RE-PHASING NEO-LIBERALISM: FROM GOVERNANCE TO 'GOVERNMENTALITY' – NEW LABOUR AND BRITAIN'S CRISIS OF STREET HOMELESSNESS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we continue the task of fleshing out understandings of ‘actually existing neo-liberalism’ (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). More specifically, drawing on the work of Tom Ling we suggest that Peck and Tickell’s recent distinction between periods of roll back/ roll out neo-liberalization can usefully be supplemented by the identification of second, more powerful moment of roll out neo-liberalism - described by Ling in terms of the shift from a system of governance to one of ‘governmentality’ (Ling, 2000; Peck and Tickell, 2002). We illustrate our argument with an analysis of changing central government responses to a crisis of street homelessness in 1990s Britain. Tracing the development and impact of the Conservative government’s *Rough Sleepers Initiative* and New Labour’s *Homelessness Action Programme* in two contrasting places (the city of Bristol and the small market town of Bodmin, Cornwall) we suggest that the latter has been less successful in containing the problems of street homelessness than at first appears. Whilst noting the value of Ling’s framework the paper therefore concludes by pointing to the need to temper a reading of the recent shift to a system of ‘governmentality’ with a recognition of the continuing limits to central state power and of the ‘messy actualities’ of ‘actually existing neo-liberalism’.

Key words: *Neo-liberalism* *New Labour* *Street Homelessness*

INTRODUCTION

Building on their understanding of neo-liberalism as a 'path dependent' process, Brenner and Theodore (2002) have advanced the idea of 'actually existing neo-liberalism': a concept designed to move the critical literature on neo-liberalism beyond the rather generalised accounts that have up to now dominated the field. Crucial to such a concept, and because it is more useful to think of neo-liberalism as a process rather than an end state, is the attempt to foreground the various stages through which the process has (so far) passed. In an attempt to provide a more developed chronology of neo-liberalization, Peck and Tickell (2002) have therefore drawn attention to the recent shift from what they term 'roll back' to 'roll out' neo-liberalism. Where the former focused mainly upon processes of economic restructuring and a rolling back of the welfare safety net, under the latter new discourses of welfare 'reform' and new institutional arrangements have emerged designed to discipline and contain those "marginalised or dispossessed by the [roll back] neo-liberalism of the 1980s" (Peck and Tickell, 2002: 389). Complementing this more developed chronology, others have unpacked the changing geographies of neo-liberalization - charting the increasingly complex patterns of de-centralisation, re-centralisation and displacement that characterise neo-liberal welfare state regimes within a period 'hollowing out' (Barnett, 1999; Patterson and Pinch, 1995).

In this paper we continue the task of fleshing out understandings of the neo-liberalization of western welfare state regimes with an examination of changes to British welfare policy since the election of the New Labour government in May 1997. Put simply, we suggest that there has been a significant change in the nature and form of welfare policies and practices in Britain since the election of New Labour. Such a change sits within the broad chronology proposed by Peck and Tickell (2002), but suggests the need to complement broad brush analyses of the changing face of neo-liberalism with a closer reading of the different ways in which the neo-liberal state has sought to intervene in the social field within a period of roll out neo-liberalism.

To develop our analysis we draw upon a governmentality perspective, examining the nature of recent changes in British welfare policy across three domains: in the basic *rationale* of state welfare provision; in *the practices and technologies of the state* through which change has been enabled; and in the state's attempts to change the *subjectivities* of welfare providers, welfare recipients and of a broader public (Larner and Walters, 2000). Tracing significant changes across all three domains, we suggest that the election of New Labour can be understood as ushering in a shift from what Tom Ling (2000) has called a system of 'governance' to (rather confusingly) a system of 'governmentality'. Where the former was characterised by welfare pluralism but relatively weak regulatory structures and a certain measure of independence for non-statutory welfare providers (whether non-governmental agencies or private citizens), the latter has witnessed an increasing role for non-statutory agencies alongside the development of tighter regulatory controls aimed at securing the self-regulation of welfare providers and welfare recipients alike in accordance with the emergence of what Dean (1999) has termed a 'post-welfare' regime. In contrast to more familiar readings of 'hollowing out', such changes articulate a re-centralisation and formalisation of state power resulting in new and complex relationships between central and local government and their non-statutory 'partners', and the ever deeper insertion of central government personnel in both local government and civil society (c.f. Jessop, 1999; 2002).

Though, as Ling has shown (2000), the shift from a system of 'governance' to 'governmentality' can be traced in other arenas of welfare too, it is articulated most clearly in responses to street homelessness. This is because street homelessness has been accorded an especially high priority by the New Labour government, for whom a reduction in levels of rough sleeping have been taken as a sign of their ability to deliver on a pledges to tackle the broader problems of social exclusion (Fitzpatrick et al, 2000). Here we therefore examine the nature and significance of such a shift with an analysis of changing central government responses to a crisis of street homelessness in 1990s Britain, paying particular attention to two

programmes: the Conservative government's *Rough Sleepers Initiative* (1990-1997) and New Labour's *Homelessness Action Programme* (1999-2002). In accordance with Peck and Tickell (2002) both can be read as examples of 'crisis management', as central government sought ways to contain the growing number of homeless people visible on the streets of Britain following a period of economic restructuring and a rolling back of the welfare safety net in the mid-to-late 1980s. But significant differences are also apparent between the two. Hence we suggest that the *Homelessness Action Programme* is in fact best understood as articulating a *second*, more powerful moment of roll-out neo-liberalism, as New Labour have sought *new* ways in which to manage a continuing crisis of street homelessness that had failed to go away despite the efforts of previous administrations.

The remainder of the paper is in three parts. In the following section we expand upon Ling's conceptualisation of a shift from a system of governance to 'governmentality' before, in part two, carrying this to a reading of recent responses to Britain's crisis of street homelessness. Responding to Peck and Tickell's (2002: 382) suggestion that properly worked through analyses of the characteristics and affects of neo-liberalization in the "home spaces" of the advanced western economies are in fact curiously underdeveloped, in the final part of the paper we present an account of the impacts of these responses in two very different settings: the large urban centre of Bristol (population 500,000) and the small market town of Bodmin (population 3,500) both in the south-west of England. Whilst the former has attracted a considerable proportion of the funding attached to the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* and *Homelessness Action Programme*, Bodmin continues hardly to register in the minds of those allocating central government funds for the alleviation of street homelessness – despite compelling evidence of significant problems of rough sleeping.

Our choice of case studies has been shaped by out reading of the governmentality literature. In his later work, Foucault drew attention to what he called five 'methodological precautions' (Foucault, 1980). Of these, the first concerned the need to extend our analyses of power

beyond “the regulated and legitimate forms of power in their central locations” and consider instead relations of power at the ‘extremities’ (Gilbert, 2003). As Clarke and Newman (1997) have shown, such a move often leads to recognition of the partial and fragmented penetration of social policy. In place of the coherence too often implied in talk of ‘the’ neo-liberal ‘project’, then, a governmentality perspective stresses instead the *uneven*, *incomplete* and often *contrary* affects of neo-liberalization (Larner, 2000). It is exactly these complexities we wish to draw attention to in our reading of the development of British homelessness policy, of the broader shift to a system of ‘governmentality’ and hence, in the end, of the politics and affects of roll out neo-liberalism.

RE-PHASING NEO-LIBERALISM: FROM GOVERNANCE TO ‘GOVERNMENTALITY’

In their analysis of neo-liberalization, Peck and Tickell (2002) trace a series of fundamental shifts in the basic structure of neo-liberalism as it has unfolded in the advanced economies of the North Atlantic: the first the move from the abstract philosophical project, or ‘proto neo-liberalism’, of the 1970s to the roll back neo-liberalism of the 1980s (with its focus upon a restructuring of the economy and a rolling-back of the Keynesian welfare state apparatus); the second, beginning in the early 1990s, a shift towards a more socially interventionist agenda (or roll out neo-liberalism) designed to manage and contain the increasingly obvious social costs associated with this earlier restructuring.

