrope of assertions, intentions and relations. Speaking of her own PhD study, conducted with asylum seekers in the Netherlands, Kim Tsai draws attention to the almost ‘indecent’ nature of a practice of ‘weeding out information’ in the ‘cause of knowledge’ (2011, p.8). She warns against
fantasies of the ‘hero researcher’ and ‘empowerment’ through research, recommending ‘self-reflexivity’ and an open ‘humane’ methodology (ibid.). She also discusses her ‘privileges’ and the importance of recognising them along with the knowledge that they colour her reality and make it impossible for her ever to truly speak ‘for’ her participants (2011, p.11).

Similarly, I was wary that the aspiration of ‘providing a platform’ may create the impression that it is only through me, the researcher, that participants could articulate and exercise agency themselves. This was certainly not my intention, instead I sought to document and present as closely as possible, the actions of participants, facilitating them when I could. It was thus vitally important that all those participating in the research be fully aware of and be able to influence the study’s objectives, conclusions and their role within it. It was equally important that the methodology chosen could facilitate these conditions.

Thirdly, as Reason and Bradbury caution (2001b), research is never neutral but a political process. Regardless of the immediate rejection of positivist approaches, I was still aware of potential hazards regarding my own perceived neutrality as a researcher. Foucault himself cautions against any implementation of the ‘tyranny of overall discourses’ (1997, p.8) and one of his greatest influences, Friedrich Nietzsche (Miller 1993, p.67), famously believed all philosophy to be tyrannical and derived from the aims and prejudices of those who cultivate it (Nietzsche 1998, p.8-9). Kathy Charmaz warns that a researcher’s ‘world view, disciplinary assumptions, theoretical proclivities and research interests’ can manifest themselves, not just in preparing and conducting the research, but can also ‘influence his or her observations and emerging categories’ (1996, p.32). In order to combat these inherent and unavoidable factors, Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber stresses the need for the researcher to be self-aware and even recommends sharing their own biographies and experiences with participants, whilst always maintaining awareness of the power differentials that exist between researcher and participant (2007, p.128). As such, any methodology chosen for this
study would have to account for personal prejudices, be able to incorporate my own
reflexivity and contain mechanisms for the inclusion of other perspectives regarding the
direction of the study.

2. Action Research

As a methodology that purports to 'honour lived experience' and to strive for direct action
(Tilman 2003, p.8), action research immediately stood out as being potentially compatible
with the study’s theoretical framework and also as being capable of addressing both my
objectives and concerns. The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and
Practice defines action research as

   a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of
   worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory
   and practice, in participation with others, in pursuit of practical solutions to issues of
   pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons

Most of the literature available on the paradigm emphasises its focus on knowledge
production, practical application and its collaborative nature, among other qualities. In spite
of these general characteristics, action research constitutes a broad field of practices, as
outlined by Kyle and McNaughton’s ‘Four Generation’ model (2001). As such, it was
important that I identify the particular type of action research best suited to meeting my
objectives. In this section, I seek to provide a brief outline of how action research and its
principles have developed over the years and how I came to view contemporary, fourth
generation action research methodologies as providing the most suitable framework within
which to conduct this study.
It is impossible to identify any single individual as the original instigator of what has come to be known as action research, not least because the practice of solving problems through participatory inquiry has existed in all human cultures (Reason and Bradbury 2001a). Epistemologically, the concerns which underpin the paradigm have been traced back to Aristotle’s work on praxis and phronesis, while some argue that the true origins of action research are to be found in cultures often overlooked by Eurocentric academics. Reason and Bradbury even give Marx credit for advancing the cause of action research, citing his famous dictum that the important task lies not in interpreting the world but in changing it (ibid.).

Despite these diverse and early origins, many academics trace the initial development of contemporary action research back to the work undertaken by John Dewey and Kurt Lewin. Dewey, an early contributor to pragmatism, was highly critical of the separation of knowledge from action in social research. Making the argument that scientific experimentation should be considered a case of human beings testing their conceptions in action, he claimed that ‘science in becoming experimental has itself become a mode of directed practical doing’ (Adelman 1993, p.12).

Kurt Lewin pioneered the 'first generation' of action research, establishing the Research Centre for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Lewin's work sought solutions to social issues and to contribute to the development of a theory of intervention (Bargal 2006, p.371). He saw action research as a tool that would help minority groups overcome the ‘forces of exploitation and colonisation’; believing social science could and should be applied to overcome social conflicts (Adelman 1993, p.8). Having himself fled from Nazi Germany in the 1930s, Lewin was committed to the democratic process and this dedication is evident in the principles he formulated for conducting action research, which emphasised co-operation and mutual decision making (Bargal 2006, p.376). Lewin and the first generation of action research also identified the potential of something similar to what
Foucault would later identify as ‘the local character of critique’ (Foucault 2004, p.6); i.e. that indigenous, intimate knowledge that can contradict and unsettle all-encompassing scientific discourses and established ‘truths’. Lewin dubbed this ‘specific knowledge’ and felt that it could be combined with ‘general laws’, i.e. the knowledge gained from academic study, in order to conduct successful research and practice (Bargal 2006, p.373). Since his death and in spite of his democratic intentions, Lewin's first generation of action research has come in for criticism for lacking scientific validity and being undemocratic in practice. Edgar Schein argued that the momentum for change in Lewin’s action research remained the preserve of the researcher and that the function of participants was to facilitate and implement changes desired by the researcher (1995, cited in Cassell and Johnson 2006, p.791).

The second generation of action research emerged after the Second World War within the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in the UK. The Institute combined Lewin’s action research approach with theories of ‘leaderless groups’ and ‘work systems’ to create 'practical' workplace interventions in order to improve ‘organizational effectiveness and human dignity’ (Passmore 2000, cited in Cassell and Johnson 2006, p.792). However, this second generation of action research faced similar criticisms to the first; such as those focusing on the paradigm's lack of scientific validity and how the research prioritised the researcher’s conception of change, with the contributions of participants considered only in the context of that change. The second generation was also critiqued from a Foucauldian perspective, on the grounds that the research engaged in ‘dividing practices’ by creating a new form of examination with the researcher or consultant as the main authority figure (Cullen 1998, cited in Cassell and Johnson 2006, p.785).

The third generation of action research emerged in Australia and was motivated by a desire to combine the practical character of the second with critical and emancipatory elements. Grounded in ‘critical theory’, the third generation removed itself dramatically from the
epistemological assumptions and positivist pretentions at the foundation of the first two
generations. Rather than pursuing reason in order to analyse and transform human affairs, the
critical perspective was suspicious of claims to epistemological authority (Cassell and
Johnson 2006, p.798). This generation cast off any pretence that it was engaging in morally
founded research in order to improve organisational procedures, or document a ‘cognitively
accessible reality’ (2006, p.792). Instead, researchers saw themselves not as experts, but
‘enablers’ of the research; looking at the world subjectively, through a ‘negotiation of inter-
subjective meaning’ (2006, p.796-798). It was believed that a research paradigm which
‘mobilized every stakeholder’, took account of the ‘marginalized’ and embraced their values
and practices, could facilitate socio-democratic relations and identify and promote alternative
forms of organisation that ‘empower participants’ (2006, p.799). However, like its
predecessors, the third generation was critiqued for lacking the tools to deliver on its
emancipatory and democratic intent. One problem lay in the democratic requirement for full
stakeholder participation; arranging to consult with and involve such a potentially large group
of people presented obvious organisational difficulties. Furthermore, even if full
representation could be arranged, the research would still fail to be democratic because of the
unacknowledged unequal power relations that would persist between participants. Some
critics even alleged that the paradigm's pretentions to democracy constituted a 'façade' which
enabled the powerful to surreptitiously impose their designs upon the less powerful (Cassel
and Johnson 2006, p.799).

This brings us to the fourth generation of action research which sought to combine the critical
and emancipatory foundations pioneered by the third generation with the participatory
movements that were beginning to achieve global influence in 1970s; from community
development in the UK, to social movements in the third world. Participatory research had
its origins in liberation theology and Neo-Marxism. It was distinguished from traditional
research by its shared ownership of the research project, an orientation towards community action and a community based analysis of social problems (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000, p.271). The fourth generation sought to break down the constructed notions of participants and researchers by attempting to create an ‘authentic’ dialogue where each participant was as knowledgeable on the research topic as the other. As Paulo Freire observed:

> democracy requires participation, which requires the prior development of critical consciousness on the part of participants, that dismantles the current hegemony, through their recognition of their present oppression by their introjection of the cultural myths of the dominator (Freire 1972, cited in Cassell and Johnson 2006, p.799).

This generation maintained the focus on the production of transformatory knowledge, but also involved a type of reciprocity lacking in previous generations. It recognised and attempted to limit the power of the researcher to frame the experiences of participants in an academic world, instead focusing on deconstructing hegemonic discourses and empowering participants through their own understanding, enabling them to impact the situation as they saw fit.

Although the fourth generation and its various branches seemed to have the potential to meet the objectives of this study, two major concerns persisted. Firstly, on a theoretical level, the idea of power as being something that could be seized or wrestled from the grasp of Freire’s dominator, clashes with Foucault’s conception of power as being exercised through a web of innumerable, unequal relations (see Chapter 2, section 1.2). This premise of liberating marginalised subjects through a transfer of power has resulted in the accusation that action research is ‘an archetypal, modernist political project’ (Cameron and Gibson 2004, p.317). However, action research has been adapted to suit a variety of schools of thought that are in
direct opposition to any form of ‘modernist political project’. Post-modern, deconstructionist and post-structural approaches to action research projects have outlined various ways in which the paradigm's principles can be applied to the production of knowledge, without the need to conceptualise that production as a form of researcher instigated liberation. For example, Reason and Bradbury argue that there are parallels between the search for local knowledges in action research and post-structural notions of multiple types of knowledge and the rejection of modernist or hegemonic discourses (2001a, p.5-6). Glenda MacNaughton and Kylie Smith (2001) highlight how action research can be used to expose the ‘fragmented’, ‘specific’ and ‘contested’ nature of ‘truth’, in order to undermine hegemonic narratives and socially constructed views of reality.

My final concern regarding action research related to its transformatory potential. Action research that actively seeks to distance itself from modernist approaches has come in for criticism with regard to its lack of relevance in the ‘real world’ (Cameron and Gibson 2004, p.317). For example, Reason and Bradbury question the utility of employing action research in the deconstruction of hegemonic discourses and the exploration of subjugated knowledge, arguing that ‘while these perspectives help us immensely in seeing through the myth of the modernist world, they do not help us move beyond the problems it has produced’ (2001a, p.8). However, Jenny Cameron and Katherine Gibson (2004) argue that it is possible to engage in transformatory action research without having to employ modernist assumptions about knowledge, progress and liberation. In 1999 they conducted a research project in the Latrobe Valley, Australia, an economic black spot that had been devastated over two decades by the downsizing and privatisation of the mining and power industries that the local economy had been built on. They employed a participatory action research based methodological approach and sought to utilise the knowledge and testimonies of local participants in order to ‘create new economic identities’ and ‘forms of subjectivity’ (2004,
p.320). Using interviews, photo-essays, fieldtrips, workshops and forming a community garden, the research acknowledged and documented the pain and poverty that existed in the Latrobe valley, but also created new subject positions ‘other than those of dependence, powerlessness and victimhood’ (2004, p.319). Prevailing knowledges and representations were challenged by the production of narratives that highlighted the region’s economic diversity, community spirit and human capital (2004 p.325). The transformatory effects of the study were not limited to a personal sense of confidence derived from the new subject positions; in 1999 participants in the study obtained funding from their local council and formed the ‘Latrobe Valley Community Environmental Gardens’ and, by the end of that year, three other projects had begun (2004 p.328).

Like Cameron and Gibson, Maggie O’Neill (2008) utilises pictures and art in order to ‘facilitate the production of knowledge and counter-hegemonic texts’. In work highly relevant to this study, O’Neill takes an action research based approach in an attempt to facilitate an ‘alternative voice from the perspective of the refugee or asylum seeker’ through an exploration of art and biography. Working in the UK, she argues that British society is fostering a dual set of contradictory discourses; one of exclusion of the ‘other’, focused on criminalisation, detention and deportation, and another NGO based discourse of human rights, freedoms, and the possibility of multi-cultural citizenship. This work prioritises and promotes the subjugated discourses of asylum seekers with the hope that these previously marginalised voices can ‘feed into policy and praxis’, attempting to ‘develop a critique that we can act upon’. O’Neill’s work with various groups of asylum seekers and refugees has been exhibited in gallery spaces and community centres, art exhibitions, newspapers and journals. According to O’Neill it has ‘challenged dominant images and stereotypes’ and created a ‘potential space for transformative possibilities for the participants as well as audiences’ (ibid.).
Such contemporary examples of action research show that the paradigm need not be seen as a ‘modernist political project’, but can be adapted to expose and undermine the contestable nature of dominant discourses and ‘truths’ and reveal what Foucault identified as ‘local, discontinuous, disqualified, or nonlegitimized knowledges’ (2004, p.9). Moreover, examples of projects, such as those undertaken by Cameron and Gibson and O’Neil, exhibit how such knowledges can be both illuminating and transformatory. Thus, satisfied that an action research approach could be made compatible with the study’s theoretical framework and held the transformatory potential capable of meeting its objectives, I began to prepare for the fieldwork.

3. Research Design

Having settled on an action research approach to this study, I had to work within that paradigm to create a research design that best facilitated the study’s objectives. The research design chosen needed to enable the identification of power dynamics within the system, detail how that power operated, focus on the relations that sustained the system and provide insight into how resistances and subjectivities were understood and negotiated by those who exercised them. Essentially the design sought to gain access to the lived experiences of Direct Provision through the testimony of those who live it every day.

3.1 Preparation

When I began this study in 2010, there were 6,235 asylum seekers living in Direct Provision in Ireland. 71.9 per cent were documented as African, 21 per cent were Asian, 6.1 per cent European and 0.9 per cent were classified as ‘other’ (RIA 2010b, p. 17). With regard to nationality, the most prevalent was Nigerian (27 per cent) followed by Congolese (6.5 per
cent) and Pakistani (5.4 per cent). The largest group accounted for by the RIA statistics were the 36.5 per cent of asylum seekers classified as ‘other’, a category that indicated that there were fewer than 167 of their nationality resident in Direct Provision at that point in time (ibid.). There was an equally diverse spread in regard to residents' ages, marital status and an uneven split between genders with 2807 females, 3418 males and nine individuals of unrecorded gender (2010b, p.6). Residents were being housed in 47 reception and accommodation centres dispersed throughout the country. Each of these individual factors would have an effect on how an individual resident experienced life in Direct Provision and they operate contingently in shaping a unique life experience for each individual asylum seeker (Grint 2005, p.201). Further analysis of the inherent heterogeneity of those categorised as asylum seekers is presented in Chapter 7, section 1. This heterogeneity precludes any attempt to capture some sort of generic life experience applicable to an entire population and raised questions about how to develop a research design that could access and document the lived experiences of Direct Provision, when those experiences were so diverse.

With these questions in mind I decided that anybody with experience of living in Direct Provision would be welcome to participate in the study. The study would be unconcerned with seeking a representative sample, because a representative experience of Direct Provision would be very difficult, if not impossible, to locate. Such an approach is not unusual for qualitative studies which are generally 'not intended to be "representative" in the sense of seeking to approximate known population parameters' (Abrams 2010, p.537). The fieldwork would thus produce knowledge relating to the unique lived experiences of Direct Provision held by this study's participants, but could not hope to produce a general narrative applicable to all asylum seekers. In this sense, beyond the requirement that the participant have had experience of living in Direct Provision, my sampling was non-purposive and non-probability based. In order to procure participants, I employed a blend of sampling strategies. I utilised
connections made while working at *Doras Luimní* to gain access to the study's initial participants and latter on linked up with *Doras Luimní's* 'Migrant Network' (see section 4.3). This could be interpreted as a form of 'agency based' sampling, which recruits 'hard to reach populations' through such organisations (Abrams 2010, p.541). In asking participants to bring along friends and fellow residents, I also employed a form of 'snowball sampling'; a type of recruitment that can avail of 'social networks in order to access "hard to reach" and "sensitive populations"' (Browne 2010, p.48). Finally, I arranged to have informative posters placed within Direct Provision centres, which could be regarded as a form of 'convenience sampling'; a type of recruitment that focuses on 'places where people are likely to have key insight' into the research topic (Abrams, 2010, p.542). In employing such a diverse set of sampling strategies, my goal was not to recruit a representative sample about which I could generalise, rather it was focused on making awareness of the study and participation within it, available to as many as possible. The positive and negative effects of these strategies are dealt with in greater detail in sections 4.2 and 4.3. Once participants were recruited and became involved in the research, it necessarily became a more participatory affair and I was required to make decisions in collaboration with participants. As such, I looked to employ Heron and Reason’s ‘reflection-action cycles’ which provide a framework for instigating and evaluating collaborative group work, through phases of action and reflection, allowing the fieldwork to evolve accordingly (2001).

For the first meeting I arranged a focus group discussion, a format which, at the meeting, the participants agreed to continue with. The group setting was compatible with the principles and objectives of action research and I believed that it would allow each of the participants to engage with each other, instead of just me. I had rejected the possibilities of using questionnaires or written testimonies as being incapable of producing the rich knowledge that comes with personal interaction. I also believed that focus groups held advantages over
individual interviews as they are more interactive, facilitating discussion and debates as opposed to a back and forth dialogue. The participants at the first meeting agreed with me and the focus group remained the primary means for producing data throughout the study. However, during this first meeting, the participants decided that, if they wished to do so, individuals should also have the option of partaking in one-to-one individual interviews with me. This would allow any participant who wanted to tell me their story, or outline their views outside of a group setting to do so. It provided some of the more reluctant participants and also those with much to say, an opportunity to express themselves in a more confidential and relaxed setting with no need to concern themselves with taking up the time of others.

At the first meeting I prepared a semi-structured list of possible topics to discuss and questions to ask, an information sheet stating the date, location and participant information and took notes throughout on things that wouldn’t show up on recordings, such as body language and gestures. I had prepared the semi-structured list of possible topics partially out of a fear that it might be difficult to get a discussion going in the focus group and partially because I wanted to obtain certain types of information. After the first meeting it became clear that there was no need for me to prompt any discussion as it was naturally lively. Also, after listening to and transcribing the meeting, I realised that my set questions had been somewhat leading and diverted the flow of discussion. As such, I abandoned a semi-structured approach in favour of letting all subsequent meetings flow naturally in an unstructured manner.

From the first meeting on the 6th of September 2011 to the final meeting on the 12th of November 2012, 11 focus groups were convened, lasting approximately between one and three hours in duration. During this period the location, participants, means of data collection and even the group itself would change (see section 4).
Overall 26 people from a variety of nationalities with experience of living in Direct Provision, took part in the focus groups. Of the participants involved in this research, all but one was male.

**Table 1: Breakdown of Participants’ Nationalities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR Congo</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Four participants requested that I interview them privately, including one who did not wish to be a part of any of the focus groups (see section 4.3): two from Sudan and one each from Eritrea and Saudi Arabia.

3.2 Analysis

The first four focus group meetings were all recorded and transcribed, as were the four one-to-one interviews. The following seven meetings were not recorded due to the wishes of some participants (see section 4.3). I took notes throughout these meetings, following up with participants later to verify particular statements, and wrote up a summary of each meeting afterwards. This produced a great deal of data which I transcribed to form the basis of my analysis. These transcriptions were lengthy and varied. In order to make them presentable and conducive to this study's objectives, I was required to reduce them through an identification of, and focus on, relevant themes. These practices constituted a 'thematic analysis'; i.e. a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within the research data (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.6) where a theme is understood as something which 'captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.10). Thematic analyses can be problematic in that they are unavoidably infused with the epistemological, ontological and theoretical assumptions of the researcher (Mauthner and Doucet 2003, p.415). The researcher plays an active role in deciding what quotes, stories and topics are to serve as the basis of the study's themes. Even in studies such as this one, which attempt to prioritise the voice of participants, it is the researcher who 'makes choices about how to interpret [those] voices and which transcript extracts to present' (Mauthner and Doucet 2003, p.418). As such, it is important not to conceive of themes as emerging
naturally and neutrally from the data; for, 'if themes "reside" anywhere, they reside in our heads, from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them' (Ely et al. 1997, cited in Braun and Clarke 2006, p.7). This does not mean that researcher identified themes are invalid, but that they are subjective and should be recognised as such and the processes used to identify them should be declared and open to scrutiny.

Processes of thematic analysis can be either inductive or deductive; the former emerging almost entirely from the data, while the later is driven by the researcher's theoretical interests (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.12). After the first fieldwork meeting, I did my best not to direct discussion, preferring it to be participant driven; however, when analysing the fieldwork transcripts I took a more active approach. Carol Grbich recommends that theme generation involve looking at research data through a theoretical or conceptual lens in order to make further sense of it (2007, p.185). In such a manner, I deductively employed this study's Foucauldian theoretical framework in both the identification and analysis of key themes. However, along with this theoretical gaze, I was also required to take several practical steps in order to isolate key themes from the fieldwork transcripts. To begin with I simply read and re-read the transcripts, paying close attention to recurring topics of discussion, phrases and metaphors. I also listened repeatedly to the discussions and interviews on my MP3 player in order to familiarise myself with the ebb, flow and tone of the discussions, something that the transcriptions alone were unable to convey.

When it came to isolating themes in the data I had initially intended to use a WEFT Qualitative Data Analysis programme to help detect patterns, themes and repeated metaphors. However, after a short period, I became frustrated with this approach and instead embarked upon a manual cutting and sorting method of coding, based on that outlined by Gery W. Ryan and H. Russell Bernard (2003, p.94), which I found to be more productive. This involved 'pawing' through the data and underlining recurring and, or, potentially illuminating sections
of text 'because they [made] some as yet inchoate sense' (Sandelowski 1995, cited in Ryan and Bernard 2003, p.88). The sections of text chosen were doubtlessly influenced by my own 'a priori interest[s]' (Renedo and Martson 2014, p.5), yet the information they contained often contradicted my 'a priori' assumptions and beliefs; for example, the lack of solidarity between Direct Provision residents was a recurring and unforeseen issue. These chunks of text were isolated and printed off, with notes made regarding the date, location, time and context in which they were spoken. I sorted these 'manageable chunks of text' (Attride-Stirling 2001, p.391) into related piles which would form the basis of this study's thematic analysis and then copied and pasted them into separate Microsoft Word documents. Each document was composed of a collection of data relating to a specific theme; for example, a series of quotations and discussions relating to the way in which participants felt that their life within Direct Provision was changing them in some way. I then went back over all the original transcripts to find data I had missed out on which related to these basic themes, and added them to the relevant documents. Next, I spent time pawing through and analysing the documents; identifying and developing subthemes which I marked out with different colour highlighter pens; for example, how life in Direct Provision could be an emasculating experience. These sub themes were cross referenced and the documents re-ordered to bring them all together, some themes becoming merged and others abandoned. Having identified the study’s major themes, I went back over the transcriptions one final time, searching for any relevant information missed out on, before again checking my notes and listening to the recordings to ensure that I was completely familiar with the context. Lastly, I drew up final documents relating specifically to each identified theme, divided them into sub-themes and attached notes regarding context. With the data collated in this way I began writing the empirical chapters.
4. Fieldwork

The fieldwork took place between September 2011 and December 2012. This section details how the fieldwork was organised and how it was conducted in the ‘Limerick Direct Provision Discussion Forum’, the ‘Limerick Asylum Seeker and Refugee Network’ and through various one-to-one interviews.

4.1 Preparations and Ethics

In the first phase of this study I began working as Direct Provision intern for the Limerick based NGO and migrant support group, Doras Luimní. My work with Doras Luimní lasted just over one year and was officially separate from my research. Before beginning work I was required to sign a non-disclosure agreement not to include any information that I obtained in my role there, in my research. Although I have adhered to this agreement, my work there greatly contributed to my understanding of Direct Provision as well as introducing me to some of the contacts who wished to partake in this study.

Influenced by Stacey Vanderhurst’s 2006 study, conducted while living in a Direct Provision centre, I sought to attain a similar proximity as it seemed to imbue her study with a more complete understanding of residents’ daily experiences. I believed that immediate access to the centres and participants in this way would have multiple benefits. For example, I anticipated that living in a Direct Provision centre would enable me to build trust with participants who may otherwise see me as an outsider, would allow participants to feel comfortable in familiar surroundings without the need to travel to meetings, and allow me to assess and document the living conditions and experiences of Direct Provision first hand. However, I also had some reservations that this may have negative repercussions for
participants and was aware that any centre that would permit me access, may be representative of the higher quality end of life in Direct Provision, as was the case with Vanderhurst’s study (2007, p.8). However, the more enquiries I made, the more participants stressed the importance of gaining access to a Direct Provision centre.

Rashad: You have to go inside! Inside, the people, you have many, many things, you listen to many story, many story. For example everyone tells you ‘like that’ ‘I do like that’ ‘I make like that’. If you listen to every story, if you meet 6000 people, you listen 6000 story! So which one the best? You don’t know! You have to come inside!

With this in mind I made contact with the director of the same centre that Vanderhurst’s study was conducted in, he informed me that he could not facilitate my residence in his centre at that time as he was awaiting a decision by the RIA regarding the renewal of their contract. However, he encouraged me to make further enquiries with other centres and to ‘rely on direct observed experience rather that second hand opinionated and agenda driven responses’.

Alongside my attempts to find a centre that would permit me access I sought to obtain ethical clearance for my research from the University of Limerick’s ‘Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' Ethics Committee’. In spite of a list of measures outlined, involving assurances and protections, the Ethics Committee would not approve my application without further clarification. They cited concerns that conducting research onsite in the centres could be ‘prejudicial to the respondents’ and that the research’s focus on ‘resistance’ ‘raises the prospect that the research will deal with rule breaking or activities that might be construed as illegal for these groups’ (see Appendix C).

At a meeting with a representative of the committee, arranged to discuss their concerns, I was informed that it was highly unlikely that the committee would give me permission to reside within a Direct Provision centre. I submitted an amended proposal, removing any mention of
plans to live within the centres and again outlining plans to instigate two focus groups within two Direct Provision centres in Limerick, this time as a visitor (see Appendix A). However, this second proposal was rejected on the grounds that participation in the research might have adverse consequences for those involved.

The committee is concerned that the impact of the research on your respondents is still potentially negative, putting them in a difficult position with regard to hostel and other authorities. The committee does not feel that it is appropriate to hold research meetings on site since this exposes participation (see Appendix D).

This second rejection meant that the third draft of the research proposal needed to explicitly outline that the research would not take place within a Direct Provision centre (see Appendix B). This would limit the number of potential participants; many residents living in Direct Provision have very little money to spend on travel and those who were not living immediately within Limerick city may not be able to afford to travel to meetings. The withholding of permission to conduct research on site was also disappointing on the grounds that it ignored the wishes of participants who constantly urged me to ‘go inside’, ‘write about it’ and to ‘tell it to people’. Throughout the study, participants consistently stressed the need for research to be conducted within the centres, for both practical reasons and for the depth of information available there. The denial of these wishes on such paternalistic grounds only serves to silence an already subjugated experience. It was not on the grounds of threat or conflict that this knowledge was suppressed, rather it was through a paternal concern for participants’ ‘exposed participation’, i.e. their own good, that the direction they wanted the research to go was blocked. The participants’ own personal experiences and their ability to conduct their own risk assessment regarding ‘being exposed’ was undermined by the University Ethics Committee’s judgement on the matter and concerns on their behalf. As a result, this study misses out on a key part of their experience and the everyday events that
I first made contact with potential participants through a series of connections I had built up through previous employment and study and through my work with Doras Luimni. With on-site fieldwork no longer an option, potential participants were contacted about the possibility of organising a focus group to meet in Doras Luimni’s offices and encouraged to spread the word and contact other potentially interested individuals. Approaching participants through agency contacts initially limited potential participants to those who had their own connections with that agency and, as detailed in section 4.4, some Direct Provision residents had an aversion to working with Doras Luimni. However, I hoped that by informing and recruiting friends and fellow residents, participants would engage in a type of snowball sampling that would broaden the group's membership. Snowball sampling too had its positive and negative implications. Paul Oliver claims that such techniques can be useful when dealing with socially marginalised groups who lack confidence, as such people may be more 'comfortable' with participating if approached by someone with similar experiences (2006, p.282). However, snowball sampling also risks excluding those outside certain social networks (Browne 2010, p.57). Any individual indicating an interest in the study was sent an information sheet, outlining personal details about me and the research (see Appendix E) and inviting them to the first meeting, which took place at Doras Luimni offices on September 6th 2011.

Only three men attended the first meeting which lasted approximately two hours and 45 minutes. By the end of the meeting, the group had decided to meet monthly under the name of the ‘Limerick Direct Provision Discussion Forum’ (LDPDF). The group decided that the
meetings would need to take place in an alternative location, as they felt that the *Doras Luimní* setting would lead to the research being associated with the NGO, which they thought might limit participation. The meetings were to be recorded by tape and transcribed by myself as long as everybody at the meeting was comfortable with the arrangement. It was also decided that the meetings would continue to operate in a democratic manner and through a focus group dynamic. However, it was suggested and agreed that participants would be welcome to conduct one-to-one interviews with me outside of the LDPDF focus group setting (see section 3.1).

The group continued to meet monthly in the private backroom of a local hotel for a further four months, during which time two of the participants partook in one-to-one interviews with me. The meetings were very lively, with a conversational dynamic and generally lasted between 90 minutes and two hours. Participants discussed a wide range of subjects and issues, from things they liked about Ireland to problems they had with staff and management within their centres. Participation was often low (the highest attendance was five people), yet I felt this facilitated some intense and intimate discussions. One of the participants, Michael, came to adopt a leading role in the LDPDF, calling the meetings monthly and bringing along friends. Michael’s emergence as a key organiser of the group was indicative of the 'circulation of power' that can develop in participatory research (Doná 2007, p.226). This has been elaborated on by Giorgia Doná who documented how in her co-operative study with refugees, she was subjected to the power of her co-researchers who could act like gatekeepers and dictate information flows (2007, p.224). Similarly I was aware that the LDPDF was perhaps becoming overly reliant on Michael but was reluctant, and possibly unable, to interfere. One key drawback of this imbalance was the LDPDF’s lack of diversity, which I attribute to its over reliance on snowball sampling strategies. In spite of efforts to branch out, the group came to rely on Michael to introduce new members and as such, these members
were primarily drawn from his own circle of friends. Although these friends came from various countries, they were all males between 25 and 45, and all members of the Islamic faith. This undoubtedly limited the scope of the data produced. Elena Kosygina has documented in her own participatory research with ‘forced migrants’, that the participants’ gender and age ‘influence the quality of the information obtained’ and can impact on interview length, format and degree of reflexivity (2005, cited in Dona 2007, p.213).

However, in spite of its concentrated focus, the LDPDF created a wealth of knowledge gathered from the specific, if not general, experiences of participants in Direct Provision. Kath Browne has documented one of the potential benefits of snowball sample strategies as being the establishment of focus groups in which all members are comfortable in each other's company and relaxed about sharing personal information, which I believe was the case with the LDPDF (2010, p.54). Michael may have dominated the meeting's organisation but this was not through any authoritarian style, rather I felt it was his enthusiasm for the group that led to him taking responsibility. Nor did he dominate the meetings verbally and they always proceeded in a sociable and democratic atmosphere.

At the fourth meeting I suggested we consider reevaluating our work in accordance with action research's emphasis on action, reflection cycles. This would involve looking over the topics discussed so far, outlining and reflecting on what we considered the key issues and deciding whether this knowledge could be put to an agreed upon purpose. The participants were receptive to this idea and mentioned the possibility of going beyond discussions and implementing something more actionable (Michael suggested writing to and trying to get interviews with local papers) and also the idea of branching out further by making contact with a group of female Direct Provision residents Michael was in contact with. However, the group’s reliance on Michael would soon impose greater changes than anticipated.
4.3 The Limerick Asylum Seeker and Refugee Network

During the fourth meeting of the LDPDF, Michael informed us of the good news that he had been given ‘leave to remain’ in Ireland. In December he contacted me and the rest of the group to inform us that he was planning to move to Dublin. Michael had become the focal point of the Forum, recruiting members and calling meetings. Throughout December and January, I and several other participants tried to keep the Forum going but to no avail. After discussing the possibilities with the two members still anxious to continue, we decided the best option involved amalgamating the Forum with Doras Luimní’s ‘Migrant Network’.

This opportunity arose from an approach I made to Doras Luimní in January 2012, asking them if they knew of anybody who would be interested in joining the LDPDF. They informed me that, due to budget cuts, their Migrant Network group had been forced to cease activities. According a Doras Luimní electronic bulletin published in August 2011, the Migrant Network described itself as an ‘open forum where all migrants living in Limerick have the opportunity to raise the issues that matter to them and work together towards meeting shared goals’. These goals pertained to integration, expressing a ‘political voice’, solidarity and co-operation and providing information. I was placed in contact with Ali, a Direct Provision resident who had played a leading role in organising the Network. Ali agreed to conduct a one-to-one interview with me, after which we discussed the possibility of bringing the two groups together. We met again and I contacted the remaining members of the LDPDF. After consultation with each other, the remaining members of the Migrant Network and Doras Luimní, it was proposed to merge the two groups together into the ‘Limerick Asylum Seeker and Refugee Network’ (LASRN).

I proposed to the remaining LDPDF members that we view the merger as an opportunity to
implement a second ‘inquiry cycle’, taking what we had learned from the LDPDF and implementing it in the establishment of the LASRN. The most immediate benefit this offered was that we were able to branch out to new members as had been discussed at the final meeting of the LDPDF. The association with Doras Luimní ensured that we had a far wider network of contacts and access to several Direct Provision centres, where posters advertising meetings were put up, making the sampling strategy for the LASRN a blend of agency, convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Following from this, it was decided that the LASRN should be more action orientated as opposed to the focus on discussion which prevailed in the LDPDF.

Laura Abrams documents how the utilisation of agency contacts in recruiting participants often can require a degree of 'negotiation' (2010, p.542). This was the case with the LASRN where compromises were required from all parties in order to facilitate the merger. Doras Luimní, Ali and other representatives formerly of the Migrant Network agreed to allow me to use the data gathered from the LASRN for this research. These representatives also agreed to limit participation to Asylum Seekers and refugees as opposed to migrants in general. This was something particularly supported by Ali who felt that the Migrant Network had suffered from its diverse focus which made it difficult to achieve its objectives. Compromises made by the LDPDF included an agreement that I would not record the meetings in case new members found it intimidating. I would instead inform the group about my research at the start of every meeting and proceed to take minutes and notes throughout. We also agreed to hold the meetings at the Doras Luimní offices and that Doras Luimní were entitled to have a representative at each meeting.

The first meeting of the LASRN was held on the 29th of May 2012. There were 14 members in attendance including myself and a representative from Doras Luimní. Ali chaired the meeting and encouraged those present to participate fully, telling them that it was up to the
Network’s members to ‘make it a success’. I informed those present of the previous work of the LDPDF and my research. There followed an approximately 90 minute discussion about issues participants wanted to see the Network address, with several placing an emphasis on collective action and the ability of a unified group to ‘fight together’. By the end of the meeting a list was drawn up of these issues and the Network voted to meet monthly to address each one specifically. The initial list of issues comprised of: volunteering, education, deportation, information regarding the asylum process in Ireland and integration. It was agreed that the Network would source experts on these topics in order to address the meetings and questions and discussion would follow. For the next six months the group met on this basis; however, as winter approached attendances declined. One meeting on education only attracted two members besides me and the speaker. It was decided that the meeting would be run again the following month in the Easter Road Direct Provision centre, although my agreement with the Ethics Committee prevents me from including the details of this meeting in this study, I can say that it attracted a much larger attendance. After another poorly attended meeting at the Doras Luimníní offices in November 2012, it was decided that the LASRN was no longer viable in its current format. Ali and Victor approached me and Doras Luimníní about the possibility of bringing the group within the Direct Provision centres. I agreed to try and help with this as much as I could and organised a further meeting on the subject. A representative from Doras Luimníní spoke about the possibility of linking the LASRN up with the Irish Refugee Council who were looking to run training courses for residents, with a view to establishing residents’ committees in Direct Provision centres. Ali and Valentine asked to be put in contact with the Irish Refugee Council with a view to organising a meeting within Ali’s hostel. This is where the fieldwork was forced to end.

There were many positive aspects to the LASRN. Members took charge of organising, and in one case personally delivering, talks on issues identified by themselves, as opposed to topics
chosen by myself or Doras Luimní. The focus on actively pursuing outcomes and information meant that the Network’s successes were instantly visible which I found encouraging. For example, the meetings on volunteering and education helped many of the participants to arrange positions and places in which they could remain active and resist some of the objectifying effects of Direct Provision. Similarly, the meetings on deportation and the asylum process proved highly informative for some members, although they were unable to deal with all of the concerns raised. The Network also highlighted many of the ‘intolerable’ issues faced by asylum seekers living in Direct Provision; the effects forced idleness can have on people and the nature and techniques of power that mediate the system.

On the negative side of things, the Network lacked the communal dynamic of the LDPDF. Some of the meetings contained up to 15 members and discussions became dominated by the most vocal and articulate members and groups. It was also apparent that the members possessed a diverse set of circumstances and requirements and as such, the Network was unable to cater to them all equally (see Chapter 7, section 3). Finally, members lacking in English language skills or confidence were rarely able to express themselves. While such language issues did not pose major problems during the research process, there were some aspects worth addressing. Within the LASRN, there were four participants who required translators to convey information to them, three of whom were part of the same group. In these cases translation was automatically provided by other participants who had accompanied the non-English speakers to the meeting. These participants tended to be understandably less vocal at meetings and there are no quotations from them present in this thesis. Nonetheless, throughout the research there were times when even English speaking participants seemed to struggle to convey their intended meaning to me (see Chapter 5, section 1.3; section 2). Bogusia Temple and Alys Young have documented the ways in which language plays a key role in the construction of meaning and experiences of social living.
(2004, p.164). They also highlight how the hierarchical politics of language permeate modern research and how the vast majority of research is filtered through and presented in the English language (2004, p.167). This is problematic as it risks a failure to grasp degrees of meaning and social experience that participants are only able to fully convey through their own language. This seemed to be the case on several occasions throughout the fieldwork and was an aspect of the study which I find regrettable, yet given my own limitations, unavoidable.