In reality, of course, Peck and Tickell’s framework is better treated as a useful heuristic rather than a strict chronology. Certainly, key elements (suitably re-worked) are clearly evident in more than one phase, suggesting a certain bleeding of categories and phases one to another: between the apparent ‘economic’ concerns of the 1980s and the more obviously welfarist agenda of the 1990s. Hence, it is indeed clearly possible, for example, to read roll back neo-liberalism as mainly characterised by a relatively active role for the state in the *economic* sphere (most obviously, in the careful management of a ‘free market’) and a progressive

withdrawal of the state from the active delivery of welfare. But it is equally clear that in Britain as elsewhere successive Conservative administrations through out the 1980s actually worked quite hard at transforming both public perceptions of welfare and welfare recipients, and the structures of welfare delivery, in ways that did more than simply lay the *groundwork* for a more active intervention in the social field in the 1990s (Malpass, 1985). Not least, a convincing case can be made that a number of the central tenets of the 'welfare settlement' of the 1990s (based around the centrality of paid employment and of the need for systems of income support to help not hinder the development of a more flexible labour market, of individual responsibility for one's own welfare needs within a 'mixed economy' of welfare, and the drive towards 'value for money') were in fact first ushered in as part of a broader transformation of British welfare under the third Thatcher administration of 1986-1990 (Cochrane, 1994). Thus, though we remain convinced by the general thrust of Peck and Tickell's argument - and in particular, their conceptualisation of roll out neo-liberalism as, in essence, a form of *crisis management* – the chronology they develop can not easily accommodate a more detailed reading of British welfare policy and practice. Nor does it allow for any change in welfare policies and practices within the rather broad periods they identify.

An alternative to Peck and Tickell's chronology is provided by Tom Ling (2000). More narrowly focused than Peck and Tickell (2002) Ling has examined changes to British welfare policy and practice over the past sixty years. Like Peck and Tickell (2002), Ling (2000) too identifies three ideal typical periods of state welfare provision. In contrast to Peck and Tickell, however, for Ling the most important change relates not to any apparent shift from a period of roll back to roll out neoliberalism in the early 1990s, but the move from what he terms a system of '*governance*' to a system of '*governmentality*' in the mid-to-late 1990s, broadly concomitant with the election of the New Labour government.

We should say at the outset that we find Ling's terminology somewhat confusing. Whilst he is not alone in identifying a shift from a system of 'government' to one of 'governance', his use of the term 'governmentality' to describe a particular mode of governing is more problematic (Richards and Smith, 2002). From a Foucauldian perspective, governmentality more properly refers to the *process of governing* itself (Foucault, 1979, 1991; Raco and Imrie, 2000; Rose and Miller, 1992). Such a process takes different forms at different times, as the rationalities and practices of governing (themselves giving rise to particular subjectivities) coalesce to form particular modes of governmentality: 'government', 'governance' and so on (Larner and Walters, 2000; Morrison, 2000). Hence, whilst it is possible to identify different modes of governmentality, it is not strictly speaking possible to talk of 'governmentality' as itself a mode of governing, and attribute it to a particular period of time. It is partly because of this that where others too have identified recent changes in neo-liberal welfare state regimes that take these regimes somewhere beyond a system of 'governance', other terms have been used to describe this new phase: ranging from the 'Third Way', to a period of 'de-governmentalization' (see Loughlin, 2004; Morrison, 2000).

We remain wedded to Ling's framework (if not his terminology) however, because we are more convinced by his account of the *substance* of recent changes than we are by the more limited changes described in these other accounts. At the risk of confusion, we have therefore retained Ling's terminology, whilst analysing the changes he describes through a governmentality *perspective*: that is, noting the key differences in the basic *rationale* and *practices* of state welfare provision, and in the *subjectivities* such changes give rise to, in the different periods he identifies.

To elaborate: Ling suggests that from 1947 to around the mid-1970s British welfare was characterised by a system of *government*: "an epoch when, in Kooiman's terms, 'Governing was basically regarded as one-way traffic from those governing to those governed'" with the majority of welfare services provided directly by the state (Ling, 2000; Richards and Smith,

2002: 15). From about the mid-1970s, however, a shift towards a system of *governance* became apparent, as “the number of actors in the policy … arena multiplied, the boundaries between the public and private sector … [became] more blurred and central government’s command over a more complex policy process … receded” (Ling, 2000; Richards and Smith, 2002: 15). Developing this basic framework, then, the shift to a system of governance was associated with changes across three broad domains.

First, with regards the *rationale* of state welfare provision, responsibility for the delivery of an increasing array of welfare services passed from central and local government to other agencies in both the profit but also and especially the not-for-profit, non-statutory sector. Whilst the multiplication of welfare agencies can be understood in part as a response to the recognition of the inability of the state to meet the needs of all, with the election of a Conservative government in 1979 it became tied in to a more basic re-conceptualisation of the state’s role in welfare provision. As they sought to free the state from its responsibilities for the delivery of welfare, successive Conservative administrations therefore not only encouraged the expansion of the non-statutory sector but attempted to shift the burden of welfare provision away from both the state and non-statutory agencies on to the shoulders of private citizens themselves.

Second, even whilst introducing a fundamental split between purchaser and provider, from the early 1980s especially British welfare policy underwent a complex process of spatial re-organisation. Part and parcel of a broader attack on the power of the local state, as responsibility for the delivery of welfare was devolved to (non-elected) local bodies in the private and not-for-profit sector, responsibility for the regulation of those bodies passed from local to central government. Throughout this period, however, the *technologies* of state regulation remained relatively under-developed, or better still ‘thin’. Hence, whilst central government showed increasing concern for value for money (ensured through new systems of *Compulsory Competitive Tendering* and the widespread dissemination of the principles of the

New Public Management) such systems had little power to determine *how* services were delivered.

Finally, partly as a result of this limited regulatory framework, both individual agencies and the non-statutory sector as a whole retained a significant degree of independence through out this period: providing an important space for the voicing of dissent when government policy clashed with agency practice or with the ideals of the sector more broadly. With regard any attempt to reshape the *subjectivities* of welfare recipients and of a broader public, Conservative rhetoric concerned itself mainly with an attack on the idea of state sponsored welfare *per se* (frequently casting welfare recipients as a drain on collective wealth) and pushed instead a creed of individualism, within which any responsibilities the private citizen might have for the welfare of others was cast as a choice rather than an obligation.

The move from a system of government to governance therefore had a significant impact on both the logic and form of British welfare (see also Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; Rhodes, 1997). For Ling, however, the more recent shift away from a system of governance towards what he terms a system of 'governmentality', around the mid-to-late 1990s, has been equally if not more significant. Though such a shift can not be directly aligned with the change of government at that time (with a number of the features he identifies as articulating a period of governmentality evident in different areas of British welfare policy prior to May 1997) there is little doubt that the changes he describes accelerated with the election of New Labour. In particular, the new government's much vaunted Compacts with the voluntary sector announced in 1998 (described by Kendall as "an unparalleled step in the positioning of the third sector in [British] public policy") signalled a sea change in British welfare policy and practice (Kendall, 2000: 542).

Not least, the Compact articulated a fundamental change in the *rationale* of state welfare provision. Where previous Conservative administrations had turned to the non-statutory

sector mainly as a way of off-loading the state's responsibilities for welfare delivery, New Labour have described a new vision of British welfare policy: with the state working in partnership with an expanded non-statutory sector (Home Office, 1998; Giddens, 1998). Such a vision speaks of both the familiar strengths of the non-statutory sector (its 'expertise', 'creativity', and 'flexibility') but also of a renewed faith in the state - whose role, far from receding, is seen as overseeing the work of the sector (so as to ensure issues of quality control, for example) and setting the broader direction of welfare policy.