4.4 Awn’s Interviews

One participant to this research, approached after the demise of the LDPDF, declined to take part in the LASRN but was amenable to being interviewed personally. I had met Awn through his own attempts to organise asylum seekers and agitate for change. Although resident in Limerick, he had twice organised and staged protests against Direct Provision in Dublin. Awn was highly suspicious of the role played by NGOs in Ireland and felt that they had offered him no help in organising his demonstrations, because these demonstrations were ‘going to do something in the street’. He claimed that he and other asylum seekers had tried to get assistance for protests from NGOs in the past but ‘we didn’t get anything’. Awn told me that nothing would come from research conducted alongside Doras Luimní and that change needed to ‘take place in the street, the street is for everybody’. He asserted that, ‘we want to protest. To demonstrate. We are fed up now. We need action’, but argued that NGOs would never back such action. Awn would not work alongside the LASRN because of its association with Doras Luimní, but consented to partake in one-to-one interviewing. Like many others Awn wished to conduct the interviews in his hostel, but I was ethically bound to conduct them elsewhere. We met twice in December 2012 to discuss his experiences.
4.5 Reciprocity and Aftermath

Working closely with participants and their personal experiences within an action research based framework, can entail certain responsibilities alongside the benefits. Referring to qualitative research in general and feminist paradigms in particular, Harrison et al. argue that in order to obtain 'rich', descriptive data and 'intimate interviews', researchers are obliged to 'attend to reciprocity'; i.e. the give and take of social interactions (2001, p.323). I believe this to be particularly true of studies such as this where participants have so much to give to the research in the way of information, yet can be so materially lacking in their personal lives. As such, while preparing for this study I had considered offering participants a small financial incentive of €10 for their participation. However, this idea was rejected after careful consideration, on the grounds that even such a small sum of money represented over 50 per cent of an asylum seeker's weekly income and, as such, it may have incentivised participation for financial reasons rather than because of a general interest in the project. Such motivations might not have been conducive to lively discussion and enthusiastic interaction.

Although I did not offer any formal incentives, beyond the transformative potential of the research, I did my best during and after the fieldwork to aid participants in a variety of ways. For example, I informed participants who had already agreed to take part in the research that I would cover any travel costs that they incurred on the way to meetings; however, no participants took me up on this offer. At the meetings which took place away from the Doras Luimní offices, I paid for the group's food (crisps, sweets, biscuits) and (non-alcoholic) drinks during and after meetings. As the fieldwork progressed, several participants requested some form of certificate as proof of their participation and evidence of their attempts to integrate
into Irish society (see Chapter 4, section 1.1). These certificates were compiled and subsequently provided on request.

Over the period of the study, I became closer with many of the more involved participants; developing friendships that I believe facilitated open and frank discussions within and about the fieldwork. Lisa Tillman documents the various benefits that can be reaped by both researcher and participants as a result of friendship between the two (2003, p.12-18), basing her methodological approach upon such relations. Her 'friendship as method' framework focuses primarily on the building of friendships (2003, p.8), with the direction of the research and collection of data intended to flow 'organically' from them (2003, p.10). However, this was not the case in this study. Instead practices of data collection in the focus groups preceded and facilitated the development of friendships. Nevertheless these friendships did develop and just as myself and the research benefited from them, so too did participants. Tilman documents how participants can gain a great deal from their relationship with a researcher. The creation of an 'empathetic connection' can make them feel listened to, understood and energized; while they can also receive valuable information from the researcher and even work through some of their own psychological issues just by talking them out (2003, p.14-17). These were all benefits that I believe at least some participants in this study were able to enjoy to varying degrees.

Other benefits were more tangible. One participant asked me to contribute funding towards a teaching course he wished to take but could not afford. To this end, I established and contributed towards a collection at the University which covered his costs. Another asked me to write up his CV and a cover letter in order to help him find employment after he obtained 'leave to remain' status, which I was happy to do. I also proof read one participant's MA dissertation. Finally, I tried to ensure that I was always available to participants when they needed advice about the Direct Provision system, Irish society or just wanted someone to talk
to in general. Since completing the fieldwork I have remained in contact and retained friendships with several of the participants. In Chapter 6, section 2 of this study I document how asylum seekers, advocates and activists throughout the country support each other and exceed the Direct Provision system through a network of knowledges, services, solidarities and friendships similar to what Dimitris Papadopoulos has identified as a 'mobile commons' (2014). Looking back on the fieldwork process and the relationships that developed within it, I feel that I became part of that network, drawing upon and contributing to it. Upon completion of the first draft of this thesis, all participants were offered access to of a copy to read. Two requested a copy which I duly e-mailed to them. I have also offered the research findings to Doras Luimní to work with, in consultation with me. Somewhat corroborating Tilman's claim that close relations can lead to researchers becoming permanent 'allies with and for their research communities' (2003, p.12), I have also joined the steering committee of the 'Limerick Campaign to End Direct Provision'. Finally, I intend to publish some of the core research findings in academic journals and I hope that they may contribute in some way towards the systematic changes identified as necessary by participants throughout this study.

5. Conclusion

This chapter establishes the importance of selecting a research paradigm that could facilitate the objectives of the study while also remaining compatible with the study's theoretical framework. In the chapter, I outline and scrutinise historical debates and developments regarding the action research paradigm; from the first generation to contemporary projects, explaining how I eventually satisfied myself that the action research paradigm was capable of achieving the objectives of the study and meeting my own concerns.

The chapter also outlines the research design I adopted and documents the decisions and
preparations I undertook, both ethical and practical, before beginning the fieldwork. It details the problems I faced in trying to adhere to the requests of participants, specifically regarding the ways in which I was blocked from observing and reporting directly on the conditions prevalent within Direct Provision centres. What was perhaps most interesting about this was that my attempts and the participants' wishes were not denied by the RIA or centre management, rather they were blocked by *Doras Luimní* and the University of Limerick's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' Ethics Committee, in both cases for the participants' 'own good'. This served as an early indication to me of some of the objectifying pressures experienced by asylum seekers; in this case, the construction of them as dependant and in need of protection, and how such constructions can influence the perceptions of even the most well-intentioned individuals. It can also perhaps be seen as a signifier of the seemingly pervasive assumption that change to the Direct Provision system is to be brought about from those external to it. Such an approach neglects the autonomous potential of and activities engaged in by those who inhabit the system. The autonomy exhibited by participants in this research is elaborated on in Chapter 6.

This chapter also addresses the ways in which the methodological decisions taken, played out during the fieldwork process. A varied sampling strategy, incorporating elements of agency, snowball and convenience sampling, was deployed in the hope of making the research accessible to as many participants as possible. Yet, while there were many positives, such as the rich descriptive data produced and the high levels of participant engagement, there were also obstacles, such as the lack of diversity within the LDPDF because of its over reliance on snowball sampling and Michael, the eventual disbanding of the LDPDF for similar reasons, the diminishing attendances within the LASRN and the failure of this study to involve more than one woman. Although I had never intended to seek any sort of representative sample, the lack of female involvement in this study was disappointing to me. The experiences of
female asylum seekers have been documented as differing significantly from those of men (McSpadden and Moussa 1993, p.205) and this study lacks those experiences and, as such, is essentially a study based on the experiences of men.

The study also failed to achieve the type of systematic change I had envisioned at its inception. Although the study certainly highlighted and facilitated transformatory activity in many ways that I had not anticipated, much of this took place at an individual or local level. One of the core loci of power relations, contestation and transformation emerging from the fieldwork was the space of the Direct Provision centre. In the following chapter I begin to document and analyse the information gathered during the fieldwork with an investigation into how this space operates and is legitimised.
Chapter 4: A Dense Site of Disciplinary Power: The How and Why of the Direct Provision Centre

The 34 Direct Provision centres currently in operation within the Republic of Ireland are the spaces of day to day living in which the majority of the country’s asylum seekers experience the pressures, relations and mechanisms of power that constitute the Irish asylum system. As such, it is perhaps not surprising that the Direct Provision centre, and the conditions, relations and general activities within, were recurring themes throughout the fieldwork. This chapter documents participants' experiences relating to the space of the Direct Provision centre, how it functions and how it is able to do so. In section 1, the ways in which these centres operate, primarily as disciplinary spaces, are described from the perspectives of participants. This section also outlines how mechanisms of examination, a gratification-punishment dynamic, control over mobility and the arbitrary application of power, target the minds and bodies of residents in order to conduct their conduct.

Section 2 identifies the various motivations, pressures and interests that converge in the creation of a disciplinary and punitive system. Again drawing on the testimony of participants, it takes into account the role played by centre staff and management, the wider Irish public and profiteers, in the legitimisation and maintenance of the Direct Provision system. Section 3 documents why Direct Provision centres continue to function in the manner outlined in sections 1 and 2. It details how they are legitimised and maintained. It also acknowledges and looks briefly at some factors that were noticeably absent from participants’ testimonies, seeking to locate their experiences within wider global systems of asylum, migration and labour.
1. Discipline and Direct Provision

Throughout the fieldwork, by far and away the most recurring metaphor for the experience of life in Direct Provision was that of a life incarcerated. The frequent use of this metaphor indicates that those employing it felt that it was especially capable of conveying key aspects of what it is like to be a resident in a Direct Provision centre. Beck et al. suggest that such metaphors can serve as vehicles for participants, transferring us from the literal to a new perspective and giving words to their experiences (2003, p.346-347). To this end, metaphors referencing prisons, jails and even concentration camps were employed by participants as they tried to communicate to me how the Direct Provision centre was organised and how it felt to live life within it, day after day. Metaphors referencing incarceration were first expressed to me at the first meeting of the LDPDF, where Michael compared life in Direct Provision to ‘living in an open jail’. This was corroborated later in the same meeting by Valentine who re-iterated that placing people in accommodation centres was ‘like humiliation… like putting people in jail’. In my interview with Ali, he expressed his belief that the Direct Provision system had created ‘a people who are not free’ and he compared the years he has spent within Direct Provision centres to living in ‘a concentration camp’. Isaac, who employed a prison analogy on several occasions, told me that he believed life within a prison would actually be ‘better’ than his life in the centre. This assessment was echoed during my interview with Awn who referred to the centres as ‘open prisons’. He also suggested that a prison sentence would be preferable.

Here there is no… You don’t know… Sometimes the case can take years, like without reason. So, you know, if you put someone in prison, he will know how long he will spend until release or for life. But here you will never know.
Comparisons between life in Direct Provision and other carceral systems are not new; previous studies carried out by NGOs have also documented the parallels (IRC 2001, p. 16; NASC 2008, p.35; FLAC 2010a, p.10). Mountz et al. have investigated the commonalities between prisons and migrant detention and document that both involve ‘similar processes of racialized entrapment’, and serve to ‘generate economic vulnerability’ and that both systems ‘increasingly share sturdy legal and discursive practices of racialized criminalization’ (2012, p.13).

With regard to this study, the recurring use of carceral metaphors provides an insight into the wider regime of disciplinary power in Direct Provision. Deidre Conlon has suggested that day-to-day practices within Direct Provision centres are more consistent with governmental rather than disciplinary regimes of power (2010b, p.107). However, the testimonies of this study’s participants are rich with examples of disciplinary techniques of conduct. These examples go beyond the mere imagery of the prison, the archetypal disciplinary institution, to specific references to various relations and mechanisms of control that this study identifies as disciplinary in nature. While evidence of other modalities of power, such as governmentality, is also present within the data, disciplinary modalities were the most commonly referenced. In the following section I examine their mechanisms of control and the relations through which they were mediated.

1.1 The Implementation of Discipline via the Examination

Foucault attributes the success of disciplinary power to the use of its ‘simple instruments’. These are the techniques implicit in hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and a combination of the first two; the examination. It is through the examination that power and knowledge combine to establish over ‘individuals a visibility through which one
differentiates and judges them’ (1991, p.184). The asylum process in Ireland can be understood in terms of an examination. It constitutes a great gathering and compilation of knowledge concerning individuals, not just relating to their lives before arriving in Ireland, but also their conduct while here. This knowledge is then used to make an individual into a ‘case’ upon which judgment is passed. Foucault documents how the creation of a case is the culmination of the disciplinary examination. It constitutes an ‘individual as he may be described, judged, measured, compared with others’ (1991, p.191). Once the individual is established as a case, s/he can then be ‘trained or corrected, classified, normalised, excluded’ (ibid.). With regard to Ireland’s asylum system, the final judgment is more often than not exclusion through a refusal to recognise the right to residency.

According to Foucault, one of the key techniques of the examination involves ‘transforming the economy of visibility into the exercise of power’ (1991, p.187). Whereas sovereign power is invested in its own prominence, disciplinary power seeks to veil itself while making its target visible through techniques of ‘hierarchical observation’. For example, during the industrial revolution, the figure of the foreman or supervisor replaced the direct management of the factory owner, enforcing regulations and subjecting fellow employees to rigorous supervision and calculation (1991, p.174). Similarly, a variety of surveillance techniques render large parts of Direct Provision residents’ lives intelligible, whilst, besides interactions with staff and management, the residents rarely catch a glimpse of those who formulate, instigate and benefit from the polices that observe them (see section 2). This is characteristic of disciplinary surveillance which Foucault claims, in spite of resting on certain individuals, functions as a ‘network of relations from top to bottom’, where even the supervisors are perpetually supervised (1991, p.176-177). Thus, the creation of a case for an individual asylum seeker can involve a multitude of people, many of whom the asylum seeker will never come into contact with. The components of this case will of course include information
relating to their past and the veracity of their claim, but many participants’ indicated that they believed their conduct in Ireland, and specifically within the Direct Provision centre, was also under examination.

Although the physical architecture of surveillance discussed by Foucault is somewhat absent from most Direct Provision centres, a combination of modern technology and the arbitrary invasion of privacy has made it possible to observe and document even minute aspects of residents' lives. Many centres employ security cameras which the RIA claim are there to promote ‘a safe, hospitable and clean environment’ (Integrating Ireland et al. 2007, p.7). These measures have been contested by residents who feel the cameras are there to track their own movements and have complained about being ‘constantly monitored’ (ibid.). Some orientation packs distributed to asylum seekers even encouraged them to intensify their own visibility by keeping their curtains and blinds open, so as not to ‘arouse suspicion’ or ‘adverse attention’ (Conlon and Gill 2013, p.249).

This atmosphere of surveillance and the resultant lack of privacy was a recurring grievance expressed by participants. Valentine stated his belief that the centres' staff and management would ‘make an excuse’ to ‘intrude’ upon residents. He claimed that they would use concerns over fire safety or missing goods in order to search residents’ rooms, even when they were not present. This was corroborated by Michael who informed me of how management would periodically search rooms and even belongings.

Michael: Managers go access to the rooms, master key, and she searched private bag.

Dominic: Private bags?

Michael: Yeah.

Dominic: So everything? No privacy?
Michael: You cannot have any privacy! We, we, we, raise this issue to Minister of Justice, the human rights, and we say this is too much, enough and guess what happen? The executioner was the judge! Ehh ehh we send a letter to the Minister of Justice, I have the documentation. To Alan Shatter, and Alan Shatter send our document to the Receptions and Integration Agency. They respond to our letter and say, she have a right to search for… what? Hazard? Fire hazard? Or something like that.

These invasions increased participants’ sense of what Michael described as being ‘all the time watched’ and Valentine’s experience of being, ‘intruded upon’. Motivated by the discussion about a lack of privacy, Stephan arrived at the following LDPDF meeting with a letter from his bank to show me. The letter had been opened by the manager of his centre and he had brought it to demonstrate the extent to which residents’ privacy was encroached upon within the centres. Michael informed me that they had earlier that day gone to Stephan’s bank in order to confirm that the bank had not sent the letter in the condition in which Stephan received it, to which the staff assured them that ‘it was not AIB policy to open like this’. Michael became visibly angry and said that incidents like this ‘happen all the time’ within Direct Provision.

Stephan: Here, here.

(Stephan goes in to his bag and produces the letter which had clearly been crudely opened and resealed with a single strip of tape)

Dominic: hmmm… they didn’t even try to hide it.

Michael: Yeah!
Stephan: If they tell me they want the post, to check the post, I’d say, ‘no problem, you can check it’. But they say ‘no, no, it come like this from the bank’. I say ‘how can it come like this?’

Dominic: What do you think they are checking for?

Michael: It’s not, ehh… security thing. She’s not in position of security to check the post. It’s not allowed. It’s just the kind of ehh ehh… treating people inhuman.

The participants gave no practical reasons for their resentment of these invasions, such as having something they wished to hide, or wanting something in particular kept personal. Their anger seemed to stem primarily from the way in which such invasions made them and all aspects of their lives constantly visible. Foucault claims that the disciplinary examination revels in the creation and application of such visibility, more so than any practical outcomes that may derive from this application. The visibility of subjects, in this case residents of the Direct Provision centre, is a tool which ‘assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them’, a ‘compulsory objectification’ (1991 p.187-189). This resonates with Valentine’s claim that one ‘could not be the same’ after being ‘intruded upon’.

This creation of visibility within the centres also extends to residents’ whereabouts, with their presence in the centres being subject to surveillance and control. For example, participants complained to me about the practice of being forced to sign in everyday and of how, in some centres, electronic swipe card systems had been installed. A resident who does not consent to signing or swiping in may be considered to be ‘consistently absent’ and it is official RIA policy to re-allocate the rooms of those deemed absent (RIA 2009, P.16). This can result in individuals being made homeless. The fear of having nowhere to stay was of great concern to many participants. For example, Michael claimed that this fear had prevented him from visiting his infant daughter. Furthermore, participants believed that the threat and reality of
homelessness was actively employed by centre management and the RIA as a form of punishment for temporary absences.

Valentine: Yeah, well they (the RIA) have their own agendas definitely but it’s also something. You want a certain place and you are told just wait. So it’s also, even if you know there are empty vacancies in the place you propose to go… they will not.

... 

Michael: If you’re kicked out of hostel you have to stay a month or two on your own.

Dominic: Where, homeless?

Michael: Yeah, homeless and during that time you’re obliged, this month or two to go on a waiting list. A punishment for getting kicked out of your hostel. You must…

Stephan: There’s many places empty!

Michael: There’s many places empty, but there’s a kind of punishment you…

Dominic: So you’re saying they punish you by making you homeless for a month?

Michael: Yeah, so it’s, you cannot say nothing, you do not have to. There’s no organisation to, to complain to.

Participants also indicated that being made homeless would have a detrimental impact on one’s case and subsequently one’s chances of being allowed to stay in the country. According to Valentine, ‘If you’re absent frequently it will impact on your application as well. It shows like you are not good citizen’. The idea that the information being gathered through surveillance would be used to determine an individual’s case was referenced several times throughout the fieldwork. Awn claimed that ‘if you are troublesome, they will not take you’. He also indicated that he believed people protesting against the Direct Provision
system would be monitored and that this would be held against them when it came to
deciding their case; ‘they will give you transfer, deportation, something like that’. When
pressed as to why he kept on trying to organise protests if he truly believed it might lead to
his own deportation, Awn claimed that

I will organise protests and other demonstrations until they deport me or give me my
status. This is enough for me. I don’t care about any result for me. You know if they
want to deport me they have to deport me.

Although Awn was steadfast in his refusal to alter his behaviour, the feeling of having one’s
activities and presence constantly under examination was bound to affect the conduct of some
residents, especially when it was believed that the information being gathered would shape
one’s case and subsequently one’s entire future. Foucault claims that ‘it is the fact of being
constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in
his subjection’ (1991, p.187). By being always visible and judgeable, residents in Direct
Provision are subject to an intense disciplinary examination that compiles a plethora of
information ranging from their previous lives to their current whereabouts and activities,
possibly to the content of their belongings and even mail.

At times the disciplinary nature of the surveillance participants endured seemed to take on a
more governmental character. Conlon and Gill (2013) have documented how asylum seekers
in the UK and Ireland are encouraged to reproduce themselves in a manner amenable to
modern liberal society. In this way, the state is able to remain in the background while the
individual governs their own development in a manner conducive to prevailing rationalities.
One of the ways in which this is achieved is by putting asylum seekers through certain
initiation and orientation procedures and encouraging them to partake in certain classes and
activities that will develop and prove their value as ‘responsible, liberal and autonomous
asylum seeker subjects’ (2013, p.245). Conlon and Gill highlight how these processes demand a degree of interaction and self-examination and as such serve as techniques of ‘surveillance’, exposing asylum seekers and their thoughts to a ‘compulsory visibility’ (2013, p.252). While participants in this study did not readily identify these governmental elements of surveillance, perhaps this only serves to illustrate their insidious effectiveness. After the fieldwork was completed, several participants contacted me about obtaining some sort of certificate or accreditation for their participation, which was duly supplied. These seemingly worthless documents were to be used as proof that the participants were doing their best to integrate into Irish society. Under advice from their solicitors, many asylum seekers collect certificates and letters of attendance from all the classes and activities in which they participate, in order to submit them if they ever have to apply for ‘leave to remain’. In this way they can present themselves as autonomous, enthusiastic and eager to integrate; proving their compatibility with liberal society. Thus, for asylum seekers, the examination is perpetual; even if disciplinary techniques of surveillance are not monitoring what an individual is doing, governmental techniques of surveillance may judge the individual for what they are not doing, i.e. integrating and expressing autonomy.

The key goal of the examination is the creation of visibility and the Direct Provision system utilises this visibility in the production of knowledge regarding the individual’s outer activities and inner character. This knowledge while useful in itself can also be productive. The processes of surveillance, judgement, objectification and self-government that constitute the examination, also make possible the creation of hierarchies and the implementation of systems of hierarchical distribution, such as streaming in education or ranking structures in the workplace. These systems can be used to further modulate behaviour, through the physical distribution of resources and facilities and also through the spatial distribution of individuals via controls over their mobility.
1.2 The Implementation of Discipline via Resources and Rewards

Upon beginning the fieldwork, I anticipated that some of the key issues that may arise would focus on the subject of resources and facilities; specifically their limited quantity and poor quality. This assumption was based on a reading of existing research and my work with *Doras Luimni* in which it became clear that certain Direct Provision centres drew a lot of complaints from residents concerning poor quality food, small rooms, a lack of recreational facilities and low standards of hygiene. However, during the fieldwork it became clear that participants in this research were uninterested in making comparisons between, and singling out, certain centres. Although it was acknowledged that some centres had better facilities and resources than others, it was consistently impressed upon me that this was not important.

Notes taken from meeting with Isaac:

I ask him about Westbourne hostel in particular, what makes it like a prison? What are the management like? The food? How does it compare to others? But he is not interested in discussing it; instead he waves his hands and claims ‘it’s the same, all, all the same’.

In most cases, the questions I asked regarding the standard of resources and facilities available to residents were rebuffed in this manner. This reluctance to engage with a comparative analysis of different Direct Provision centres could be interpreted as an indication that, while on the surface there seemed to be a variation between the resources and facilities available, at their heart all the centres essentially functioned in a similar manner. When I asked Awn to tell me about Tannadice, a notoriously unpopular centre among asylum seekers, he informed me how it served its punitive function just like everywhere else he had been resident.
Awn: It is a place of punishment, yes. But when they send me there you know, I didn’t think, you know, I just think of it like all this system is a punishment. So OK, it’s all the same. Nothing can change.

Dominic: Nothing?

Awn: Yeah, because what? If they give you accommodation in a hostel in Dublin, still what is different?

Looking back over the data after completing the fieldwork, I began to notice that when participants did raise issues concerning resources and facilities, it was rarely in qualitative or quantitative terms; rather it was often the method of resource distribution which was the main point of contention. For example, one of the most commonly recurring themes in existing NGO research is the poor quality and choice of food provided for residents (NASC 2008, p.6; FLAC 2009, p.102). While the quality of the food made available was criticized by some participants, several others were complimentary about the standard available at particular centres. However, many of the participants expressed unhappiness with the manner in which the food was distributed. Michael described the indignity of being made to queue for food ‘like an animal’ and Ali related his negative experiences about a certain manager who refused to keep food for him on nights when he was occupied with a reading group. Valentine passionately believed that even if they were required to stay in Direct Provision, asylum seekers should be given money or ‘even food stamps’ so that they could prepare their own meals: ‘it is so important, you know? How can you be fed like this every day’? In this sense, the participants tended not to rally against the conditions and resources themselves, rather against the way they were managed and distributed in a manner which made residents vulnerable to, and dependant on, the seemingly arbitrary instruction and whims of those in charge.
This vulnerability was exasperated by the feeling that the rules and regulations with regard to the Direct Provision centre, as outlined by the RIA, applied only to the residents. This was perhaps best illustrated by Michael’s experiences when trying to secure the resources and facilitates residents were entitled to according to the RIA’s own house rules and regulations. In particular, Michael informed me of his attempts to establish a common room in a centre in which he had previously resided.

Michael: We request emm, common rooms what you call it… Because RIA they have a green book. Green book like Gadhafi, he have green book also. They said in the book all hostels must have common rooms, and what you call it… ehh ehh…

Valentine: Social room.

Michael: Yeah. Any hostel should have this one.

Dominic: So this is a standard they do have?

Michael: Yeah they have. So we asked RIA, ‘we don’t have’. Written in your green book, page number, blah, blah, blah, there’s supposed to be common rooms and entertainment things and we need one established in Easter Road. You know what they answer us?... I have the document, I’ll show you. They said ‘Easter Road hostel is in the middle of the town and in the middle of the town is…’

Stephan: ‘Many club’.

Michael: ‘Many club! So you can join any club you like’.

Michael: So see, they have a policy and they won’t follow it. So it’s something… you know, disgrace. They do whatever they like. This green book is just, just… (voice trails off).
In this situation it is clear that Michael’s discontent goes beyond the lack of a common room and other facilities. It is the way in which these resources are distributed and his relation with those that distribute them that seems to have most angered Michael and which has constituted him as an almost powerless subject. The rules and regulations that constrain Michael at every turn are not applied equally but arbitrarily, they can be employed to conduct him, but cannot be employed by him to conduct the conduct of others. The relations through which this arbitrary power is applied and the subsequent frustrations of residents are encapsulated by Michael’s use of the phrase ‘the executioner is the judge’. Michael repeated this phrase often and it was never contested within the group. It is a phrase evocative of an omnipotent sovereign power. However, while there are elements of sovereignty in the seemingly arbitrary way this power is exercised, it also allows for, and employs, mechanisms of hierarchy and incentive in order to discipline those subject to it.

Throughout the fieldwork there emerged recurring examples of centre management and staff employing their control of resources and their access to arbitrary power in order to conduct the behaviour of residents in a disciplinary way. Most of the time, this was achieved subtly, through the provision of certain privileges. For example, Awn informed me that residents who did not cause trouble for the staff or nurtured a good relationship with them would benefit: ‘if they know you, know you are not troublesome, then OK, you will get’. Similarly, Ali informed me of how he tried to maintain good relationships with the staff in his centre because ‘then they will do for you. You know, keep food. Even heat it for you’. Michael and Stephen told me of a manager who would record an individual’s attendance when they were absent, if he liked them. Such attempts to incentivise residents’ behaviour with rewards could take on a more sinister dynamic when combined with aspects of surveillance. Awn insisted that, although he was no longer resident there, the new management at Tannadice
was using rewards to recruit asylum seekers to inform on their fellow residents. His information was obtained from friends at Tannadice with whom he had maintained contact.

Awn: So all must be careful around who you talk. Many are with the manager on these things. And if you speak against him. He will know.

Dominic: So other residents will tell him about protests, complaints?

Awn: All these things. There is one man, Pakistani man who will never sign in. He is gone for one month, two month. Never sign. But it’s OK for him because the manager will never report.

Dominic: Two months?

Awn: Even more.

Dominic: And the manager reports others if they go for a week or…

Awn: (interrupting) One day! One day missing and you can be removed. But not this man. So you know, when he is in the room, you just, you know, you will just keep it to yourself.

Here we can see how a system of rewards can be employed as a disciplinary tool of surveillance and even self-regulation, redolent of Foucault’s description of how the Panopticon functions (see Chapter 2, section 2.2). Foucault outlines how the Panopticon's design conducts its inmates through a ‘visible and unverifiable’ application of power (1991, p.201). These same principles are at work in a situation where residents within a centre suspect the management of using rewards to gather information on them and their activities; even in a situation where no informant is present, uncertainty may cause residents to self-regulate, what Awn described as ‘keep(ing) it to yourself’. What is most important in such
cases of surveillance is that ‘the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so’ (ibid.).

Such attempts to modulate an individual’s conduct through the distribution of resources and indulgences are indicative of a disciplinary mechanism that Foucault labels ‘gratification-punishment’. Foucault claims that, in certain cases, implementing a system of judgement and reward can both incentivise and ‘normalise’ individuals. He references the idea that one must endeavour to make rewards more frequent than penalties, the lazy being more encouraged by the desire to be rewarded in the same way as the diligent than by the fear of punishment (Demia, cited in Foucault 1991, p.180).

A system that also includes rewards, even small ones like access to heated food, creates a more positive economy than one based purely on punishment and is less open to critique from outside sources.

The gratification-punishment dynamics outlined by participants as being implemented in their centres seemed to have varied purposes. They could be a means of surveillance as outlined by Awn. They could be used to create hierarchies derived from residents’ behaviour within the system as outlined below. Or, they could be employed for pure expediency in efforts to instil and maintain control within a centre. An example of the latter purpose can be seen in Michael’s account of a residents’ struggle against the imposition of a new management team at Tannadice. During this struggle the new management sought to bribe residents through a series or rewards and promises in order to obtain control of the centre. This incident is elaborated on in Chapter 6, section 4.

During less pressing times, centre management can employ a gratification-punishment dynamic through hierarchical observation mechanisms similar to those employed in the
examination. Through the implementation of a system of privileges and punishments, where certain residents are subjected to the full effect of the rules and regulations and others are indulged and given easy access to resources, a hierarchy of distribution emerges along with the incentive to move up that hierarchy. So, for example, Ali is incentivised to be courteous and compliant with staff in order that they keep his food back for him. Michael is incentivised not to cause trouble for the new manager through both the promise of a variety of resources but also through pressure put upon him by other residents at the behest of the new manager (see Chapter 6, section 4). Stephan and Michael both recommend having a good relationship with certain managers on the grounds that they will then ‘sign for you’, recording your attendance if absent from the centre. Ali even suggested that long term residents who have built up a trust with management would be more likely to be allocated single rooms and suffer fewer invasions of privacy.

Thus a hierarchy is established, with long term, trusted, well behaved, even informing residents at the top and ‘troublesome’ residents at the bottom; resources and indulgences are allocated accordingly. Foucault identifies such ‘economies’ as ‘operating a differentiation that is not of acts, but of individuals themselves’ (1991, p.181). Awn indicated that such hierarchies could be, and are, used to divide residents and prevent solidarity within the centres.

Awn: In some hostel systems they will try to break community. You see some people and their things are going OK and others they are broken from it.

Dominic: So how would they break it?

Awn: Well some they will facilitate. You know facilitate some and not others. That you know, different approaches. So residents, they have respect from the management and some others get it hard from the management.
It is clear from the accounts of participants that the distribution of resources within Direct Provision centres was employed as means of hierarchizing and conducting them. Through the provision of various rewards and indulgences, and without recourse to any higher body or set of rules, residents are hierarchized and incentivised to behave in a certain manner. These practices belong primarily to the gratification side of the gratification-punishment dynamic. However, practices of punishment were also recounted by participants, the most common of which concerned power over residents’ mobility.

1.3 The Implementation of Discipline via Control of Mobility

Perhaps the starkest example of how those administering the Direct Provision system are able to conduct conduct and even manufacture compliance through a gratification-punishment mechanism, can be found in the threat and implementation of transfers. Although this practice has been consistently denied by the RIA (O’Sullivan, 2010), every participant in this research who spoke about the matter insisted that threats of and actual transfers were carried out regularly as a means of disciplining perceived troublemakers. These claims appear to have been confirmed by the transfer of two residents from Limerick’s Mount Trenchard Direct Provision centre in August 2014. The two men were involved in organising a protest at the centre regarding issues of maintenance, food, overcrowding and the conduct of the centre management (O’Shea and Raleigh 2014). Following the protest, they were involved in negotiations with centre management alongside representatives of Doras Luimní. On the same day, shortly after negotiations concluded, both men received transfer letters from the RIA and were given ’10 minutes to pack’ before being taken by Gardaí to new centres (ibid.).
The implementation of transfers as a means of control broadens the domain of the
hierarchization implicit in the examination and gratification-punishment mechanisms beyond
individual cases and centres to create a national hierarchy across the country. Those who find
themselves at the bottom of this hierarchy become pooled within some of the country’s most
notorious centres, while those near the top may be able to avail of transfers to places they find
more agreeable.

One particular centre, Tannadice, was well known among asylum seekers in Limerick and
beyond as a ‘punishment block’ where asylum seekers deemed to have consistently broken
the rules were exiled.

Awn: Yes, the people you will find in Tannadice can be divided up into figures.
People who cross the borders, ehm when their case is still in process, it is not allowed,
so they send them to Tannadice as a punishment. People who make trouble in other
hostels and… Eh yeah.

Dominic: These are the two yeah?

Awn: These are the main two yeah.

Dominic: And of course, this is illegal you know… To use poor conditions as a
punishment, but people I speak to…

Awn: (interrupting) Well if you ask any asylum seeker in this country. Ask him about
Tannadice, and he will say ‘yeah I know Guantanamo’.

Dominic: Really?

Awn: Yeah.

Dominic: Even asylum seekers outside of Limerick?
Awn: Yes they know it like that. It is a place of punishment.

The notoriety of Tannadice seemed to emanate from a few of its features, but primarily its isolation. According to Michael, there is ‘nobody there, you don’t see anybody, even you don’t see cow or horse, you don’t see nobody there. It really is a stressful place’. This isolation did not merely serve as a deterrent to those threatened with a transfer there; it could also be seen to have a functional purpose. Foucault identifies such spaces as utilising what he labels ‘the art of distribution’. This is a disciplinary technique that avails of spatial isolation in order to ‘neutralise’ outside inconveniences and allow the management to prevent abuses of conduct as soon as they arise (Foucault 1991, p.142-143). Mountz et al. (2012) have commented on how techniques of distribution and isolation can be utilised in order to cut migrants off from the outside world and isolate them within disciplinary spaces. They claim that migrant detention often works by mobilizing and containing bodies through confinement, remoteness and surveillance (2012, p.6). In order to optimise these techniques, detention centres are often located in spaces where geographic isolation constrains or severs migrants’ connections to support networks (ibid.). Furthermore, Mountz et al. document that mechanisms of surveillance, confining architecture and various spatial and temporal controls employed in these centres become embedded in migrant’s routines and lives.

This isolation, along with reports of overcrowding and a population of ‘dangerous’ residents, has created the impression among participants that Tannadice is an uncomfortable, intimidating and dangerous place to live, serving as a ‘place of punishment’ for ‘troublesome’ asylum seekers. Awn told me about some of the troubles he witnessed during his time there and how, in spite of the occasionally forceful implementation of rules, the centre management was frequently unable to control residents.
Awn: Yeah, when I was there, there were many fights between residents, and the Gardaí they come, most of the time they come to hostel to check these out.

Dominic: Would you say the Gardaí got called often?

Awn: Huh?

Dominic: Like once a week?

Awn: Twice! Twice a week. Sometimes more. The place… This place it is always on fire. Always on fire.

Michael shared a similar experience, claiming that Tannadice was potentially a dangerous and frightening place to live. He described how he was placed in a room with two ‘alcoholics’ who ‘if they just drink four cans, they totally lost control.’

Michael: For me it was different because in my life I had rough time so it will be easy for me to deal with alcoholics. But for other persons, like if I make general, for other persons if he didn’t have rough life he will suffer… Really. He will be scared.

Dominic: Yeah?

Michael: He will not sleep in the night. He will be afraid he will get stabbed or something.

Being sent to live in such a place seemed to be an intimidating prospect for most men, let alone children. Yet, in spite of this fearsome reputation and the RIA’s own strict guidelines, Awn informed me of a 17 year old, unaccompanied minor whom he had encountered whilst resident in the centre. Sceptical at first, some brief research revealed that the agency’s own publications listed a single boy aged between 13 and 17 as being resident at Tannadice during the period Awn mentioned (RIA 2010b, p.16).
The threat and implementation of transfers was not limited to Tannadice. During a LASRN meeting Abet informed the group of how a clash with a centre manager in his previous accommodation had resulted in the Gardai being called and his eventual transfer to Limerick.

Notes taken from LASRN meeting 6:

Abet says that the manager had been insulting him and describes how he was particularly angered by the manager’s ‘racist’ comments about Iran: ‘he call the Guards. They say to me I will be transferred, you know, to Limerick. Limerick has a bad reputation you know. Stab, stab, stab! But I don’t care. I want to go from here’.

Similar use of transfers, as a mechanism for hierarchizing, isolating and inducing compliance among residents has been documented by Nick Gill in his study of detention centres in the UK. Resonating with the claims of participants in this study that a life in Direct Provision is akin to a life incarcerated, Gill’s research compares what he calls the ‘forced movement’ of migrants with the purposefully ‘humiliating’ and ‘dehumanising’ practice of transferring prisoners within the penal system (2009a). Gill contends that such practices serve the purpose of ‘performing’ the authority of those doing the moving and re-enforcing the identity of the inmate as a ‘subjugated body’ (2009a p.191). He references the work of Svensson and Svensson which highlights how penal authorities recognise transportation as ‘an important part of the dynamics of the prison system’, as a means of subduing prison populations, maintaining differentiation and security and breaking the rules rituals and ties between the prisoner population (2006, cited in Gill 2009a, p.191).

With regard to migrants, and resonating with the gratification-punishment mechanism that this study identifies, Gill also highlights how transfers or ‘ghosting’ are used as part of a wider regulatory ‘sanction/reward’ system intended to promote compliant behaviour (2009a, p.190). He documents how these upheavals can be extremely ‘disorientating and
dehumanising’ and often sever vital connections between asylum seekers and support groups, friends and even lawyers, leading to an undermining of an individual’s security (2009a, p.192). The constant threat of ‘forced mobility’ can also have negative psychological consequences for individuals. Gill’s work documents how such a threat can create great levels of stress and anxiety and can even have deeper, more damaging effects for a category of people who have undergone great trauma and who often associate stillness with safety (2009b).

Although transfers seemed to be employed primarily as a means of punishment, some participants also indicated that they could be used to reward residents. For example, ‘troublesome’ asylum seekers who had been sent to Tannadice could redeem themselves through good behaviour and ask to be transferred to a different centre. Awn claimed that ‘you know that if you behave well’ for six months in Tannadice ‘you will get transfer back in to the city’. In his conflict with the new management team at Tannadice, Michael’s eventual compliance was rewarded with a transfer away from the centre and into one where he was given a single room.