To facilitate this new vision, New Labour have set about transforming the *technologies* of welfare and embarked upon a complex re-organisation of local-central state responsibilities and of state personnel. Most importantly, perhaps, with the introduction of *Best Value* in place of the previous mechanism of *Compulsory Competitive Tendering*, New Labour have sought to exert much greater control over how non-statutory 'partner' agencies deliver welfare services, with a new tendering process effectively dictating the policies and procedures an agency must follow in order to enter in to a service contract. Backed up by the introduction of strict performance targets, the effect has been to channel funding to what Ling calls 'fit partners': those agencies whose ethos and approach is in broad alignment with the aims and objectives of central government policy (Ling, 2000).

At the same time, and in contrast to the previous era, under New Labour day-to-day responsibility for the management and regulation of non-statutory agencies has passed (back) to the local state. Given the degree to which *Best Value* determines the regulatory framework, however, it is difficult to read such a move as evidence of genuine de-centralisation. Rather, we appear to be witnessing a re-centralisation and formalisation of state power within which, as Maile and Hoggett argue: "Local government is increasingly becoming a 'policy free zone' … [its role] to deliver centrally determined policies in a strategic way" (2001: 512).

Such a process has been facilitated by a complex restructuring of state personnel. Thus, the last few years have also seen a rapid proliferation of central government appointed 'special advisors', acting at both the centre (in the form of various 'tsars') and the periphery: chairing the 'local services consortia' that have become a key part of the welfare landscape under New Labour. Seconded from the local state, but funded directly from the centre, the latter in particular represent a significant, if subtle, extension of central government's regulatory reach: disseminating government directives and shaping discussions as to appropriate responses to (centrally defined) local service needs so as to ensure that local authorities and non-statutory agencies alike remain 'on message'.

In stark contrast to the relative independence enjoyed by non-statutory agencies under previous Conservative administrations, then, under New Labour the non-statutory sector has found itself subject to increased central government control. At the national level, in particular, New Labour have been especially adept at setting the limits to debate. By holding out the promise of a greater say in the shaping of government policy, New Labour have increasingly been able to contain the voice of critics fearful of losing their place at the table of government (Newman, 2000). At the local level, hemmed in by new contracts and performance targets but fearful of stepping outside these predetermined limits lest it result in a loss of funding, agencies appear to have embarked upon a process of 'self-regulation': shaping their services and procedures in line with the definitions of need provided by central government (Anonymous, 2001).

Finally, whilst the shift from a system of governance to 'governmentality' appears to have constructed new *subjectivities* amongst welfare providers, so too it has seen a transformation of the relationships between the state and the private citizen: both direct welfare recipients and a broader public. Here, New Labour has sought to clarify the rights but also the responsibilities of those in receipt of welfare services. But a broader attempt to 'govern by culture' is also apparent: as central government has sought to delineate the most effective, if

not also the 'right and proper', ways for private citizens to provide for both themselves and, in a significant departure from the creed of individualism expoused by previous Conservative governments, for others (Ling, 2000).

At first sight at least, Ling's reading of recent changes in British welfare policy and practice does not sit easily with the chronology of neo-liberalization proposed by Peck and Tickell (2002). Given the rather different focus of the two accounts, however, we believe it is possible to accommodate Ling's more specific analysis within Peck and Tickell's broader framework. Here we therefore read the shift from a system of governance to 'governmentality' that Ling proposes as a second, more powerful articulation of the broader programme of roll out neo-liberalization that Peck and Tickell identify. In the following section we carry this argument to a reading of central government responses to the crisis of street homelessness in 1990s Britain. We identify both the roots of that crisis, the moment at which central government first responded to it (broadly coincident with Peck and Tickell's timing of the shift from roll back to roll out neo-liberalism) and the point at which the New Labour government initiated a *new* response, formulated around a system of 'govermentality'.

ROLL BACK, ROLL OUT NEO-LIBERALISM AND BRITAIN'S CRISIS OF STREET HOMELESSNESS

The crisis of rough sleeping that unfolded in Britain in the late 1980s remains one of the most potent symbols of the social costs of the Thatcher revolution (Carlen, 1996). When examined through the twin lens of roll back neo-liberalism, with its emphasis upon a 'free market' economy and a minimalist state, the roots of that crisis are not difficult to trace. First, as the Conservative government of 1979-1983 embarked upon a radical restructuring of the British space-economy, decimating Britain's traditional manufacturing base and speeding the move towards a high skill/low skill service economy, the British labour market showed the first signs of growing income and occupational polarisation (Mohen, 1999). With levels of unemployment reaching record highs, the number of long-term unemployed in particular rose

dramatically, especially amongst the young (Heddy, 1990; Robinson, 1989). Second, in line with their desire to 'roll back the state' (and reduce a growing benefits bill), successive Conservative administrations embarked upon a simultaneous and systematic dismantling of the welfare safety net (Cloke 1995).

With regards the latter three changes are perhaps especially significant in their effects upon an emergent crisis of street homelessness (Anderson, 1993). First, with the passage of the 1980 Housing Act and the introduction of Right-to-Buy, local authority housing stocks were significantly reduced at a time when the supply of new social housing was in decline following dramatic reductions in central government's Housing Investment Programme (Brownhill and Sharp, 1992; Forest and Murie, 1988). Second, faced with the need to accommodate those who a decade earlier would have turned to the local state, Britain's Housing Association's found themselves increasingly unable to offer accommodation to their traditional client groups. As a result, and at the very moment that the removal of Fair Rents had significantly increased the cost (though not the supply) of private rented accommodation, poorer single people in particular found their access to affordable rental housing severely curtailed (Warrington, 1996). Finally, reflecting a disastrous combination of financial pragmatism and neo-conservative doctrine, under the 1986 Social Security Act sixteen and seventeen year olds became ineligible for Income Support, as the government looked to the Family to pick up the mantel of welfare provision for Britain's young people (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

Taken together such changes produced a dramatic rise in levels of homelessness of all kinds and important changes in the characteristics of Britain's single homeless population[1]. Most

[1] In discussions of homelessness in Britain distinctions are commonly drawn between the 'statutory' and 'non-statutory' homeless, a distinction first made in relation to the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act and upheld in all subsequent revisions to the Act. The former refers to those to whom the local state has a statutory duty of care, namely the provision of accommodation: people with dependants or those otherwise found in 'priority need' (by virtue of age or ill-health) and who have not made themselves 'intentionally' homeless. In contrast, the non-statutory homeless have no such right to

importantly, perhaps, a traditional population of older, single homeless men was supplemented and eventually surpassed by growing numbers of younger men and women seeking refuge in Britain's shelter system. The visible presence of young people in night shelters and hostels, day centres and soup kitchens challenged popular stereotypes of the 'vagrants' and 'tramps' traditionally understood as making up Britain's single homeless population and considerably raised public sympathy for homeless people (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). At the same time, as the providers of night shelter and hostel accommodation sought to respond to the needs of new client groups, the shift towards smaller units offering single rooms and increased levels of support rather than basic dormitory style arrangements resulted in a steady decline in the number of emergency beds available to homeless people across Britain and a dramatic rise in levels of street homelessness (Harrison, 1996). By the summer of 1990, the sight of some three thousand people sleeping rough in central London thus provided the British public with a powerful symbol of the costs of Thatcherism and, in combination with that summer's poll tax riots, a serious legitimation crisis for the government (Goodwin, 1997).