Another form of mobility that could be regulated according to the conduct of participants and their relationship with centre management was the freedom to leave the centre overnight. Deidre Conlon and Nick Gill have documented how residents who break ‘the law of the RIA’ and stay out all night face the prospect of being transferred to centres with less ‘freedom’ and poorer conditions (2013, p.250). Residents who are deemed to have removed themselves from their bed can be reallocated and their monetary allowance stopped (ibid.). However, if a resident enjoys a good relationship with the management of a centre, such absences may be overlooked. Michael told me about how he had built such a relationship with one of the old managers at Tannadice and how this enabled him to go and visit his infant daughter.
Michael: As we say it’s all on the management. Very tight? You will suffer more. Very small? You will have, you know… I remember in Tannadice, I was visiting my child for three four weeks before I came back.

Dominic: And it was OK?

Michael: Yeah, he says ‘of course go see your daughter like’, so it’s different. When you see this Easter Road manager they say you cannot go, you have to sign here every day.

Dominic: So they just say no?

Michael: They don’t say no. They just say ‘sign here daily, or if you don’t I will just send it. I send it every week to RIA. If you don’t sign, I don’t know what happen to you. It’s not my problem. I’m working here, I have business.’

Stephan similarly advocated building good relationships with staff on the grounds that ‘they will let you go sometime. Dublin, Galway. I have friends there’.

This absolute and conditional control over residents’ mobility represents a powerful tool for modulating their conduct. Awn claimed that the threat of transfer and even deportation, was ‘always there for you’ and was responsible for stifling protests and resistance within Direct Provision centres and against the system. He told me how he believed that fear of this forced mobility was the main reason why asylum seekers had not yet mobilised in large numbers, elaborating

if you try anything: medical card, basic education, meals three times a day and this kind of accommodation… A lot of things. Plus you are complaining about the service sometimes. Moreover, you know, there is the management against you if you
break our law, not the law. Like the rules of the hostel, if you do not follow what they want you to do, they use the word of deportation or transfer.

Dominic: They will threaten you with these things?

Awn: Yeah and that’s why they keep most student… Sorry most of the residents silent, from seeking their rights. You understand?

Michael voiced similar concerns when discussing his attempts to change aspects of the system through his correspondences with the Minister of Justice and Equality. The profoundly unequal nature of the power relations as they exist within the system and the arbitrary way power is exercised, ensured that Michael’s efforts were not just frustrating, but also potentially dangerous.

We don’t have third party to complain. The executioner is the judge. So we are like, anything you complain, come back to you. And maybe you will get punishment. Transfer.

Such testimonies are a strong indication of the relations that exist within the space of the Direct Provision centre. Margaret Malloch and Elizabeth Stanley have argued that through being subjected to the threat of detention and transfer in this way, asylum seekers are ‘dominated’ and pushed towards the very bottom of a ‘global hierarchy of mobility’ (2011 p.55). It is through the construction and maintenance of a system of hierarchies that certain mechanisms of control are made viable and operational. Rewards and punishments are distributed according to such hierarchies, in ways that incentivise residents to comply with staff, management and the system. The residents have little course to appeal in this system as, in Michael’s words, ‘the executioner is the judge’. All participants, aside from Awn, indicated that they felt required to engage with this system and modulate their behaviour to
some degree. Foucault argues that disciplinary power utilises these systems and mechanisms to fashion ‘analysable’ and ‘manipulable’ individuals; its purpose being the creation of ‘docile bodies’ of increased utility and obedience (1991, p.136).

The testimonies presented above explain how the Direct Provision centre functions, but why does it function in this way? Who benefits from the disciplinary mechanisms and systems of hierarchy documented? In whose interests are docile bodies created? Why has there been no outcry about these practices amongst the wider Irish population?

2. The Legitimisation of Direct Provision

In order to understand why the Direct Provision centre functions in the manner outlined above, it is necessary to understand that its organisation is contingent upon a plurality of interests, objectives and relations. Foucault asserts that institutions and the foundations upon which they are based arise from a series of seemingly random interactions between numerous ‘micro practices’ (Bevir 1999b, p.352). As such, it would be impossible to focus on the space of the Direct Provision centre without acknowledging that it is but one point within the wider Irish, and indeed global, asylum system. Unfortunately, the vast amount of actors, organisations and governments engaged in the global asylum system makes compiling a comprehensive account of how each relate to and shape the intensely disciplinary space of the Direct Provision centre an immense task. As such, this section merely outlines some, but by no means all, of the key pressures, influences and modes of thought that converge to constitute the Direct Provision centre as it is experienced and has been outlined by participants. Beginning with the individual staff members that maintain the immediate disciplinary environment, this section examines how they, and a multitude of others, are tied into a vast web of relations that constitute national and global systems of asylum and control.
2.1 Immediate Staff

Towards the culmination of my interview with Awn, he became highly agitated as he considered how people he had never had contact with ‘decide my case, my life’. He repeatedly questioned how someone he had never met, and who ‘can enjoy everything’ in his life, could contrive to make his own existence so difficult. This was a recurring theme amongst participants who could not understand why Irish people, who they generally regarded to be ‘very good people’ could ignore, and even participate in the maintenance of the ‘inhuman’ Direct Provision system.

Such incomprehension raises an interesting issue. How do the thousands of people involved in the administration of Ireland’s Direct Provision system all conspire to create the disciplinary system outlined above? How do working men and women come to engage daily in practices of invading people’s privacy, withholding their food and resources and threatening them with homelessness and transfers to violent, isolated places? Such disciplinary practices are not official RIA policy and in some cases actually contravene their own regulations and stated objectives. The implementation of such a disciplinary regime can also be considered to be in contradiction with the humanitarian spirit that underlies the Irish state’s obligations in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Lavenex 2001, p.30).

In order to understand why those who administer Direct Provision centres employ the disciplinary mechanisms of control outlined above, we can return to the archetypal disciplinary institution so often evoked by participants: the prison. Foucault believed the modern day prison to be the prime example of a ‘paradox of intentionality’, a place where the institution’s social function became obscured and secondary to other processes. He argued
that the prison’s public objective of rehabilitation had been undermined and frustrated by a strategy that effectuates punishment (Heller 1996, p.89). Foucault claims that this state of affairs persists because those who worked within and administered the prison were convinced that they were serving its stated rehabilitative purpose, even while operating a disciplinary and essentially punitive system.

The institution’s first program, its initial finality, is on the contrary, displayed and used as justification, while the strategic configurations are not often clear in the very eyes of those who occupy a place and play only a role there (Foucault 1971, cited in Heller 1996, p.89).

Thus, the prison’s staff and management are not concerned with how their combined activities actually manifest themselves, rather they are focused on their own individual roles, content that they are carrying out the institution’s stated objectives and purposes. This phenomenon was identified by Zygmunt Bauman as vital to the eroding of the individual’s moral responsibility to the ‘other’. He argues that modern rationalities, bureaucracies and technologies make it possible for individual workers to focus on their role within a system and to distance themselves from those subject to their actions. This distance is vital to exercises of inhumanity which could not take place if the multitude of actors necessary for the exercise were to come face to face with the human subjects affected. Bauman argues that modern society manufactures

'moral sleeping pills' made available by modern bureaucracy and modern technology.

The natural invisibility of causal connections in a complex system of interaction, and the 'distancing' of the unsightly or morally repelling outcomes of action to the point of rendering them invisible to the actor (1988, p.26).
This distance is created in a variety of ways, through the definition and dehumanisation of certain groups or their physical concentration and separation from the rest of the population (1988, p.190). For those who necessarily have to come face to face with the abject and separated subject, Bauman argues that modern institutions create psychological distance where physical distance cannot be obtained (1988, p.196). In this way, actors are encouraged to focus on the task at hand and their role within the system and are insulated from their actions through a bureaucratic division of labour and imbued with a 'technical responsibility' (1988, p.101).

This can be seen in the administration of the Direct Provision centre, where the cook, security guard, cleaner and centre manager all have their own roles to play and objectives to achieve, all reliant on each other and shielded from individual responsibility. They are also all subject to various pressures applied by their own superiors, to mechanisms of surveillance, performance evaluation and, to a certain extent, their conduct and adherence to the rules and regulations laid out by the RIA is also monitored. Thus, within the centre, the staff are also caught up in the disciplinary regime. Foucault claims that such a state of affairs is vital to the effective functioning of a disciplinary system which seeks to create a ‘network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally’, a space in which each supervisor is in turn under supervision (1991, p.176). Those who work within the system are also subject to public discourses which construct and objectify the asylum seekers they work with as national abjects, creating a comfortable psychological distance between the two groups and between the actions of staff and their human consequences. Such systems do not leave a lot of space for personal morality or contemplation of the way in which one’s technical proficiency might play an integral part of a wider disciplinary and ‘inhuman’ system.
2.2 The Irish Public

If the moral blindness and technical obligations induced by modern systems of discipline and bureaucracy go some way to explaining why those working within Direct Provision centres participate and are caught up in invasive and punitive practices, the question arises as to why the rest of Irish society permits such a system to continue. Participants indicated that they believed Irish people to be oblivious to their plight. They constantly requested that I ‘go inside’ the centres, in order to see and document what their lives were like. Some also felt that the Irish government was intentionally isolating asylum seekers in order to hide them from the rest of the population. Again, this resonates with Bauman’s findings regarding the production of distance and how this facilitates a dearth of moral behaviour towards the other. Bauman argues that during the Holocaust, in spite of propaganda that sought to criminalise and dehumanise the Jewish people, most Germans were unable to reconcile the ‘abstract’ and abject figure presented to them, with their Jewish neighbours and friends with whom they remained in proximity (1988, p.188). This led Heinrich Himmler to bemoan that, while all party members agreed that the Jewish race needed to be exterminated, all 80 million Germans, even those in the SS, knew at least one ‘decent’, ‘first class Jew’ whom they wished to save (1988, p.187). The transportation of the Jewish people first to ghettos and then to concentration camps eventually created the distance required for escalation to the final solution.

While acknowledging the Holocaust is an atrocity of unparalleled nature, similarities regarding the creation and importance of distance can be found in Direct Provision. The abjection of asylum seekers in Ireland is a distance making process in itself, creating what Imogen Tyler has identified as ‘a politics of disgust’ which ‘creates boundaries and generates
distance' (2013, p.21-22). This is compounded by asylum seekers’ physical and financial isolation which ensures that the Irish public become familiar with the homogenous and abject asylum seekers of public discourse, rather than the individual human beings who live in Direct Provision centres. This distance also ensures that many Irish people have no idea of what the reality of life within such a disciplinary system entails. Valentine expressed his belief that if this distance were to be eroded, changes would immediately follow: ‘if everybody seen, if everybody could see, they would not allow it. They would stop it for sure’. Ali felt that the whole asylum system conspired to create distance between asylum seekers and the rest of the Irish population who he regarded as ‘good people’.

The problem is from the system, not from the people. I love to shake the Irish people (gestures with handshake). I like. They are very good people… The system does not encourage the migrants and local people to live in harmony. If they live it, the ground, it does not allow them. It is hindering. The system. For instance within the system, €19.10 while others live on €188? This is impossible.

Rashad believed that Irish people were focused on their own lives and obligations and as such were not able to understand, or willing to help asylum seekers.

He is coming he know nothing from school, high school. He get his business. He sit and think everything is right. Good for him. He think all the people are like him you know? He don’t feel. He talk to people like me, ‘why I help him?’, ‘why he get it? So it’s not your business. You are working, you have to do your job. That’s it.

Thus, participants indicated that a gap existed between themselves and the rest of the Irish population. A physical separation that combined with financial and cultural isolation in creating distance between both groups and cementing the abject status of asylum seekers.
One further possible explanation for the continued functioning of the Direct Provision system, relates to the potential benefits it contains for Irish society. Foucault claims that it is not just an institution’s employees that benefit from the disjunction between its declared objectives and its actual operation. He argues that when certain institutions function in a specific manner, they can benefit interest groups in wider society. Again using the example of the prison, Foucault highlights how the disciplinary and punitive mechanisms it employs may have failed to reduce criminality, but succeeded in producing an economy of ‘delinquency’ that was of benefit to others within the population. This delinquency stretched beyond the prison walls, creating employment and profit, incorporating a wider network of ideas and interests.

The carceral system combines in a single figure discourses and architectures, coercive regulations and scientific propositions, real social effects and invisible utopias, programmes for correcting delinquents and mechanisms that re-enforce delinquency. Is not the supposed failure part of the functioning of the prison? (Foucault 1991, p.271).

Similarly, the global asylum system has created an economy of asylum, producing what Imogen Tyler describes as ‘asylum markets’ throughout the world (2013, p.94). When one considers the role that each individual Direct Provision centre plays in the maintenance of these asylum markets, it is apparent that the disciplinary space of the centre and the establishment of order within constitute the essential foundation blocks of a multi-billion industry. From the weekly wage obtained by a centre cleaner, to the €4.79 million, received in 2013 by the 'East Coast Catering' company (Deegan 2014a), to the vast sums extracted through global systems of illegal migrant labour and the parallel privatisation and securitisation of asylum and detention (Tyler 2013, p.93-95), it is in the interest of many that the Direct Provision system continues to operate in the manner outlined in this chapter.
Foucault argues that such cases do not constitute some overarching conspiracy to preserve an unjust system; rather it is simply the case that social forces and individuals are unlikely to pay attention to, let alone interrupt, a system that continues to benefit them.

Capitalists and state officials do not have to consciously recognize that the prison system is punishing instead of rehabilitating; they need only recognize that their own needs are more easily met with a delinquency-producing system in operation than without one (Heller 1996, p.90).

Similarly, the vast amounts of money flowing through the Direct Provision system and asylum markets in general, are meeting the needs of some people. This raises the question; if not the residents themselves, who are the people whose needs were being met by Ireland’s Direct Provision system? This was something that was speculated upon by participants frequently.

2.3 National and Global Interests

During the fieldwork, and especially within the LDPDF, there was a strong sense among participants that the Direct Provision system was of significant financial benefit to some people. At various times, politicians, the government, businessmen, private companies and NGOs were all identified by participants as profiting from the system. Abdul felt that the Irish government was benefiting financially from the system through payments from the European Union; he stated that ‘It is the government, if the government is not happy it will change’. Isaac told me how he felt that there was ‘much money involved’ in the system and that in order to understand Direct Provision better, I should ‘look to the money’. Michael claimed that the Irish Direct Provision system was the result of collusion between politicians and ‘international business’.
Definitely, definitely! That’s why some of those people who make decisions, those people who drive the country like this, that’s why; because they get profit! If the politician don’t get profit, he never ever drive the country like that.

The work of Nicholas De Genova links participants’ feelings about being exploited for profit with the ways in which they are made separate from the general population. He outlines how modern, neoliberal states implement various policies and controls in order to facilitate the global exploitation of labour and argues that

the state mediates the capital-labour relation through tactical deployments of law, policy and policing in a manner that ensures the relegation of diverse formulations of transnational human mobility to a variegated juridical spectrum of ‘legalities’ and ‘illegalities’ (2014, p.1184).

This distinction between those who are ‘legal’ and those who are ‘illegal’ is affirmed by what De Genova refers to as ‘the border spectacle’. By engaging in practices associated with sovereign power, such as deportations and border controls, De Genova argues that Western states create and re-enforce the ‘deportability’ and 'illegality' of certain migrants; shaping the employment possibilities and status of those who remain and making them more amenable to exploitation (2009, p.456). However, this border spectacle is not limited to sovereign borders. De Genova asserts that within the state there exists ‘a proliferation of spaces for the production of the border spectacle’ (2014, p.1183). He argues that ‘the border is effectively everywhere, so also is the spectacle of its enforcement and therefore its violation, rendering migrant illegality evermore unsettlingly ubiquitous’ (ibid.).

The disciplinary space of the Direct Provision centre can be interpreted as a form of ‘border spectacle’ that serves to distance residents from the rest of the population. Through the invasive practices of examination, the construction of a ‘case’, the creation of hierarchies,
controls over mobility and the fostering of financial and physical isolation, Direct Provision residents are categorised and marked out from the rest of the population as abject, ‘illegal’ and ultimately deportable. Although technically resident in local communities, asylum seekers’ lives within Direct Provision veil them with a cloak of separation; what De Genova calls ‘a kind of hiding in plain sight’ (2013, p.15). Participants rallied against this separation, arguing for the introduction of a system of ‘self-accommodation’ that would see asylum seekers housed and integrated within local communities. Valentine argued that ‘it’s not human practice to control people... Even if they are worried, there is no excuse to put people in one place. They should get them in the state and give them separate places’.

Although none of the participants directly indicated that they felt their life within the Direct Provision centre and the creation of distance facilitated the international exploitation of labour in the manner outlined by De Genova, a feeling persisted that many were profiting from their unhappiness. However, identifying exactly who these people were seemed to confound participants. While Michael asserted that ‘the politician’ and the ‘business man’ were making ‘much money’ from the system, he conceded that ‘it is very hard to find as a normal person, to prove’. Similarly, Valentine felt that ‘there is a huge question mark over who gets benefit’. Awn insisted that Ireland’s asylum system was a highly profitable business and related to me how this notion had inspired one of the banners he had created for a protest. Later he would proudly show me the newspaper clipping in which it was featured.

You know one of our slogans when we went on demonstration that time? ‘Stop using us as a business’. I remember the camera man was interested in that slogan and he takes a picture of it. Another: ‘It is not fair to live twice oppressed’. Another: ‘Stop trading us’. But this first one he takes the photo of.
Although participants did not specifically identify those groups and individuals benefiting from the system, they were certainly correct in their assumption that the establishment of Direct Provision has opened up many profitable opportunities. Naomi Klein has identified how neoliberal states have moved beyond selling off and opening up public sector companies to market profiteering and are now in the process of ‘outsourcing’ ‘core’ state functions ‘so intrinsic to the concept of governing that the idea of handing them to private corporations challenge[s] what it mean[s] to be a nation state’ (2006, p.288). Klein identifies control over a state’s borders as one of these ‘core’ functions that have been opened to ‘market logic’ and which offer up the possibility of ‘instant riches’ (2006, p.288-289).

As suspected by participants in this study, many private companies and individuals have profited immensely from the privatisation of sections of the asylum process. Some of the companies who have contracts with the RIA are registered in offshore tax havens while some are registered as private unlimited companies which means they are under no obligation to file annual accounts (O’Brien 2014b). This, along with the obfuscating practices companies often indulge in, makes it difficult to ascertain exactly which individuals are benefiting from the privatisation of these core functions and to what degree. For example, Mosney, who operate the Direct Provision centre at the former Bultins resort in Meath, have been the largest recipients of government money, totalling €105 million, since the Direct Provision system was introduced. Mosney’s shareholders include Louth businessman Phelim McCloskey and the Louth Company ‘El Molino Hotels Ltd’. The secretary of ‘El Molino Hotels Ltd’ is Phelim McCloskey and the company has two shareholders ‘Sonning Unlimited’ and ‘Tymon Company Secretaries Ltd’, both of which are registered in the Isle of Man. Mosney itself became an unlimited company in 2012 (ibid.).

Although the profiteers remained largely out of view, participants believed they retained high degrees of influence. This assumption seemed to be at the root of some participants’
reservations about the possibility of achieving the systematic change that they desired.

Michael and Stephan both argued that any proposed changes to the system would meet with strong opposition if they threatened profits.

  Michael: They will not let anyone change this. Because if I’m getting good business from this one and you have your research with another idea (laughs). You damage my business (laughs).

  Dominic: Yeah?

  Michael: I will do whatever it takes to stop your idea.

Perhaps this outlook goes someway to explaining the pessimism many participants exhibited with regard to whether this study could bring about systematic change. The obscure and omnipotent nature of those groups deemed to be benefiting from the system made identifying them intensely problematic. This contrasted starkly with participants’ own visibility and vulnerability.

3. Conclusion

The first section of this chapter outlines and analyses the space of the Direct Provision centre as illustrated by participants’ testimonies and experiences. This space is revealed to be intensely disciplinary. Through their accounts of surveillance, invasions of their privacy and the creation of their ‘case’, a system of observation, judgement and self-regulation emerges that is evocative of the disciplinary examination as outlined by Foucault. The hierarchies created from the examination facilitate the implementation of a gratification-punishment dynamic. This dynamic was evident in participants’ accounts of the arbitrary controls
exercised over residents, primarily controls over the distribution of resources and the implementation of enforced mobility.

This chapter’s focus on disciplinary mechanisms of control is a result of the emphasis participants placed on these practices. The focus does not imply that disciplinary power is the only modality of power active within the Direct Provision centre, or that it is the predominant means of control employed in the wider asylum system. Sovereign elements of control, implicit in the border spectacle and the exercise of arbitrary power, have already been touched upon in this chapter. Governmental techniques of conduct are also evident in the liberal self-reproduction required of asylum seekers throughout the processes of ‘the examination’ and also in the manner in which wider asylum policy acts as a ‘politicized system of deterrence and control’ (Titley 2012). Governmental considerations and incentives have also been documented as infusing and shaping general Irish asylum policy and the wider Direct Provision system (Conlon 2010b). Although not readily identified by participants in this fieldwork, such examples of governmental power can be detected throughout the organisation and administration of Direct Provision. Thus, sovereign and governmental modalities of power can also be understood as essential to the functioning of the Direct Provision system and can be seen to overlap and support the disciplinary mechanisms outlined in this chapter.

The second section of the chapter looked at some of the key pressures and influences that participants saw as being responsible for shaping the disciplinary space outlined in the first section. The primary areas of focus were the staff as well as the wider public and national and global interests. This section illustrated how modern disciplinary systems can shape the perceptions and conduct of those who work within, administer, tolerate and benefit from them. They can manufacture distance, a focus on technical responsibility, delusions regarding the system’s function and purpose and they can deliver immense benefits.
Finally, I speculated with regard to who these beneficiaries were by locating the disciplinary space of the Direct Provision centre within much wider global processes. Looking at the centres in this way, one can see how booming asylum markets are reliant on the maintenance of discipline and order within individual Direct Provision centres in order to extract profits on a global scale. Thus, it is not just through the compliance induced among residents that the various mechanisms outlined in this chapter are said to be ‘disciplinary’, but also through their production of utility. The utility in this case arises from the profitable role that asylum seekers play in wider global systems of asylum, migration and labour.

This discussion is necessarily shaped by the experiences and opinions of participants and therefore omits those aspects that are not articulated by them. For example, there was no mention of the importance of diplomatic and international pressures in the formulation of asylum policy. Examples of such diplomatic pressure include France’s censure of Italy after the latter granted temporary residence to migrants fleeing Libya and Tunisia (BBC News 2011) and the letter sent to Greece, threatening to reinstate emergency internal border controls if borders with Turkey weren’t tightened (Davenport 2012). In this case such omissions were inevitable when one considers limited perspectives of participants in contrast with the vast web of actors, motivations and relations that constitute and shape global systems of asylum, migration and labour. The sheer immensity of this web daunted participants, who seemed aware of their role as cogs in a wider machine, yet found it incomprehensible as to why fellow human beings would permit the Direct Provision system to function in the manner outlined.

Being subject to the mechanics of such a complex system seemed confusing and frustrating for participants. Yet they were aware of their immediate experiences within the centre and were also fully able to identify and articulate the ways in which these experiences affected them. In the next chapter I will outline how living within a disciplinary space that distanced
them from the rest of the population could be an intensely subject forming experience for participants. In doing so, I illustrate the impact such experiences had on their mental wellbeing and sense of self.
Chapter 5: ‘No way to be the same’: Subjectification and State of Mind in Direct Provision

In Chapter 1 of this study I documented how research has indicated that time spent within the Direct Provision system can have a variety of adverse effects on the mental health of asylum seekers. This chapter outlines how some of these issues can be seen as directly related to the manner in which the Direct Provision system functions and takes a closer look at the conditions of their emergence. Through the testimony of participants, the chapter illustrates how the disciplinary system of Direct Provision, as outlined in the previous chapter, can objectify and affect its residents in certain shared ways. Section 1 examines experiences of subjection related by participants. It documents the ways in which they were made subject through their lives within the Direct Provision system through processes which produced them as inactive and dependant and drained their masculinity. In section 2, I document the way in which these experiences can be intensely distressing for participants, who struggled to articulate the feelings and subjectivities produced by their experiences of Direct Provision. This section draws on the phenomenological work of Beck et al. (2003) to illustrate the intense emotions of hopelessness and despair expressed by many of the participants.

Although this chapter presents a somewhat pessimistic outlook and primarily focuses on the negative effects and subjectivities produced by the Direct Provision system, this is not to imply that residents were entirely passive subjects. Participants also articulated the ways in which they evaded and even shaped the system through their own thoughts and actions and how the system provoked and produced in them subjectivities which encouraged challenges to the system. These everyday revolutions and moments of excess are the central theme of Chapter 6.
1. Being Made Different: Experiences of Inactivity, Dependency and Emasculaton

Throughout this study, participants described how their experiences of Direct Provision impinged upon their lives by dictating their present circumstances and limiting their future aspirations. They also spoke of the ways in which their lives within the system shaped their sense of self, changing them in the process. Ali referred to this process as 'being made different' and it serves to emphasise the productive capabilities of certain applications of power. This section details some of the ways in which this production was achieved, how a life in Direct Provision transformed residents, how their experiences could be internalised how these experiences could leave them with what Valentine described as 'no way to be the same'.

Chapter 4 outlined how the disciplinary regime underpinning the Direct Provision centre, and various other modalities of power integral to wider systems of asylum, migration and labour, manufacture compliance. It also acknowledged that this process has a productive element; alongside degrees of docility, it also nurtures utility, providing a stable foundation for the creation of vast profits. This productive element of power is not uncommon; Foucault argues that modern power is not inherently negative, but creative. The application of power can produce discourses, knowledges, pleasures and even individuals.

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’ it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge gained of him belong to this production (Foucault 1991, p.194).
When discussing how living within Direct Provision impacted upon participants, they indicated that it had a transformatory, even productive effect, not just on their conduct, but on who they were. While discussing the issue of surveillance with participants, Valentine indicated that he felt the various arbitrary invasions of privacy asylum seekers endured were intended to shape the subject of the intrusion.

Dominic: It just must be so difficult to not even have a small space you can keep to yourself if everything you have can be opened.

Stephan: Yeah.

Michael: mmmm.

Valentine: The opposite thing like. They want to make you similar to every other body! The reality is similar. So even if you end up having paper from department of justice, you are already being treated differently so… From the beginning, you feel there is no way to be the same…

Subject to its various arbitrary power relations and disciplinary mechanisms, Valentine fears that his experiences in Direct Provision will have a lasting effect on his own sense of self. Other participants shared similar concerns. For example, Ali insisted that asylum seekers were 'being made different', and 'being made desperate' while Michael claimed that ‘you are growing, changing always’. Such fears reveal the degree to which life in Direct Provision can be an objectifying and subjectifying experience. Asylum seekers in Ireland are made subjects through all three modes of subject formation identified by Foucault (see Chapter 2, section 3). They are subject to dividing practices which separate them from the rest of the population in a binary manner; their abject status marking them out as de facto illegal, as opposed to legal, citizens and as undeserving, as opposed to deserving, migrants. They also
face the 'scientific' division allocated to their racial group, with many participants indicating that they had suffered from some degree of racism since arriving in Ireland. Abet told the group at one meeting about how the manager of a centre in which he was resident would insult him for being Iranian and the country of Iran in general. This racial abuse resulted in a confrontation, leading to the Gardai being called and Abet’s eventual transfer. Isaac also claimed to have experienced ‘much racism’ in ‘many hostel’. He claimed that ‘in Ireland, there is big racism’, much worse than in ‘Holland, England, these places’.

Isaac: Racism, understand? Ireland is high, you know?... Cannot explain to you… and cannot talk to you… Problems… is like eh… just like happen now… Peoples… Racist.

Dominic: Yeah, I’ve heard that...

Isaac: (interrupting) Sometimes you hear, ‘fucking nigger’! On the street!… I see these people… They need 50 years or 100 years… 50 years to become like European peoples! To improve his culture.

The divisions and distance that the Direct Provision system fosters have been identified as potential causes of such racism. Sue Conlan, Chief Executive of the Irish Refugee Council has claimed that increases in racial violence have served to highlight ‘the vulnerability of a very visible minority who are isolated from mainstream communities and may therefore be viewed with suspicion and distrust leading to violence’ (IRC 2013b).

Asylum seekers are also separated through the science of economics which has played a large role in marking them out as an abject population, saturated with risk and lacking autonomy. Such discourses, which are essential in justifying the neoliberal state's bio-political approach
towards asylum seekers, have been highly influential in shaping public opinion and policy (see Chapter 1, section 6).

These practices of division and subjection do not just shape outsiders perceptions of asylum seekers. Participants' testimonies indicate how many of them internalise their objectification. For example, when Valentine claims that living in Direct Provision leaves him ‘no way to be the same’, he indicates that the various controls he is subject to, not only shape his conduct, but also how he thinks and feels about himself. In this sense, the experiences of asylum seekers are doubly objectifying. For asylum seekers, the process of subject formation comes from their categorisation as abject and separate from the rest of the population, as well as through the ways in which their sense of self is shaped by their lived experiences.

Finally, this research also found participants to be made subjects through processes of subjectification. That is, they were encouraged to partake in their own subject formation. This is different to their subjection through dividing practices and their abject categorisation, to which they exhibited a strong resistance. Deidre Conlon and Nick Gill have documented how certain technologies at work within the asylum process encourage the individual asylum seeker to produce themselves as 'entrepreneurial and autonomous subjects in liberal society' (2013, p.253). This study corroborates these findings as its participants seemed to be incredibly eager to produce themselves in such a manner. Although this production seemed to go unnoticed by participants, many of their responses, actions and the directions they chose for the LDPDF and particularly the LASRN, seemed indicative of a desire to portray and even create themselves as subjects conducive to the maintenance of a neoliberal milieu.

Some of the topics that participants decided to organise LASRN meetings around, such as education and volunteering, could be viewed as an attempt to accumulate a sort of liberal capital that could attest to their entrepreneurialism, enthusiasm and autonomy. Moreover, meetings that provided information on issues of deportation and the Irish asylum process,
could be seen as conducive to attempts to make asylum seekers self-responsible, even for their own legal representation; so that 'even when failure and possible deportation is impending, asylum seekers are expected to be responsible, autonomous, and entrepreneurial' (Conlon and Gill 2013, p.254).

However, while the effective nature of subjectifying technologies that sought to reproduce the asylum seeker as an autonomous, liberal subject seemed evident in participants' actions, the vast majority of their testimonies spoke of a paradoxical objectification through which they and others were pressurised into recreating themselves in profoundly negative and abject ways. Seemingly antithetical to the technologies documented by Conlon and Gill, participants in this research spoke at length about how prolonged periods of residence within the Direct Provision system produced 'desperate' subjects who, far from being entrepreneurial, enthusiastic and autonomous, were inactive, dependant and emasculated. These were three objectifying experiences identified by this study's participants as being intensely productive with regard to the practice of making them and other residents 'different'. These three experiences and their effect on participants were closely intertwined with each other and could be seen to be contributing to the feelings of despair and hopelessness that are further investigated in section 2 of this chapter.

1.1 Inactivity

In spite of various technologies which attempt to reproduce asylum seekers as liberal and autonomous 'entrepreneurs of the self' (Conlon and Gill 2013, p.245), a variety of factors and controls combine to render asylum seekers inactive for long periods of time. The removal of the right to work, which coincided with the introduction of the Direct Provision system, was something that participants found very difficult to come to terms with as it left them with
‘many empty hours’. According to participants, this ‘empty’ time and the inactivity it fostered was one of the most trying things about living in Direct Provision.

   Ali: Imagine if you are staying, five, six, seven years in a hostel. Just eating, sleeping, drinking, nothing. Job is not allowed. You cannot travel outside Ireland. You do not have any chance to engage in tertiary education, colleges, universities. So without education. Without job. Being kept in hostel. That’s very, very horrible.

Physically, socially and economically isolated, participants fought against accepting and internalising their inactivity. Ali warned that asylum seekers who gave in to inactivity would soon be overcome by it and become depressed: ‘they were sleeping the whole night, sleeping the whole day. Eating. Sleeping. Lots of stress. Desperate ehh, highly depressed’.

Many of the participants talked of the need to keep active, as life was ‘very easy when you are busy’. Yet, there were many factors which made keeping ‘busy’ difficult for them. Controls exercised over mobility (see Chapter 4, section 1.3) can make it hard for residents to make and maintain connections in local areas and engage in social life. Residents can be threatened with a transfer to isolated centres such as Tannadice, which further compromise opportunities to make connections, as illustrated by Awn, ‘it is all empty… The whole area. Nothing. What can you do but sports. You know?... Sport and eat and watch (the television)’.

Participants were constantly on the lookout for ways in which to engage themselves. Through the LASRN, they sought to become involved in education and volunteering, exhibiting a desire to actively engage with Irish society. However, the opportunities available to them were extremely limited and those that were available rarely accorded with their skill level or field of interest. Some participants even indicated that this urge to remain ‘busy’ or productive contributed a great deal towards their motivation for getting involved in this study.
In spite of their efforts to remain active, the financial situation of many participants limited their possibilities for doing so. Stephan complained that the gym near his current hostel was too expensive to join. Rashad and Isaac both pointed out that a big part of Irish culture involves drinking in pubs, which was prohibitively expensive for them. This was also mentioned by Michael who bemoaned the fact that asylum seekers were excluded from something as simple as watching a football match in a pub with local people because ‘you will have to buy a drink’. The lack of facilities available in Direct Provision centres and their arbitrary distribution, left many participants without access to the resources required to remain active. This could be doubly subject forming; Conlon has highlighted how the absence of access to material resources and possessions marks asylum seekers out from the rest of a population who self-define through ‘temporalities and specialities of consumption and commodification’ (2010, p.722). One revealing example of how both inactivity and a lack of resources can result in practices that would seem alien to the rest of the population was revealed in an exchange that took place in an LDPDF meeting in which I asked Michael and Stephan how they kept active.

Michael: Sometimes we go kill the time and we walk to ehh Lidl. We come back, just one hour gone, we try to kill time, nothing to do like.

Dominic: So you walk to the shop just to kill the time?

Michael: Kill the time like.

Dominic: Do you buy anything?

Michael: No, no, no. We just go to walk around, put hands in pocket and walk around…

Stephan: (Laughs)
Michael: (Laughing) Shopping with my eyes!

Stephan: Shopping, window.

Combating boredom and inactivity was a key recurring theme during the fieldwork and is a subject elaborated on in Chapter 6. Although participants did not talk directly about boredom as a particularly subject forming phenomenon, their desire to avoid boredom and remain active seemed densely entwined with a need to avoid internalising and giving into inactivity and to perceive of themselves as participative beings. According to Ali, one of the key dangers of living in Direct Provision for ‘many years’ was the possibility that ‘people just give up. Lie in bed, give up. Done. It is very bad’. This was corroborated by Awn who claimed to have witnessed how ‘people, they just give up’. In this context it is somewhat easier to understand the seemingly bizarre act of window shopping in Lidl, or the various other activities participants engaged in to cope with and stave off inactivity (see Chapter 6).

1.2 Dependency

It is clear from the fieldwork that life within a Direct Provision centre cultivated a state of dependency in its residents. An ideologically loaded word, I use the term dependency to refer to circumstances where a person is required to rely on other people, or institutions for subsistence; as is the case for the majority of asylum seekers within the Direct Provision system. In spite of technologies which pressure asylum seekers to invest in and exhibit their autonomy, wider asylum policy removes much of their ability to remain self-sufficient, while life within the Direct Provision centre makes them reliant upon the whims of, and arbitrary power exercised by, others on a daily basis. Chapter 4 documented how nearly all participants were pressured into modulating their conduct by the various disciplinary mechanisms employed within the centre. Exposure to these mechanisms and the
mechanisations of the wider asylum system over time can also be seen to be a subject forming process, constructing residents as helplessly dependent. This construction has been documented by Gill who claims that the day-to-day relations played out in Direct Provision centres serve to ‘propagate an image of detainees as childlike and dependant’ (2009a, p.190). Dependency can be an intensely subjectifying experience, one which is different from outright poverty. Former US Senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, argues that ‘to be poor is an objective condition, to be dependent, a subjective one as well’ (1973, cited in Fraser and Gordon 2004, p.309). This echoes Foucault's assertion that there are two ways in which the individual can be constituted as a subject, i.e. as

subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscious or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (1982, p.781).

The testimonies of participants corroborated these analyses, indicating that dependence produced them as subjects on both levels; firstly through the process of being dependant and subsequently as they internalised that state of being as part of themselves. At the first meeting of the LDPDF, Michael told me how he believed imposed inactivity and dependence would inevitably impact upon one’s mental state.

Michael: It’s my opinion like, but if like if they make it more than one year and during this one year the person is not allowed for education, is not allowed for work, it’s kind of damage his mental… I don’t know how say it… It will damage his mental. When some person, like if you take the average, stays three years… Some people more, some people less, three years… You're doing nothing, you're not allowed for study, for work for anything, if you have any experience in your life you forget it. You get depressed, the time’s running… You're growing up.
Dominic: Yeah, yeah.

Michael: You’re losing things. You don’t get any benefit for yourself and society as well. This is the point of Direct Provision.

These were sentiments shared by many participants who were frustrated by their inactivity and also scared that it was impacting upon their long term skills, knowledge and motivation. During a LASRN meeting on the subject of volunteering, Samuel, an electrician by trade, told us he was willing to work for nothing as he was worried that ‘it is all going, I need to work so my fingers remember. I need to practice’.

Contrary to discourses which seek to construct asylum seekers as inherently ‘unproductive’ (Lentin and Titley 2011, p.133-134) and a drain on public resources (see Chapter 1, section 6), the vast majority of participants echoed Samuel’s desire to engage in productive labour and the volunteering session of the LASRN was one of the Network’s best attended meetings. There seemed to be a profound fear of the possibility that prolonged inactivity would lead to individuals internalising not just the discourses that constructed them as dependant, but also the reality that forced them to live that dependence. Participants spoke of surrender to dependence as if it was the result of some sort of loss and something that was difficult, if not impossible, to get back, even after leaving Direct Provision.

Awn: OK so, once they are granted status and begin their new lives, they can do nothing because for five years they have done nothing. Even knowledge they bring from back home, it’s just gone. Plus mental depression, stress, whatever, lots of other action. These people start their new lives by gambling… eh… depending on social welfare. Because they have been used to that for five years and just nothing. They spend their time… They are losing their lives.
Dominic: And you have seen this happen to people?