Roll back/roll out neo-liberalism I - the Rough Sleepers Initiative

Examining responses to crises of street homelessness in the United States at this time, significant emphasis has been placed upon the emergence of various campaigns by city managers to clear homeless people from the streets. Echoing Peck and Tickell's avowed shift from roll back to roll out neo-liberalism, such campaigns have been read by Mitchell (2001) as characterising an epochal shift in the management of homeless people: from an attitude of 'malign neglect' to one more in-line with the politics of the 'Revanchist City' (Smith, 1996; Wolch and Dear, 1993).

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either emergency or more permanent accommodation and are mainly dependent upon non-statutory organisations for emergency shelter. Because the majority (though by no means all) of the non-statutory homeless population are single, it has become commonplace to refer to this group as single homeless people (Pleace et al, 1997). Those sleeping rough on the streets or living in night shelters and hostels (i.e. people experiencing some form of 'street homelessness') are almost always part of the single homeless population.

In fact, the extent to which responses to the problems of street homelessness in the United States at this time can be reduced to a simple clearance politics is open to question (DeVerteuil, 2003). In Britain, spurred on by calls from an increasingly hostile press and pressure groups such as Shelter, CHAR and Crisis not only to respond but to respond *humanely* to a crisis of street homelessness seen by many as of the government's own making, the response to this crisis came in *two* parts – with a push to both clearance *and* containment (Guardian, 1990a; Telegraph, 1990a and b).

At the heart of the government's strategy lay the *Rough Sleeper's Initiative*: launched in June 1990 and managed by the then Department of Environment with an initial budget of £15 million rising to £179 million through phases two and three (1993-9) (Randall and Brown, 1993, 1996). For the Conservatives, the main appeal of the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* (*RSI*) was that it enabled central government to point to a visible response to the problems of street homelessness (namely, the increased provision of emergency accommodation), without challenging the position of single homeless people more generally as a residual group within the British welfare system – denied the same rights to social housing afforded homeless families (Fitzpatrick et al, 2000). In the first instance at least, the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* also applied only to central London: where the problems of street homelessness were both most visible and most politically damaging.

Importantly, responsibility for delivering the emergency shelters and smaller number of 'move-on' units made available through the *RSI* fell not to the local state (as was the case for homeless families) but non-statutory organisations. Indeed, whilst local authorities enjoyed a limited role in co-ordinating bids for *RSI* funding on behalf of the non-statutory agencies operating in their area, they were otherwise little involved in the programme – with the regulation of these organisations passing directly to central government via the then Department of Environment (DOE). And, though operating under a system of *Compulsory*

Competitive Tendering meant that the DOE showed a basic concern with value-for-money, it otherwise imposed only very 'thin' forms of regulatory control upon organisations bidding for *RSI* money: with agencies required to provide evidence as to the existence of suitable outreach or resettlement programmes, or of their attempts to engage in joint-working with other agencies in their local area, for example, only in the latter phases of the initiative.

Whilst the launch of the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* might well be read as signalling a move beyond an earlier position of 'malign neglect', then, in light of their failure to reverse the cuts in the supply of social housing initiated in the 1980s or even to provide for a significant supply of 'move-on' rather than only emergency accommodation, it is clear that the *RSI* was hardly representative of a genuine attempt by the British government to solve the problems of single homelessness. Rather, it is most usefully seen as an exercise in *containment*, designed to render the crisis of street homelessness less visible even as it did little to address the roots causes of that crisis (Financial Times, 1990; Times 1990). Significantly, exactly this charge was levelled at the government by Britain's homeless pressure groups, as indeed by a number of the organisations contracted to supply accommodation under the *RSI*, a number of whom accused the DOE of overseeing a warehousing exercise (Guardian, 1990b).

From the outset, organisations such as Centrepoint, Shelter, CHAR and Crisis also voiced concerns over what appeared to be a second arm of government policy. Following the failure of Phase 1 of the *RSI* to significantly reduce levels of rough sleeping in key areas of central London, for example, in August 1991 the Department of Environment called upon Britain's homeless charities to work with the Metropolitan Police to clear what they termed a 'hard core' of rough sleepers from a number of the capital's 'black spots'. When these requests were turned down, the police embarked upon clearance campaigns of their own, increasing the number of people arrested under the power of Britain's Vagrancy Acts from 192 in 1991 to 1,445 in 1992 in central London alone (Independent, 1992). As the 1990s wore on both actual and rhetorical attacks on the homeless increased. In May 1994, for example, John

Major launched a stinging attack on Britain's 'homeless' beggars, and in September of the same year the then Secretary to the Treasury Peter Lilley called for the suspension of benefit payments to people selling the street newspaper the *Big Issue*. Significantly, however, the right wing tabloid press not-with-standing (Express 1994; Mail, 1994) as the government sought to broaden their attacks on homeless people to conflate the problems of homelessness with street crime and begging, public opinion increasingly turned against the government (Guardian, 1994; Observer, 1994). Such attacks also significantly soured relationships between central government and the non-statutory agencies charged with the task of delivering central government policy.

With the benefit of hindsight the launch of the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* and subsequent clearance campaigns can certainly be read as articulating a shift from roll back to roll out neo-liberalism: as first the Thatcher and then the Major governments sought ways of containing a crisis of street homelessness that had its roots in an earlier period of economic restructuring and welfare 'reform'. But it is also clear that this containment policy was remarkably ineffective. Having failed to dampen public sympathy for homeless people, and soured relationships with their non-statutory partners, successive Conservative administrations also failed to significantly reduce the number of people sleeping rough. By the time that New Labour came to power in May 1997, for example, some two thousand or so people remained on the streets of central London, and countless hundreds of others in towns and cities across the country (Brown et al, 1996).

Roll back/roll out neo-liberalism II – the Homelessness Action Programme

As one of the most obvious symbols of social exclusion, street homelessness was always going to be afforded a high priority by a government pledging a return to a more cohesive society (Fitzpatrick et al, 2000). In this sense, it was hardly surprising when almost immediately on gaining office New Labour announced a series of measures designed to tackle a continuing crisis of rough sleeping, with an extension of the previous administration's

Rough Sleepers Initiative (1997-9) and the launch of its own *Homelessness Action Programme* (1999-2002). Where the former had (finally) provided funding to just seven towns and cities outside of London identified as having especially high levels of street homelessness, however, the latter extended central government funding to no fewer that 113 towns and cities across the UK - at a total cost of some £134 million. At the same time, working through the auspices of the newly created *Rough Sleepers Unit,* New Labour also promised to transform the apparatus by which problems of rough sleeping might be managed.

Most importantly, from the outset New Labour looked towards the creation of closer relations between central government and the non-statutory organisations responsible for the delivery of care and accommodation to single homeless people: part and parcel of the move towards 'active partnership' formalised in the government's Compacts with the voluntary sector (Home Office, 1998). Eased by the appointment of the ex Deputy Director of Shelter, Lousie Casey, as the head of the government's *Rough Sleepers Unit* (*RSU*) and first homelessness 'Tsar', Britain's major pressure groups thus began to play a far more active role in the shaping of government policy, feeding in to discussions around the new Homelessness Bill as well as the design of the *Homelessness Action Programme* (*HAP*) itself.

With regards the latter, new contracts drawn up under a system of *Best Value* (the successor to the Conservative's *Compulsory Competitive Tendering*) sought to correct the shortcomings of the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* by imposing far stricter conditions upon agencies bidding for government money: shifting the focus from simple value-for-money to a much closer concern with modes of service delivery. In particular, agencies bidding for *HAP* monies were now required to demonstrate their active engagement with other organisations working with single homeless people in their local area (through membership of local street service consortia, for example); the existence of suitable outreach and resettlement programmes; and, crucially, their focus upon the specific problems of rough sleeping rather than problems of single homelessness more generally (DETR, 2000). Underpinning these new contractual

arrangements were new technologies of monitoring and control, designed to ensure that agencies fulfilled their contractual obligations. Most importantly, perhaps, participating agencies found themselves facing new performance targets that required them to demonstrate a reduction in levels of rough sleeping (assessed via repeated street counts) and of a measurable through-put of clients in to move-on accommodation.

Undermining the notion of an equal partnership with central government, then, voluntary organisations in receipt of *HAP* funding soon found themselves increasingly subject to what Paul Hoggett (1994) has called control by 'remote control': as new contractual arrangements and performance indicators tied participating agencies ever closer to the approach demanded of them by the *RSU*. At the same time, and moving somewhat beyond this notion of 'control at a distance', the *Rough Sleepers Unit* sought to extend it physical presence, seconding local authority officers in those cities in receipt of a significant proportion of *HAP* monies (such as Bristol) to chair the various consortia established to facilitate local joint-working.

Bringing together both those currently in receipt of central government funding and, crucially, those who might wish to apply for funding in the future, such consortia represented a significant extension of central government power. Not least, whilst always able to threaten a withdrawal of funding, the real success of the *RSU* in this regard was to alter the terms of debate at the local level. With agencies that rejected the approaches of the *RSU* quickly finding themselves labelled unhelpful or 'unprofessional', and cast outside the loop of future funding opportunities, alternative approaches to the management of rough sleeping became if not unthinkable then certainly difficult to articulate (Anonymous, 2001).

At the same time, the new regulatory regimes introduced under the auspices of the *Rough Sleepers Unit* were further complicated by a complex *re-scaling* of responsibilities for the purchase and control of services for single homeless people from central to local government. Though through the course of the *Homelessness Action Programme* service delivery agencies

remained subject to regulation by central government (in the form of the *RSU*) with the passage of the Homelessness Act 2003 responsibility for these services passed to local authorities charged with the task of implementing a *Local Homelessness Strategy* (ODPM, 2003). With the implementation of the *Supporting People Programme* core funding also switched from the Housing Benefits system (paid direct to service agencies) to *Supporting People*. Under the latter programme agencies providing care and accommodation to vulnerable groups (including but not limited to single homeless people) bid for core funding from the local state, which in turn must present a case to central government for the amount of funding to be made available each period. Crucially, though subject to a general needs assessment (the number of people found sleeping rough in their local area, for example) the allocation of *Supporting People* funds also depends upon the past performance of each authority (including any reduction in levels of rough sleeping through the period of the *Homelessness Action Programme*) and plans for future spending, as laid out in its *Single Homelessness Strategy*.

Hence, through the course of the *Homelessness Action Programme* both service agencies and local authorities found themselves playing a complicated game. For the former, whilst it was important to stay on side with the *RSU* (to safeguard current funding arrangements) it was also necessary to maintain strong relations with the local state (lest they jeopardise future income opportunities under *Supporting People*). For the latter, whilst seeking to ensure the compliance of local agencies with performance targets set by the *RSU* (so as not to jeopardise future funding allocations under *Supporting People*) local authorities also found themselves having to tread a careful path with key non-statutory agencies upon whose advice and expertise they often had to rely in preparing their Local Homelessness Strategies.

Finally, complementing this re-working of the relationships between central and local government and their voluntary sector 'partners', New Labour also worked hard at transforming public understandings of street homelessness and of street homeless people.

Most significantly, in place of the crude attacks on homeless people perpetuated by the Major government, New Labour sought to re-construct understandings of street homelessness within the broader context of their approach to problems of social exclusion – focusing upon the rights but also (and increasingly) the responsibilities of homeless people to confront the causes of their own exclusion. Hence, in his forward to the initial report on rough sleeping by the *Social Exclusion Unit*, for example, Prime Minister Tony Blair outlined the government's compact with those still on the streets. Setting their right to access a more extensive shelter system against their responsibility (to both welfare providers and a wider public alike) to take up the offer of accommodation, he noted that: "[Whilst] The Government believes the public will expect hostels places to be taken up as more become available … the police have [also] often said they would be willing to take a more directive approach with rough sleepers if there was somewhere to take them and a more co-ordinated approach" (quoted in Fitzpatrick et al, 2000).

In contrast to other areas of welfare, however, New Labour also sought to outline the counter side of this compact: setting out the responsibilities of a wider public in tackling the problems of street homelessness. In a powerful example of 'governing by culture', New Labour thus sought to remind the public of their duty to care for street homeless people (see for example: 'Be a buddy to the homeless, says Blair' Mail, 1998; 'Blair urges public to be 'buddies' to homeless' Telegraph, 1998). Going further, in their *Change a Life* (2000) campaign the *RSU* also sought to define the 'right and proper' mode of caring: urging those who wished to ease the plight of homeless people to give to a number of nominated charities rather than direct to people on the streets.

Even as it conflated the problems of rough sleeping with the problem of begging, however, one of the most notable aspects of the *Change a Life* campaign was the limited criticism it attracted from those working in the field (Fitzpatrick and Kennedy, 2001). Certainly, where similar such moves by the previous Conservative government had quickly attracted the wrath

of Britain's main homelessness pressure groups, *Change a Life* generated little overt criticism from organisations which seemed loathe to publicly criticise the *RSU* lest they jeopardise their ability to influence government thinking on forthcoming legislation: notably, the new Homelessness Act (Shelter, 2000).

Tracing the development of the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* and *Homelessness Action Programme*, then, it is not difficult to read key differences between the two programmes as articulating a number of the features that Ling identifies in his reading of a shift from a system of 'governance' to 'governmentality' (Ling, 2000). Rather than understand such a shift as counter to the chronology proposed by Peck and Tickell (2002), however, it may be more instructive to read it as indicating a second, more powerful articulation of the move to a programme of roll out neo-liberalism. Whilst such a programme was initiated by the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* and associated street clearance campaigns under the Thatcher and Major governments, it has clearly accelerated under New Labour: as the New Labour government has attempted to find *new* ways to confront and contain a still visible crisis of street homelessness that has its roots in an earlier period of economic restructuring and welfare 'reform'.

On the face of it at least these attempts have been remarkably successful, with the number of people sleeping rough significantly down right across Britain (Guardian, 2001; though see, Morrison, J. and Seymenliyska, 2001). In the final part of the paper, however, we suggest that just as levels of rough sleeping may not be as low as New Labour would have us believe, and may well be set to rise again, the apparatus they have put in place to confront the spectre of street homelessness may not be as powerful, or coherent, as would at first appear. Examining the landscapes of street homelessness in two very different locations, in the final part of the paper we reveal the ambiguous and uneven impacts of New Labour's *Homelessness Action Programme* – suggesting the need to temper a reading of the juggernaut of roll out neo-

liberalism with an awareness of the uneven, incomplete and plain 'messy' character of 'actually existing' neo-liberalization (Larner, 2000).

ACTUALLY EXISTING NEO-LIBERALISM AND THE UNEVEN GEOGRAPHIES OF STREET HOMELESSNESS 1: BODMIN

Whilst it may well be true that it is "in cities and city-regions that the various contradictions and tensions of 'actually existing neo-liberalism' are expressed most saliently in everyday life" (Jessop, 2002: 452) it is still necessary to trace the rather different ways in which such processes are unfolding beyond the metropolitan fringe. Located some two hundred and fifty miles to the south-west of London, the small market town of Bodmin is hardly the kind of place that springs to mind in discussions of street homelessness or the dynamics of roll out neo-liberalism. In line with towns of a similar size in other parts of England, for example, Bodmin has only one emergency hostel (provided by St Petrocs) and little else in the way of specialist provision for single homeless people (Cloke et al, 2002). Yet, outreach workers and hostel staff at St Petrocs suggest that Bodmin has a real and growing crisis of street homelessness, with anything "up to 20 to 30 people out there somewhere" sleeping rough in the countryside stretching between Bodmin and Truro some twenty miles further to the south (Outreach worker, St Petroc's Housing Association, 22/7/02).