Awn: Yes. Yes.

Dominic: OK.

Awn: The majority. The majority of people.

Awn’s experience has been corroborated by a recent ESRI and Equality Authority report which claimed to prove that maintaining asylum seekers in institutional accommodation and denying them the opportunity to work for prolonged periods has a negative impact on their ability to become self-sufficient once they leave Direct Provision (IRC 2013a).

This paradoxical objectification of the asylum seeker as unproductive and dependant, alongside subjectifying technologies that demand autonomy and responsibilization, is not unique within disciplinary institutions that serve bio-political purposes. Nikolas Rose has documented how methods of confinement which attempt to assess and manage risk, such as prisons, often produce ‘intractably risky’ individuals (2000, p.333). These dual subjectifying and objectifying pressures and processes can have effects that go deeper than the creation of merely dependant subjects. Daniel Patrick Moynihan claimed that ‘in a world where completed men and women stand on their own feet’, dependency was an ‘incomplete state in life: normal in the child abnormal in the adult’ (1973, cited in Fraser and Gordon 2004, p.309). Through the paradox of a valorised and supposedly attainable autonomy existing alongside a reality of inescapable dependency, responsibility for their 'incomplete state in life' is placed at the non-standing feet of the asylum seeker. In a world where ‘exclusion has become a fundamentally subjective condition' (Rose 2000, p.335), pressures which demand self-responsibility could be seen to affect several of the participants (see Chapter 6, section 2)
who, in internalizing their inactivity and dependence, also struggled to maintain possession of their self-perception as worthy individuals with something to contribute.

1.3 Emasculation

All but one of the participants who took part in this research was male and their experience of living within Direct Provision, particularly the dependency aspect of it, seemed to undermine some sense of masculinity. Linda McDowell claims that a variety of different types of masculinities and gender subjectivities exist and that there is no definitive version (2000a, p.396). Instead an individual is subjectified by their ‘insertion into, cross-cutting discursive gender positions and multiple regimes of power’ (2000a, p.404). This makes theorising about masculinity difficult at the best of times and intensely problematic for this study which encapsulates such a heterogeneous group of men, occupying a variety of subject positions.

With this in mind, I have chosen to focus on the ways in which a life in Direct Provision seemed to limit participants in the practice and attainment of general ‘male norms’, which in turn seemed to prevent what McDowell describes as the ‘successful attainment of heterosexual masculinity’ (2000a, p.390). In the early 1970s, Patricia Sexton suggested that male norms were founded upon values of courage, inner direction, types of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure and toughness of mind and body (cited in Donaldson 1993, p.644). These values resonated a great deal with participants’ testimonies and are the norms I have chosen to focus upon.

Living a life of inactivity and dependency and being subject to disciplinary power can be seen as undermining many of the male norms identified by Sexton, principally autonomy. In spite of the limitations of life in Direct Provision, participants exhibited a strong desire to engage in ‘normal’ male behaviour. All participants related their wish to be permitted to
work, while this has been theorised as a result of subjectifying liberal pressures (see section 1), it can also be conceived as a desire to play the traditional male role of breadwinner and to demonstrate aspects of their masculinity, such as technological skill, mastery and inner direction.

A more negative aspect of this will to masculinity may be detected in the many incidents of violence participants experienced within the Direct Provision centre. McDowell identifies violence as a popular recourse for unemployed and disaffected young men (2000b, p.205). Engagement in violent confrontation may be seen as a means to exercise types of aggression, while also asserting one’s courage, toughness of mind and body and in some cases, even build upon group solidarities. The extreme dedication to sports, especially football, exhibited by participants can also be seen as a means of practicing many of the male norms outlined by Sexton. Awn told me that football games at Tannadice were highly competitive and constantly in session. He spoke about how, during the summer months, games could go on all day, while others told me how, when possible, they would spend all their time at the gym.

However, much in the same way the pressure to reproduce oneself as an ideal, autonomous subject existed alongside a reality in which this goal was impossible to fully realise, it seemed that participants were equally incapable of attaining a desired masculine identity while resident in Direct Provision. This failure seemed to instil feelings of inadequacy, guilt and shame among participants. During an LDPDF meeting, Valentine described living in Direct Provision as: ‘like humiliation’, claiming that ‘the dignity, the self-esteem, it’s hard to get it back’. Michael spoke to the group about his intermittent relationship with his daughter and her mother, the extent of which was often contingent upon the disposition of the manager of his current place of residence. Michael expressed concern that this was impinging on his ability to be a father and feared it would impact negatively on his daughter: ‘OK so I can visit
now, but maybe not next week. I cannot see, or be a father. You know, it’s not right to punish both. Not fair like. Ehh… And she is Irish!’.  

During my interview with Isaac, he struggled to convey his feelings about how life in Direct Provision had impacted on his sense dignity and self.

Isaac: Here (in Ireland) nothing. It’s like sinking… Headache… Benefit or social, give you money. But if you work (bangs fist on chest).

Dominic: Yeah, yeah. It’s good for you?

Isaac: It’s good! Give you money is… not good. If you work you are happy: ‘oh Dominic, you work, ten hours, here is your money’.

(Isaac passes a beer-mat to me across the table)

Isaac: You have dignity. You have eh… like a… you feel… work and this your money (gestures to beer-mat). Yes?

Dominic: Uhuh.

Isaac: Here is money (picks up other beer-mat). It’s from the social (shakes head dismissively). It’s not good.

Dominic: What work did you do before you came to Europe?

Isaac: Teach.

Dominic: Oh, OK. It must be very difficult not to have that work.

Isaac: Sorry?

Dominic: Like you were saying, it’s tough when you can’t work.
Isaac: It’s not good! It’s not good, there’s no dignity. If I am work, children, woman, it’s very good from me.

Dominic: That’s what you want from life?

Isaac: If you are a man, it’s not good. It’s eh… very shame… You can’t understand. You can’t understand, you can’t understand… You can’t understand.

In this exchange Isaac underlines McDowell’s claim that ‘waged work is so significant a part of the achievement of hegemonic masculinity’ (2000a, p. 412). Isaac associates work with women, children and dignity; as if without the foundation-stone of work, he cannot attain the rest. As such, his enforced inactivity and dependence not only undermines his autonomy through unemployment, but also any ability to confirm his masculinity through a partner and a family.

Awn was also alone in Ireland. Although he was married, he was unable to join his wife, either through family re-unification in Ireland, due to his status as an asylum seeker, or through a return to Sudan, which was deemed unsafe: ‘you know it’s not right. A husband and wife should be together’. He conveyed feelings of frustration, which seemed to be tinged with a sense of guilt regarding his wife and others he had left behind and who were fighting without him.

If our family in Sudan, our friends are challenging the government in Sudan.

Demanding change. And they are fighting and we live away from our country and we don’t do any action because we are blocked by a system called Direct Provision.

Because we are just lying in bed and feeding us.

Both Awn and Isaac informed me that they had each unsuccessfully attempted to return to their home countries voluntarily, but that the Department of Justice and Equality would not
assist either of them due to the potential dangers to them in these regions. When I asked Awn why he would want to return to such a potentially dangerous situation, he explained that ‘when you don’t get that (humane treatment)... It is better to go and die in your country. I didn’t come to eat. And I didn’t come to stay in the same bed for four years’. Awn’s desire to return to Sudan and even face death on his own terms suggests a preference to die as a subject he could identify with and be proud of rather than continue to live ‘in bed’ as the dependant, emasculated subject forged by his life in Ireland.

Constantly subject to contrary discourses and experiences which threatened to re-make them as subjects they didn’t want to become, participants fought hard against the subject forming pressures of life in Direct Provision (see Chapter 6). However, there were also many times when these pressures could seem overwhelming. Many of the participants related stories of others within their centres who had ‘given up’ or become ‘desperate’. They also related their own negative feelings, informing me of how they personally had suffered ‘depression’ and ‘bad mental health’. The next section considers these experiences and attempts to account for them through an analysis of the phenomena of hopelessness and despair.

2. Hopelessness and Despair

Several studies analysing the mental health of asylum seekers have been undertaken since the introduction of Direct Provision in Ireland. These analyses have claimed that living in Direct Provision could be responsible for a variety of negative mental conditions including anxiety, depression and various other psychiatric disorders (see Chapter 1, section 7).

Throughout the fieldwork, participants seemed anxious to relate the various negative feelings and thoughts attributed to aspects of their life within Direct Provision. Many of the participants had difficulty communicating to me exactly how these thoughts and feelings
impacted upon them; as if the commonly used term of ‘depression’ was not a strong enough word to encapsulate their experiences. It seemed to me that they felt that there wasn’t a word in my vocabulary, or an emotion within my frame of reference, capable of conveying to me what they wanted to say. Michael described it as ‘difficult to explain… When you live, you’re not living’. Ali’s attempts to clarify it related the experience in terms of torture.

These peoples I mean… five, six years without working, without going to school. Your mind, physically you are there, mentally you are not. Even after that, if you are given your status, you… it’s gone. Maybe some very few people, very courageous people… they can make it. But the majority… eh… in one country. One people being tortured psychologically. You know physically, it’s OK, but this is psychological torture. You know, you come here to seek asylum and then get this systematic, psychological torture.

The one-to-one interview with Isaac contained evidence of similar trauma. The field notes document his body language as indicating that he was ‘agitated’ and ‘unhappy’. Throughout the interview he periodically tried to explain to me how living in Direct Provision was impacting on him. Evidently he didn’t believe that I was able to grasp what he was telling me and repeated the phrase ‘you don’t understand’ constantly.

But the problem with Ireland is we cannot explain to you… These are problems. Because there is big racism in Ireland! They cannot explain to you what is happened. You are not, you don’t understand… It’s like ‘stay’! Like mad dog, like mad peoples… Control your life, but you don’t understand… If you have no… Fast feeling, can’t understand. Can’t believe decisions! Say ‘Oh, what is…’ You can’t believe this decision… Is very fast feeling… You know?

…
The situation in Ireland is not easy… But I don’t know, I don’t know. I can’t explain (very long pause). Europe gives no mercy. No mercy, understand? This is my opinion, there is no Mercy in Europe. No mercy. All Europe countries. No mercy.

...

In Europe there is no mercy. No mercy. The mercy is life, the mercy is life. If you have no money, if there is mercy you will become happy and you can’t feel your depression and your sadness. But if you have money and there is no mercy? Nothing. Drink, bar, go nightclub. Nothing. No Mercy, no life. Mercy is life.

Shortly after this final attempt to get me to understand his feelings, Isaac went silent. He seemed to be very frustrated with the fact that I could not place myself in his shoes, and the interview ended. One aspect to note about Isaac’s attempts to convey his situation via the term ‘no mercy’ is that instead of trying to explain the worst excesses of Direct Provision as comparable to something that exists, he based his reference on that which was lacking, in his case ‘mercy’. This had parallels with Michael’s attempts to relate his experiences through the description of ‘not living’, Ali’s references to ‘inhumanity’ and Awn’s assertion that he would rather ‘go home’ and ‘die’ rather than continue to be treated as ‘non-human’.

If one looks at the ways in which participants indicated that they were objectified and made abject within the Direct Provision system, one notices that they produce negative subject positions. That is to say that they are rooted in deficiency, creating subjects suffering from a lack of activity, a lack of autonomy, a lack of masculinity and also a lack of humanity. Further references to various negative states of mind were made by Ali who claimed that ‘very few people are managing, very few are successful… They are desperate’. Valentine expressed the belief that living for a long period in Direct Provision would ‘finish the psychology of someone, the dignity of someone, their self-esteem’ and that once gone it was
‘hard to get back’ because, ‘whatever they do, they cannot fix the damaged person’. Michael believed that after the first six months have passed, ‘everybody starts feeling the negativity’. He elaborated: ‘when you live a few years in the place and feel you don’t have any hope… You’ll feel hopeless.’ During my interview with Awn, he told me about how he had previously taken sleeping pills in order to get through the nights and was currently taking anti-depressants, claiming it was ‘the only way to survive’. When I asked him whether he thought it was common for residents to require anti-depressants, he told me that ‘very few of them do not take medication. Very few’.

During a LASRN meeting, Abet told the group of how he was unable to sleep despite taking medication: ‘I have depression tablets but don’t sleep… I am waking, twenty nights, all awake. Not sleeping. I walk instead’. Despite taking medication and, or, adopting various means of staying positive it seemed that participants were unable to fully rid themselves of that sense of lacking that they were trying to transmit to me. At the beginning of my interview with Awn, he told me that he had tried to explain to a case worker what Direct Provision was like for him: ‘so I explain to him; difficult, hard, you know I am so fed up. And he say to me ”if I am in this system for two years I would kill myself”’. By the close of the interview, perhaps believing I had failed to understand in the same way the case worker had, Awn ceased trying to place me in his position. Instead of trying to explain himself further, Awn attempted to take on the perspectives of those he perceived as operating the system that was making him feel this way.

Awn: Already, I have lost five years of my life. It doesn’t matter to lose the rest. People they are living you know… Who decides in my case, my life? I think like he, that person, he is not living in a hostel like me. He is not, not allowed work, he is not getting 19 (euro). Who decides my case, who decides my situation now… He has a car, good salary maybe, nice house… He has his family beside him, his children.
Maybe his children go to school, they’re happy. He can go enjoy a holiday somewhere… He can’t feel the difference in the weather. This terrible weather. He can enjoy and everything. So why? Why he put me here like this, while he enjoys his life?… So I am a human being and, and… this is not acceptable to me.

Dominic: OK… mmm. Do you want to, would you like to add anything else Awn?

Awn: No… No its ok. I think it’s enough (End of Tape).

Awn seemed equally unable to comprehend the logic of the Direct Provision system and those that implement it as I was incapable of understanding the mental suffering endured by him and the rest of the participants. Perhaps the most notable aspect of participants' expressions of the mental effects produced by life in Direct Provision was the absence of language to describe and convey their experiences to outsiders; they had indeed been ‘made different’.

This problem may not be as uncommon as one might assume. Similar issues with expression have been documented by Beck et al., who noted that people experiencing ‘despair’ often struggle for the right words to convey their feelings. In 2003 they conducted a phenomenological study into the emotions of hopelessness and despair as experienced by people of a variety of ages and in various contexts, which sought to give despair a language. Interestingly, a determination to share one’s seemingly inexpressible negative feelings was deemed to be particularly prevalent among ‘those whose lives are involved with teaching and writing’ (p.350). This is highly relevant to this study's fieldwork, where the three participants who seemed most frustrated by their inability to relate their feelings, Awn, Isaac and Ali, were all educators. Beck et al.’s study differentiates between feelings of hopelessness and depression, citing Goldsmith’s claim that they are based on different relationships with loss. According to this theorisation, depression relates to one’s inability to continue hiding what
one believes to be a ‘fundamental unworthiness’ or deficiency, whereas feelings of despair occur when something that gives meaning or purpose to a person’s life is lost (Goldsmith 1987, cited in Beck et al. 2003, p.341) i.e. is now lacking. This sense of loss seemed central to the frustrations of the research participants, the enforced dependency, the loss of autonomy, skills and direction, as well as the experiences of dehumanisation and emasculation can all be conceived of as contributing to a general loss of purpose and identity.

In concluding their work, Beck et al. locate despair in ‘radical disruptions’ and a growing awareness of hopelessness and distance from others: ‘you feel terribly alone, you can see people in the distance going about life and seemingly feeling OK. You can see them but you see no way to get to them’ (2003, p.347). This resonates with the physical, social and economic isolation experienced and articulated by participants in the fieldwork of this study. Beck et al. claim that such feelings can then be accentuated by the inability of the sufferer to act on ‘their own behalf’, illustrating the point with the words of one sufferer struggling to pull herself free.

I will be very depressed but I’ll know that there is some way, if I can just find the right loop, I can pull myself out of it’ but with despair: ‘I couldn’t find the loop for myself and I didn’t feel like there was one’ (2003, p.348).

Parallels can be drawn between these feelings and the frustration which the participants in this study had to endure; constantly waiting for a way out that never seemed to arrive.

The urge to constantly ‘keep busy’ that Michael, Ali, Stephan and others spoke of, the attempts by Isaac to return to his home country, in spite of the danger involved, and Awn’s efforts to do likewise, as it is better to ‘fight’ and ‘die’ there than ‘remain in his bed’, indicated an urge to avoid remaining stationary and isolated within the system and the feelings this produced. This urge was also recognised by Beck et al.’s study: ‘this place is
intolerable: you can’t stay here or you will be swallowed up… every which way you turn
leads to a dead end, but at least you’re moving’ (2003 p.349). Trying to fight and replace the
‘loss’ at the root of despair by forcing oneself to remain active was a common tactic
employed by participants in this study and is elaborated upon in Chapter 6.

On a more positive note, Beck et al.’s study indicates the existence of a way out of the
‘swamp’ of despair. This ‘way out’ was to be found in a dawning ‘clarity’ that helped
participants to face up to the ‘hard reality’ of their situation. Eventually, this clarity would
lead to a state of acceptance and facilitate movement away from a state of hopelessness.
Beck et al.’s participants were divided on whether or not this clarity was reassuring or hard to
bear; however, they all agreed that it finally allowed them to comprehend and deal with
important truths and, eventually, emerge from their state of hopelessness and despair.

3. Conclusion

This chapter documents the productive application of power at work in Ireland's Direct
Provision system. It details how participants' experiences within the system could be
internalised and shape their sense of self in profoundly negative ways. This process can be
seen to be especially distressing for participants in this study who were paradoxically
encouraged to re-produce and prove themselves as autonomous, self-reliant individuals, while
simultaneously living an inactive, dependency inducing and emasculating reality. In a
neoliberal society where we all supposedly enjoy unprecedented levels of freedom,
responsibility for an individual's failure to produce themselves as a free and autonomous
subject is laid squarely at his/her own feet; participants must negotiate what Rose identifies as
' a regime of self where competent personhood is thought to depend on the continual exercise
of freedom' (1999, p.87). Under such a regime, participants are not encouraged to relate to
themselves and their lives through the prism of ‘fate or social status’, but rather ‘in terms of their successes or failure acquiring the skills and making the choices to actualize oneself’ (ibid.). Thus, being ‘made different’ is an intensely objectifying and subjectifying experience that produces a variety of emotions; not least, strong feelings of hopelessness and despair that invite much comparison with the work conducted by Beck et al.

However, the parallels between Beck et al.’s study and my own are not all-encompassing. The hope and path out of despair offered by Beck et al. was predicated on the emergence of a ‘clarity’ that allowed those suffering from despair to face and deal with their experiences. This clarity could be difficult to face up to, but it was required in order for sufferers to take control of their situation and their lives again. Without a set date for the resolution of their case, or knowledge of what the future held beyond that decision, participants in this research seemed unable to face, or even imagine a reality that didn’t yet exist for them. Whether positive or negative, participants yearned for the clarity and sense of direction that would come with a decision. Discussions in the LDPDF and the LASRN consistently raised the need to speed up the processing of applications. One could interpret this as an indication that participants desired clarity on their status and the ability to move on with their lives. Awn pointed out that at least in prison, even if you are there for life, ‘you know your sentence’, in which case you can face up to it and plan your future accordingly. However, for an asylum seeker in Direct Provision, ‘you will never know’ and I believe that that feeling of indefinite hopelessness is what participants were desperately trying to convey to me throughout the fieldwork.

This indefinite hopelessness was considered especially dangerous because of its potentially transformative and irreversible nature, moulding an inactive, dependant, emasculated and ultimately hopeless subject; the ‘damaged person’ that Valentine warned would be impossible to ‘fix’. This was a fear that permeated many participant testimonies, the fear that
even after officially escaping the abject categorisation and pressures of subjection applied to asylum seekers, an individual might still have ‘no way to be the same’. However, power relations are never one dimensional; those who are subject to power are also capable of exercising it, for as Foucault notes: ‘where there is power, there is resistance’ (1998, p.95). Citing Foucault, Kevin Jon Heller outlines how power relations that produce ‘hegemonic’ ‘subject positions’ will inevitably also produce ‘counter-hegemonic subject positions’ capable of resistance and challenge (1996, p. 101). This counter balance to the practices of power and processes of subject formation at work in the Direct Provision system was clearly evident in this study. In spite of their apparent despair, participants generally refused to meekly acquiesce to their situation. Along with examples of apparent hopelessness, the fieldwork data details numerous instances of ingenuity, agency and escape. These included bold and direct challenges to what participants felt was an inherently unfair system and those that administered it, but also personal micro-level resistances that exceeded the despair-inducing and subject forming effects documented in this chapter. These resistances and the questions of identity and ‘self’ that they provoked are detailed in the following chapter.
Chapter 6: Everyday Life as Revolution: Autonomy, Excess and the ‘Care of the Self’

In the previous two chapters, I have outlined some of the ways in which Ireland’s Direct Provision system operates and how, through their lives within it, the system impacts on participants; conducting and subjectifying them, inducing seemingly inescapable feelings of hopelessness and despair. Read as stand-alone chapters, they create a pessimistic illustration of participants’ lives and prospects. This could potentially give the illusion that asylum seekers occupy a powerless place on the bottom rungs of a series of top-down power relations, through which they are perpetually scrutinised, manipulated, classified and constructed. This chapter nuances this picture, corroborating Foucault’s claim that ‘the power relationship and freedom’s refusal to submit cannot be separated’ (2000, cited in Edkins and Pin-Fat 2005, p.5). It expands upon the accounts detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, with examples of how participants refused to be conducted and objectified. It places mechanisms of power and control in a context which conceives of the actions of asylum seekers as primary and, along with their resistances, irrepressible.

To this end, section 1 of this chapter outlines the ‘autonomy of migration’ perspective, exposing the illusion of the perpetually and hopelessly oppressed asylum seeker, by conceptualising their actions as a primary, autonomous phenomenon. The next two sections detail two distinct yet overlapping examples of resistance exhibited by participants. Prior to beginning this study, I had fully expected to encounter examples of resistance to the Direct Provision system. However, the types of resistance I encountered during the fieldwork were both more diverse than I had anticipated and more routine. They seemed analogous with those resistances which Nicholas De Genova has referred to as ‘the revolutions of everyday
life’ (2013, p.3). With this in mind I believe the term ‘resistance’ to be too broad, so I have divided the examples of resistance detailed by participants into resistances that constituted a ‘care of the self’ and resistances of ‘excess’; that is resistances that sought to defy mechanisms of power and to exceed attempts to conduct conduct. Section 2 of this chapter deals with these excesses, while section 3 looks at how participants nurtured a much more personal ‘care of the self’ in order to resist the subjectifying pressures of Direct Provision.

Section 4 documents ‘Michael’s story’, one participant’s account of a unique struggle that took place between residents and centre management at Tannadice Direct Provision centre. This incident is given special attention because the acute nature of the struggle is especially revealing in terms of the power relations it exposes and the mechanisms and techniques employed by both sides in seeking to conduct the other and achieve their objectives. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the variety of ways in which asylum seekers daily subvert, exceed and even shape the Direct Provision system and examine what this says about the ways in which the possibility of resistance and transformation are framed.

1. Asylum and Autonomy

It is all too easy when documenting the various mechanisms and pressures integral to the administration of Direct Provision and wider systems of asylum, migration and labour, to conceive of these systems as hierarchical, one-sided structures that relentlessly impose themselves upon and victimise asylum seekers. The ‘autonomy of migration approach’ exposes these misconceptions, illustrating the ways in which these systems are constituted by a plurality of actors, relations and contingencies; similar to the ‘dense web’ of power described by Foucault which ‘passes through apparatuses and institutions’ (1998, p.96).
Proponents of this approach highlight how the movement of people is something that is timeless, natural and unavoidable. While governments, political unions, capital and various other agents have constantly attempted to facilitate, direct and halt these flows in various ways, it is the mobility of migrants and their labour which is primary and the controls that are reactionary. These historical and natural aspects of migrant mobility were referenced by participants during the fieldwork. For example, Michael and Ali both asserted that it was ‘normal’ to move between countries and flee from ‘persecution’, while Awn outlined how seeking asylum was ‘a historical thing’.

The prophet Moses, I know he took his people across border, across the water to Sinai, to Israel, and when they enter, they seek protection. Even in Islam we have the experience. Our prophet Mohamed had to flee before he could build his Muslim community at that time. So when he enters Medina, he says for protection. Also other examples, British people, when you run to the church, you can seek protection from other tribes in the church. It is something normal in life.

Because it is the migrants, in this case asylum seekers, who are the primary actors within the system, we can conceive of them as initiators of the power relations that are played out through its ‘dense web’, instead of as passive subjects. Furthermore, we can conceive of asylum seekers’ resistances, not as hopeless, symbolic reactions, but rather as techniques and moments of transcendence that escape and exceed the reactionary mechanisms and controls which seek to conduct their mobility. This is not to say that the various attempts to control participants documented by this study are easily eluded; rather, it emphasises the role played by participants and asylum seekers in general, in shaping relations, conflicts and compromises. As such, migration can be seen, not as ‘a response to political and economic necessities, but as a constituent force in the formation of polity and social life’ (Papadopoulos 2013, p.184).
Through his work, Nicholas De Genova has documented numerous incidences of migrants subverting what he and Foucault label ‘the bonds of obedience’, by breaking laws and challenging ‘the rationality of the state’ in order to assert their own law: ‘the law of my very nature’ (2013, p.2). He highlights how migrants engaged in demonstrations and insubordinations against the post 9/11 crackdown on undocumented workers in the US, thus asserting their visibility and presence and eventually winning concessions and shaping government policy (2009). Similarly, he documents how migrants converging on Washington DC during the 2003 ‘freedom rides’ were involved in ‘asserting their subjectivity’ with ‘their very bodies’. The protestors visibly occupied space with their ‘illegal’ bodies and challenged the sovereign power of the state to ‘reassert its presumptive monopoly – through violence, in space – over the disbursement of rights’ (2009, p.450).

Thus, the deployment of insistent presence and heightened visibility act as powerful tools, not just for exceeding controls, but for challenging, shaping and even dismantling them. De Genova goes so far as to argue that through their mere presence in a country, in spite of all attempts to govern their mobility, migrants affirm ‘the ineradicably and incorrigibly insistent character of their very material needs, desires, capacities and dispositions’ (ibid.).

Dimitris Papadopoulos also draws attention to the potential resistances implicit in the everyday practice of just being an asylum seeker. He argues that migrants who ‘clandestinely defy the borders that block their future, expose the limits of liberal citizenship without ever intending it’ (2014, p.188). A vast collection of knowledges, services, solidarities, information and tricks for survival are employed by migrants as they daily challenge and subvert attempts to control them. Papadopoulos refers to this collection as the ‘mobile commons’, the space in which migrants assert their own subjectivity through the practice of ‘alternative everyday forms of existence and alternative forms of life’ (2014, p.191).

Examples of the seemingly mundane practices that constitute the mobile commons include:
financial aid, provision of employment or accommodation, sharing knowledge with others about policing and surveillance systems, sharing knowledge regarding social supports, health and educational resources, connecting individuals with people and organisations that can assist them, and simply providing care, support and mutual friendship for each other (2014, p.191-192). This concept of a mobile commons is strikingly similar to Cindi Katz’s notion of ‘resilience’; i.e. the way in which oppressed groups and communities engage in practices of: community organisation, guidance, encouragement and general care and concern which collectively constitute ‘a range of small transactions' that enable these groups to ‘get by, to enter reciprocal relations and to shore up their resources’ and to ‘rework and resist oppressive circumstances’ (2004, p.246). These are the revolutions of everyday life that daily exceed and triumph over the mechanisms, controls and subjectifying pressures detailed in Chapters 4 and 5. In the next two sections I outline how participants in this study engaged in such practices.

2. Exceeding the System

In this section I detail the ways in which participants in this study engaged in practices which exceeded attempts to conduct them. By excession I mean those ‘real struggles practices, tactics that escape control’ (Papadopoulos 2013, p.184) and through which asylum seekers exercise their autonomy by challenging and shaping their own reality. I argue that participants in this study engage in the reproduction of a 'mobile commons' and other moments of excess on a day-to-day basis. For example, Isaac informed me that he had come to know Valentine through social gatherings Valentine had instigated. Since gaining his refugee status, Valentine would periodically invite Muslim asylum seekers to his house for 'food and talking'. Michael described how he had taken one young asylum seeker under his
wing while resident at Easter Road, showing him 'how things are' and had been reluctant to leave him behind when the opportunity for a transfer arose earlier in the year. During LASRN meetings, Victor would arrive with Marcel, who only spoke French and translate for him, while a similar arrangement was in place amongst a group of Middle Eastern participants. Ali was a fountain of information for other asylum seekers and told me how he would encourage residents in his centre to get involved in 'education, politics, anything like this' to prevent them from 'becoming desperate'.

You know I try to encourage some to go to different centres, look for education, CIE club, these Doras programmes, NCP… They are desperate. I try to encourage them.

... 

I am not to work, not to learn, so instead of sleeping I come here. Living is helping each other. Teaching is helping each other. I am here just to participate.

The LASRN provided the most obvious example of the mobile commons in action. Here a group of asylum seekers organised and conducted meetings in order to identify, locate and share the types of information they deemed important. Although the subject matter chosen by participants in the LASRN could be interpreted as facilitating their reproduction in a manner conducive to liberal society, the democratic decision making process and information identified as useful emerged from the will of participants. The topics for each meeting reveal how participants saw the Network as a means of negotiating and evading problems and pressures they experienced as asylum seekers in Ireland. For example, the meeting held on the topic of integration involved a discussion of strategies to exceed the social isolation and distance experienced by participants, through engagement with local communities.

Notes taken from LASRN meeting 6:
Ali mentions the need for all participants to integrate into Irish society, claiming that Ireland had for ‘so long been a closed nation’ and that, as asylum seekers seeking residency, the members should see themselves as ‘part of Ireland’s future’. However, in order to actively take part they will have to make a conscious effort to leave their hostels and hotels and ‘mix with the native population’.

Victor agrees and claims that there are ‘many opportunities’ for asylum seekers to involve themselves in Irish society. He talks about library groups, the church and ‘many other groups’ as examples: ‘look in the papers, you will see. Many opportunities’.

Meetings were also requested and held on the issues of the asylum process in Ireland and deportation. At these meetings participants were able to pool their knowledge with that of an expert speaker and apply this information to their own cases. The meetings involved discussions on a variety of subjects with participants asking questions and receiving information relating to waiting periods, the criteria for obtaining refugee status and ‘leave to remain’, the Zambrano ruling, rights to social welfare, detainment practices and deportation procedures, amongst other topics. Meetings were also held concerning the issues of volunteering and education, while organising and engaging in these meetings, participants actively exhibited a desire to resist the subjectifying effects of Direct Provision outlined in Chapter 5, whilst exceeding the social and financial limitations the system imposed on them.

Notes taken from LASRN meeting 1:

Fan brings up the matter of education and claims to know of an initiative run by SPIRASI (an NGO who work with disadvantaged migrant groups) which funds fourth level education for asylum seekers.
Leone says that the Network will not have the funding for such a scheme.

Fan mentions the possibility of starting cookery, music or Red Cross courses. He complains that you first require prior training to take a Red Cross course and that this training costs €60.

Helen says that the Order of Malta offer Red Cross training for free, but that they are reluctant to enrol asylum seekers sometimes, as too many drop out before completion.

George claims that the group has to organise ‘something’, because too many are just ‘sleeping in beds’.

It is resolved to contact the Order of Malta to enquire about the training.

Beyond the LASRN, participants attempted to exceed the controls and pressures of Direct Provision in many other and sometimes more dramatic ways. Examples included incidents which involved breaking the rules and regulations set by the RIA and even breaching the boundaries of national law. Participants told me about how, in some cases, they had witnessed residents’ attempts to ‘find solutions’ to their problems by engaging in drug dealing and other criminal practices. Awn intimated a concern that asylum seekers are engaging in criminality as a means to escape the financial hardships associated with Direct Provision.

Awn: I do not mean just anger in the street. Not like that. I mean you will bring a very bad community. Most people they are just OK. They just… I have to follow law and system and don’t have to work… But you spend the time waiting, trying to find solutions. This will bring you against the law. Stealing. Selling drugs.

Dominic: You think these things will happen?
Awn: Yes, it will happen.

Dominic: Do you think it is happening?

Awn: (very guarded) Ehmmm. I can say… It will happen.

Although the subject of criminality was one which participants were understandably reluctant to elaborate on, one can speculate as to how participation in criminal activities could provide opportunities to exceed the subject forming pressures of inactivity, dependency and emasculation, as well as to alleviate isolation and financial hardships. Ali also expressed a fear that such temptations would draw young asylum seekers towards criminal activity and he cautioned that the government’s failure to listen to asylum seekers could result in extreme levels of law-breaking.

Their voice is not heard. The negative aspects will build a climax and then burst. It is very dangerous, for example, drug abuse, what you call extortion, rape, different, unwanted behaviour is a result. You know, you keep say, keep say, and demonstration, demonstration, demonstration, but if you don’t get change… That’s very dangerous.

Awn and Ali both seemed to fear the prospect of a clash between disenfranchised asylum seekers and wider Irish society if change continued to be perceived of as an impossibility. This pursuit of transformation was something that both men had spent much time working towards, with a view to moving beyond simply escaping or transcending the mechanisms and pressures of Direct Provision. By actively attempting to effect systematic change, Ali, Awn and other participants engaged in excesses analogous to what Foucault terms ‘counter conduct’. Similar to what Katz identifies as practices of ‘reworking’, which seek to ‘alter conditions’ within, and without challenging, ‘hegemonic social relations’ (2004, p.247),
counter conducts are capable of questioning, elaborating upon and even eroding power (Foucault 2009, p.202). However, counter conducts do not directly challenge the concept of being governed and conducted, they merely demand that we are governed in a different way or by different people (Foucault 2009, p.199). This has led some to claim that, rather than exceed the liberal system, counter conducts can re-enforce aspects of it (Conlon and Gill 2013, p.253). Yet, this does not negate the potential of counter conduct to exceed and transform aspects of the society it targets. As Katz notes, such reworkings can make everyday life ‘more liveable’ for those being conducted and can even create more ‘viable terrains of practice’ from which to build further resistances (2004, p.251).

Often the manner in which participants engaged in counter conduct revealed something of how they perceived the system to function and how it might be transformed. Ali, for example, has been an active member of many local projects and forums since coming to Ireland. During our discussions he told me how he viewed his participation in these forums as much more than merely a means to remain active; he also felt that by engaging in Irish society and politics, asylum seekers could shape the system that is shaping them. Within the LASRN, Ali consistently advocated the potential of participation, asserting that asylum seekers had much to contribute to Irish society and its development.

I believe all people who are living here should work for the development of the nation. Ireland should develop with participation, active participation of all people living here, where Irish, Asians, Africans, Travellers, ehh… Gypsies, any sort of people should give helping hand. If these people are united, if these people are really coming together, then it is good for the development of a country.

Although Ali claimed that asylum seekers were already part of the Irish nation, he acknowledged that the Direct Provision system was ‘hindering’ them' from 'living in
harmony’ and contributing along with the rest of the population. It was through conscious efforts to participate and integrate that Ali believed asylum seekers could exceed aspects of the system that excluded them and could shape future developments. Ali also exhibited a strong belief in the transformatory power of democracy and took the view that ‘government leaders are slaves of the people’. This tied in with his belief that one could change the system by engaging in it.

There is a proverb in my language, if two people tell you ‘your head is not with you’... This is a saying from good person, if two good persons tell you are wrong and you are saying ‘I am right, I am right’, you are change resistant, you resist change. So that when NGOs give comment to government, when asylum seekers give comments, when centres, local centres, give advice to the government I hope the government will change, as the government is representative of the people.

When I questioned this view, on the basis that such advocacy has failed to produce significant change for over ten years, Ali remained committed to his belief in transforming the system from within.

We must be patient for some time. Build unity and those local people should come, sit together, sit and discuss ‘we have said this for ten years, we cannot continue with this’. And if so, I think the government, there is no way to continue ehh their policy, their laws and statutes. I believe they will listen to the people and this will bring positive change. Yes. That is my idea.

Like Ali, Michael had also been involved in challenging and attempting to transform the system. Prior to our meeting he had expressed an interest in establishing a Direct Provision residents' group in Limerick city and played a leading role in the organisation of the LDPDF. By connecting many of the Forum's participants and raising many of the issues discussed
within it, Michael was vital to the creation of a small, mobile commons in which participants were able to share knowledges, voice their concerns and avail of each other's support and mutual friendship.

Michael has also spent much time engaging in a form of counter conduct that involved putting his concerns and complaints about Direct Provision into writing. In doing so, he played the system at its own game, by highlighting how it contravenes its own rules and attempting to hold those responsible to account and force them to change. His correspondence with Department of Justice and Equality and the RIA concerning the various invasions of privacy endured by residents and the right of residents to a common room (see Chapter 4) are one example of this. Michael also informed me of his on-going struggle with the RIA regarding the right of his room-mate, who had been diagnosed with Hepatitis C, to live in a single room. Michael claimed: 'I am always writing!' and 'I keep all, all the letters, every one'. However, in contrast with Ali, Michael’s testimony seemed to betray a lack of confidence that the counter conduct he practiced could result in significant change. He felt that the interest groups who had a financial stake in the Direct Provision system 'would never allow’ any changes that threatened profits (see Chapter 4, section 1.3).

Despite his seemingly pessimistic attitude, Michael continued to draw attention to the intolerable nature of what he perceived to be a system that 'imprisons people' and in which 'the executioner is the judge'. Michael constantly highlighted the system's arbitrary application of power, documenting how those administering it were able to bend and even flaunt the system’s rules and regulations to suit their own agenda. Although Michael’s complaints and condemnations were often founded on the very rules and regulations the Direct Provision system established and purportedly abided by, the system was sufficiently flexible to resist Michael's attempts to force it to adhere. This is not to say that Michael's efforts were in vain. In many ways one can view Michael's actions as going beyond counter
conduct and demands to be governed in a different manner. By making demands on the system’s own terms, that he knows will not be met, Michael's work exposes what Foucault labels 'the intolerables' of the Direct Provision system. By drawing attention to its hypocritical and arbitrary nature, Michael turns techniques of documentation and surveillance back on the system; making it visible, not just to him and other concerned parties, but to the system itself. By forcing the system to put its hypocrisy into writing and by keeping a record of all his correspondence, Michael actively reverses some of the techniques of examination outlined in Chapter 5, repudiates narratives that portray him as inactive and dependant and exceeds attempts to objectify him as an abject subject.