As elsewhere, the rise in levels of rough sleeping has been especially noticeable in recent years, following the decline of the town's light manufacturing employment base, rapidly rising house prices (fuelled by the growing number of holiday homes in the area) and the closure of a major mental health facility. In contrast to the larger urban centres to the north, however, the basic geography of the region poses considerable difficulties for those hit hardest by such changes. As the general manager of St Petrocs describes it:

"[If] it's difficult for so-called 'normal people' like you and me … if you've got a problem it just makes it 10 times more difficult. It is difficult to get public transport anywhere because there isn't any … If you need support, the expense of getting support to you means quite often the statutory agencies are not prepared to provide it … [so if] if you're homeless with an

addiction, unless someone is benevolent enough to give you a lift in a car … they just cannot access the services."
(General Manager of St Petrocs, 31/7/02).

This same geography has also made it extremely difficult for the non-statutory agencies operating in the area to secure funding under the *Homelessness Action Programme.* Most obviously, with the release of *HAP* money dependent upon evidence of rough sleeping (assessed via a street count), it has proved impossible for St Petrocs or others to press their case with central government:

"When things like the famous count was done, we were the voice who was saying the criteria that you are using just won't work here … I could walk around any major city on any given evening and I could probably find a number of people sleeping rough. [But] trying to find people who sleep rough in barns or woods or in the middle of a small town is just not going to happen - because the geography of it is so big … [So] we were almost like the radicals saying 'no, no, the criteria on this won't work'".
(General Manager of St Petrocs, 31/7/02).

Indeed, there is a strong sense amongst St Petrocs staff that, as with the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* before it, the criteria relating to the release of monies under the *Homelessness Action Programme* have been designed with a distinct urban bias - as central government have sought to respond to the problems of rough sleeping only where such problems visibly undermine New Labour's avowed attempts to confront the problems of social exclusion:

Sarah: I was just asking your views on central government's approach to dealing with street homelessness. Has it had any effect on Cornwall, or has it completely bypassed you?

-: … Well [at the end of the day] we are not London. Money just doesn't just come down here. We are too far away. It's the tourist Mecca of Britain. 'The tourists don't want to see homelessness, sweep it under the carpet' - but they wont give us any money to sweep it with!
(Hostel Manager, St Petrocs, 23/7/02)

This is not to say that *HAP* has by-passed Bodmin entirely. Indeed, one of the more iniquitous effects of the programme has been to add to the workload of hostel staff and of its outreach team in particular, as the more assertive approach taken by *HAP* funded 'Contact and Assessment Teams' (or CAT) in nearby urban areas has led to a displacement of people sleeping rough:

“With some of the people that I’ve met down here, part of their anxiety about encountering me is that I’m perceived initially as either a social worker, which is a lethal thing to be perceived as by this particular client group, or else as - you know - an assertive outreach worker from a CAT. And of course some of them have moved away from the urban areas to escape [exactly] the kind of pummelling that they feel these people give them - you know, the assertiveness of it: you must get off [this], you must do [that].”
(Outreach Worker, St Petrocs, 24/7/02)

Whilst the ODPM has stressed the comprehensive coverage of the *Homelessness Action Programme*, then, the evidence from both Bodmin and a number of other towns and cities across Britain facing similar problems is that the programme failed to reach all of the places experiencing a crisis of rough sleeping (DETR, 2000; Cloke et al, 2002). Rather, programme monies flowed to those places able to meet the particular criteria through which the existence of such a crisis was assessed. As a result, agencies like St Petrocs have found themselves seeking to respond to an increasing demand for their services – coming in part through the displacement of people from area’s where *HAP* has been operational - with ever decreasing resources.

But the implications of this unevenness in the distribution of central government funding, and of the regulatory regimes that come with it, are far from straightforward. On the one hand, for example, a basic lack of funding means that:

“Our headquarters is probably the most inappropriate place you could have to bring frightened and vulnerable people; its cramped, overcrowded, dark, smelly…Dickensian is how I would describe it … [But] people still come to us … even if the most we can do for them is give them a food voucher or a clean pair of socks.”
(General Manager of St Petrocs, 31/7/02)

On the other hand, for those able to access a bed in the hostel it is the very different relationships with management and staff that are possible in a smaller organization not yet beholden to crude ‘output’ measures that differentiates their experiences at St Petrocs from their experiences elsewhere:

“Here, I’m treated like a human being, I’m not treated like just another drunk, just another drug addict, just another whatever, you know, I’m treated with courtesy, respect, and all that’s expected of me is the same in return. That’s the main difference I think, you know in the **** in Bristol, I suppose because they see so many people, they’re too quick to turn you away, or

… I think they're still very judgmental … they just see people as fucked up, as [needing] a room for the night. I'm not knocking them. I mean I'd probably be dead a long time ago if it wasn't for the fact that they opened their door to me, but like I said they … don't actually know the facts."
(Hostel resident, St Petrocs, 24/7/02)

The absence of *HAP* funding, and the relative scarcity of services that results, also puts non-statutory organisations like St Petrocs in a very different position with regards their relationships with the local state relative to their counterparts elsewhere. Not least, as the only agency dealing specifically with single homeless people in the region "[though] I wouldn't say they are reliant on us …a lot of the statutory groups and authorities … see us as a valuable asset, and hopefully that will work out from the funding point of view [come the *Homelessness Act* and change to *Supporting People* that will see local authorities assume a legal responsibility for the purchase of services for single homeless people]" (Operations Manager, St Petrocs, 24/7/02).

ACTUALLY EXISTING NEO-LIBERALISM AND THE UNEVEN GEOGRAPHIES OF STREET HOMELESSNESS 2: BRISTOL

In stark contrast to Bodmin, Bristol already had a well established network of services for single homeless people when the extension to the *Rough Sleepers Initiative* was announced: totalling no fewer than four emergency hostels, one night shelter, four drop-in centres, and a number of soup runs – all provided by non-statutory organisations. With levels of rough sleeping still standing at upwards of eighty to ninety people a night, however, in 1997 the city became the first recipient of *RSI* funding, and the largest single recipient of *HAP* monies, anywhere outside of London. The impact of such funding can not be underestimated, initiating a transformation in both physical infrastructure and more especially in the ways in which local service agencies operated:

Sarah: What would you say the major implications of the *RSU* have been, here in Bristol?
-: Oh, I think without it, we'd be knee-deep in problems … we [just] wouldn't have had the services that we've got now. The local authority, coupled with the *RSU*, have been enormously effective in developing strategies, getting people around the table that haven't ever met before, and developing a huge range of services for rough sleepers … plus of course

… the other services, the ancillary work, outreach, resettlement teams, etc., etc. … A huge amount of stuff has come in on the back of the *RSU*, and it's been really impressive.
(Manager, Bristol City Council Contact and Assessment Team, 8/2/02)

Also in contrast to Bodmin (where as the only non-statutory agency operating in the immediate vicinity, St Petrocs was able to assume a lead role in discussions with the local authority regarding future approaches to the problems of rough sleeping) the secondment of local authority officers from the city council to the *RSU* meant that whilst it was the local authority rather than the city's non-statutory agencies that took the lead in developing strategies to respond to Bristol's rough sleeping crisis, these strategies were in turn more closely aligned to the approaches advocated by central government. Chief amongst these was the increased targeting of outreach and resettlement services towards the needs of rough sleepers rather than single homeless people more generally, in an attempt to meet central government targets relating to a basic reduction in levels of rough sleeping:

"The main aim has been decided by the government. The government have funded the scheme and most of the services, so they have dictated the aim, and the aim has been primarily to reduce the number of rough sleepers. So we have a target to reduce the number to below ten and maintain it below ten, and that is the main measure that we use. Obviously along the way [we're developing] a better quality of services, better accommodation, better support for the people who are homeless and rough sleeping. But it is primarily targeted at rough sleepers."
(Rough Sleepers Initiative Homelessness Team, Bristol City Council, 19/3/02)

Promoted through various street services consortia, such targets were in turn fed through to service providers - who found themselves under increasing pressure to adapt their policies and procedures in accordance to the demands of the city council (lest they should jeopardise future funding opportunities under *Supporting People*) and hence, in the final analysis, to the *RSU*. Most importantly, perhaps, projects in receipt of *HAP* funding found themselves allowed to offer emergency accommodation only to those with a 'Local Connection' to the city and deemed to be 'Entrenched and Vulnerable' by the city's CAT, whose staff were funded by the *Homelessness Action Programme*. Whilst such changes were rarely welcomed by hostel managers concerned about a threat to their autonomy and to the underlying ethos of 'direct access' accommodation, on the face of it at least they were accepted as a necessary

part of the new funding regime – and as a price worth paying to maintain the new found support of central government in their efforts to confront the problems of rough sleeping:

"I suppose I come from an era when direct access *meant* direct access. When I first worked here we very much felt that we were part of the safety net and anyone could walk in off the street … and get a bed for the night …. In the last year or two … with the increasing development of local authority plans and the increasing involvement of the *Rough Sleepers Unit* … there is a feeling that to some extent … we're no longer our own masters, in that we have become subject to the requirements of the city council through the outreach team and the *Rough Sleepers Initiative*. [Indeed] we now take very few people on a direct-access basis ... Largely now we're told who we can and cannot admit and referrals to this accommodation have to be filtered through the outreach team. So that's been some impingement on the way that people feel about the work they do, but I think, broadly speaking, it fits into a professionalisation of services, and obviously measures come in from central government to tackle the problem in a more structured and a more accountable way. And broadly I would be in favour of that political intervention, because the present government is doing rather more than its predecessors to address the issue of homelessness. I remember the Conservative era was a very dark and bleak time for people who were homeless."
(Senior Staff Member, **** Hostel. Bristol 21/3/02)

In accordance with its status as the primary recipient of both *RSI* and *HAP* funding, then, Bristol would seem to offer a powerful example of the shift from a system of governance to 'governmentality', and of the success of New Labour's approach to the problems of street homelessness. Certainly, there can be little doubt that the strategies adopted by the city council at the behest of the *RSU* were (initially at least) remarkably successful in reducing levels of rough sleeping in the city: down from the earlier high of eighty to ninety people a night in 1997 to just seven in December 2002 (Rough Sleepers Initiative Homelessness Team, Bristol City Council, 19/3/02).

Examining recent developments in Bristol in a little more detail, however, a more complex picture emerges. In the first place, and reminding us of the need to pay careful attention to the embodied practices through which state power is enacted, it is clear that directives emanating from the city council/*RSU* were not in fact always put in to practice by 'partner' agencies (see also Peck, 2001). Asked to refuse people access to accommodation even when a bed was available simply because that person had not been referred to them by the city CAT, for example, staff at a number of hostels often ignored city council directives - admitting people

to their projects irrespective of whether they held a Local Connection or had been deemed Entrenched and Vulnerable by members of the outreach team:

-: The council have changed the rules recently as to who they are going to allow to stay in the hostel … The official line is if you are not a priority - which means the whole lot of satisfying the priority conditions like mental health and all that kind of thing and not intentionally homeless or not having a local connection anyone one of those can bar you from getting a place even in the hostel … the council says 'no sorry … we are not going to house you'. So that kind of thing I really struggle with because I just think that is just not helping anyone.
Sarah: Is it quite hard to implement?
-: Yes … because people do turn up all the time and turning them away is very difficult. So officially we are not supposed to … [admit people] but in practice…
(Staff member, **** Hostel, Bristol, 23/4/02)

Sarah: Do some of the hostels engage with that whole priority access scheme more than others?
-: [Scoughs, pretending to choke] … Errm - yes! … The two hostels that we deal most with in terms of this are **** and ****. It's taken a while of negotiation through the city council and CAT managers to really get the issue over that the main priority of the council and the funding arrangements surrounding it is to get people who are sleeping on the street into hostels, and it can be tricky, obviously - it took a while [for them] to adjust to [the idea] that … the only people that they should be taking are our clients, which is pretty tough .. [in fact] How can I put it? I can't really put it diplomatically: the **** just doesn't seem to want to do that. I mean, they obviously have a huge place; they house a lot of people, but for whatever reason they don't seem to be able to adjust to the new policies.
(Member of Bristol City Council Contact and Assessment Team, 26/2/02)

Secondly, such tactics not-with-standing, it is also clear that as the CAT focused more on the most vulnerable groups, the city's hostels began to silt up: with hostel managers reporting increased difficulties in placing these higher needs groups in long term, supported accommodation. As a result, and almost by default, accommodation that was initially designed to provide temporary respite from the streets began to resemble a new form of social 'housing' for the addicted and the mentally ill:

"you know the ****?… It's a four story building with maybe 50 rooms … [Inside] it'slike a prison. You get a room, you know, what? about half the size of this room [8' x 8'] with a bed in it, and that's it. Maybe a rug on the floor if you're lucky … there's no detox, there's no rehab, there's no support. They've got key workers … but none of them were trained, and most of them were younger than … the residents"
(Ex-resident of *HAP* funded hostel, Bristol, 24/7/02)

"I've never been anywhere where it's been so drug orientated. All the young ones, everybody there, you know, 99.9% there [are using] …"
(Resident of *HAP* funded hostel, Bristol, 15/3/02)

"And the hygiene's crap. It's not the cleaners fault it's the people who live here, they crap here, there and everywhere, they don't always use the toilet, they rub it all down the walls, they're puking everywhere, it's a real shit hole"
(Resident of *HAP* funded hostel, Bristol, 24/2/02)

"I spent the weekend with … my family … and the first thing my daughter said to me was, 'You stink'. She said, 'I can smell that place on you'. I'd washed that morning but she could smell it on me. It's like a stigma. You get stigmatised. It's bad."
(Resident of *HAP* funded hostel, Bristol, 23/4/02)

Thirdly, even if the conditions in such hostels were hardly conducive to the care and recovery of those suffering acute addiction or problems of mental and physical ill-health, it quickly became apparent that those able to access such hostels were in fact the lucky ones. Thus, as Bristol's hostels gradually filled with higher need groups, others found it increasingly difficult to find any kind of emergency accommodation at all. For 'normals' like 'Peter' the increased difficulties in accessing emergency accommodation seem either to have led them to seek other, safer, places to sleep on the edges of the city, to join the growing number of people squatting properties in Bristol's inner city, or to embark upon extended periods of 'sofa surfing'. In either case, with the city home to a growing number of 'hidden homeless', it seems unlikely that Bristol will be able to maintain the low levels of rough sleeping achieved over recent years:

"It's a vicious circle round here. The reason I've found it difficult to get hostel accommodation is because I'm not an alcoholic, I'm not a drug addict, I've not no physical or mental disabilities or social disabilities. To the government I'm 'normal' … [So] I've gone to the bottom of the list … [They all tell you the same story] "We'll try as hard as we can … but you are a low priority … I'm afraid there are people that are a bit more vulnerable that need these places before you".
(Former rough sleeper, interviewed at Methodist Centre, Bristol, 5/3/02)