Like Michael, Awn, an experienced organiser in his home country, utilised the power of visibility and presence to practice excession and pursue change. This was in spite of his belief that such activity would harm his chances of obtaining refugee status. Awn nurtured a deeply held sense of injustice regarding the Direct Provision system, along with an appetite to fight it; the word ‘unacceptable’ was repeated constantly during our discussions. Unlike Ali, Awn did not appear to conceive of himself, or other asylum seekers, as part of the Irish nation. Whereas Ali acknowledged that Direct Provision created distance between asylum seekers and the rest of the population, he also believed that with effort, integration between the two was possible. Conversely, Awn felt that integration was impossible under the Direct Provision system and that, as a result, asylum seekers would have to rely on themselves if they wished to instigate change.

Awn: Make the person a part of you in this country, that’s the meaning of integration. You have to make me able to contribute in your country but when you keep someone in hostel… in a different place away from the society of the country themselves. Put someone aside. Put them separate, space life, culture, financial, how can they integrate? Never.
Awn: But you know Dominic, it is difficult for us, not for them. Not for you. So nobody can fight this rather than us. You know?

Dominic: Yeah.

Awn: It is our job.

These feelings seemed to partially explain why Awn declined my invitation to join the LASRN. He expressed the belief that asylum seekers needed to take to the streets because ‘it’s the place you can cry and everyone can listen’ and to protest the system directly in order to challenge public perceptions, as a precursor to change.

Awn: We want to protest. To demonstrate. We are fed up now. We need action. We know that now only change will come from us, not from you.

Dominic: From asylum seekers not NGOs?

Awn: Not them, not the state. Only us. We need to go on to the street and explain to the people: ‘no it is the wrong idea you have in your mind’. ‘We are not like that’. ‘We can do everything’. ‘We can work like you, pay tax like you and our tax will go to help you’.

Such assertions of visibility and occupations of public spaces have been identified by De Genova as key means of exceeding and challenging state controls. He provides the example of how the 2003 ‘freedom rides’ in the US saw migrants ‘defiantly assert their subjectivity...with their very bodies’ (2009, p.450). In a similar effort to make asylum seekers in Ireland visible and heard, Awn organised two protests in Dublin. The first focused on the difficulties faced by Sudanese asylum seekers in Ireland today, while the second was open to
all nationalities. Awn organised these protests using his own limited funds and boundless ingenuity. He bought materials and created signs and placards out of his €19.10 allowance: ‘I go to €2 shop, red marker €2, paper… OK, is all less than €19’. He sent e-mails, found people who had mobile phone packages with free calls and borrowed their phones in the evening, availed of free text message services online and utilised a network of contacts around the country in order to spread information and to organise travel for himself and others. Here, one can see how even in the early planning stages of a protest, Awn drew from his own skills and knowledge to exceed the limitations imposed on him as an asylum seeker within the Direct Provision system. The protests attracted approximately fifty people and combined with public and media attention, secured a promise from Teachta Dála, Richard Boyd Barrett, to raise a question on the matter of the Direct Provision system in the Dáil. Like Michael's correspondence, Awn's protest amounted to more than a counter conduct based demand to be governed in a different way. The most important derivative of visible resistances such as Awn's is not progress towards 'any explicit programme of political demands'; rather it lies in the assertion of 'physical and bodily presence' and the 'rupture' that takes place when 'officially rightless citizens... assume the mantle of quasi-citizenship by articulating political demands and making claims' (De Genova 2009, p.451).

Through such acts of resistance, participants exceeded many of the mechanisms, controls, pressures and limitations that have the potential to conduct and objectify them. However, each participant had their own unique approach that reflected their own beliefs and perhaps indicated their own personal conceptions of power and change. For example, although Michael never tired of exposing the 'intolerable' hypocrisy and arbitrary nature of Direct Provision, he was less optimistic regarding the transformatory potential of his actions than either Awn or Ali. Perhaps this could be attributed to his conception of power as a being arbitrary and repressive. When Michael spoke of Direct Provision, it was as a top down
system, run for profit and beyond challenge, because the executioner and the judge were one
and the same and financial interests would always prevail. Both Ali and Awn were slightly
more positive in their outlooks, seeking to exceed their isolation and limitations in order to
engage, influence and transform perceptions and actions in wider Irish society. Both men
seemed to perceive power as working in a fluid and circulatory manner, similar to Foucault’s
conception of the state and its institutions as the sum of a multiplicity of power relations.
Where Ali and Awn differ is in their conception of the best way to pursue change in such a
system. Ali seemed to envision a bottom-up system of relations where government is
representative of the will of the population, of which he considers himself and other asylum
seekers to be members. By exceeding certain systematic barriers to integration and creating
proximity where there is distance, he and others can participate in and shape society. In
doing so, the very people who constitute the population will either know directly, or soon
become aware of, the intolerable nature of the Direct Provision system. As such, those
administering the system, the ‘slaves’ of the people, will come under increasing pressure to
transform aspects of its operation, eventually bringing about the positive change that Ali
desires.

Awn seems to possess a similar conception of the state as a manifestation of multiple
relations and, like Ali, he believes the popular will to be highly influential in shaping these
relations. However, because Awn conceives of himself and other asylum seekers as living
outside of the population, he adopts a strategy of confrontation rather than participation,
insisting that asylum seekers need to instigate change themselves by asserting their presence
and directly confronting the rest of society with the injustice they face. In spite of these
differences both men clearly view asylum seekers as potential agents of change.

Interestingly, especially taking into account that Awn readily identifies himself as a left-wing
political activist, both men also sought to re-articulate the public perception of asylum
seekers in neoliberal terms. One way to interpret this is as an indication of the ubiquitous nature of neoliberal discourses and how such discourses serve to subjectify individuals, not just in Ireland but across the globe. Such discourses have been highly influential in constructing asylum seekers as a threat to national prosperity, as ‘a risky group with uncertain potential to do detriment to the country’s public resources and institutional structure’ (Conlon 2010b, p.105; Chapter 2, section 5). On this assumption, the state interprets asylum seekers according to market rationalities and often pressures them to prove their compatibility with, and value to, a market economy (Conlon and Gill 2013). Thus, in a neoliberal world in which we are governed as economic subjects, or ‘*homo economicus*’ (De Genova 2013, p.7), Foucault asserts that ‘the migrant is an investor’ (cited in De Genova 2013, p.5). Deirdre Conlon and Nick Gill (2013) have documented how liberal states encourage asylum seekers to act as investors; entrepreneurial, self-responsible individuals acting according to a liberal, market rationality. Unlike the objectifying pressures that classified participants as abject, inactive, dependant and emasculated, these encouragements are subjectifying in nature. That is to say that they recruit asylum seekers in their own subjection; whereas participants fought against internalising their abjection, they actively sought to foster and exhibit their neoliberal credentials.

Such processes of subjectification can even extend to the politics of protest. For example, Conlon and Gill highlight the ways in which asylum seekers are permitted to engage in certain forms of protest which produce them as liberal subjects; forms of protest which Foucault identifies as being 'consistent with the rationality of government and values of freedom and autonomy' (cited in Conlon and Gill 2013, p.251). In this way, protest and advocacy can become reduced to the dominant neoliberal logics of cost/benefit and value for money. As such, the case for asylum seekers, risks being limited to what they can bring to the neoliberal milieu and how this could possibly offset what they threaten to take away from
it. This was a perspective periodically adopted by many of the study's participants and recurring through much of the academic and NGO literature on the subject of Direct Provision and the Irish asylum process in general. Similarly, Katy Long’s UK based study of how ‘refugee advocates are adept at presenting the displaced to a sceptical public as valuable economic assets’, highlights the British Refugees Council’s 2010 ‘Refugee Week’ campaign entitled ‘As British as Fish and Chips’; a campaign which focused on contributions made to UK business by refugee entrepreneurs (2013, p.8). In a similar fashion, the Irish Refugee Council have taken to releasing pre budget submissions which, although also highlighting the ‘human costs’ of the Direct Provision system, emphasise ‘cost comparisons’ and the potential savings that could be made if the system were replaced with one of general welfare provision (IRC 2013c).

Awn and especially Ali, articulated the case for transforming the Direct Provision system in a similar manner. They emphasised the potential of autonomous and educated asylum seekers to contribute to Ireland financially and asserted that once allowed to work, asylum seekers would no longer be a drain on resources. Such arguments can sometimes seem like a plea from an excluded group and their advocates to be permitted access to those 'circuits of inclusion' that Nikolas Rose identifies as being open only to individuals who can prove themselves to adhere to 'core values' centred on self-reliance and responsibilization (2000, p.335). However, there seems to be more to Awn and Ali’s appeals than an unquestioning assertion of their market credentials and a liberally sanctioned request to be governed according to them. In much the same way as Michael’s correspondence and complaints focused upon the system's own rules and regulations, Awn and Ali make their case within the parameters and according to the rationalities of the system they are resisting. The fact that they are prepared to utilise neoliberal rationalities does not mean that they have become entirely reduced to them (see section 5). Like Michael’s, their appeals, although ignored,
make visible the hypocritical and arbitrary nature of Irish asylum policy and raise the seemingly paradoxical question of why, in a world of free markets and free movement, do autonomous, educated and entrepreneurial asylum seekers continue to be ‘a people not free’?

3. A ‘Care of the Self’

Although the fieldwork documented numerous examples of participants exceeding the system in a variety of ways, one form of excess stood out from the rest as being highly personal and ubiquitous among participants. This did not take the form of communal or transformatory acts, rather it took place on the micro level, focused on individual subjectivity. Primarily the purpose seemed to be to resist the subject forming pressures of life in Direct Provision and to develop and nurture a sense of self agreeable to the individual. I decided to theorise these intensely personal examples of every day resistance under the term: ‘a care of the self’, in reference to Foucault’s ideas about the possibility of cultivating subjectivity according to a personal ethic.

The concept of ‘care of the self’ was developed in Foucault’s later writings, in which he explored the possibility of nurturing an ethic contrary to both the objectifying and subjectifying processes of individualisation and normalisation (Foucault 1982, p.785). In the second and third volumes of The History of Sexuality, Foucault distinguishes ethics from morality, believing the latter to be a series of imposed requirements and restrictions and the former a practice of a personal interpretation, navigation and negotiation of these codes (Bevir 1999a, p.75). Foucault claimed that while certain societies, such as our own, are fixated on codes, rules and norms, others, such as in classical Greece, were more amenable to the development of an individual’s ‘ethic of existence’ and that the pursuit of this ethic could affirm one’s liberty and give form to one’s life (ibid.). In practicing an ethic of existence, or
care of the self, we attempt to negotiate, and when required, resist the pressures of morality, normalisation and subject formation that exist in the modern world, thus creating a personal style and outlook unique to ourselves. It can perhaps be difficult to identify where subjectification ends and a care of the self begins. This difficulty can be attributed to Foucault’s rejection of the notion of any essential, primary self. Not believing in human nature, or the existence of a unified self that had been corrupted by exterior processes (Foucault 1984a, p.282), Foucault saw an individual’s personal style, or ‘self’, as the unrepeatable product of countless contingencies (Shusterman 2000, p.538). As such, for Foucault, the individual subject is a subject of their environment and cannot help but be ‘interpellated through ideology’ (Heller 1996, p.93). However, Foucault also argued that one could practice a genuine care of the self from the ‘positions we are happy to occupy’, essentially engaging in a modification within ‘the context of the social influences at work on us’ (Bevir 1999a, p.76). Thus an individual can practice subject formation according to an ethic of their choosing as opposed to various objectifying and subjectifying pressures.

The sense of self we nurture may not be consistent and in some cases it may not even always be consciously identified, yet through it we may exceed the subject forming pressures of our daily lives. Through ‘techniques’, or ‘practices’ of the self, individuals are able to ‘improve themselves’, ‘their lives’ and the ‘aspirations and norms that guide them’ (Rose 1992, p.363). Such self-care can be consistently viewed in the revolution of everyday life partaken in by this research’s participants, as they navigated and steeled themselves against the various codes, rules and discourses that permeate Irish policy and public debate regarding asylum. By constituting themselves ‘in an active fashion through practices of the self” (Foucault 1984a, p.291), participants could be seen to manage some of the subject forming effects which shape life in Direct Provision.
Foucault described practices of the self as ‘a subset of this broader domain of the “conduct of conduct” that seeks to “govern our own selves”’’ (Dean 2010, p.20). That is to say that the care of the self refers to a form of power that is only exercised over one’s own actions and subjectivity. For the purposes of this study, I present examples of care of the self separately from acts that seek to inform and transform the actions of others; to conduct the conduct of other institutions, individuals and processes. Although these two forms of resistance can often blend into one another, at its essence a care of the self does not, and cannot, seek to apply power on others. This is because an approach that takes ‘the risk of dominating others and exercising a tyrannical power over them, arises precisely only when one has not taken care of the self” (Foucault 1984, p.288). Foucault argues that if one knows oneself and takes ‘proper care of yourself” then you ‘cannot abuse your power over others’ (ibid.). Thus, for the most part, participants’ practices of the self, were non-confrontational and exercised within the confines of the regulations outlined by the law, the RIA and centre management. They did not seek to change the system, directly challenge authority within it or encourage others to do so. These practices are simply examples of how the residents maintained a care of themselves against the intensely subject forming pressures of everyday life in Direct Provision. I have also chosen to classify personal alcohol and drug consumption as constituting practices of the self. Although these practices can contravene the RIA regulations and national laws, participants spoke of them as a means of personal escapism rather than as direct attempts to defy or exert influence over others.

Throughout the study, participants revealed that they had either engaged in, or witnessed a variety of methods for personally coping with the pressures of life in Direct Provision. Awn himself informed me that: ‘I kill myself playing sport. Football for hours. Sports at the gym for hours. This helps me try to sleep as normal as any person. But I can’t’. By remaining active and accentuating aspects of masculinity that he could control, such as physical
conditioning and mental toughness, Awn is able to nurture a masculine sense of self and resist some of the subjectifying pressures of life in Direct Provision.

Such intense engagement with sports as a means of caring for oneself was a recurring theme throughout the fieldwork. For example, Rashad informed me about how football was a very popular pastime at a centre he had lived in previously.

Oh, always games. Playing. Before dinner, after dinner. If the weather is good? All day! You will, you stay like. If you do, if you stay there, you will be Ronaldo when you leave (laughs).

In the LDPDF, Michael and Stephan both spoke about how they had regularly attended gyms while resident at previous Direct Provision centres and bemoaned the lack of an affordable gym in Limerick city. They claimed to be getting their exercise by travelling to shops and walking long distances to parks and along rivers. According to Beck et al., such routine behaviour can be important to people facing ‘a vague or dire future’. By taking part in seemingly routine activities, they can ‘pass the time’, finding ‘periodic respite from overwhelming problems’ (2003, p.349).

Participants also sought to nurture their minds as well as their bodies. For example, Valentine told the group about how, when living in Kerry, he and many of the other residents in his hostel would go to the local library early and fill their day reading the newspapers, or using the computers. Rashad spoke to the LDPDF about how he was writing music, both in Arabic and English. He talked about the different music projects he was working on and how it was important for him to translate them properly, so the listener would be able to understand his meaning, which he referred to as ‘going inside’. Ali has been and remains active in many initiatives, such as educational programmes, book clubs and projects. While these practices could be attributed to the subjectifying pressures of a liberal society, they may
also be interpreted as an attempt to nurture an active self, in line with Ali’s own beliefs on integration and his capacity and duty to contribute. Adhering to such an ethic can be understood as a means to ward off pressures relating to inactivity and boredom, which he had witnessed creating ‘desperate’, ‘paralysed’ subjects.

This proactive mind-set may have been exemplified by Ali, but it was also evident in the actions of many other participants. One might even speculate that participation in this research was at least somewhat motivated by a will to care for the self. For example, the two well attended meetings on the volunteering and educational opportunities available in Limerick city, organised by the LASRN, provided an indication of the strong impulse towards partaking in any kind of productive, or even social, activity. It was evident from many discussions throughout the fieldwork that participants were anxious to engage in any exercise that permitted them to practice their skills, or provided them even the slightest sense of developing their abilities. In their determination to engage in such activities, absent of any financial motivation, we can glimpse a struggle against the pressures which cast participants as dependant, emasculated and isolated. Participants did not want to ‘lie in bed with them feeding us’ or just collect ‘the social (welfare)’, ‘it’s not good’. By engaging in activities befitting of autonomous men, participants were able to nurture an ‘ethic of existence’ formed in the context of their own experiences and values. By following this ethic one could nurture a sense of self in opposition to the childlike, emasculated and isolated subject that Ali held up as a ‘desperate’ warning of what life in Direct Provision could transform a person into.

Another response to the pressures of life in Direct Provision was a sharp focus on religious beliefs. Religion can be seen as ‘part of a transnational circuit of ideas, associations and practices’ which open up important connections and relations for asylum seekers (Conlon 2010a, p.720-721). In the LDPDF, the subject of Islam was evidently close to heart of all the members and was frequently discussed as a moral compass and means of self-identification.
Michael spoke about how Islam provided a ‘system’ for people to live by, which all Muslims took pride in and tried to follow. Rashad often spent time reading the Koran ‘to be at peace’ and Isaac spent ‘much time’ in prayer. Islam seemed to provide some participants with an ethical framework and identity that they were far more comfortable with than the rules they were subjected to and the abject identities they were designated in Direct Provision (this care of the self and construction of identity through religion is discussed further in Chapter 7 section 2.1). Awn, who was a practising Muslim himself, told me that he believed that many residents ‘become very religious’ and ‘keep most of their time in church, most of their time in the mosque’ in order to ‘escape’ from the Direct Provision centre. This view was shared by Ali who added that another of the reasons asylum seekers were likely to engage with ‘religious institutions’ was because it was free and, as such, it was one of the only ways they could afford to interact with the local population.

Another way for residents to escape isolation and become involved in Irish society was through personal relationships. Awn told me that some asylum seekers saw becoming involved with a local woman as a means to escape from the centre for a period of time and to forget about his life there.

Awn: Some people like to forget about his life; will try to find a woman to forget about his life in the hostel. You know, to keep himself away.

…

Awn: To live with a lady in her house, away from the hostel for a while. You’re just forgetting things.

While I am not suggesting that such escapism was the motivation for Michael’s relationship with the mother of his child, it was clear from our discussions that it had a social aspect for
him and he greatly relished any time he could secure with both of them, their company being of great comfort to him. Heterosexual relationships can also be seen as a means to assert one’s masculine identity, for, as Mike Donaldson argues, heterosexual men often require women to provide them with sexual validation (1993, p.645).

Beyond attempting to nurture active, ethical and social existences, participants also spoke of how residents would attempt to escape the pressures of Direct Provision through the consumption of medication, alcohol and illegal drugs. Whilst talking about how he had been prescribed sleeping pills and anti-depressants, Awn expressed his belief that ‘very few’ Direct Provision residents were not taking some sort of medication. Those people, Awn claimed, were only able to live without medication because ‘they will use other things… To keep forgetting things’. The majority of participants did not disclose any personal experiences with alcohol or illegal drugs; however, many of them related incidents where the over-consumption of alcohol by others had resulted in disturbances and even violence. For example, Michael claimed that ‘when someone get drunk, he get mistake there is a fight going on and always the drunk he will be the victim’.

Although participants were more elusive on the subject of drug use among Direct Provision residents, informal discussion and my own observations suggest that it was more prevalent than they were willing to discuss on record. Awn gave an indication of the presence of drugs in the centres when discussing anti-depressants, he told me that some residents ‘don’t need to use medication because they take alcohol. Some people take a lot of drugs, you know, they smoke a lot of hash’.

Initially the consumption of drugs and alcohol may seem incompatible with a ‘care’ of the self. Far from exceeding pressures and controls, such practices could be interpreted as relenting to and embracing inactivity, dependency and even illegality. However, studies
conducted by Grazyna Zajdow (2010) into ‘intoxication and the ethics of pleasure’ suggest otherwise. Drawing upon Foucault’s own experiences and theorisations concerning the use of drugs, Zajdow highlights how engaging in intoxication can be seen as a means to elude both the sovereign and security based mechanisms of control which attempt to secure the individual against risk. Foucault himself advocated drug use as a practice of the self and as a means to attain an ‘ethics of pleasure’ (Zajdow 2010, p.223). Zajdow argues that such ethics enable the user to escape from ‘being oneself’ through a search for ‘incredibly intense’ pleasure; an ethic that eludes ‘risk minimisation measures’ (ibid.). Thus, Direct Provision residents engaging in drug use can be interpreted as practicing a radical care of the self that cuts them off from a system premised on cost/benefit calculations, risk management and the government of their conduct. The ‘euphoria’ of intoxication can also ‘stop’ or ‘lose time’, further separating the asylum seeker from a particularly time-intensive and time-elusive system and what Zajdow deems a generally ‘time obsessed society’ (2010, p.224). Thus, by indulging in drugs and becoming intoxicated, residents can momentarily escape themselves as they exist in the system. Take for example Awn’s claim that resident’s would take ‘a lot of drugs’ in order to ‘forget’ and ‘get away’.

Dominic: Away from that life?

Awn: Away from Direct Provision thinking.

While engaging in drug or alcohol consumption is a de jure breach of rules (RIA 2009, p.14), participants indicated that the system was quite flexible. In some cases it seemed that such practices were even encouraged in order to aid in the centre’s operation. An example of how management would bend the rules in order to maintain more general control can be seen in Awn’s explanation of how, because of Tannadice’s isolated location and potentially ‘troublesome’ residents, staff there would turn a blind eye to the storage and consumption of
alcohol during the day. Moreover, after 11 pm, the security guards would take a further step back and allow the residents to ‘do as we like’.

Awn: Yeah well, you know, in the morning time the management is there, so there is a kind of respect. So people they don’t drink or do bad things during the day. But at night you know the place just becomes common for everyone, so people start drinking.

Dominic: In the public areas?

Awn: Drinking in the TV room, smoking in TV room. Well yeah, nobody can ask, because it is our time and… there is no place other than that place to go.

In such instances we get a clearer glimpse of how power relations and the exercise of power are never entirely one-sided and how even self-care can bleed into transformatory practices of power. In Awn’s example the actions, or at least the potential actions, of residents actually inform the conduct of centre staff who concede them a certain time and space. We can also see how the system is able to accommodate such relations, exercising a degree of flexibility that is required to maintain a workable level of consensus between both parties. By allowing residents to practice some forms of autonomy after 11pm, the management are able to maintain control during the day.

The practices of the self, detailed in this section, constitute a subtle management of subjectifying and objectifying pressures, but they also contain potential wider implications. In exceeding the system through caring for the self, participants can be seen to exercise an ethic that opposes and contradicts, not just the processes and pressures of the Direct Provision system, but also the subject of the asylum seeker that the system constructs and exhibits to the rest of the population. By engaging in the practices detailed in this section, participants
assert their autonomy and exhibit themselves and their values. Thus, practices of the self not only exercise resistance at the personal level, but can also be seen to contribute to public perceptions and understandings as well.

4. Michael’s Story

In *Society must be Defended* (2004), Foucault famously inverts Clausewitz’s proposition that politics is war by other means. He argues that we can instead view politics and power as the continuation of war; the dense web of power relations are ‘essentially anchored in a certain relationship of force that was established in and through war’ (2004, p.15). During times of ‘peace’, this relationship of force is applied through a ‘silent war’ that reinscribes itself through institutions, inequalities, languages and ‘even on the bodies of individuals’ (2004, p.16). If we hold this to be true of the set of relations and mechanisms that constitute Ireland’s Direct Provision system, each incidence of excess, resistance, even care of the self can be viewed as an a ‘continuation of war’; exercises of power that evade, challenge and re-shape relations of ‘peace’ that are merely part of a never ending war (ibid.). It is during these moments of subversion and contention that we can truly glimpse the nature of the ‘relationships of force’ on which the Direct Provision system is built. When Michael writes letters to the Department of Justice and Equality demanding the system adhere to its own rules, he exposes a system where ‘the executioner is the judge’. When Awn organises a protest in Dublin, he and the other protesters assert their visibility and their agency within a system that seeks to constrain and conduct them.

In this section I document one particular series of events which stood out amongst the others. This incident involved a long and protracted clash between a centre’s residents and staff, in which the residents exceeded many of the mechanisms and contested many of the relations
that shaped their daily lives. This is ‘Michael’s story’ an account of a turbulent change of management that occurred while he was a resident at Tannadice. The events described by Michael can be seen to have briefly and brightly illuminated the set of relations and controls underpinning the functioning of Tannadice during times of supposed ‘peace’, and also to have evaded, challenged and reshaped these relations and controls during a period of conflict.

During my one-to-one interview with Michael, he informed me that one morning the residents of Tannadice awoke to find the centre foyer occupied by ten men from the G4S security firm. It was explained to residents that the contract for the administration of Tannadice Direct Provision centre had been terminated and that the manager of the centre was to be replaced.

Michael: In the morning, we see about ten security around the hostel and we feel there’s something going on. But until now we don’t know exactly what is going on, but we feel there is a change going on in the hostel.

Dominic: Yes.

Michael: And it is a big change in our lives. After that the manager, old manager, he comes to us and he explain that this is the other company, main company, mother company and they try to kick him out for business reasons.

According to Michael, this not only ‘frightened’ many of the residents, but also dismayed them, as the ‘old manager’, was ‘a great man’ who treated residents like ‘a human being’. He also operated a relaxed policy with regard to residents recording their attendance by signing in and would frequently permit Michael time away to visit his family.

Michael claimed that the new manger was a ‘young man’ in his early to mid-twenties whom Michael described as impossible to respect because he was ‘an idiot’. Upon arriving this new
manager quickly began the installation of an electronic card-operated machine to keep track of residents’ attendance. This was negatively received by residents who felt such a system monitored them, ‘like employees’, but without a wage: ‘we ask him “so will you pay us for that?”’. The residents consulted with the old manager, who remained present in the centre, and after reaching a consensus they demanded the new manager and security leave the premises, which they did. All came back the next day along with a representative from the ‘mother company’. Michael described the representative as ‘very smart and very rich’. In an attempt to undermine any resistance to the new manager and win over the residents, the representative promised to spend more money on the upkeep of the centre and its facilities. This failed to convince Michael and some of the other residents: ‘she say she give you new duvet and things. But this is one time only and she will be here for years’. The representative then tried and failed to ‘bribe’ Michael and the others directly: ‘she can’t buy us with money’. However, she was successful in winning over some residents by taking them to a pub in the nearest town and paying for their drinks.

Michael: Yes, the alcoholics! She provides for him a bus every day from ten to nine pm. The driver already paid. The pub in the village is already paid.

Dominic: Yeah? She paid for them to go to the pub?

Michael: Every day! They go have dinner and they drink there. That’s when we started to get very upset. Someone else talk to those lads and they try to make problems. So they came to us very drunk and they try to fight with us… Not fight, but make arguments: ‘let’s kick the old manager out and the new one will take us all to the pub’. And we don’t drink like.

Michael and approximately twenty others formed a group who continued to resist the new management structure, refusing to record their attendances or follow instruction.
The group met with representatives from *Doras Luimní* in an effort to resolve the situation because ‘they know the manager’, but this action failed to resolve anything. This was followed by a hunger strike which lasted ‘three or four days’, although Michael admitted to me that the group had smuggled in a pizza. During this period Michael claims the new management and security remained on the premises and continued to both ‘bribe’ and intimidate dissenting residents: ‘the security was from another company, G4. Everywhere we feel, uncomfortable’. This atmosphere of intimidation culminated in several security guards physically beating one asylum seeker in his bed for being drunk and breaking windows. However, after this incident the residents became ‘angry’ and the *Gardaí* were called out to the centre. After talking to both the residents and the security guards, the *Gardaí* insisted that the latter leave the premises for their own safety.

Michael: Garda came and took the security out and said you can’t stay there.

Dominic: You can’t stay there?

Michael: For your own safety because we were like very upset.

Dominic: I can imagine.

Michael: Yeah, we were angry. And we were 20 lads also.

The security guards returned the next day. Eventually, Michael and the rest of the group realised that they would not be able to prevent the changeover and reached a mutual decision to strike a deal.

Michael: Ahh like we know we’re losing, but don’t show her we are disappointed. So if we lose we need to transfer all the lads here at one time. So she says ‘no this will not happen, the Department of Justice will not accept it’. She says ‘I have a deal for you, what you want exactly? I will give you anything you want’. We was losing, we
can do nothing. So at least we take advantage from her now. So I say 'there is not anything I can do now, I have to go back to my friends, the asylum seekers, and ask them what they need'. I had arranged a meeting and ask everyone what they need. Some request PlayStation…

Dominic: Yeah?

Michael: Yes, some request blinder?

Dominic: Blender?

Michael: Blender, some request, the morning honey, more different yoghurts. Different kind of…

Dominic: That’s interesting though, these are the different things people want.

Michael: Yeah, yeah, so I make a list for her. So when I saw the list is so big, I tell her we need one thing.

Dominic. Yes?

Michael: I tell her: ‘we need Argos book’ and we choose from the Argos book and she said ‘yeah OK’… So we said in the end: ‘you win’.

As a final condition for his and the group’s compliance, Michael sought assurance that he would be transferred from Tannadice as soon as possible. He feared that his role as the representative of the group that had opposed the changeover would be held against him by the new manager.

Michael: As long as she wins, as I was head of organisers, I will have to go away.

Dominic: Or she will come for you (laughs).
Michael: Yes (laughs) she will come for me. So I told her, ‘listen I cannot stay here’. She will come after, get revenge from me because we give her rough time like, really rough. So I stay altogether one month… After I left.

Dominic: And she helped you move?

Michael: She didn’t help like but she can’t stop me, because I request.

Dominic: But, sometimes they turn requests down.

Michael: Ah, but she said, ‘for all the people, anyone need a move, let him move’. She wants to rid of trouble people and said ‘I will support you if you move someplace’.

Michael was transferred to a new centre within one month.

Michael’s story illustrates the relations and mechanisms of power intrinsic to the day-to-day functioning of Direct Provision centres, and how this arrangement is fluid, at times unstable and open to negotiation and transformation. Upon entering Tannadice, the new management and staff immediately asserted their control through physical sovereign force, embodied by the G4S security guards. The management then set about implementing the various disciplinary mechanisms of control utilised in the administration of the Direct Provision centre. The installation of an electronic swipe card system was one of the first initiatives implemented with the goal of increasing resident surveillance. A gratification-punishment dynamic was also brought into operation with the promise of increased investments in the centre’s resources and facilities as long as the residents ‘do as we are told’. Later on systems of hierarchal distribution emerge in which those who accept the new management structure are rewarded with trips to the pub and other bribes, while those who continue to resist are classified as ‘troublesome’ and face pressure and intimidation. These mechanisms contain
elements of the disciplinary examination; however, the full brilliance of disciplinary power, implicit in the examination, could not be fully implemented without the compliance of residents who refused to swipe in or allow themselves to be otherwise monitored. The group of resisting residents seemed to lack the element of fear essential for the examination to function. They were not concerned with the rewards available to those who rose to the top of the hierarchy that was implemented, nor did they seem afraid of the punishments that traditionally incentivised those at the bottom, such as the threat of transfer or the negative repercussions for one’s ‘case’ and application. If these things did concern members of the group, it was not to the degree necessary to conduct their conduct.

This lack of that fear which makes one malleable could be attributed to a variety of causes. For example, already residents of Tannadice, Michael and the rest of the group may have felt there was nowhere worse to which they could be transferred. Or, perhaps as residents of a centre notorious for housing troublemakers, they may have believed themselves to be already marked out and thus had little to lose with regard to the construction of their case. Another possible interpretation is that their strength in numbers, along with the morally dubious circumstances surrounding the takeover, placed the new management in a vulnerable position, rendering them incapable of taking on the group all at once or enlisting the help of the RIA. Whatever the case, many of the disciplinary techniques the new management attempted to implement were resisted by Michael and the others. Through their presence in the hostel and their excess of the various attempts to conduct and control them, Michael and his group made the full implementation of a disciplinary regime impossible; resulting in the assertion of management’s dominance through sovereign violence, when the security guards physically assaulted a resident. However, at this moment Michael and the 20 others, whom he claimed were ‘angry’, asserted their own sovereign power by calling the Gardai, threatening violence of their own and insisting the security guards leave. When challenged
on their supposed monopoly on sovereign force, the security guards backed down and left the centre for the night.

Michael and the rest of the group engaged in a variety of other attempts to direct the conduct of the new management, such as their hunger strike and the contact made with *Doras Luimní*. However, over time and via an escalation of the gratification-punishment dynamic, the new management increased their influence over residents, bribing some and relying on pressure from the converted to conduct the others. Attempts to seek help and publicity from the media failed and the resistance finally ended when the group perceived that they could not achieve the objective of bringing back the old manager.

Although the group was eventually defeated, Michael's story highlights how excession and transformation are possible within the Direct Provision centre. The story concludes with Michael securing a large and much needed quantity of resources and facilities on behalf of the Tannadice residents and transfers to more popular centres for himself and others. As Tannadice settled back down into a state of ‘peace’, with the relations of force once again concealed, it is evident that the ‘peace’ that prevailed was somewhat more agreeable to the residents of Tannadice, than the ‘peace’ that confronted them on the morning they awoke to find their centre occupied by security guards.

5. Conclusion

This chapter documents the ways in which participants of this study were not merely passive subjects within the Direct Provision system, but frequently exercised various techniques of resistance, subversion and excess. It reveals asylum seekers as autonomous actors, capable of challenging, shaping and even transforming the system in which they act. To this end, section 1 draws on the autonomy of migration approach, to demonstrate how asylum seekers
can, and do, draw upon their resources, skills and ingenuity in order to establish a variety of networks, knowledges and alliances that exceed attempts to conduct them. Section 2 examines these practices of excession in further detail. It conceptualises the activities of the LASRN as constituting a ‘mobile commons’, providing its members with opportunities and information. It also documents various other types of excession practiced by individuals, including criminality, active participation, correspondence and visible protest. It concludes that the way in which excession is practiced can often be revealing with regard to the actor’s beliefs and conceptions of power and change. It also notes that these beliefs and conceptions are shaped to greater and lesser extents by the dominant liberal values and market based rationalities that frame modern society.

Section 3 addresses the ways in which the subject forming effects of living in Direct Provision are managed through various personal techniques such as, practices, or care of the self. The section looks at how various activities and relationships, from church going to drug taking, are employed by participants as a means of nurturing a sense of self that subverts and counters the inactive, dependant, emasculated subject forged by Direct Provision. Finally, section 4 details ‘Michael’s story’. This glimpse of a unique power struggle within Tannadice Direct Provision centre exposes the variety of techniques, tactics, resistances and relationships that underpin the day-to-day operation of Direct Provision centres during times of ‘peace’. Crucially it highlights the agency and potential of asylum seekers to challenge, shape and transform their environment.

The entire chapter is a testament to the agency of participants. However, as mentioned in the introduction, the resistances that they practiced were not what I had expected and in some aspects, could be perceived as somewhat limited. To begin with, many of the examples of excess documented were of a personal nature. That is to say, they may have challenged and even transformed aspects of the actor’s lives but held little prospect of effecting the
systematic change that participants themselves identified as necessary. Examples of moments of excess capable of causing great rupture were rare; even the LASRN, Awn’s protests and ‘Michael’s story’ impacted on dozens rather than hundreds of people. This is in no way to suggest that such moments are insignificant; rather it is to question the possibility of organising systematic transformations of the Direct Provision system through more collective, large scale excesses.

Secondly, as touched upon in section 2, many of the types of protest and excession practiced, seemed to be of a type conducive to modern liberal government and to embrace rationalities of responsibilization, autonomy and market based prosperity. These are some of the core rationalities upon which today’s global systems of migration and labour, which constrain and conduct asylum seekers, are founded. Although embracing such rationalities can challenge certain dominant narratives that cast asylum seekers as uniformly abject, it could also be interpreted as excluding those asylum seekers who do not fit the autonomous, market based model. Thus, another question emerges as to whether or not it is possible to formulate types of resistance and excess that embrace alternative, subversive rationalities?

To deal with the second question first; it is not a uniquely modern phenomenon that requires critics of certain aspects of government to frame their criticism in terms relatable to that type of government. David Graeber contends that throughout history it has often been the case that discourses of opposition have been required to frame critique within the ‘reigning terms of debate’ or else to attempt to create a ‘diametrical inversion’ (2011a, p.241). He gives the example of Mo Di, founder of Mohism, who attempted to undermine China’s materialist rationalities by demonstrating how war was not a profitable exercise; for example, by highlighting its financial costs and the impact war has on agricultural production. Conversely, Confucianism and Taoism, Graeber contends, are based on a complete rejection of such profit and loss calculation; however, being constructed as a mirror image of market
logic, they succeed in being ‘the same thing, only backwards’ (2011a, p.242). The cases of Ali and Awn outlined in section 2 illustrate that nearly two and a half millennia later we can still witness resistance to a market based rationality that is articulated in terms of autonomy, profits and prosperity. As Foucault himself notes, no matter how we actively endeavour to produce ourselves, the instruments with which we do so ‘are not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him’ (1984a, p.291). As such, it is perhaps not surprising to find that participants often articulated their opposition to the system of Direct Provision in the same terms and employing the same dominant rationalities that permeate the Irish state and upon which the system is founded.

However, such rationalities are not ubiquitous. Some aspects of life are valued precisely because they remain outside dominant rationalities. For example, Graeber argues that all humans attempt to dedicate themselves to ‘something larger than themselves’ (2011b, p.195). In spite of the subjectifying pressures of neoliberal society, participants were often seen to embrace ethics in contradiction with its dominant precepts. For example, in the existence of the mobile commons, we can glimpse a way of thinking that was communal rather than individual. Valentine’s practice of taking Muslim asylum seekers into his home did not seem to rest on any expectation of profit. The speakers who attended the LASRN during their own time were not interested in financial remuneration. In taking a young asylum seeker under his wing, ‘to show him how things are’, Michael exhibits a positive, rather than negative response to the young man’s lack of autonomy. Similarly, Michael’s demand that everyone should ‘get his right’, did not seem dependant on anyone’s market value, while Awn’s insistence that asylum seekers stop being treated ‘like a business’ seemed to directly repudiate such market logic.
Thus, while certain core market based discourses are hegemonic, individual subjects are formed through a variety of rationalities and, as participants exhibited in this chapter, are free to care for, nurture and expand on those aspects most amenable to the ‘self’. It is through such micro, personal management that one can construct systems of thought and various other skills essential to practicing excess on the larger, collective scale. In the following Chapter, I question why examples of such collective, large scale excesses seemed to be in short supply. Moreover, I document the successes and failures of this study in the pursuit of collective action and transformation.
Chapter 7: ‘All Fingers are not the same’: Connections and Contestations in the Category ‘Asylum Seeker’

In the previous chapter I detailed the various ways in which participants’ challenged, exceeded and shaped Ireland's Direct Provision system and the myriad controls and pressures at work in that system. Throughout the fieldwork, participants expressed and conducted themselves in ways that completely contradicted, not only the popular social construction of the abject asylum seeker, but also my own perceptions and expectations. Yet, in spite of the evident local effectiveness of their actions, there seemed to be a dearth of any form of collective organisation which explicitly sought to transform the system they condemned. It is my view that the absence of collective organisation is related to the intense heterogeneity of those people classified as asylum seekers and the failure of that category to successfully act as a point of shared interest, politics or identity. This chapter outlines the reasons why the category of asylum seeker was problematic to organise around. Reflecting on the LDPDF and the LASRN, it documents both the diversity gathered within the category and also those alternative connections and points of solidarity that did emerge and were built upon. The chapter also investigates how participants related to the status of asylum seeker, how categorisation in this way could be a subject forming experience and how it often clashed with the sense of self which participants sought to nurture as outlined in Chapter 6, section 3.

The first section establishes the diversity of those people categorised as asylum seekers and considers the extent to which this diversity has, or has not, been recognised. Sections 2 and 3 document this diversity as it manifested itself in the LDPDF and the LASRN. Section 2 outlines how various aspects of participants' identities, such as religion and nationality, could be unifying within these groups, while section 3 documents how differences between
participants could be seen to impede the pursuit of their collective goals. Section 4 addresses the ways in which some participants related to their status as asylum seekers, how they variously attempted to embrace, or distance themselves from this abject categorisation and how this affected their sense of self. Finally, the chapter investigates those forms of organisation and protest that do not congregate primarily through the categorisation ‘asylum seeker’ and considers whether it is possible or desirable to organise on such a basis.

1. A Heterogeneous Population

Those who are categorised as asylum seekers in Ireland today form an incredibly diverse body of people with one fundamental commonality; they have all applied for asylum in the Republic of Ireland and are waiting an official decision on the matter. As part of the systematic production of knowledge concerning those applying for asylum in the country, the RIA compiles monthly and annual reports on asylum seekers that present a detailed statistical analysis of all those living within Direct Provision at that point in time. At the time of writing, the most recent RIA annual report recorded 4,434 asylum seekers as being ‘live on system’ with a further 32 residents yet to have their status documented (2014, p.20). These residents represent 92 different nationalities (2014, p.22). Their age profiles range from the 686 residents under the age of four, to the 12 residents over the age of 66 (2014, p.23). The system accommodates single people, married couples, lone parents and children, all in possession of a plethora of different skills and educational abilities. Those living in Direct Provision are at various stages of the asylum process, although the majority (68.2 per cent) have been living in Direct Provision for 36 months or more (2014, p.12).

These comprehensive reports record and graph a variety of diverse nationalities and statuses, making the heterogeneity of Ireland’s Direct Provision residents clearly visible to the state.
That this diversity of population presents a diverse set of requirements and needs has also, at times, been apparent and catered for by state institutions and techniques of governance. For example, a 2006 HSE-backed study into the mental health of asylum seekers in Galway asserts that the state is currently ‘witnessing multi-ethnic, heterogeneous and complex populations trying to integrate into Irish society’ and notes that this brings with it ‘a huge diversity of needs, ethnic groups and languages, political and religious beliefs’ (Stewart 2006, p.12). As far back as 2003, the 'Eastern Regional Health Authority' published a strategy for ethnic minorities documenting that

each ethnic group shares a collective identity based on a sense of common history and ancestry. Ethnic groups possess their own cultural identity, language, customs and practices, while every individual will possess his or her own unique life experiences and health, social, emotional and psychological needs (2003 p.12).

With regard to the Direct Provision system, the RIA has also acknowledged, albeit to a lesser degree, the challenges presented by the diversity of asylum seekers. For example, it lists ‘the restrictions caused by incompatibilities between different nationalities’ as one of its challenges in its *Value for Money Review* (2010, p.51). They also include a respect for ‘diversity and different cultures and values’ in their code of practice for people working in accommodation centres (2005, p.4). Despite the evident heterogeneity of asylum seekers and their needs being occasionally recognised, this recognition does not seem to inform Direct Provision policy. As such, the heterogeneity of asylum seekers, while somewhat acknowledged is not always accommodated.

If state policy is guilty of sometimes overlooking this diversity, popular public discourses often afford it no recognition at all. This homogenisation of asylum seekers in the public consciousness has gone hand-in-hand with a negative perceptual shift, both globally and
nationally, over the last 20 years, during which time people seeking asylum have been reconfigured as 'outcasts' and 'the scum of the earth' (Gibney 2004, p.3; see Chapter 1, sections 5 and 6). Media scholars have claimed that the practice of seeking asylum in Europe has now become stigmatised to the degree that the public demonisation of an asylum seeker no longer requires any hard evidence because 'simple mention of the word asylum now seems to be enough to connote an entire negative conceptual field' (Gross et al. 2007, cited in Tyler 2013, p.97-98). Essentially, asylum seekers have been discursively constructed as uniformly abject (see Chapter 2, section 5); their diversity is disavowed as they are perceived and classified collectively. Perhaps then it should not be surprising to find that many participants are reluctant to embrace, or even engage with this status.

The tendency to conceptualise the diverse assortment of people that constitutes the category asylum seeker into one homogenous collective was something that I too was guilty of in conducting this study. While I was aware of the diversity inherent in the category, I, along with several participants, believed that it was through their shared interests as asylum seekers that they could best organise and agitate for change to the Direct Provision system. This was doubtless related to my own beliefs about the value of solidarity and the potential of collective organisation and agitation. The problems inherent in such homogenising assumptions manifested themselves throughout the fieldwork and instead various other methods of collective identification and organisation emerged. While any kind of all-encompassing collective interest was noticeably lacking, the connections that did develop are explored in the following section.
2. Building on Connections

The establishment of the Limerick Direct Provision Discussion Forum (LDPDF) was my first attempt to document participants’ experiences of life within Direct Provision and discuss the possibility of changing aspects of the system. However, it soon became clear that, despite the members’ initial approval of these objectives, they did not share my enthusiasm for collective action, or hold out much hope for the prospect of large scale systematic change. Thus, the group developed and functioned in an informal manner, with issues raised and discussed according to the whim of members and transformatory objectives discarded. Nonetheless, members were still eager to relate their experiences of Direct Provision and it soon became apparent that these experiences varied between participants and that they did not on their own provide common ground between members (see section 3). Perhaps this explains why members didn’t seem particularly concerned with advancing a common cause with other asylum seekers living in Direct Provision. There were brief discussions about connections that they shared with fellow Direct Provision residents (alongside those they shared with Irish people) and plenty of expressed grievances with the Direct Provision system, but little reference to an asylum community, common purpose or shared interest. Overall, there seemed little appetite to self-identify with the abject category ‘asylum seeker’.

However, in spite of this reluctance to embrace their common status as asylum seekers, the members of the LDPDF were able to unify and express themselves through a variety of other connections. Religion was something that all members had in common and seemed to be the main point of common ground within the group. The shared Muslim faith amongst participants was a recurring talking point and formed a particularly strong theme in our third meeting. Potentially understood as another means of exercising care of the self, Islam
provided a strong moral code to be navigated by participants and offered not just an
alternative means to belong, but also a guiding ethic through which to create one’s self and
refuse the identities and pressures imposed by the subject forming effects of Direct Provision.

As documented in Chapter 6, section 3, participants had informed me that residents in Direct
Provision often turned strongly towards religion. Such enthusiasm seemed to be present in
all members of the LDPDF, where Islam not only appeared to provide refuge from the
subjectifying effects of Direct Provision, but also offered a camaraderie and common ground
in a strange country. Michael asserted that it was ‘the role of Islam’ that guided his actions,
asserting that he and the other members were ‘very proud of this system’ in which ‘every
human being has his right and every human being must get his right’. Rashad was also very
passionate about his beliefs and became emotional when talking about them.

I am Muslim, I have one God. One book, one messenger. I am half; my mother Shia,
my father Sunni. If somebody tell me, I tell him, 'one God, one book, one messenger!'

That’s it.

Islam appeared to bring people in Direct Provision together in a way that their shared status
as asylum seekers failed to. Rashad likened being part of the faith to being ‘like a family
together, so you watch your brother’. An example of this togetherness was visible in
Valentine’s social gatherings with fellow Muslims who were living in Direct Provision (see
Chapter 6, section 2). Religion was also spoken of as a way for residents of different cultures
to come together. For example, Isaac revealed to me that he sometimes prayed with fellow
Muslims of varying nationalities in his centre. This was significant because it was the only
time Isaac mentioned engaging with other Direct Provision residents at all. Valentine also
found his religion prompted interaction with other cultures, telling the group about how Asian
residents would ask him to teach them Arabic so that they could better understand the Koran and that he in turn would try to learn some of their language.

The importance of language was another frequent topic of discussion in the Forum. Rashad and Michael both indicated that, when possible, residents tend to spend time with people fluent in their native language and Rashad was very forthright in his belief that one needed to learn English in order to integrate into Irish society. Michael spoke about how residents with a poor grasp of English had trouble communicating with other residents and staff in the centre, while Valentine felt that a shared language was important in making oneself understood.

If I met Sudanese guy, with same language and we talk about our memories.

Sometimes the best way is to talk in our own language. Because he is exactly understanding.

This sentiment was echoed in the one-to-one interviews with Ali, ‘if you or I have same language we both understand. We interact’, and Awn, who felt that language barriers played a key role in the racial divisions he observed.

In the hostel you know, if you live in a place, Arab speakers will speak together, English together, French speaking or African, separate to the Asian, something like that. So, you know, this is racism already.

Although in this sense language could be seen as exclusionary and divisive, it also had the power to elicit positive feelings amongst residents. Rashad was intensely proud of the fact that he could speak Arabic. He told me how he had learned it from his grandfather and that when writing songs he only used Arabic, because the English language was insufficient to convey his emotions. This pride in the Arabic language was shared by other participants.
Michael told me about the spiritual significance Arabic held for fluent speakers, claiming that for him, speaking Arabic was like the priest talking in Latin for Catholic people: ‘it is the original. It has that meaning’. Isaac and Rashad both spoke with pride about how Arabic was one thing that colonialism did not manage to take from them. Isaac bemoaned the pervasive influence of the French language and culture in Africa, while Rashad spoke about how the English had imposed themselves on Ireland and his home country Iraq, before enthusiastically adding 'but we don’t forget Arabic'.

The pride participants held in their religion and their proficiency in Arabic stood in stark contrast to the sadness they exhibited with regard to the erosion of their own national cultures. Perhaps this partially explains the lack of national or patriotic identity expressed during the fieldwork. Contrary to my expectations, expressions of national belonging were quite rare in the LDPDF and often tempered with a sadness regarding the legacy of colonialism. For example, during one meeting Valentine spoke with admiration about how the Taiwanese had ‘protected’ their culture from the Chinese and bemoaned the fact that in Africa ‘in only 100 years, the English and French change everything’. Such rueful expressions of national sentiment and the dearth of enthusiastic patriotism might also be explained by the diverse nature of the forum; as each member came from a different country, expressions of such sentiment did not offer much of a common ground for participants. However, this is not to say that a shared nationality is not sometimes a point of connection within the Direct Provision; it is clear from discussions documented in section 3, that when the numbers are sufficient, sometimes groups and cliques based on nationality do form within Direct Provision centres. In our discussions, Awn informed me of how he attempted to harness the unifying power of a shared nationality while organising a protest for Sudanese nationals.
Awn: Yeah, the first was for Sudanese, because we are Sudanese asylum seekers and we do not have that organised body registered in this country to carry our case, you understand?

Dominic: Yeah.

Awn: So the idea just come when revolution started in Sudan. Protest, problems, demonstrations in Sudan. This is going out to the world, protest in Sudan! So I try to match it here... So that idea, I build from that idea. So the first one just involved Sudanese because I matched it with Sudanese situation at the time and there's nobody else can support us. But the second one was for everybody.

In this case a shared nationality, evoked by mediatised events in Sudan, was perceived to be potentially unifying. Awn coordinated Sudanese protests in Ireland with demonstrations in Sudan in order to achieve maximum attendance and exposure. The unique situation had provided an opportunity to maximise their visibility, which was a core strategy in Awn’s attempts to challenge the system (see Chapter 6, section 2). The passage of time and events can throw up numerous situations from which common interests emerge and contingent alliances can be built. Take for example the events detailed in Michael’s story (see Chapter 6, section 4), where the common interest of the resisting residents (reinstating the old manager) brought them all together, allowing them to exercise a collective power and challenge and eventually shape events and the environment within their centre.

It was the perceived potential of such collective action that inspired the direction of the LASRN, which sought to combine the efforts of asylum seekers and refugees in order to improve their lives and serve as a vehicle for change. The LASRN had a broader reach than the LDPDF, thanks to its affiliation with Doras Luimnì, which gave the Network a more diverse membership and also a more agenda-driven mandate than its predecessor. This was
something that I believed would make it more influential than the LDPDF and more capable of effecting systematic change. Although some of the members did attend the LASRN in pairs or groups based on some of the connections discussed above, the network itself never discussed issues relating to matters of religion or nationality as it may have alienated members who did not share an interest in these matters. Instead, the LASRN organised exclusively around the members' status as either asylum seekers or refugees and the perceived shared interests that these statuses embodied.

At the very first meeting of the LASRN, Ali told those in attendance that they, the members, were responsible for determining the issues to be discussed and acted upon and that participation was needed from everyone in order to identify issues that were relevant to all members and not just a vocal minority. He expressed his belief that if the Network could bring together and organise large numbers of asylum seekers, it would have a collective presence and thus greater potential to achieve its goals and create change: ‘we need to get something present, get knowledge and gain from it, if we are having interviews, deportations; we can fight!’.

Ali’s initial enthusiasm about the Network’s potential to exceed and potentially transform their circumstances initially seemed to be shared by the other Network members. The first meeting concluded with a consensus that volunteering, education and deportation were issues that affected all asylum seekers and an agreement that the next meeting would feature a presentation on volunteering. The second meeting was perhaps the most widely relevant of the series as all those who attended had a shared interest in availing of volunteering opportunities around Limerick. Following the initial presentation a lively discussion about Gardai vetting procedures and the arbitrary application of power commenced. The discussion spilled over into the subject of deportation. The language used by members
highlighted how the issue was recognised as a collective problem that they all faced. George argued that

we need to know these things, because, you know, appeal tribunal, leave to remain, these things are not understood by all and we need to know our rights and law, how to act. We need to know our rights in order to fight for them.

Ali promoted the idea of harnessing this common purpose, arguing that ‘as a pressure group we can go to different places, act in different situations, we can use the media, use protest’. However, in a prelude to the difficulties that organising such collective, transformatory action would face, Ali had to stop in the middle of making his point to try, unsuccessfully, to explain it to Marcel whose lack of English language skills made it difficult for him to keep up.

Throughout the life of the LASRN, the overwhelming point of reference was that all members either were, or had been at one point in time, asylum seekers. The perceived immediate advantage of organising around such a broad shared experience seemed to be principally derived from the large number of people that could be attracted to such a group and the potential political influence such a group might be able to wield. This logic was also embraced by Awn with regard to the protests he arranged. After the first protest he organised for Sudanese asylum seekers, Awn opened up a second protest to all Direct Provision residents: ‘for everybody. Because this is a big issue and we need everybody’. However, in spite of the second protest appealing to a wider group, there were fewer in attendance than at the first one.

Awn’s negative experiences with appealing to large groups of people through their shared status as asylum seekers, would eventually replicate themselves in the LASRN, where the glossed over diversity soon asserted itself. In the next section I use the testimony of
participants and my own experiences with the LASRN to illustrate how the heterogeneity of asylum seekers militates against initiatives to organise collectively under that status.

3. Negotiating Differences

From the very beginning of the fieldwork, participants warned me against generalising their experiences. The members of the LDPDF were particularly insistent that Direct Provision was full of individuals who often had little beyond their status in common. This is perhaps best exemplified by an exchange that took place during the group’s second meeting.

Michael: You know, finger is not the same.

Dominic: Sorry, what does that mean?

Michael: All fingers are not the same.

Valentine: Proverbs… Saying…

Rashad: Arabic saying.

Dominic: Yeah I see it’s a saying… But what is it? All fingers are not the same size?

All: Yes.

Valentine: They belong to you… (holds up fingers to me) and you call them fingers, but some of them just are fingers, but they are all different.

Throughout the life of the LDPDF, participants would re-iterate that, although they were all classified as asylum seekers, they all had separate experiences of what that entailed and that beyond the group, there was another world of perspectives and experiences that the research had not touched upon. Rashad urged me to talk to as many people as possible: ‘you have to
listen to all the people. Understand? All the people have different. Different stories.

Understand?’. When I questioned Awn about collective action in his centre of residence he told me

no, it is not like that. Dominic, some people will not say hello to you. You can spend months with them in the same place and you don't even know their name. It is just divided like that.

In the LDPDF, participants' reluctance to attest to a common interest amongst all asylum seekers could sometimes manifest itself in a forthright refusal to discuss notions relating to shared identity, experiences or interests. Isaac provided the most striking example of this refusal. Throughout our interactions he dismissed all of my attempts to broach issues relating to common interests with a wave of his hand, declaring that he had no interest in talking for, or about, asylum seekers because ‘I can speak only for myself’. Similarly, Rashad rejected the notion that his status as an asylum seeker enabled him to speak for anyone but himself. He insisted that the LDPDF, on its own, would be insufficient in producing knowledge about all those living in Direct Provision.

Yeah, but man I'm telling you this one, you have to listen all the people. For example, for asylum seekers, check how many asylum seeker there are and listen all their story. Check which one is the best word and take it from him. Use all the 6,000 for one story... You have to open your brain! Many, many people has many problem, some are coming, drinking, smoking, different colours, language. Some are coming school, computer, food. You know, it’s different, you know? So the story is like that. Story’s like that.

Throughout the LDPDF, and in spite of the evident effect their categorisation had on their lives, the term ‘asylum seeker’ was rarely employed by participants as a way to relate to each
other, or to other residents. When the term did come up, it was usually in relation to political or media discourses and wider Irish society; almost as a recognition that it had implications in these contexts, but held little meaning for them personally.

This was not something that I had anticipated. Because participants were rejecting the notion of a common cause, I asked them to elaborate on the differences that exist within Direct Provision centres and how these differences manifested themselves. Michael and Stephan informed me how groups and cliques would form within the centre, often founded upon the connections discussed in section 2. For example, they told me about how cliques based on nationality would exert physical power over others when it came to occupying space or using facilities or resources.

Michael: Well it’s kind of, you have to have power. So let’s uh… if we were five Somalis, we can sit, sit and watch the television…

Stephan: Sit over, all day.

Michael: But you have to have a group, if a fight or something come up. If I don’t have five persons on my back they…

Stephan: They will kill you.

Such divisions along national and ethnic lines were also raised in my discussions with Awn who felt that groups tended to form among people sharing the 'same religion, same country. Not the same interests'. Awn re-iterated several times that, through the formation of such groups, Direct Provision centres produced division and 'much racism'.

People, they divide into groups! Pakistani, Afghani together. Africa together. Arab together. Algerian and, ehm... They are all separate from the others and this brings anger sometimes.
During the LDPDF meetings, participants were at times critical of others who held different religious affiliations and nationalities; sometimes even employing some of the negative discourses that have contributed towards the construction of the asylum seeker as a national abject. Rashad claimed that Jewish people believed themselves to be superior to Christians and Muslims: 'he say, I’m old I'm the best, it’s not true’. Michael alleged that Nigerians had ‘misused the system’ and taken advantage of the ‘good people of Ireland’ and bemoaned the fact that Irish people did not differentiate between Africans: ‘they call us all colour, all those people hear it so it’s what is stuck in their head’. Rashad and Michael criticised Chinese asylum seekers for being reluctant to learn English and associating only with each other, yet this critique was tempered with expressions of admiration for their perceived intelligence and the strong networks the Chinese had built up in Ireland.

The differences and divisions between Direct Provision residents highlighted in the LDPDF and in one-to-one interviews with Awn, can be understood in a variety of ways. Firstly, they can be seen as a simple and inevitable consequence of grouping such a heterogeneous group of people into one category. As Awn put it:

if you bring different cultures, different nationalities, different traditions and different tasting food from different countries to one place and to just put them and feed them by taste of chef and meaning of taste... That's it... They won't join together.

However, there seemed to be more to participants' rejection of a shared experience and interest than a disavowal of a common identity. Participants seemed frustrated by the focus I had tried to place on collective action and in retrospect I can see that such an approach contained its own potential for subject formation. Eventually Awn, who himself had sought to organise a protest against Direct Provision on behalf of all asylum seekers, stressed to me that 'there is no common interest in the hostel. Nothing'.
My overemphasis on finding a common interest shared by participants and their rejection of it, contains parallels with work conducted by Jacques Rancière on the mid-nineteenth century labour movement in France. While conducting his work, Rancière did not find the ‘cultural unity’ he was searching for and instead notes the actual separation between particular workers’ struggles and the collective identities they had been designated (2011, p.22).

Rancière detailed how the working class people that he analysed were indeed engaged in a variety of struggles, but that these struggles were not unified. Instead, they were unique and the often feted working class identity and unity was but a counter offensive against the demonisation of the working class by the bourgeoisie. In fact, Rancière claims that working class people did not seek to overthrow the bourgeoisie or end economic injustice, rather they wished to participate as equals, drawing distinctions between themselves and those who might be construed as being undeserving of such equality. He argues that working class identity is a ‘strategic identity’ and that it was completely tied to denial of the identity imposed by others. The workers spoke to say that they were not those Others, those 'barbarians' that bourgeois discourse denounced (ibid.).

In rejecting the notion of a shared experience, or even identity, derived from their status as asylum seekers and emphasising their differences, participants similarly distanced themselves from the abject 'Others'. Michael's condemnation of Nigerian asylum seekers who 'misuse the system' similarly allows him to draw a distinction between himself and the 'bogus asylum seekers' that public discourses construct and denounce. Likewise, his and Rashad's criticism of Chinese asylum seekers for being insular and avoiding integration, by emphasising differences and distancing themselves from such behaviour, breaks with the homogenising narrative of the asylum seeker and allows them to assert their own credentials for integration. Like Ranciere's working class, they can be seen as making their own personal case for equal
participation 'within the common social and political life of the nation' (ibid.). Thus, abject categorisations and the efforts of individuals to resist them and their effects can potentially militate against collective association and organisation.

In the LASRN, participants took a very different approach. The Network's focus on the collective potential of, and interests shared by, asylum seekers meant that division and difference were rarely acknowledged. As outlined in the previous section, the Network was initially enthusiastic about the possibility of collective action and this approach resulted in a degree of success via the production of a mobile commons in which important information was identified, organised and shared by participants.

However, over time it became apparent that identifying and acting upon the common interests and needs of asylum seekers was not as simple as initially anticipated. At the Network's third meeting, a barrister gave a presentation on the deportation process and it was noticeable that the terminology and legal language being used was not understood by everyone in attendance. During the question and answer session, all enquiries were focused on very specific individual problems which the barrister recommended members talk to their solicitors about. It was clear that each member was at a particular stage of the asylum process and wished to focus on their own specific, personal issues. Deirdre Conlon and Nick Gill have documented how modern technologies of governance have converged to make asylum seekers self-responsible to the extent that even in the face of deportation they are encouraged to gather information on the legal process, their rights within it and prepare for their own appeals (2013, p.254-255). Evidently, such pressures do not leave much space for the development of solidarities. Despite the fiery rhetoric of the previous meeting, there were no attempts to organise as a group against deportation, the members’ collective will to discuss the issue now seemed to be necessarily limited to their personal interest in their own journey through the system.
The fourth Network meeting focused on the subject of education and was poorly attended causing it to be rescheduled within the Easter Road Direct Provision centre. The open ended set up of this meeting (see Chapter 3, section 4.3) allowed Catherine, the representative from the 'Limerick Community Education Network', to directly address the specific enquiries of the participants on a one-to-one basis and provide them with relevant advice on educational opportunities in Limerick city. This set up was better able to facilitate the diverse needs of the members; from those such as Stephan looking to partake in more advanced computer courses to Imran who wanted to take lessons in basic English. However, the meeting was still unable to cater for everyone, as beyond introductory level classes there was nothing more Catherine could offer. This was disappointing for Stephan and especially Samuel who had already completed the level one computer course and claimed that it was far too basic for his skill level. Catherine informed him that because the level two course was *FÁS* (Irish state employment authority) certified he would be unlikely to get a place on it. The meeting was also unable to fully cater to George who, in four years of living in Direct Provision, had completed the majority of courses available. George eventually agreed to take a place in a gardening program for ‘something to do’. Ali, who was a highly qualified professional, did not attend this meeting because of its lack of relevance to him.

By the time the fifth meeting took place, attendance had dropped to only two members; Ali and Victor. I had anticipated that this meeting, based on the subject of the asylum process in Ireland, would suffer from the same problems as the previous two meetings; i.e. an inability to adequately address the diverse concerns of members, based on their current position within the system. Due to the low turnout, this was not a problem as Ali and Victor were able to interact directly with the speaker and put their specific questions to him in a way that would have been impossible at a larger meeting. After the presentation Leonie, representing *Doras Luimni*, enquired as to our thoughts on why attendances had declined. I expressed my belief...
that the common interests of members that we had intended to focus on were not as common
as anticipated and as a result the topics of discussion had to be very broad and some of these
broad topics were of little relevance to individual members. This was agreed upon by Ali
who felt that people at ‘different stages are concerned with different aspects’. He also
expressed his belief that people who had obtained refugee status were unwilling to get
involved in 'matters of asylum'. This was echoed by Leonie who had the impression that
once someone has obtained status 'they want to leave that part of their life behind'. Leonie
then suggested that the LASRN might be better served conducting meetings inside the Direct
Provision centres themselves and mentioned the possibility of linking up with the Irish
Refugee Council in order to provide members with training on how to establish residents'
committees. This suggestion was well received by Ali and Victor who felt that these
committees could deal directly with shared problems as they arose in Direct Provision
centres: ‘residents' committees are needed... You know... the food, it’s always an issue and
such things as the space and crowding... it would be good’. In this way solidarities and
alliances would be able to form and dissipate naturally within the centres.

The problems that emerged in the LASRN served to highlight how, while certain shared
experiences existed between asylum seekers, the category itself contained such a diverse set
of interests as to render a permanent organisation around those interests virtually impossible.
These complications were also experienced by Awn who, following the relative success of
his Sudanese-based demonstration, sought to organise protests for ‘all Direct Provision
residents’. Awn had a lot of experience in coordinating demonstrations back in Sudan but
claimed that it was much more difficult for him to do so in Ireland, referencing the diversity
of those he sought to rally.

Yeah, it is much easier there (in Sudan). You can’t imagine here... You understand,
you have here university eh... university lecturers, teachers, some lawyers, soldiers,
also child soldiers, farmers, civil servant, drug dealer, illiterates... Dominic you
would need to be a prophet to organise all these people.

Awn's experiences parallel those of the LASRN, where, despite the collective rhetoric, the
many differences that exist between various groupings living in Direct Provision could not
just be willed away by the political expediency of unity. With this in mind, attempts to
establish residents’ committees within individual Direct Provision centres may prove more
fruitful. Besides the potential to attract more members through proximity, the individual
committees would also benefit from a more organic development, focusing on specific
concerns within their centre and relating to the issues as they arise. This would also
constitute a greater focus on the everyday experiences and lived reality of life in the centres, a
reality that may be the only over-riding connection that unites all those within.

4. Who Am I? Contesting Subjection

The practical problems of collective organisation were not the only issues emerging from the
presumed heterogeneity of asylum seekers during the fieldwork. Some of the participants
also seemed to have a complicated relationship with their status as an asylum seeker and how
this related to their sense of self. As documented in Chapters 5 and 6, life in Direct Provision
can be an intensely subject forming experience and many participants spoke of how residents
would engage in various practices of the self as a way of managing their subjection (see
Chapter 5, section 1). However, in spite of these practices and participants' disavowals of a
common identity or interest, some of them still seemed to struggle with the abject status and
identity they had been allocated. The positive sense of self that they nurtured in opposition to
their subject forming experiences within Direct Provision was consistently undermined by
their status as an asylum seeker, an intensely negative and abject subject.
It became apparent during the fieldwork that the implications of being 'made different' and cast into an abject category was distressing for participants who were trying to nurture their own sense of self and who were also under constant pressure to reproduce themselves in a manner amenable to neoliberal society. This was especially problematic for participants who had sought to, if not embrace at least engage with their asylum-seeking status.

One way in which participants refused the abject classification imposed on them as asylum seekers was to adopt a detached perspective. For example, in one-to-one interviews some participants gave their opinions on matters relating to asylum and Direct Provision as if they were outsiders addressing a series of issues and problems that did not affect them. For example, Michael’s responses when asked about his feelings with regard to Direct Provision suggests a distance from his personal experience, referring to Direct Provision in abstract terms.

It’s a good place to put the people, the immigrant people, the asylum people.

…

Until they understand the society, the rule of the country, how everything work, until he finish his interview, whatever.

While happy to make recommendations regarding what would be most beneficial to ‘asylum people’, in these instances Michael showed no indication of considering himself to be one of them. A similar separation occurred during my interview with Ali. When heavily involved in the organisation of the LASRN, Ali had stressed the importance of collective action amongst asylum seekers. Yet for most of our one-to-one discussion he took a detached position, distancing himself from the subject at hand. Ali spoke about the problems that asylum seekers face in the third person, referring to ‘them’, ‘they' and ‘these people’.
Throughout our discussion he deconstructed and critiqued the Irish asylum process and Direct Provision policy as if he were an impartial observer or advisor on the matter. Although Ali’s recommendations were sympathetic towards ‘these people’ in Direct Provision, he proclaimed his overriding interest as being Irish society as a whole in which he felt ‘they’ could make a contribution.

I believe all people who live here should work for the development of the nation.

…

If these people are united, if these people are coming together, than it is good for the country.

However, he felt that the Direct Provision system and the asylum process were hindering unity between asylum seekers and wider Irish society, creating distances and establishing them as a specific 'group of people'.

So these are the differences (economic and social) that make the bond very weak… or no bond at all, so if this continues, it is not good for the development of society. In other words, there are a different group of people, a group of people who are not free.

Ali talked with me about his many attempts to integrate into Irish society. He described his efforts towards and the difficulties he encountered trying to involve himself in other asylum seeker and migrant networks and various education schemes. Throughout our discussion, Ali took up the position of the ideal liberal subject. It is difficult to discern if this was a result of subjectifying pressures, or whether he nurtured a genuinely liberal ethic, attained prior to his arrival in Ireland, according to which he sought to guide himself. Whatever the reason, in all my dealings with Ali he was always enthusiastic, prepared to work, determined to integrate, passionate about Ireland's future and willing to challenge and engage with the system in order
to transform it in a liberal, democratic manner. However, when expressing himself in this
manner alone with me, Ali did not relate to himself as an asylum seeker.

Ali carried his enthusiasm for interaction and active participation into the LASRN where he
argued that the Network members needed to see themselves as part of ‘Ireland’s future’ and
expressed his belief that the group should use its collective influence to try to ‘change Irish
society as a whole’. It was notable that during these LASRN meetings Ali readily self-
identified as an asylum seeker, abandoning the detached perspective and instead speaking of
‘we’ and ‘us’ instead of ‘those people’ and ‘them’. One might speculate that Ali merely
adopted this collective identity when expedient because of the common ground that it
represented and its transformatory potential: ‘as a group, we can exert greater pressure’.
However, I think it represents the very real rupture that exists within the self, i.e. between the
subjectivities participants chose and cared for and the abject status which they were
designated and struggled with. As a person who believed in the collective possibilities of
embracing and organising around that status, this rupture seemed to be especially problematic
for Ali. Throughout my work with Ali, there was a clear discord between the self he aspired
to inhabit and how he was objectified through his status. This was perhaps best illustrated in
our exchange about the identification cards asylum seekers are required to carry.

Ali: Do you have any ID? They don’t have any identification card… Even the small
ID. Look at the ID given from justice! It says ‘this is not identification card!’ Yes! It
says… let me see if I have it…

(Ali takes identification card out of his wallet and shows it to me, he points to where it
says ‘this is not an identification card’).

Look! I have no other ID! How do you feel that? A person without an identification
card. Who am I?
Nikolas Rose has documented how the designation, or refusal of a 'legitimate identity' has become a cornerstone of modern processes of inclusion and exclusion (2000, p.325). Passports, social insurance numbers, bank, credit and debit cards endow the bearer with a 'virtual identity' which grants them access to circuits of citizenship and consumption (2006, 326). Through the formal refusal of a legitimate identity by the state he desperately wishes to be a part of, the active, community conscious and included self that Ali seeks to nurture, is also denied to him; leaving him with his abject status.

Similar crises of status and self, asserted themselves throughout the fieldwork with many participants declaring that they no longer knew who they were or asserting that they were 'nothing'. This was true of Awn, who like Ali, had to some degree sought to engage with his status as an asylum seeker. As with Ali, this engagement with his abject status seemed difficult for Awn to reconcile with his sense of self. While discussing education, a subject he believed to be ‘so important’, Awn criticized the limited avenues available to asylum seekers in Ireland and how this placed restrictions on how one can perceive one’s self.

Awn: You know it's very limited what you can do. Very basic stuff. Basic English. And Dominic, the matter is like this: the organisation in your city or town you are located will offer you beginning classes for English or computer once a week or twice a week for an hour, two hours. So, you know, you cannot claim you are a student with just two lessons a week. Just four hours a week. You know?

Dominic: Yeah, I guess it doesn't really make you a student.

Awn: It doesn't make you anything. And it's, it's, it's nobody, nobody! Nothing, you are nothing.
I believe that this sudden emotional outburst from Awn can be traced back to something he had mentioned earlier in our discussion, concerning his attempts to organise protests.

We are nobody to those people. Irish people, you know. Sometimes you feel it too. But it’s not good to feel that, it’s... you need to get on the streets and change. Make changes to it, let them hear.

In these two statements one can glimpse the tension within Awn as he battles against his subjection as an abject individual, a ‘nobody’ and yet still attempts to subvert the perceptions and pressures of wider Irish society by embracing the collective potential of his abject status.

My discussion with Isaac also pointed to a dilemma relating to the reconciliation of his abject status with his sense of self. Unlike Ali and Awn, Isaac never sought to engage with his status as an asylum seeker during our discussions, intentionally evading any line of questioning which intimated any sort of shared experience. He was dismissive of questions about Direct Provision and life as an asylum seeker (see section 2). Further to this, he also tried to distance himself from connections that others had identified with during the LDPDF, such as nationality and religion. When questioned on connections that existed within Direct Provision he responded by emphasising his own separateness.

Dominic: Do you find some cultures tend to stick together like that?

Isaac: Same… Same cultures… I have many friends of other cultures! South American, African, many cultures. I have many friends.

Throughout our discussion Isaac portrayed himself as extremely well-travelled: ‘in Europe I go many country, six or seven country. In Africa, I go three country’. When he found out I had lived in London he was keen to impress upon me his knowledge of the area and was happy to talk about differences between places and peoples. Like Ali, he was comfortable
answering questions from a detached perspective, as if offering advice. For example, when discussing his home country and Africa in general, Isaac spoke of their negative aspects and potential as if he had no stake or relevant interest in either.

They (African people) can’t use his mind. Everything is ready, he just has to work hard and use his mind, for this reason… But Africa is very rich… He needs to work hard.

When Isaac did speak for himself, he was keen to emphasise his open nature, as if attempting to evade my attempts to categorise him as a Muslim, African or asylum seeker:

I sleep on the street… church. I am at in church and I am a Muslim… When I stay in a Christian country… I sleep on the street, demonstrate on the street, I don’t know what is life. But things they come, this is real life, this is real situations. I eat church, sleep church, go demonstrations.

Isaac’s reluctance to be identified through his religion, nationality or status as an asylum seeker may indicate a resistance to being objectified and categorised. However, despite informing me of his ability to make friends with people of all creeds and colour and fit in almost anywhere, he confessed that he was finding it very difficult to do so in Ireland. Isaac’s abject status seemed to limit him, even in the face of his refusal to accept it. The active, independent, masculine subject he sought to nurture was beyond his reaching (see Chapter 6, section 1.3) and as a result, Isaac seemed to suffer greatly: ‘the soul… I can’t see spirit. In this life a person has spirit. But I can’t. There is no spirit for me. No mercy.’

In spite of this seemingly intensely bleak summation of his situation, Isaac’s refusal to be categorised, by himself or others, can also be interpreted as an extreme commitment to freedom and perhaps the ultimate care of the self. Practices of refusal, such as refusal to
speak, eat or participate can be understood as a rejection of modern societies, through which an individual even rejects the liberal invitation to govern oneself (Conlon and Gill 2013, p.255-256). Inundated with the subject forming pressures that accompany a life in Direct Provision and faced with a status and situation incompatible with the self he wished to cultivate, Isaac chooses to be nothing, to live without spirit, to enter what Frantz Fanon has labelled the 'zone of non-being' (2008, p.2). In his studies of colonial domination, Fanon documents how black people and colonised subjects are depersonalised from birth through objectifying processes that fix an individual as a 'chemical solution is fixed by a dye' (2008, p.82) and 'chain him with an unbearable insularity' (p.35). Escape from this 'crushing objecthood' (2008, p.82) involves decent into that 'real hell', the 'extraordinarily sterile and arid' zone of non-being (2008, p.2). Citing Fanon's work, Imogen Tyler identifies this zone of non-being as a ‘zombie like condition’, ‘suspended between life and death’ and claims it is frequently described by incarcerated migrants in the UK (2013, p.116). In his wilful occupation of this zone of non-being and his refusal to accept the identities and incentives foisted upon to him by others, Isaac retains the freedom to inhabit an indeterminate space of existence.