Finally, whilst local authority officers worked hard to bring Bristol's numerous voluntary sector organisations within the remit of the city's programme, not all such organisations were compliant with the approaches advocated by the *RSU*. More specifically, as the *Homelessness Action Programme* unfolded it became clear that a significant gap was emerging between members of the city's street services consortia, who drew funding from *HAP*, and a second tier of welfare organisations cast very much outside the loop of local and central government

regulation and funding. In the eyes of local authority officers, the refusal of these organisations to sign-up for *HAP* funding and abide by the *RSU*'s calls for a more targeted approach not only rendered such organisation's difficult to work with, but led to them being seen as hampering the city's efforts to reduce levels of rough sleeping. In particular, *RSU* representatives and city council officers railed against both the apparent unprofessionalism of such organisations (that was held to be placing both their clients and staff at risk) but also and especially their failure to impose conditions upon those using their services - accusing them of fostering a 'street lifestyle':

"There are a huge number of cross-agency meetings facilitated by the local authority. [But] the biggest problem comes with the what I call 'ad-hoc' agencies, not in receipt of funding, for example the night shelter, **** Centre … the soup runs … agencies like that …who are sort of out of the loop. In my role as CAT manager I've tried to give those organisations an opportunity to feed into the *RSI* consortium … share best practice, etc …But it's a hard slog sometimes, because I think people choose not to accept funding for a variety of reasons, and it can be quite difficult getting these agencies … on board in terms of ensuring a professional approach to the work that they're doing; not just in health and safety and training issues, but more particularly, helping clients move away from a life on the streets - giving people opportunities to move forward in their lives. I think very often that is missing in some of those voluntary organisations … they're not challenging them; they're not offering them opportunities, and I think they're also to a great degree putting their staff at risk because they don't know *who* they're taking and they don't know *what* they're up against."
(Manager, Bristol City Council Contact and Assessment Team, 8/2/02

For homeless people themselves the situation was more complex. Whilst often welcoming the efforts of local drop-in centres and soup runs as providing an important resource for those on the streets, echoing the concerns of city officials the city's night shelter was clearly seen by homeless people too very much as an option of last resort:

Sarah: So what was it like to stay in?
-: Horrible, terrible … You go in there and the staff are really nice, but there's a lot of drunkenness, fights, you can't get any sleep. They do offer facilities but they're very basic … people in there are banging up … needles all over the place. I'm not used to that … [But] going in [there] everyone was using so I started using … I didn't go every night. I stayed once a week for the sake of having a shower and getting my clothes washed. I only had one set of clothes … [and] you can't walk around in the same clothes all the time, you've got to get them cleaned.
Sarah: How long did that go on for?
-: About 2 months.
(Former night shelter resident, Bristol,19/3/02)

Promoted by the *RSU* as an attempt to produce a more cohesive response to the problems of rough sleeping, in Bristol then the *Homelessness Action Programme* seems in fact to have resulted in a widening of the gap between the various voluntary sector organisations responsible for providing care and accommodation to single homeless people. Though for those in receipt of *HAP* funding the programme undoubtedly provided welcome additional resources, it is equally clear that such benefits failed to accrue to all.

Further, whilst partly because of the confrontational stance taken by the *RSU* and Bristol City Council to those rejecting its approaches the programme did little, if anything, to improve conditions in projects not in direct receipt of *HAP* funding, those same projects also saw an increased demand for their services as the programme took effect. Not least, as the effects of the more targeted approach introduced by the city council in an attempt to meet central government targets on rough sleeping filtered through to those seeking access to the city's emergency hostels, an increasing number of people were left with few options but to turn to exactly those agencies least able to provide satisfactory care or accommodation.

At a theoretical level such developments speak of the 'messy actualities' of 'actually existing neo-liberalism', and of the cracks in the apparatus designed to contain a crisis of street homelessness even in the midst of a period of 'governmentality'. On the ground in Bristol, they mean more people like 'Peter' pitching their tents in woods on the edge of the city, or braving the chaos of under-resourced and frequently dangerous 'spaces of care'.

CONCLUSIONS

The rise of and responses to crisis of street homelessness provide a powerful barometer through which to assess the dynamics of 'actually existing neo-liberalism' (DeVerteuil, 2003). In the case of Britain, that crisis can usefully be analysed through the framework of roll back/roll out neo-liberalism proposed by Peck and Tickell (2002). Whilst the economic restructuring and welfare 'reforms' of the 1980s provided the conditions for a significant rise

in street homelessness, the 1990s saw a variety of attempts by both Conservative and New Labour governments to manage and contain the problem of rough sleeping. Moving beyond this broad chronology, however, it is also clear that successive British governments have sought to intervene in this crisis in rather different ways. Though his terminology remains problematic, these differences are best made sense of with reference to the framework developed by Tom Ling (2000). In his notion of a shift from a system of 'governance' to a system of 'governmentality' around the mid-1990s, Ling draws attention to a second, more powerful moment of roll out neo-liberalism that, on the face of it at least, appears better able to manage the very significant social costs associated with processes of neo-liberalization.

Certainly, Ling's account of such a shift captures much of what was new in the New Labour government's *Homelessness Action Programme*. Tracing the impact of that programme on the ground, however, it is also clear that the move to a system of 'governmenality' can not usefully be seen as representative of a 'total capture' of the welfare apparatus by central government, as Ling implies (Ling, 2000). Rather, experiences in Bodmin make clear that the *Homelessness Action Programme* failed to reach all of the areas experiencing a crisis of street homelessness, leaving local non-statutory agencies seeking to cope with that crisis beyond the reach of central government. In Bristol, whilst a number of voluntary sector organisations continue to operate outside of the control of the city council and representatives of the *RSU*, the practices of individual hostel staff frequently undermined attempts by the city's CAT to ration hostel beds to those deemed 'entrenched and vulnerable'.

Taken together, the two studies thus point to the need to further develop our understandings of neo-liberalization with full reference to the complexities of current processes of hollowing-out (one that includes a recognition of the rather different form such processes take in different places); of the continued limits to central state power even in an era of roll out neo-liberalism; and of the various ways in which state power becomes transformed in practice – whether the practices of central state personnel or those working in non-statutory

organisations (c.f. Barnett, 1999; Peck, 2001). With regards the problems of street homelessness itself, it is clear that the dramatic reductions in levels of rough sleeping claimed by the New Labour government over recent years are unlikely to be sustainable and may even be set to increase again.

Finally, for homeless people themselves or those at risk of becoming homeless the ramifications of recent changes are not easy to read. More especially, as the experiences of those turning in desperation to Bristol's night shelter makes clear, the environment provided by organisations currently operating 'outside the loop' of state regulation and funding can pose a serious threat to homeless people's well-being. But it is also clear that there is as of yet no necessary connection between the quality of care afforded by such organisations and their relationship to central or local government: as comparisons between conditions in Bristol's *HAP* funded hostels and in St Petrocs makes plain. Rather, whilst the *Homelessness Action Programme* imposed a growing number of conditions on whom organisation's might offer accommodation to, it exerted remarkably little control over the quality of care afforded the users of these organisation's once inside their doors. Given that in light of *Supporting People* the gap between the quality of care afforded by well resourced, well managed organisations in receipt of local authority funding and those existing outside of statutory funding regimes is likely to grow, the need to close this regulatory 'hole' becomes more pressing. In contrast to those who would see increasing state regulation as an inevitable sign of a creeping 'shadow state' (and the death-knell of a creative and properly independent voluntary sector) then, we would suggest that the need may be for neither more nor less but *different* forms of regulatory control (c.f Wolch, 1989, 1990). More specifically, only when the state focuses more clearly upon the quality of care offered by the non-statutory sector (rather than seeking to dictate who might be 'deserving' of the sector's aid) is Britain's landscape of street homelessness liable to become less uneven and more akin to a meaningful 'landscape of care'.

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