Isaac’s choice here can be seen to be equally as powerful as the attempts of other participants to exceed subjection and abjection through protests, organisation and education. Rose argues that subjectifying pressures that require an individual to produce themselves in a certain manner, also empower the individual to 'refuse' (2000, p.323). By refusing to engage with the type of society that Fanon identifies as 'deriving its stability' from racial inequality and the inferiority complex it nurtures in the other (2008, p.74), Isaac breaks all ties with his abjection and his supposed responsibilities. Striped of any identity or agenda, Isaac's testimony is reduced to an unprejudiced account of how the system of Direct Provision and the Irish state has worked on his body and mind; how it has fixed him in as an unwanted
person in an undesirable location, how it lacks 'mercy', how it has deprived him of his aspirations and drained him of 'the spirit'. Here, refusal is a practical act with profoundly political effects. Through Isaac’s decision to refuse, the dehumanising effects of Direct Provision are rendered abundantly visible.

5. Conclusion

This chapter investigates the potential for organisation and excess built upon shared interests and collective action, with specific reference to participants' shared status as asylum seekers. Having established the heterogeneous nature of the asylum seeker category, the chapter documents the ways in which many of the participants tended to shy away from, or refuse identification with the term, instead expressing themselves through alternative identifications with religion, nationality, language or radical indeterminacy. The chapter outlines the ways in which a failure to acknowledge and account for the inherent diversity of asylum seekers can cause problems with regard to organisation. It documents the conflict evident amongst participants who had to reconcile their sense of self and pressures to reproduce themselves as autonomous individuals, with an abject status and limiting reality. This was particularly true for those who actively sought to engage with their status as a means to exceed or transform the system.

Finally, the chapter considers Isaac’s outright rejection of any categorisation. Through the practice of refusal, Isaac exercises his freedom to either live by an ethic of his choosing or not live at all, entering the Fanon’s zone of non-being. According to Imogen Tyler, the rejection of an ascribed identity does not represent unusual behaviour among groups of people who are subject to abjectifying pressures. She documents how it is highly common for certain ‘national abjects’ to disassociate from, and even 'actively reject' classifications of themselves
that circulate in the 'public sphere' (2013, p.157). In this study that rejection, although not always conscious, extended to their classification as asylum seekers.

In his identification of racial subjection as a key tool of colonial and post-colonial governance, Fanon (2008) sheds light on this dissociation between how certain groups are constructed and the self they recognise and aspire to. Similar to the discourses that define the ‘asylum seeker’ against the 'deserving' migrant or the autonomous citizen, Fanon argues that racialised subjects are made black through their distinction from a white other, 'woven... out of a thousand details anecdotes, stories' (2008, p.42). Similarly, the asylum seeker is contrasted with other migrants and Irish citizens and encouraged to reproduce themselves in a manner conducive to the host society. Systematically rendered incapable of fully realising themselves in this way, the asylum seeker's failure becomes their own responsibility and their abject status re-enforced.

In spite of the intensely subject forming effects of these discourses and pressures, Fanon holds that there always remains a discord between the 'interpellation of the subject' and how they experience themselves. This resonates with the identity crises experienced by some participants taking part in this research, 'he is dominated, not domesticated. Made to feel inferior but is no means convinced of inferiority' (Fanon 2004, cited in Tyler 2013, p.44). According to Fanon, this conflict between subject forming discourses and pressures and the personal experience of the self, forces the subject to echo Ali's question: 'Who am I?' (ibid.). Although this conflict can be painful for the person who experiences it, it can also be seen as potentially transformatory. Foucault argues that modern struggles against categorisation and normalisation revolve around the question
who are we? They are a refusal of these abstractions, of economic and ideological state violence, which ignore who we are individually, and also a refusal of a scientific or administrative inquisition which determines who one is (1982, p.781).

These struggles do not necessarily require that the subject attempts to nurture an identity contrary to their categorisation. Isaac’s outright refusal of any categorisation or identification can be seen as equally, if not even more powerful than other participants embrace of a religious ethic or national pride. Foucault suggests as much himself, asserting that in order to escape ‘the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures’, it may be more powerful to ‘refuse what we are’, rather than ‘discover what we are’ (1982, p.785). Through his rejection of what Direct Provision, the Irish state or I might try to make him, one could argue that Isaac, more than any other participant, practices the most radical freedom and excess of all: refusal.

Taking into account this tendency for participants to indicate discord with, or outright refusal of their categorisation as asylum seekers, along with the intensely subject forming effects derived from the abject status, one might question whether the category can, or should be a focal point for those seeking to subvert or exceed the Direct Provision system. One of the key findings of this study is that the most frequent examples of excess and successful organisation emerged from instances and examples where asylum seekers were acting on their own initiative. Whether forging alliances based on religious or national affiliations, uniting under a common cause as in Michael's story, or simply practicing a care of the self, participants engaged freely in moments of excess on terms of their choosing. It was when shared identities and interests were foisted upon them that organisational difficulties began to emerge and participants' sense of self became problematized. This study thus found that an organic, flexible and contingent approach to organisation, that does not assume, or impose a collective interest or identity upon individual asylum seekers, contained the most
transformatory potential. This finding raises many important questions, not least for those academics and NGOs that condemn the negative discourses that constitute and categorise people as asylum seekers, yet continue to propagate that categorisation, not merely as an organisational tool, but as representing a shared experience or identity.

Some academics have already adopted the view that the terminology 'asylum seeker' should be abandoned, refusing to use the classification in their work and rejecting it as a 'state centric' category of belonging (McNevin 2007, cited in Tyler 2013, p.99). Whilst this approach makes a lot of sense based on the reasoning outlined above, it contains potential limitations that need to be addressed. For one thing, it forfeits the unifying organisational possibilities implicit in the large group of people the category applies to. Taking such an approach risks appealing to fewer participants and this may also result in the exclusion of certain demographics. For example, Awn's Sudanese demonstration which did not appeal to people of any other nationality in spite of the fact they may have shared similar interests.

Furthermore, some have argued against abandoning abject categorisations, suggesting that categories rooted in discrimination can actually be appropriated and utilised in resistance to practices of normalisation; for example, the reclaiming and reorganisation around the word 'queer'. Judith Butler highlights how Foucault himself believed in the possibility of subversion in ‘the course of subjectivation’, where ‘resistance appears as the effect of power’ (Butler 1995, p.93). Drawing upon Foucault, Butler argues that the ‘term’ that names and constructs a subject can also be used to ‘mobilize a reverse discourse against the very regime of normalization by which it is spawned’ (ibid.).

This potential for the status of asylum seeker to serve as a unifying point of organisation or a subversive discourse requires further investigation. With regard to this study, two main questions emerge: what is the transformatory potential inherent in the category and how willing are those living within Direct Provision to embrace it on any level, subversive or
otherwise? With regard to the first question, this study found that common interests, identities and solidarities amongst Direct Provision residents, based on their status as asylum seekers, were surprisingly limited. As such, the broad base of people to whom the term can be applied and may appeal to could dwindle, as within the LASRN, due to such a group having to account for the disparate interests and requirements of each participant. Essentially, due to its intense heterogeneity, groups organising around the category of 'asylum seeker' run the risk of having to operate according to a thinly spread, general focus of little relevance to anyone. That is certainly not to suggest that asylum seekers cannot share and organise around common causes within their own centres and indeed nationwide. At certain points in time, issues have arisen which have united residents of particular Direct Provision centres and elicited solidarity from the residents of centres across the country. It is merely to argue that their shared status as asylum seekers is not an all unifying factor and is generally only mobilized effectively on the ground and in response to particular conditions and issues.

With regard to the second question, Foucault himself placed great importance on the personal freedom and choice of individuals engaged in collective action. According to Mark Bevir, he argued in favour of the freedom 'to join or stand apart from struggles made on behalf of any collective to which we are supposed to belong; we should feel free to reject all imposed identities' (1999a, p.77). With this in mind and when one considers the reluctance of the participants in this study to define themselves as asylum seekers, even when freely partaking in a study that explicitly did so, it is difficult to advocate for using the category as a subversive tool in order to 'mobilize a reverse discourse'.

Before finally rejecting a focus on the category 'asylum seeker' and its transformatory potential, one must determine whether it is feasible, or desirable, to organise on an alternative basis and what that basis might be. This involves considering whether it is at all possible to
operate outside of the conceptual and structural parameters imposed upon us and if so, is such an operation capable of achieving the goals desired? If not through the unified assertion of a common interest, identity and experience, how might asylum seekers best approach a system that objectifies and controls them? Foucault faced similar questions regarding self-definition and identity in his own lifetime. He struggled with the politics of gay liberation, particularly its emphasis on 'coming out' and defining oneself as a 'homosexual', declaring that to do so was both 'a necessary affirmation of a right', but also a 'cage, a trap' (cited in Miller 1993, p.256). He was uncomfortable with the idea of asserting a fixed and unified identity in public, arguing that gay activism shouldn't revolve around 'identity', but that politics reside in 'relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation' (ibid.). Fanon also identifies the potential for creativity to emerge from an individual's subjection, but not through a subversive identification with the term, rather through a break with the identity imposed on them. According to Fanon, recognising the discord between what one is being made and what one actually feels, presents an opportunity for excess; he advocates self-reflection and critique, a grasping of 'my narcissism with both hands' and turning one’s back on 'those who would make man a mere mechanism' (2008, p.12). Likewise, Ewa Ziarek identifies this potential rupture between what one is told one is and who one feels one is, as an opportunity for a 'reversal into contestation and revolt' (2005, cited in Tyler 2013, p.44).

Is it possible to organise subversion and even transformation on the basis of such a crisis and contestation? Imogen Tyler argues that one needs to look beyond what is possible, which limits us to a tacit acceptance of existing frameworks, and towards a conception of protest as ‘an art of the impossible’ (2013, p.98). She argues that we must seek to transform the parameters of a society that constructed and captured asylum seekers and that this entails a direct contestation of their classification and categorisation (ibid.). In making a case for the potential effectiveness of such an approach, Tyler documents how the 'Sans-Papiers'
movement grew from a grouping of undocumented migrants in France, who sought residency papers and regularisation, into a radical movement questioning the neo-colonial function of citizenship. She also makes reference to the European ‘No Borders’ movement which ventures beyond what can appear to be the fixed parameters of debate on the issue of migration, to demand an end to border controls (2013, p.99).

Perhaps it is time to strive towards an ‘art of the impossible’ in Ireland. The parameters which restrain current discourses and limit forms of organisation have shaped over a decade of appeals and protests to little avail. Meanwhile, asylum seekers along with other migrants continue to exercise mobility and exceed controls, from international borders to their own sense of self. This study has documented how the various practices of excess engaged in by asylum seekers are constant and fluid; their 'revolution of everyday life' undermines the rigidity of systems that seek to impose discipline and control. This revolution also confounds attempts to classify it, to derive a formula for transformation from it, to bottle the multiplicity of contestations and excesses of which it is comprised and unleash them at a particular point of space and time.

In the successes of the LDPDF and the LASRN one can see the benefits of an organic approach that seeks to facilitate participants and their excesses; through the failures of these groups, one can see the futility of organisation based upon fixed assumptions, categories and goals. By abandoning these parameters and embracing a freedom of cause and association, a movement will only be practicing that which, according to the findings of this research, asylum seekers are already practicing themselves.
Chapter 8: Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations

This study set out to: analyse modalities of power at work in the legitimisation and maintenance of Direct Provision; identify barriers to change and explore possible spaces of resistance; and provide a platform for asylum seekers, their contributions to public discourses and their attempts to initiate change.

In pursuing these objectives, the study produced a variety of knowledges concerning the Irish Direct Provision system and those living within it; some of these are theoretical in nature, others have practical implications and some contain elements of both.

In section 1 of this chapter, I explore the ‘raw’ knowledge produced by this study and how it provides a ‘platform’ for the voices of its participants. Alongside the unique perspectives articulated by these voices, the pursuit of this objective and how it was achieved gave rise to further practical knowledge about the politics and potential of action research with asylum seekers. Section 2 focuses on the modalities and mechanisms of power identified by the study, specifically those of a disciplinary nature, and how they are employed in the operation and legitimisation of the Irish Direct Provision system and Direct Provision centres in particular. Section 3 documents the ways in which this study repudiates narratives that cast asylum seekers as helpless victims, or conceptualise change to the Direct Provision system as coming from those external to it. It details how the study serves as a prime exhibition of the myriad ways in which asylum seekers exercise their transformatory capacity daily in the revolutions of everyday life. This reveals not only their potential to change and shape Ireland's Direct Provision system, but the ways in which they are already doing so. Finally, section 4 concludes this study by expanding on Imogen Tyler’s call for an ‘art of the impossible’, by examining the possibility and potential of a ‘movement of the impossible’.
Based on the findings of this study it examines what such a movement might entail, what its strengths and limitations might be and points to key considerations for such a movement.

1. Providing a Platform and the Production of ‘Raw’ and ‘Local’ Knowledge

This study provides a platform for asylum seekers and their contributions to public discourses regarding change, although not entirely in the way I had initially envisioned. Wary of the possibility of conceptualising my role as the liberating ‘hero researcher’ that Kim Tsai warns against (2011, p.8), or of exploiting participants for their knowledge, I adopted an action research approach in order to conduct the study in a collaborative fashion and to prioritise the experiences and opinions of those living in the Direct Provision system. In retrospect, this approach had certain limitations; perhaps the most significant of which concerned the profile of participants. For example, this study almost entirely omits issues relating to women and children living within Direct Provision. These are issues that are currently generating a great deal of public attention and motivating comparisons with current revelations concerning Ireland's mother and child homes (see Introduction), yet are largely absent from this study.

While such omissions are one of the negative consequences of this study's methodological approach and research design, there was much to be positive about with regard to the rich uncompromising narratives and participant-driven direction that this approach and design facilitated. For all its omissions and faults, the study was able to successfully blend its action research based participant focus with a Foucauldian theoretical framework, to produce the ‘raw memories’ and ‘local critiques’ that Foucault identifies as part of the ‘insurrection of knowledges’ that can be mobilised against ‘centralizing power effects’ and ‘scientific’ discourses (2004, p.7-9). While it is not unique for research conducted on Ireland's Direct Provision system to contain quotes and testimonies from those living within it, this study has
produced particularly rich and absolutely ‘raw’ and ‘local’ accounts of how the system is experienced by asylum seeking men. The resultant narratives provide a new perspective on what day-to-day life is really like within Ireland's Direct Provision centres. The study goes beyond participants’ daily routines to expose the various objectifying and subjectifying pressures associated with life in Direct Provision and with being cast as an abject subject. The emotional language employed by participants emphasises how such pressures impact on their mental health and sense of self. Through their testimonies, we can glimpse the reality behind scientific discourses and the language of statistics. Instead of focusing on figures detailing average waiting times, this study is able to convey some of the tedium associated with constant, indeterminate waiting; instead of diagnosing and cataloguing various psychological problems prevalent in Direct Provision centres, it evokes a sense of hopelessness and despair through words of those who suffer from it.

Part of the reason why this study was able to uncover such unique insights is down to the action research approach adopted, which ensured that the direction the fieldwork was driven by the participants themselves. As such, their testimonies pertain to issues and actions of their own choosing, rather than merely serving as quotes to back up the predetermined arguments and theories of a researcher. This is perhaps best exemplified by the direction taken by the LDPDF, where participants seemed reluctant to engage in any of the transformatory activities I had anticipated and suggested. As such, the LDPDF developed as a discussion group in accordance with the wishes of participants and these discussions were incredibly fruitful, lasting up to three hours and involving debate on a whole range of issues that participants deemed relevant. Although the LASRN was more agenda driven and lacked some of the intimacy and depth of its predecessor, it too focused on issues and activities determined by its members and produced valuable knowledge on the subject of Direct Provision and the perspectives of those within it.
Although the knowledge produced by this study is intensely subjective and limited in perspective, it pertains to subjects and perspectives that had previously been largely undocumented and ignored. Such knowledge's can be useful in themselves, offering insight into lived experiences and perspectives from within the Direct Provision system. However, the manner in which these knowledges were produced, through an action research based design and Foucauldian theory can serve as a type of knowledge in itself. Researchers who seek to prioritise rich descriptive data, or to provide a platform for subjugated knowledges may consider both the positives and negatives of the approach taken by this study and learn from my experiences in order to accentuate the former and minimise the latter.

2. Discipline and Direct Provision

There currently exists a great deal of analysis of issues of migration, asylum and even Direct Provision which identify and examine the plethora of governmental techniques and pressures that saturate contemporary global mobility. Of the three modalities of power detailed by Foucault, it is governmentality with its focus on probabilities and perpetual improvement rather than exhaustive perfection (Foucault 2009, p.21), that is perhaps most suited to responding to evolving contemporary issues and a rapidly developing and globalizing world. It is probably not surprising then to find that in the global north, increasingly advanced and subtle governmental mechanisms are constantly being deployed in the conduct of conduct and are being documented and investigated by researchers. While the documentation and analysis of such developments within Irish asylum policy are not absent from this study, the major modality of power emerging from participants’ testimonies was that of discipline. Unlike the expansionist capabilities implicit in governmental techniques of control, discipline is essentially inwardly focused and centripetal, regulating all within its realm and ‘allowing
nothing to escape’ (Foucault 2009, p.45). As such, disciplinary techniques of control are often overlooked by researchers who cast their gaze upon an ever fragmenting and deregulated 'post-disciplinary world' (Simon 1993, cited in Rose 2000, p.321). With regard to issues of asylum, Dan Bulley (2014) asserts that there has been a shift in recent decades from disciplinary to governmental methods of conducting people fleeing persecution. Focusing on refugee camps he highlights the ways in which various governmental programmes cultivate self-empowerment and attempt to ‘govern through community’ in order to ‘produce, manage and conduct refugees’ (2014, p.63). Similarly, Deirdre Conlon highlights the manner in which Ireland’s Direct Provision centres ‘bear some of the hallmarks of governmental regulation: they facilitate circulation, maintaining a tally of the asylum population… and asylum seekers are expected to be relatively autonomous within’ (2010b, p.101). However, while an analysis of various manifestos, programmes policies may indicate the predominance of governmental approaches to managing and conducting asylum seekers, the testimonies of participants documented in this research predominantly referenced disciplinary mechanisms of conduct and control.

The emphasis that participants’ placed on the disciplinary rather than governmental forces within the Direct Provision centre can be explained in a two different ways. Firstly, it is possible that the disciplinary mechanisms that targeted them were far more overt than their governmental counterparts. As Foucault notes, visibility is a core staple of disciplinary power which relies on the target being aware of the potential presence of an observer (Foucault 1991, p.201-202). Governmental mechanisms of control are much more subversive, recruiting the target in their own conduct and as such may have remained relatively undetected by this study’s participants.

Secondly, while it is certainly plausible that state bodies, institutions and NGOs intend to manage asylum seekers and the spaces they occupy according to governmental principles, the
reality of the situation on the ground seems to demand a more disciplinary approach. Bulley
draws upon ‘three interrelated and cross-referential UNHCR and NGO guides and
handbooks’ to outline how these organisations attempt to ‘optimize the lives of refugees’
through a series of governmental ‘tactics’ related to the production of space and statistics
(2014, p.68). However, he notes that at their point of application in the camps, these tactics
are ‘always being overturned or exceeded’ (2014, p.76). It may be the case that the
governmental approach to conducting asylum seekers is an idealistic one, but that those
people charged with maintaining order within Direct Provision centres find disciplinary
mechanisms of conduct more effective. Thus, while the RIA’s Code of Practice may urge
their staff to ‘promote the independence of service users’ (2005, p.5), yet contain no
references to incentivising residents via threat of transfer, centre managers and staff seem to
be more inclined to employ the latter approach.

Throughout the fieldwork participants spoke about Direct Provision centres as intensely
disciplinary spaces. Comparisons with ‘prisons’, the archetypal disciplinary institution, were
plentiful as were references to techniques and mechanisms of control redolent of those
detailed by Foucault in Discipline and Punish. Practices of surveillance seem to be
omnipresent within Ireland’s Direct Provision centres with a variety of techniques being
employed in the gathering of data and production of knowledge regarding residents. These
surveillances sometimes focus on spaces within the centres, which incorporate cameras and
electronic ‘swipe-in’ systems; they can also be directed towards the production of knowledge
regarding the residents themselves, through the construction of their ‘case’. It is in the
construction of an asylum seeker’s case that this study identifies Foucault’s disciplinary
examination at work. As within the prison, the examination within Direct Provision is so
much more than the mere collection of information. It fixes ‘each individual in his own
particularity’ (Foucault 1991, p.192), constantly assuring him/her that they are the subjects of
surveillance and power (1991, p.187) and motivating him/her to produce and conduct him/herself in certain ways. Thus, the examination can be intensely productive; by creating knowable cases from individuals it also becomes possible to introduce hierarchies of distribution that further incentivise conduct. Participants in this study all spoke of various ways in which management and staff sought to encourage good behaviour. For example, residents who enjoyed a favourable relationship with a manager, or even informed on other residents, could be given a single room or expect to have a blind eye turned towards absences from the centre. Such practices constitute a ‘gratification-punishment’ dynamic, which Foucault identifies as being a key disciplinary technique. This dynamic employs the cases produced in the examination to create an ‘economy… of individuals’ that are ‘under constant pressure to conform’ (Foucault 1991, p.182). The punishment aspect of this dynamic was perhaps most evident in participants’ accounts of how control over their mobility, through forced transfers, was implemented in order to incentivise and penalise residents. This practice can be understood as part of a wider economy of hierarchical distribution in which the most troublesome cases are relocated to places which participants described as centres of ‘punishment’ and those deemed to be successfully modulating their conduct and character are allocated places in more sought after locations.

This study also outlines the role played by the Direct Provision staff in the maintenance and legitimisation of the system they operate within. Drawing upon Zygmunt Bauman and Foucault, it documents how the creation of distance, an emphasis on task orientation and a web of dense hierarchical supervision, embroils staff within the disciplinary system themselves and encourages them to distance themselves from their work and its human consequences. Although the immediate space of the Direct Provision centre and the disciplinary manner in which it functions was the focus of much of the knowledge shared by participants, the role that this space played in Irish society and wider systems of global
mobility and control was also referenced. Participants indicated that they believed their lives within the centres to be a profitable business and were aware that the centres’ continued operation served some function, even if knowledge regarding precisely which people were profiting and what exactly that function was seemed elusive.

This study’s documentation and examination of Direct Provision as a disciplinary institution places a fresh emphasis on disciplinary power with regard to current analyses of global mobility, which deal primarily in governmental and even sovereign modalities of control. Similar to how Nikolas Rose documents the key role played by disciplinary and carceral institutions in modern processes of risk management and exclusion (2000, p.332), the disciplinary space of the Direct Provision centre complements and facilitates governmental techniques of control. While being illuminating in itself, this study's findings regarding the role played by discipline may also prompt further analysis of how all three modalities of power overlap and support each other in the management and conduct of population flows. For example, the maintenance of a disciplined population of asylum seekers is conducive and arguably essential to the privatisation of and profiteering from the state’s borders and its responsibility of care. Similarly the order derived from and unhappiness produced in the disciplinary space of the Direct Provision centre, constitute some of the core foundation blocks for an Irish asylum policy that seeks to conduct the actions of potential asylum applicants through the regulation of ‘pull’ and ‘push’ factors. Although predominantly located within the Direct Provision centre, this study highlights the ways in which the role of discipline is crucial to wider systems and techniques of conduct and control. Such an understanding of the role played by discipline could potentially form the basis of more complete analyses of these systems in the future.
3. Autonomy and Everyday Revolution

As noted in the introduction to this study, the recent wave of controversy and criticism building against Ireland’s Direct Provision system is for the most part predicated on the notion that it can be transformed from the outside. This perspective, shared by some of the study’s participants, holds that if Direct Provision is to be altered, it will be through legislation drafted by politicians who have been motivated by the concerns and anger of a morally outraged native population. However, this study directly repudiates that narrative. Its findings corroborate the autonomy of migration perspective, which holds that the politics of mobility precede and dictate the reactionary politics of control (De Genova 2014, p.1190; Papadopoulos 2013, p.184). Locating the potential for transformation primarily in the actions of its participants, this study exhibits the multitude of ways in which asylum seekers in Ireland challenge and influence the reality in which they live their daily lives.

Although this study documents the manner in which asylum seekers are subject to a vast array of mechanisms of control, also detailing the way these controls can be intensely subject forming, it is important to note that these mechanisms and their effects are reactions to the initial mobility and intractable nature of the people they target. Even more importantly, this study documents how its participants frequently exceeded and subverted these controls, refuting public voices which, although sympathetic, can be seen to cast asylum seekers in the same objectifying manner as the system they are critiquing. Participants in this study were not inherently helpless, dependant, inactive, childlike or in need of rescuing. Throughout the study they resisted these objectifying characterisations, showing themselves to be autonomous, resourceful, tireless and ready, willing and able to challenge, shape and even break the rules, regulations and system that sought to conduct them.
In order to document the ways in which participants consistently resisted and shaped the Direct Provision system they lived in, I adopted Nicholas De Genova’s term ‘the revolutions of everyday life’ (2013, p.3). As with the modalities of power that seek to conduct them, these revolutions could be seen to take on multiple forms such as resistances, subversions, coercions and counter conducts. For the purposes of this study, I separated these daily revolutions into two categories: practices of excession, which referred to the multiple ways in which participants exercised their autonomy, challenging and escaping mechanisms of control, and practices of the self, through which participants nurtured and defended their own subjectivities according to an ethic of their choosing and against the subject forming effects of Direct Provision. Examples of excession are outlined in Chapter 6, section 2 and included multiple activities that accorded with Dimitris Papadopoulos’s description of the ‘mobile commons’ (2013, p.190) as well as the organisation of protests, complaints and even practices of criminality which defied, challenged and altered aspects of the system. Practices of the self were far more personal in nature but no less common. Chapters 6 and 7 detail how participants embraced a variety of personal ethics, be they derived from religious, humanitarian, masculine or other ideals, in order to nurture a sense of self with which they were comfortable and through which they could counter the abjectifying, subject forming pressures detailed in Chapters 4 and 5. Although this care of the self was not without complication (see Chapter 7, section 4), the evidence of its existence attests to the fact that resistance to a system need not necessarily be limited to overt transformations of that system; sometimes the system can be challenged by the sheer refusal to allow the system to transform one’s self. This was perhaps best exemplified by Isaac’s occupation of the ‘zone of non-being’, exhibiting a complete refusal of attempts to place him within a narrative or categorise him in anyway.
This evidence of participants’ autonomy and their ability to challenge, shape and change the Direct Provision system through everyday revolution is not just interesting from a theoretical point of view but is also practically important because it exposes current popular understandings as being flawed. While the present building critique of Direct Provision represents a welcome increase in public awareness on the matter, it cannot hope on its own to fundamentally challenge a system that is rooted in contemporary and popular neoliberal rationalities. This is why, despite public criticisms that target everything from low recognition rates to Direct Provision’s ‘violation of human rights treaties’ (O’Brien and O’Shea 2014), the changes that are currently being mooted almost entirely refer to consolidating and accelerating a costly and time consuming multi-faceted applications procedure (Deegan 2014a; McMahon 2014). Such a development would certainly be welcomed by participants in this research who all desired quicker procedures. However, to focus on this alone is to ignore the plethora of other grievances they expressed and would only serve to speed up the deportation of the 95 per cent of applicants who fail to pass an ‘astounding’ and ‘absurd’ applications process; a process which has been known to take into account skin tones, nose measurements and personal dislikes in order to reach decisions (Kerrigan 2014).

If change is perceived as developing external to the system from the top down, then that change is determined within the confines of the rationalities that underpin the society in which the system was initially conceived. Such a view limits not only the scope of change, but also its location. When information such as the knowledge produced in this study reveals the transformatory potential of those who inhabit the system, we also see that multiple types of change are possible and are indeed happening all the time. For example, while 2014 has seen a relative outpouring of condemnation regarding the ‘limited’ facilities and ‘widespread maintenance issues’ that exist within Direct Provision centres (O’Shea 2014c), there initially
seemed little appetite for, or prospect of solving such costly problems. However, as I was concluding this thesis, a wave of resident driven activism swept Direct Provision centres across the country. These movements demanded and secured many of the improvements and facilities that media attention and public sympathy consistently failed to deliver and they continue to demand more.

On September 4th 2014, residents at the Lissywollen Direct Provision Accommodation Centre in Athlone engaged in a series of protests and began refusing supplies and making demands regarding the centre’s maintenance, food and the attitude of the staff and management (McNamee 2014). After six days, the protests were put on a three week hiatus after the Department of Justice and Equality and the RIA promised to consider improvements to the centre (ibid.). These Athlone protests followed a series of uprisings and protests at the Mount Trenchard Direct Provision centre located in Foynes, Limerick. Mount Trenchard has been described by the Irish Refugee Council as ‘one of the worst [Direct Provision centres] in the system’ (O’Shea 2014b). Residents at the centre began protesting and demanding that the centre be closed, citing a list of grievances that included: overcrowding with six people in each room, prolonged waiting periods (one resident had been in the system for 14 years), ‘serious maintenance problems’ and food that was being ‘served almost rotting’ (ibid.). Two of the residents most heavily involved in the protests were forcibly transferred almost immediately after meeting with centre management to discuss their grievances (O’Shea and Raleigh 2014) while another was arrested (Woulfe 2014). Far from quelling the protests, these actions further enraged residents who began to refuse food and water (ibid.) and formed the ‘Foynes Asylum Seekers for Change’ group. The group's objectives went beyond the reform of the centre and demanded its complete closure. Over the following weeks the group gained support from Doras Luimni and the Irish Refugee Council which both acknowledged the group’s independence and agreed to support their call to shut down Mount Trenchard. A
A protest was organised and held in Limerick city centre that attracted an unprecedented number of approximately 300 people (Dwayne 2014). By this time the RIA had become involved in the situation. Clearly affected by the actions of and momentum building behind the residents, the RIA and the centre management moved to act upon the residents’ initial demands. Improvements were made to the centre and a statement was released by the RIA, stating that

a number of additional services have been put in place including a range of additional recreational facilities and improved internet systems as well as an increase in the daily bus service to Limerick from three to six days per week (Barry 2014a).

At this point, Foynes Asylum Seekers for Change, empowered by their initial success and working alongside the Doras Luimnì and Irish Refugee Council, organised a meeting in Limerick city on the 3rd of August to discuss the situation and the possibility of forcing the centre to close down for good. The following day protests in Athlone began and efforts were made by residents there to spread these protests to other centres across the country. On the 12th of September it was announced that residents of the Montague Hotel in Co. Laois, in contact with those in Athlone, had begun to refuse food. The Laois residents’ protests were not directed at their centre’s management or conditions, but specifically targeted the Direct Provision system itself (O’Brien 2014a). Over the following months protests were organised in two Direct Provision centres in Cork, another two in Waterford and one in Mayo. Once again, these protests were not directed at ‘the inhumane conditions in which [residents] are forced to live’, but were focused on ‘the inhumanity of the Direct Provision system itself’ (Mulhall 2014). Protests at the Kinsale Road Centre in Cork and Atlantic and Birchwood House in Waterford went as far as locking out the centre’s staff and management (Roche 2014). These eight protests, representing 20 per cent of Ireland’s Direct Provision centres, were organised and conducted by Direct Provision residents themselves.
In mid-October, following eight weeks of protests, Minister Francis Fitzgerald made an announcement outlining the composition of the ‘working group’ charged with reviewing Direct Provision and ‘address[ing] the issues that have featured in much of the commentary about the Direct Provision system in recent times’ (McGreevy 2014). The group includes state, NGO and trade union representation, but only includes one former asylum seeker and contains no current Direct Provision residents. The group's membership was immediately criticized for excluding those current residents whose protests had played such a crucial role in bringing Direct Provision to national attention and making the system in its current guise unworkable. A letter signed by over 100 Irish academics argued that the group ‘further silences and marginalises asylum seekers who have to live with the damage that this system has inflicted upon them’ and called NGO representatives in the group to resign their positions so that ‘asylum seekers chosen by residents in Direct Provision can take their place’ (The Irish Times 2014). Furthermore, the ‘terms of reference’ adopted by the working group contain the stipulation that

the overall cost of the protection system to the taxpayer is reduced or remains within or close to current levels and that the existing border controls and immigration procedures are not compromised (McGreevy 2014).

As such, the working group appears to be founded upon, and limited by, the same exclusionary practices and neoliberal rationalities that played such a key role in establishing Direct Provision in the first place. The potential impact of this group thus seems restricted to exercises in counter conduct, what Cindi Katz refers to as ‘reworking’. Although the changes produced by such practices can make ‘life more liveable’ for individuals, they fail to address ‘conditions of oppression and exploitation’ (Katz 2004, p.251). It was these conditions, at the heart of the Direct Provision system, that were cited as the main driving force behind Direct Provision protests. Shortly after the announcement of the composition of the working group
and its terms of reference, attempts were instigated by asylum seekers themselves to organise protesting residents around the country and build a nation-wide independent asylum seeker movement. One group, calling themselves the ‘Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland’ (MASI), made it clear that they are not interested in reworking the Direct Provision system. An announcement they made on social media proclaims that

people complain about the food. But the food is just the fruit of the tree. The Direct Provision system itself is like the roots of the tree. If the root is dead, there is no fruit. We want to uproot the system of Direct Provision itself. We want to hit it at the roots

As dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the early direction taken by the working group spreads throughout the country, attempts are continuing, instigated by asylum seekers themselves, to challenge and change the system in a manner they deem appropriate. It is the finding of this study that such actions undertaken by Direct Provision residents, tend to be more potent and indeed more productive than calls for reform emanating external to the system. From negotiating changes within individual centres, to making collective calls to ‘uproot the system’, it is the residents themselves who hold the greatest potential and who have been the primary actors when it comes to the transformation of Direct Provision. At the Limerick meeting on the 3rd of September, one speaker made the observation that it was not William Wilberforce and Abraham Lincoln who ended slavery, but the slaves themselves. It was slaves and those who worked alongside them that rocked the system and made it untenable. Similarly, it will not be Minister Francis Fitzgerald, Minister Aodhán Ó Riordáin, or any group founded upon the exclusion of Direct Provision residents, who will transform Ireland’s asylum system in the way participants in this study demanded. This study strongly suggests that if large scale systematic change is to occur regarding the Direct Provision system, it will do so in the same manner that individual and local changes are brought about every day; through the people who live within and know the system, who exceed it and
subvert it daily, who know both its weak and strong points and who can identify the sort of change required and how it can be achieved.

4. A Movement of the Impossible: Practical Conclusions and Possibilities

Although this study achieved its core objectives, in retrospect there were aspects and endeavours that could be improved upon. However, these aspects of the study also contain important lessons and provide further opportunities for learning. In this section I combine the knowledge produced through this study’s successes and failures to make practical suggestions with regard to future research, advocacy and activism.

In Chapter 7, I documented how the objectives of the LASRN were ultimately impeded by the diverse nature and needs of its members. I also noted the ways in which my own assumptions and attempts to organise collectively around the category 'asylum seeker' had been undermined by the general unwillingness of this study's participants to classify themselves in this way. Some participants, such as Ali and Awn, had attempted to establish common cause based on their shared status, but this became problematic for them; the category asylum seeker is so saturated with abject connotations that it could not but objectify them. I argued that, according to the findings of this admittedly limited study, the term asylum seeker had become practically irredeemable as a primary focal point for organisation and change. What was observed throughout the fieldwork was that participants and residents self-organised according to identified issues and not designated identities. The 'revolutions of everyday life' challenged and transformed the system through their application at a multiplicity of points and occasions identified by those who know the system best. I concluded Chapter 7 by suggesting that it may be time to move towards what Imogen Tyler terms 'an art of the impossible'. But, what would such a nebulous concept entail? I believe
an 'art of the impossible' would constitute those efforts that attempt to shape a 'movement of
the impossible'; such a movement would constitute and perhaps even co-ordinate the multiple
revolutions of everyday life, directing power and exercising various levels of conduct and
influence within Ireland's Direct Provision system.

The prospect of a ‘movement of the impossible’ raises questions as to how such a movement
might organise and operate. Based on the evidence produced by this study a ‘movement of
the impossible’ would necessarily be open-ended and amenable to periodic re-imaginations
as determined by the people and circumstances the movement itself seeks to shape.
Nonetheless, a few core ideals can be derived from this study.

The primary strength of such a movement is to be drawn from those people currently living
within the Direct Provision system. This study has highlighted how it is the residents of
Direct Provision who are most capable of and willing to challenge and transform aspects of
the Direct Provision system. While sources of external support and solidarity, such as NGOs,
the media and some politicians can certainly be sympathetic and useful to a 'movement of the
impossible', these groups can also be incapable of, or reluctant to engage in transformatory
practices to the extent desired and practiced by asylum seekers themselves, as seems to be the
case within the working group. This reluctance can be seen to be, at least somewhat,
ideologically motivated. For while many of these groups and individuals external to systems
of Direct Provision, asylum and migration may criticise aspects of these systems, for the most
part they remain ideologically and irredeemably tied to them and the rationalities upon which
they are founded. In spite of the many parallels drawn between the Magdalene Laundries and
mother and child homes of Ireland's past and the Direct Provision centres of today, the
ideology which forged and legitimised the former has weakened over the past decades, while
the latter remain ideologically legitimate. This study has highlighted just some of the ways in
which Irish asylum policy can be seen to facilitate the construction of a milieu based on
neoliberal rationalities. From the pressures applied on individual participants to produce and
present themselves in a manner conducive to a market-based society, to the privatisation of
the state’s duty of care and the opportunities this has presented for capital accumulation;
neoliberalism and its propagation is evident throughout Ireland’s Direct Provision system.
As such, Direct Provision and Irish asylum policy in general seem to be conducive to the
Irish state’s pursuit of prosperity according to neoliberal rationalities.

With this in mind, I would suggest that a ‘movement of the impossible’ may benefit from the
recognition that such a movement will more often than not act contrary to the public and
state’s perceived ideological interests. This may impose limitations on the solidarities and
benefits this movement can draw from those individuals and organisations that share or
benefit from these interests. This is not to preclude links and collaborations with such
individuals and groups, or to rule out shifting contexts over time, but to recognise that the
vast majority of transformatory potential currently rests with those who inhabit the Direct
Provision system as opposed to those who are enfranchised by its underlying logic.

In this sense challenges to the Direct Provision system can truly be seen as a ‘movement of
the impossible’, in that they target, at least on an ideological basis, not just a national system
of Direct Provision, but also systems of global capital accumulation. Although the external
rationalities allied against such a movement may seem incredibly daunting and the external
supports available may be limited, the movement and those within it can draw upon their
insularity and intimacy as a potent resource. Throughout the fieldwork, participants
demonstrated how their proximity to the system made them the most capable judges of when,
where and how to act. They were able to subvert, exceed and even transform aspects of the
Direct Provision system using the intimate knowledge that only comes with living in that
system. Participants knew what activities to engage in to care for themselves, what help they
could get from each other and outside sources, when to complain, when to challenge and on
what grounds it was best to do so. They also had an immediate knowledge of the changes that were required and issues that needed to and could be addressed. The value of the intimate knowledges documented by this study seems to have been demonstrated during the recent protests. Although they have been supported by NGOs and sections of the public, these protests have been initiated and directed by residents. At the September 3rd Limerick meeting regarding the situation at Mount Trenchard, one asylum seeker emphasised the specialist knowledge held by residents, imploring attendees to back the decisions taken by them on the grounds that ‘it is the wearer of the shoe who knows where the pain is’.

The value of direct experience to a ‘movement of the impossible’ also allows for a fluidity with which an intimate movement can mobilise, forge alliances and dissipate. This study documents how participants responded to situations as they arose and organised associations and actions appropriately. It details how participants were capable of forging links and engaging in collaboration when they deemed it expedient to do so. For example, The LDPDF progressed on the common ground of the participants’ shared Islamic faith. In Michael's story, he and the other residents recognised that they had a shared interest in uniting against the imposition of new management and came together to effect change before dispersing to different hostels soon after. When organising protests in Dublin, Awn recognised that the on-going war in Sudan presented a focal point for him and fellow Sudanese asylum seekers to rally behind. Similarly, the residents currently protesting at centres across the country have, in addition to their specific centre based issues, made connections with each other and are targeting the Direct Provision system in general. They are currently attempting to forge further links with residents nationwide.

This fluidity and freedom of association stands in contrast with my own rigid attempts to organise 'asylum seekers' in this study toward the pre-defined goal of systematic change. However, I believe that through these failures, this study has highlighted the value of an
intimate, contingent approach while also revealing the variety of problems implicit in an approach which adheres to abject and objectifying categorisations. This in not to suggest that a ‘movement of the impossible’ should preclude association and solidarity between people classified as asylum seekers; but argues that the categorisation 'asylum seeker‘ may prove problematic if it is to serve as the solitary and fixed basis of association from which the movement’s objectives are derived.

Rejecting rigid categorisations and objectives, a ‘movement of the impossible’ could draw strength from its immediacy and contingency, identifying issues and bringing individuals together when, and on the grounds which, they themselves deem expedient. Such an approach is potentially all inclusive, yet freedom of association ensures that this inclusivity would not be forced or artificial. Such a movement can be constituted by a multitude of individual revolutions such as those taking place in centres across the country every day, but which have the potential to unite when the situation requires. This possibility of a contingent solidarity raises questions regarding the potential impact and limitations of a ‘movement of the impossible’. For example, could it achieve large scale systematic changes to the Direct Provision system? While this may be possible, such large scale transformations would not be its sole purpose. Rather such a movement could incorporate and support a multitude of transformatory practices, from an individual’s care of the self, to a collective demand to close down specific centres or to abolish Direct Provision altogether. A ‘movement of the impossible’ by its very nature is unlimited in scope, where rigid movements may crumble and fall when they fail to achieve their objectives, a movement of the impossible can dissipate, regroup, learn from its experiences, succeed elsewhere and begin again.
5. Conclusion

The completion of this study and the achievement of its objectives have produced a variety of different types of knowledge. On a theoretical level the study documents and collates the lived experiences and subjugated knowledges of people living within Ireland’s Direct Provision system. These experiences and interpretations expose a system infused with disciplinary mechanisms of conduct and also reveal the multiple ways such a system impacts on those within it and their sense of self. However, in a more positive sense this study also reveals the autonomy and influence of these people, documenting the variety of ways in which they challenge, shape and transform the system through the revolutions of everyday life.

On a practical level the study’s successes, failures and findings provide knowledge that can be used in both the field of action research and in the organisation of advocacy and activism. As the Direct Provision system lurches towards its fifteenth anniversary, the movement against it is arguably more potent than at any time in the past. Taking into account this movement’s deep knowledge of the system, its contingent nature and multiple points of application, as documented in this study, I contend that it already constitutes a ‘movement of the impossible’. Whether or not this movement can achieve its loftiest aspirations in the form of centre closures, systematic reform and the abolition of Direct Provision, remains to be seen. However, the findings of this research indicate that whatever the future holds for Ireland’s Direct Provision system, it will continue to be contested, exceeded and ultimately shaped by the very people it attempts to conduct. The power to change flows through them.
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Appendix A: Rejected Ethical Application

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
CHECKLIST

All applicants must fill in this checklist. If you answer “Yes” to any of these questions, you must proceed to fill in the ULREG Form which is specifically designed with social research methodologies in mind. If you answer “No” to all the questions, please continue with the rest of this form.

1. Does this application involve research with:
   a. People under the age of 18
   b. People with psychological impairments
   c. People under the control or influence of others (eg, people in care, prisoners)
   d. People with learning difficulties
   e. Relatives or parents of sick people
   f. People who only have a basic knowledge of English
   g. Students with whom the researcher has a supervisory relationship

   Yes  No
   Yes  No
   Yes  No
   Yes  No
   Yes  No
   Yes  No
   Yes  No
2. Does this application deal with:
   a. Personally sensitive issues, such as suicide, bereavement, gender identity, sexuality, fertility, abortion, gambling, financial arrangements
      Yes  No
   b. Illegal activities, illicit drug taking substance abuse, engaging in criminal behaviour
      Yes  No
   c. Any act that might diminish self-respect or cause shame, embarrassment or regret?
      Yes  No
   d. Research into politically sensitive and/or racially/ethically and/or commercially sensitive areas?
      Yes  No
   e. Issues which might otherwise give rise to a risk of loss of employment for the participant?
      Yes  No

3. Does the proposed research procedures involve:
   a. Use of personal records without consent
      Yes  No
   b. Deception of participants or use of placebos
      Yes  No
   c. The offer of inducements to participate
      Yes  No
   d. Audio or visual recording without consent
      Yes  No
   e. Invasive physical interventions or treatment
      Yes  No
   f. Research that might put researchers or participants at substantial risk?
      Yes  No
   g. Storage of data for less than 7 years?
      Yes  No
   h. Revealing the identity of participants?
      Yes  No
   i. Dealing with topics, using methodologies, or reporting of findings in a way that is likely to cause pain, discomfort, embarrassment, or changes of lifestyle for the participant?
      Yes  No
FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
APPLICATION FORM

Applicant Details:

Name: Dominic Hewson

ID Number: 0444936

E-mail Address: dominic.hewson@ul.ie

Department/Programme of Study: Sociology

Type of Project (FYP/MA/PhD/Faculty): PhD

Funding Body (where appropriate):

Project: Power to Change: An analysis of modalities of power and resistance in Ireland’s Direct Provision system.

Supervisor/Other Investigators: Dr. Breda Gray

Signature of Applicant ____________________________  Date

Signature of Supervisor/HoD _______________________ Date

Project Details:
1. Research Plan:

I am entering the second year of my PhD and am looking to conduct primary research influenced by the action research model espoused by Heron and Reason (2008). This involves conducting collaborative focus groups of 6-10 participants with asylum seekers in Direct Provision centres. My first choices are McDiarmid Park in Co. Claire and Love Street in Co. Kerry. I will write to the Irish Reception and Integration Agency and directors of both centres, including a comprehensive statement informing potential participants of all involved by the end of March. I will then send invitations including statements regarding the research to residents in each centre. Having obtained an expression of interest from some residents I hope to conduct initial focus group meetings by May 30th. In June I intend to conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews to gather individual views on the initial group meeting and the issues arising. This will provide richer detail, bypassing problems associated with focus-groups. Second focus groups will be convened in July identifying practical actions that participants want to take. Subsequent group meetings will be organised to monitor actions taken by participants and discuss emerging knowledge. A final group meeting will evaluate and interpret the knowledge produced by the research.

2. Research Purpose

This project combines a theoretical framework influenced by Michel Foucault’s notions of modalities of power with an action research based methodology in order for researcher and participants to co-analyse workings of power within Direct Provision. There are three objectives:
To analyse modalities of power at work in the legitimisation and maintenance of Direct Provision: Focusing on Foucault’s work concerning Sovereign, Disciplinary and Security mechanisms of power, the research will engage with participants living in Direct Provision, documenting their interpretations of the system and how and why it functions as it does.

To conduct action research with residents in order to identify barriers to change and possibilities of promoting alternative discourses: Existing research on Direct Provision has generally failed to instigate recommended changes (Cotter 2004). This research will collaborate with asylum seekers identifying points of subversion and possibilities for change. The successes and failures of the research will be evaluated and provide groundwork for a more potent future analysis of Direct Provision.

To provide a platform for asylum seekers to contribute to public discourse: This research will involve high levels of knowledge transfer and work alongside asylum seekers instead of on them, enabling them to engage as active participants.

3. Research Methodology

The project will employ an action research based methodological approach, drawing heavily on the co-operative style of enquiry espoused by Heron and Reason (2008). This type of inquiry seeks to engage with participants instead of treating them as passive subjects, contending that good research is ‘with’ people rather than ‘on’ them. The research will have strong emphasis on experiential knowledge produced in the focus groups through meeting and encounter.
The project will bring a Foucauldian approach to action research, utilising his theories on modalities of power and seeking to engage researcher and participants in critique of the system and its workings. This type of knowledge transfer has been referred to as the ‘fourth generation’ of action research, it promotes self-reflection, making the group more conscious of power causing them to engage in a more ‘conscious practice of freedom’ (MacNaughton & Smith 2001).

**Ethical Considerations for the Proposed Research:**

1. **Who will your informants be?**

I intend to conduct my research in a collaborative fashion with those asylum seekers living in Direct Provision who agree to participate in the study once they are informed of all that is involved in participating. I have identified two centres (permission pending) from which to form two focus groups of between 6-10 residents. Individual interviews will be conducted with all participants to reflect on the focus group discussions. This will constitute the main body of the primary research.

2. **How do you plan to gain access to/contact/approach your potential informants?**

Firstly, I intend to contact the Irish Reception and Integration Agency and the centres themselves, in order to obtain permission to carry out the research within the centres. I feel that this would be much simpler and cost effective, not to mention less tense and intimidating for the participants than to organise them in an unfamiliar space. Secondly I intend to utilise contacts I have made in order to approach potential participants. I have many contacts in Kerry from my work with the asylum community there and am currently interning in **Doras Luimní** Migrant Support centre in Limerick. I have identified several
possible gate keepers whom I believe could provide me with access to willing participants. Once identified as interested, I will send out the included information letter and consent form to potential participants.

3. **What arrangements have you made for anonymity or confidentiality?**

Issues of confidentiality are very important in this area of research as there is often a fear that criticism of the Direct Provision system by asylum seeking participants may impact negatively on their applications. With this in mind, I will use pseudonyms for all participants and insist that the meetings are held in private. I will express my wish to use a tape recorder at meetings in the interests of accuracy; however will offer to turn it off at any point. I will also withhold any information that could possibly be used to identify participants such as nationality, age, gender etc... I will also add intentionally misleading errors to transcriptions and the final thesis in order to impede possible identification further. Finally, I will allow the participants the opportunity to review transcriptions and omit any information they believe to be compromising.

4. **What if any is the particular vulnerability of your informant?**

Some asylum seekers resident in Ireland’s Direct Provision system may feel that negative feedback on their experience could prejudice their applications if identified. Having fled from their home countries citing persecution, asylum seekers can also be highly physically and mentally vulnerable. The process of applying for asylum can also be mentally tough in itself, with one consultant psychiatrist claiming that Direct Provision can cause as much damage to an applicant’s mental health as the initial trauma from which they fled (Breen,
2008). This research will ensure that participants are not in any way exposed to further vulnerability due to taking part in this study.

5. **What arrangements are in place to ensure the informants know the purpose of the research and what their part in the research may be?**

The purpose of the research and the participant’s role in the research is clearly detailed in the information sheet and consent form which they are required to sign in order to participate. They will also be offered access to a hand out outlining the project’s aims, objectives and key questions in greater detail. Finally, I will make available the services of my supervisor Dr. Breda Gray as a consultant if the participants have any further questions.

6. **How will you ensure that informants are aware of their right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time?**

The consent form clearly expresses that proposed informants are under no obligation whatsoever to participate in the research, it also stresses that those that do wish to participate are free to withdraw at any time. This point will be reiterated verbally in discussing participation at the start of all meetings and interviews.

7. **What are the psychological and or/safety issues for the researcher and/or the informant that arise from the research and how will you deal with them?**

The research methodology will aid collaboration between researcher and participants creating knowledge transfer and identifying possible positive spaces for change. In this sense, it is hoped that the psychological impact, if any, will be both empowering and beneficial for researcher and participant. However, as mentioned in answer to Question 4,
asylum seekers have often suffered an abundance of trauma and, although the meetings will not seek information regarding the traumas from which they fled, special care will be taken not to antagonise or upset participants. I believe my work in the past chairing focus groups for Somali asylum seekers in Cork and my current work with Doras Luimní migrant support centre has helped me develop sensitivity, awareness and diplomacy in such situations. Participants will be assured that they can withdraw from the study at any stage.

8. **How do you propose to store the information and for how long?**

With the consent of the participants, I intend to record the interviews before transcribing them, if this is not possible I will take notes to reconstruct as much of the meeting as possible. All transcriptions will be conducted and stored either on my laptop or desk top in the Sociology Department, both of which are password protected. Any recordings or notes will be kept in a locked cabinet in my room in my house. The information will be kept until the research is finished and then destroyed by 2016.
Please attach your completed Faculty Ethics Form to this application and answer the following questions where relevant, with a maximum of 300 words per question.

You must answer the following questions:

1. **What are the ethical issues involved in your research?**

   The major ethical consideration in my research is that of maintaining the privacy of participants. From past experience in conducting research alongside asylum seekers I am aware that some have concerns that any criticism of the Direct Provision system attributed to them, could impact negatively on their asylum application. With this in mind I have always made the protection of participants' anonymity a key priority in all research I have...
conducted. There is also the possibility that the research could be emotionally traumatic for the research participants. Although it will not make reference to the past traumas experienced by participants, it has been documented that the experience of living in Direct Provision can be equally if not more so mentally trying (Breen 2008). Finally there are also ethical issues surrounding the topic of participants' comprehension of the research's aims and objectives and their role within it.

2. **Explain why the use of human participants is essential to your research project.**

When the Direct Provision system was introduced in Ireland in April 2000 there was an initial flurry of research on the subject which steadily dwindled as much of the research’s findings and recommendations fell on deaf ears. An integrating Ireland report in 2004 found that one of the core problems of the existing research was that it was conducted by academic and NGO sources without any influence from the Direct Provision residents themselves (Cotter, 2004). This concern was echoed more recently in research conducted by Stacey Vanderhurst (2008). With this in mind it was always a key tenet of my research plan that the project not just include, but be directed as much as possible by, asylum seekers with actual lived experience of Direct Provision. The research was always intended to be a collaborative effort as opposed to a top down analysis. This approach also ties in with the project's Foucauldian framework which rejects concepts of superstructural power and conceives of it as operating at innumerable points on all levels. As a result, the research’s third objective references the need for human participants in order for the research to be successful: *to provide a platform for asylum seekers to contribute to public discourse*. 
3. **How will you ensure that informed consent is freely given by participants?**

I am aware that the principal of informed consent is an important ethical issue in research such as this and have taken several steps to ensure that it is obtained willingly. I have drafted an information letter to go with the consent form which concisely explains the purpose of the research. It outlines the reasoning behind and procedures involved in their participation as well as the possible risks and benefits. I have also offered to provide participants with a more detailed outline of the research which documents its aims, objectives and key questions. I have provided my contact details, those of my supervisor Dr. Breda Gray and those of ULREG chair Anne O’Dwyer in order to allay any concerns or help make any area of the research clearer. With regard to consent I will not be working with participants under the age of 18 and have explicitly stated that nobody is under any obligation whatsoever to participate in the research. I have also indicated that participants are free to pull out of the research at any time they wish.

**Answer the following questions where relevant to your research project (you must answer at least one):**

4. **How will you ensure that vulnerable research participants are protected? (Please state clearly if you abide by the Child Protection Guidelines and/or have Garda Clearance where necessary)**

   *(You must answer this question if you have ticked “yes” to any question in Part 1 of the checklist)*

The research will not work with anybody under the age of 18 nor will it require Garda clearance. The research will not work alongside anybody who cannot speak English;
however, there is a chance that some of the participants may not have a perfect grasp of the language. From past experience I do not like to exclude anybody from the research on such grounds but do insist that somebody be present, who is able to relate anything lost in translation in the focus group and certainly relate all aspects of the research before giving consent. Finally, I will provide transcripts of all the meetings to members of the focus group and make sure all understand they have the opportunity to omit anything they wish.

5. How will you protect participants if your research deals with sensitive issues? (You must answer this question if you have ticked “yes” to any question in Part 2 of the checklist)

Pseudonyms will be compulsory for all participants of the research who are residents in Direct Provision. This is due to the fact that past experience has shown me that Direct Provision residents can be very fearful of identification and I have worked with individuals who worry that identification of other participants may result in their own identification. Any information that could possibly be used to identify participants such as place of residence nationality, age, previous place of employment etc... will be omitted or disguised in the transcripts. I will also add intentionally misleading errors in order to impede possible identification further. Finally participants will be offered the opportunity to review transcriptions and omit any information they believe to be compromising. All the meetings will be held in private. I will express my wish to use a tape recorder at meetings in the interests of accuracy; however will offer to turn it off at any point. The tape recorder and physical copy of all transcriptions will be kept locked in a cabinet in my home with the rest of the data either saved on my laptop or my desk top in the Sociology Department, both password protected.
6. How will you protect participants if your research deals with sensitive research procedures? *(You must answer this question if you have ticked “yes” to any question in Part 3 of the checklist)*

n/a

7. Outline how you intend to comply with any established procedures which have been approved by ULREG for your research.

n/a

8. How will you manage data protection issues?

n/a
Appendix B: Approved Ethical Application

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
CHECKLIST

All applicants must fill in this checklist. If you answer “Yes” to any of these questions, you must proceed to fill in the ULREG Form which is specifically designed with social research methodologies in mind. If you answer “No” to all the questions, please continue with the rest of this form.

4. Does this application involve research with:

   a. People under the age of 18
      Yes  No
   b. People with psychological impairments
      Yes  No
   c. People under the control or influence of others (eg, people in care, prisoners)
      Yes  No
   d. People with learning difficulties
      Yes  No
   e. Relatives or parents of sick people
      Yes  No
   f. People who only have a basic knowledge of English
      Yes  No
   g. Students with whom the researcher has a supervisory relationship
      Yes  No
5. Does this application deal with:
   a. Personally sensitive issues, such as suicide, bereavement, gender identity, sexuality, fertility, abortion, gambling, financial arrangements  Yes  No
   b. Illegal activities, illicit drug taking substance abuse, engaging in criminal behaviour  Yes  No
   c. Any act that might diminish self-respect or cause shame, embarrassment or regret?  Yes  No
   d. Research into politically sensitive and/or racially/ethically and/or commercially sensitive areas?  Yes  No
   e. Issues which might otherwise give rise to a risk of loss of employment for the participant?  Yes  No

6. Does the proposed research procedures involve:
   a. Use of personal records without consent  Yes  No
   b. Deception of participants or use of placebos  Yes  No
   c. The offer of inducements to participate  Yes  No
   d. Audio or visual recording without consent  Yes  No
   e. Invasive physical interventions or treatment  Yes  No
   f. Research that might put researchers or participants at substantial risk?  Yes  No
   g. Storage of data for less than 7 years?  Yes  No
   h. Revealing the identity of participants?  Yes  No
   i. Dealing with topics, using methodologies, or reporting of findings in a way that is likely to cause pain, discomfort, embarrassment, or changes of lifestyle for the participant?  Yes  No
Applicant Details:

Name: Dominic Hewson
ID Number: 0444936
E-mail Address: dominic.hewson@ul.ie
Department/Programme of Study: Sociology
Type of Project (FYP/MA/PhD/Faculty): PhD
Funding Body (where appropriate):

Project: Power to Change: An analysis of modalities of power and resistance in Ireland’s Direct Provision system.

Supervisor/Other Investigators: Dr. Breda Gray

Signature of Applicant ____________________________  Date
Signature of Supervisor/HoD _______________________ Date

Project Details:
1. Research Plan.

I am entering the second year of my PhD and am looking to conduct primary research influenced by the action research model espoused by Heron and Reason (2008). This will involve conducting collaborative focus groups, of 6-10 participants, with asylum seekers in Direct Provision centres. My first choices of Direct Provision centre are McDiarmid Park in Clare and the Love St. Tralee. I will write to the Irish Reception and Integration Agency informing them of my intentions by the end of May. I will then contact potential participants by letter and make arrangements through gatekeepers to provide them with information sheets and consent forms. Having obtained an expression of interest from some residents, I will then liaise with them to explain the aims and objectives of the project further and decide upon where they feel the best location to meet would be. I hope to conduct initial focus group meetings by June 15th. These focus groups will discuss the participants’ experiences of living in Direct Provision, how it impacts upon them, who it benefits and how it functions. This is similar to deconstructive approaches to action research outlined by McNaughton and Smith (2001) in their deconstructive approach to methods of child care. It is hoped that this discussion will give a platform to perspectives and understandings that have hereto remained undeveloped or silenced. By the end of June, I intend to conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews with participants in order to gather individual views on the initial group meeting and the issues arising. This will provide richer detail, bypassing problems associated with focus-groups.

Second focus group meetings will be convened in July to further discuss group understandings of Direct Provision. Subsequent group meetings will be organised to further
develop this perspective and discuss emerging knowledge. A final group meeting will evaluate and interpret the knowledge produced by the research.

2. Research Purpose.

This project combines a theoretical framework influenced by Michel Foucault’s notions of modalities of power with an action research-based methodology in order for researcher and participants to co-analyse workings of power within Direct Provision. The research will attempt:

**To analyse modalities of power at work in the legitimisation and maintenance of Direct Provision:** Focusing on Foucault’s work concerning sovereign, disciplinary and security based mechanisms of power, the research will engage with participants living in Direct Provision, documenting their interpretations of the system and how and why it functions as it does.

**To conduct action research with residents in order to identify barriers to change and possibilities of promoting alternative discourses:** Existing research on Direct Provision has generally failed to instigate recommended changes (Cotter 2004). This research will collaborate with asylum seekers, identifying hereto silenced discourses and possibilities for change. The successes and failures of the research will be evaluated and provide groundwork for a more potent future analysis of Direct Provision.
**To provide a platform for asylum seekers to contribute to public discourse:** This research will involve high levels of knowledge transfer and work *alongside* asylum seekers instead of *on* them, enabling them to engage as active participants in the research.

3. **Research Methodology.**

The project will employ an action research-based methodological approach, drawing heavily on the co-operative style of enquiry espoused by Heron and Reason (2008) and the deconstructive approach practiced by MacNaughton and Smith (2001) and Maggie O’Neil (2008) amongst others. This type of inquiry seeks to engage with participants instead of treating them as passive subjects, contending that good research is ‘with’ people rather than ‘on’ them. The focus groups will explore participants’ reflections on Direct Provision in an attempt to free them from conventional understandings of the system. They will be asked to reflect on discourses that shape the subjects of Direct Provision and their perceptions of who benefits, how and why from the discourses and the practices of Direct Provision. This type of knowledge production has been referred to as the ‘fourth generation’ of action research. It is consistent with the Foucauldian theoretical framework promoting self-reflection, raising consciousness and enabling engagement in a more ‘conscious practice of freedom’ (MacNaughton & Smith 2001).

**N.B.** *The intention of the focus groups is to create such challenging discourses that can exist in opposition to the negative ones that surround Direct Provision and asylum. It is hoped that such discourses could have transformative qualities, however the research will not engage in any form of law breaking or engage in action that could have negative consequences for the participants.*
Ethical Considerations for the Proposed Research:

1. Who will your informants be?

I intend to conduct my research in a collaborative fashion with those asylum seekers living in Direct Provision who agree to participate in the study once they are informed of all that is involved in participating. I have identified two centres from which to form two focus groups of between 6-10 residents. Individual interviews will be conducted with all participants to reflect on the focus group discussions. This will constitute the main body of the primary research.

2. How do you plan to gain access to/contact/approach your potential informants?

Firstly, I intend to contact the Irish Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) informing them of my intentions and expressing my understanding that the research I have planned is legal and above board. According to correspondence I have had with fellow researcher Stacey Vanderhurst of the University of Notre Dame, who conducted her research in privately owned centres without RIA permission, and work colleagues at Doras Luimní, who have experience in this area, there is no requirement for permission from the RIA or any other body to conduct research with residents of these centres. Nevertheless, I intend to inform them of my plans, procedure and the project goals. After notifying RIA, I intend to utilise contacts I have made in order to approach potential participants residing within Direct Provision centres. I have many contacts in Kerry from my work with the asylum community there and I am currently interning in Doras Luimní Migrant Support centre in Limerick. I have identified several possible gate keepers whom I believe can provide me with access to
willing participants. Once identified as interested, I will meet with them and supply them with the included information letter and consent form.

3. What arrangements have you made for anonymity or confidentiality?

Issues of confidentiality are very important in this area of research as there is often a fear that criticism of the Direct Provision system by asylum seeking participants may impact negatively on their applications. The meetings will thus be conducted away from the Direct Provision centre in a location agreed with the participants themselves, at all times ensuring their anonymity is protected. I will express my wish to record meetings in the interests of accuracy. However I will offer to turn off the recorder at any point. Pseudonyms will be mandatory for all participants, I will also withhold or disguise any information that could possibly be used to identify participants, such as previous place of employment, place of residence nationality, age and gender. I will also add intentionally misleading errors to transcriptions in order to impede possible identification further. Finally, I will allow the participants the opportunity to review the transcripts and omit any information they believe to be compromising. If any language issues arise regarding the ability of participants to understand the recordings I will provide a translator.

4. What if any is the particular vulnerability of your informant?

Some asylum seekers resident in Ireland’s Direct Provision system may feel that negative feedback on their experience could prejudice their applications if identified. Having fled from their home countries citing persecution, asylum seekers can also be highly physically and mentally vulnerable. The process of applying for asylum can also be mentally tough in itself, with one consultant psychiatrist claiming that Direct Provision can cause as much
damage to an applicant’s mental health as the initial trauma from which they fled (Breen, 2008). This research will ensure that participants are not in any way exposed to further vulnerability due to taking part in this study. Please see question 3 for details of how I intend to ensure this.

5. **What arrangements are in place to ensure the informants know the purpose of the research and what their part in the research may be?**

The purpose of the research and the participants’ role in the research is clearly detailed in the information sheet and consent form which they are required to sign in order to participate. They will also be offered access to a hand out outlining the projects aims, objectives and key questions in greater detail. Finally, I will make available the services of my supervisor Dr. Breda Gray as a consultant if the participants have any further questions.

6. **How will you ensure that informants are aware of their right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time?**

The consent form clearly expresses that proposed informants are under no obligation whatsoever to participate in the research, it also stresses that those that do wish to participate are free to withdraw at any time. This point will be reiterated verbally in discussing participation at the start of all meetings and interviews.

7. **What are the psychological and or/safety issues for the researcher and/or the informant that arise from the research and how will you deal with them?**

The research methodology will aid collaboration between researcher and participants giving voice to an alternative discourse and understanding of Direct Provision. In this sense, it is
hoped that the psychological impact, if any, will be both empowering and beneficial for researcher and participant. However, as mentioned in answer to Question 4, asylum seekers have often suffered an abundance of trauma and, although the meetings will not seek information regarding the traumas from which they fled, special care will be taken not to broach such issues. I believe my work in the past chairing focus groups for Somali asylum seekers in Cork and my current work with Doras Luimní migrant support centre has helped me develop sensitivity, awareness and diplomacy in such situations. Participants will be assured that they can withdraw from the study at any stage.

8. How do you propose to store the information and for how long?

With the consent of the participants, I intend to record the interviews before transcribing them, if this is not possible, I will take notes to reconstruct as much of the meeting as possible. All transcriptions will be constructed and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act, either on my laptop or desk top in the Sociology Department, both of which are password protected. Any recordings or notes will be kept in a locked cabinet in my room in my house in Limerick with the consent forms stored in a locked cabinet in my parent’s house in Kerry. All information (hard and soft copy) will be kept until the research is finished and then destroyed seven years from the completion of the research in accordance to the University of Limericks data storage guidelines.
Please attach your completed Faculty Ethics Form to this application and answer the following questions where relevant, with a maximum of 300 words per question.

You must answer the following questions:

1. What are the ethical issues involved in your research?

The major ethical consideration in my research is that of maintaining the privacy of participants. From past experience in conducting research alongside asylum seekers I am aware that some have concerns that any criticism of the Direct Provision system attributed to them, could impact negatively on their asylum application. With this in mind I have
always made the protection of participants' anonymity a key priority in all research I have conducted. There is also the possibility that the research could be emotionally traumatic for the research participants. Although it will not make reference to the past traumas experienced by participants, it has been documented that the experience of living in Direct Provision can be equally if not more so mentally trying (Breen 2008). Finally, there are also ethical issues surrounding the topic of participants' comprehension of the research's aims and objectives and their role within it.

2. Explain why the use of human participants is essential to your research project.

When the Direct Provision system was introduced in Ireland in April 2000 there was an initial flurry of research on the subject which steadily dwindled as much of the research's findings and recommendations fell on deaf ears. An Integrating Ireland report in 2004 found that one of the core problems of the existing research was that it was conducted by academic and NGO sources without any influence from Direct Provision residents themselves (Cotter, 2004). This concern was echoed more recently in research conducted by Stacey Vanderhurst (2008). With this in mind, it was always a key tenet of my research plan that the project not just include, but be shaped as much as possible by, asylum seekers with actual lived experience of Direct Provision. The research was always intended to be a collaborative effort as opposed to a top down analysis. As a result the research’s third objective references the need for human participants in order for the research to be successful: ‘To provide a platform for asylum seekers to contribute to public discourse’.

3. How will you ensure that informed consent is freely given by participants?
I am aware that the principle of informed consent is an important ethical issue in research such as this and I have taken several steps to ensure that it is obtained willingly. I have drafted an information letter to go with the consent form which concisely and clearly explains the purpose of the research. It outlines the reasoning behind, and procedures involved, in their participation as well as the possible risks and benefits. I have also offered to provide participants with a more detailed outline of the research which documents its aims, objectives and key questions. I have provided my contact details, those of my supervisor Dr. Breda Gray and those of ULREG chair Anne O’Dwyer, in order to allay any concerns or help make any area of the research clearer.

With regard to consent I will not be working with participants under the age of 18 and have explicitly stated that nobody is under any obligation whatsoever to participate in the research. I have also indicated that participants are free to pull out of the research at any time they wish.

Answer the following questions where relevant to your research project (you must answer at least one):

4. How will you ensure that vulnerable research participants are protected?

(Please state clearly if you abide by the Child Protection Guidelines and/or have Garda Clearance where necessary) *(You must answer this question if you have ticked “yes” to any question in Part 1 of the checklist)*

The research will not work with anybody under the age of 18 nor will it require Garda clearance. The research will not work alongside anybody who cannot speak English;
however, there is a chance that some of the participants may not have a perfect grasp of the language. From past experience I do not like to exclude anybody from the research on such grounds, but do insist that somebody be present, who is able to relate anything lost in translation in the focus group and certainly relate all aspects of the research before giving consent. Finally, I will provide recordings of all the meetings to members of the focus group and make sure all understand they have the opportunity to omit anything they wish. With regard to the possibility that participants resident in Direct Provision may feel that participation may result in negative consequences to their application for asylum, I will insist that the meetings are conducted in private and at a location determined by the participants. I will also make pseudonyms mandatory and exclude any other possible identifiers from the research.

5. How will you protect participants if your research deals with sensitive issues?

(You must answer this question if you have ticked “yes” to any question in Part 2 of the checklist)

Pseudonyms will be compulsory for all participants of the research who are residents in Direct Provision. This is due to the fact that past experience has shown me that Direct Provision residents can be fearful of identification and I have worked with individuals who worry that identification of other participants may result in their own identification. Any information that could possibly be used to identify participants such as their previous place of employment, place of residence, nationality or age will be omitted from or disguised in the transcripts. I will also add intentionally misleading errors in order to impede possible identification further. Finally, participants will be offered the opportunity to review recordings and omit any information they believe to be compromising. All the meetings will
be held in private. I will express my wish to use a tape recorder at meetings in the interests of accuracy. However, I will offer to turn it off at any point should participants request I do so. The tape recorder and physical copy of all transcriptions will be kept locked in a cabinet in my home with the rest of the data either saved on my laptop or my desk top in the Sociology Department, both password protected.

6. How will you protect participants if your research deals with sensitive research procedures? *(You must answer this question if you have ticked “yes” to any question in Part 3 of the checklist)*

n/a

7. Outline how you intend to comply with any established procedures which have been approved by ULREG for your research.

n/a

8. How will you manage data protection issues?

n/a
Appendix C: University of Limerick's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' Ethics Committee - Initial Response.

Dear Dominic,

Thank you for your application. Before the application can be approved the committee would like you to clarify some issues.

First, there were some queries raised about what permissions you need to do this research if you do the research onsite in the centres. Is permission from the directors and the Irish Reception and Integration Agency enough?

Second, there was great deal of concern that conducting research onsite in the centres will be prejudicial to the respondents. Concerns about this have been raised by residents in at least one of these centres during previous research projects. What allowance has been made for this (saying that the meetings will be in private may not be enough in these circumstances since the very act of participation may be viewed prejudicially)?

Third, there is an implicit assumption in the proposal (not least from the title of the project) that there will be an investigation of resistance to the restrictions placed on residents in these centres. This raises the prospect that the research will deal with rule breaking or activities that might be construed as illegal for these groups. Such actions are understandable but what will your relationship to these activities be if this is the case? What ethical considerations arise and how will you deal with them?

On a more mundane note, any research materials need to be kept for seven years and not destroyed by 2016. See the attached notes.
The revised application will need to be put before the committee again and will need to be submitted in hard and soft copies to Carol Noonan in the School of Law before close of business, Wednesday 30 March.

Regards
Appendix D: University of Limerick's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' Ethics Committee - Rejection of Ethical Application (Appendix A).

Dear Dominic

Thank you for your revised application. I'm afraid that the research ethics committee still has some concerns about your application that need to be addressed before approval can be given.

The simplest issues to deal with is a technical one: could you re-write the information sheet so that it is more intelligible to people who's language skills are not necessarily going to be strong?

The other issues that the committee have are not too different to last time. The committee is concerned that the impact of the research on your respondents is still potentially negative, putting them in a difficult position with regard to hostel and other authorities. The committee does not feel that it is appropriate to hold research meetings on site since this exposes participation, and we also do not feel that it is appropriate that you live on site in advance of research being conducted since this will also expose participation as well as developing relationships that may lead to expectations of participation that are coercive in nature if not in intent.
The committee is also concerned that the way that you describe your relationship to the subjects of your research does not make clear what the relationship is between study and direction, that is what the distance is between the research you will conduct and knowledge transfer as a transformative practice. Ethically your application does not seem to appreciate how you might direct action by situating yourself in certain ways within the research environment, and that this might render your research void and potentially expose your subjects to censure. You point out that you will advise against certain actions, but it is not your role as a researcher 'to facilitate the group's direction' in the course of research. You need to think through the place of knowledge transfer and be more specific about the boundaries of research and related practices of knowledge transfer.

When you have dealt with these issues the application will need to be reviewed by the whole committee again. We will look at it out of cycle so that hopefully you will get approval without needing to wait for another meeting. I am happy to talk these issues over with you, as is Brendan, but I'm afraid that I'm away next week so won't be able to see you until the week after next if you wish to talk to me beside your supervisor.

Regards,
Dear Sir/Madam

I am a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Limerick and I am currently conducting a research project into the Direct Provision system in Ireland. It is hoped that by working alongside residents of Direct Provision and by providing a platform to share their experiences, we can develop a new understanding of the workings of the Direct Provision system. A more detailed explanation of the research, outlining its aims and objectives is available on request.

I intend to work with two focus groups of 6-10 participants, above the age of 18, who are interested in taking part in this study. If you take part in this study, you will be involved in a joint project alongside myself, as a co-researcher, in order to look at the workings of the Direct Provision system.
The focus groups will meet initially in a location agreed upon by participants for duration of one hour. These groups will offer you the chance to express your views and relate your experiences of living in Direct Provision.

It is hoped that those taking part in the study will benefit from the opportunity to be involved in the production of a piece of research which seeks to produce new knowledge about the Direct Provision system. If you take part, you will be very much involved in the direction and focus of the research and have the opportunity to share your experiences of Direct Provision.

I am aware that you may have worries about being identified or may be concerned that talking about your experience might impact on your application for asylum. With this in mind, I will make every effort to ensure and maintain your privacy. I will use fake names to ensure anonymity and any identifying information such as age, nationality, residence etc... will be removed or disguised. You will be given recordings of the focus groups and interviews on request and be offered the chance to omit any information you are concerned about.

There is absolutely no obligation for anybody to participate in this research and you may refuse to engage with sections of, or indeed withdraw entirely, from the research process at any time. If you have any concerns regarding participation feel free to contact the University of Limerick Research Ethics committee.
You should also feel free to contact either myself or my supervisor Dr. Breda Gray if you wish to seek additional information on any section of the proposed research you feel needs clarification.

Thank you for your time

Sincerely

Dominic Hewson

**Contact Information:**

Dominic Hewson: 0879332260 – dominic.hewson@ul.ie

Dr. Breda Gray: breda.gray@ul.ie

University of Limerick Research and Ethics Committee: 061 202672 – Anne.ODWYER@ul.ie
Appendix F: Research Consent Form

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSENT FORM

Consent Section:

I, the undersigned, declare that I am willing to take part in research for the project entitled ‘Power to Change: An analysis of modalities of power and resistance in Ireland's Direct Provision system’.

- I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and my role in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate.
- The nature of my participation has been explained to me and I have full knowledge of how the information collected will be used.
- I am also aware that my participation in this study may be recorded (video/audio) and I agree to this. However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time I can request that the recording equipment be switched off. I am entitled to copies of all recordings made
and am fully informed as to what will happen to these recordings once the study is completed

- I fully understand that there is no obligation on me to participate in this study
- I fully understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without having to explain or give a reason
- I am also entitled to full confidentiality in terms of my participation and personal details

______________________________________         __________________________
Signature of participant                                               Date