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Solidarity and Struggle:  
An ethnography of the associational lives of African  
asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow

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## Abstract

Since 2000, Glasgow has received thousands of asylum seekers, forcibly dispersed to the city through the implementation of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. Over the years, many of those individuals have organised into what have gone on to become formally constituted voluntary associations. This thesis explores the social meanings and lived realities of association life, and the nature of associational practices, as they emerge and develop over time amongst dispersed African asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow.

Based upon fieldwork undertaken over a twenty-six month period involving participant-observation, the thesis locates members' micro-level understandings, experiences, and definitions of associational life within the wider macro context of broader political, social and cultural change. In so doing, the thesis analyses the complex and differentiated ways in which associational lives are experienced, and explores their intersection with a wide range of collective and individual identities beyond those connected to migrant status and 'refugeeness'. The thesis thus seeks to challenge dominant definitions of associational forms as 'refugee community organisations', arguing that these contribute to constraining groups within fixed boundaries, and to perpetuating their position as an 'unsettled' population. Moreover, it is argued that the focus on 'refugeeness' fails to attend to the combination of internal and external factors affecting association emergence and continuity. Combining perspectives from social theory on migrant and minority associations and social movements with an anthropological approach that integrates internal processes with external forces, the thesis presents nuanced accounts of solidarity and struggle within groups. In contrast to representations that construct asylum seeker and refugee-led associations as fixed in time and space and defined by migrant status, this thesis argues for an understanding of group life that is sensitive to the fluidity of social relations in multiple social contexts which change and evolve over time. This requires an analysis of both the conditions that encourage the founding of groups and of the factors which support or inhibit their continued existence, and is crucial to 'moving beyond refugeeness'.

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## List of abbreviations, terminology and acronyms

A&CN	African and Caribbean Network
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ARC	Application Registration Card. This is a credit-card sized identity card for asylum seekers. Details on card include: name, date of birth, work permit status, nationality, fingerprints, Home Office reference number and NASS support entitlements.
Asylum seeker	A person who has left their country, has applied for asylum and is awaiting refugee status determination.
Azure card	If an asylum seeker is granted Section 4 support s/he is entitled to accommodation and weekly support to the value of £35. This is paid through an automated card payment system, called an 'Azure' payment card. Azure cards were piloted in Scotland in November 2009.
BEMIS	Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure Scotland was set up in 1997. It is made up of a network of ethnic minority organisations to address the gap that exists in support for the ethnic minority voluntary sector in Scotland.
BME	Black Minority Ethnic (sector, community, voluntary organisation, population and so forth)
CEMVO	Centre of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations Scotland was set up in April 2003, with the aim of building the capacity of the country's minority ethnic voluntary and community sector. Its work ranges from socio-economic regeneration, life-long learning, community participation and representation to organisational development, policy and research.
COSLA	Council of Scottish Local Authorities
Dispersal	Compulsory dispersal of asylum seekers. Commenced April 2000.
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ESOL	English to Speakers of Other Languages
FFD	Framework for Dialogue is a project which aims to provide a forum for asylum seekers and refugees to influence service provision and social policy at a local level in Glasgow. Set up in 2004, it was primarily an awareness raising project. Its main aims were to tackle racism in dispersal areas in Glasgow and develop a dialogue with the 'local community' on who asylum seekers were and why they had arrived in these neighbourhoods. There are eight FFD groups operating in dispersal areas and the citywide SRPF which campaigns on national issues such as asylum seekers' right to work. The

project is funded by the Scottish Executive and delivered by Community Development teams at Scottish Refugee Council and Glasgow City Council.

GASSP	Glasgow Asylum Seekers Support Project
Gateway Resettlement Programme	Under this programme, highly vulnerable refugees and their families, identified by the UN's refugee agency UNHCR, are resettled under arrangements between councils and the Home Office. The Gateway Resettlement initiative was founded in 2004, and in January 2007, North Lanarkshire was the first, and thus far, only council in Scotland to become involved with Gateway. Essentially Gateway offers a legal route for a quota of UNHCR-identified refugees to settle in the United Kingdom and enjoys cross-party support in the UK. The programme is distinct from and in addition to ordinary provisions for claiming asylum in the United Kingdom.
GCC	Glasgow City Council
HO	Home Office
ICAR	Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK
IGM	Inaugural General Meeting
MC	Management committee
MP	Member of Parliament, UK Parliament, Westminster
MSP	Member of Scottish Parliament, Scottish Government, Edinburgh
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
RC	Refugee Council
RCO	Refugee Community Organisation
Refugee	A person who has been recognised as a refugee as defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.
RWSG	Refugee Women's Strategy Group is a network of refugee women who represent women's interests in the Scottish Refugee Policy Forum (SRPF).
SCIO	Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation
SCVO	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Section 4	Hard case support: if a claim for asylum has been refused, and the claimant has no dependent children under 18 years old, the support received from the Home Office is stopped. It is replaced, depending upon eligibility, by short-term support known as Section 4 support



from the Home Office. Section 4 support consists only of accommodation and a payment card called the Azure card. This card can only be used in a limited number of shops.

Section 55	Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act 2002 renders 'in-country' applicants ineligible for any form of NASS support unless a claim is made 'as soon as reasonably practicable'. Commenced 8 January 2003.
SRC	Scottish Refugee Council
SRPF	Scottish Refugee Policy Forum is a federation of refugee-led community based organisations in Scotland. It was set up with the assistance of the Scottish Refugee Council
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Y-People	Formerly YMCA, a registered charity supporting homeless people and providing housing and support to asylum seekers.
Angel Group	Private sector housing provider

Source: various

## Key to transcription conventions used

All interviews were transcribed verbatim using the following conventions. The interviews in French were transcribed in French and data were translated into English for inclusion in the thesis. Manual coding facilitated the process of dual language coding.

The conventions used are presented here to assist the reader in their interpretation:

Names	The personal names of research participants have been changed and pseudonyms used for identification.
Association names	Following consultation with members, association names have not been anonymised.
[...]	Material that has been edited.
(...)	Incomplete sentences without editing.
...	Pause in speech.
<laughs>	Reactions/actions made by interviewees during interviews.
(I see)	Comments made by the researcher during interviews.
( <i>explanation</i> )	Explanation or translation offered by researcher for purposes of clarification.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father Andrea Piacentini, and to my son Andrea whose wonderful capacity for fun and laughter reminds me every day of what is important. This is for you.

**Author's declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 1 Introduction

*In April 2000 I began working as a French-speaking Community Interpreter in Glasgow. My first assignment was a 'home visit' in the Sighthill area of North Glasgow. I was to meet a worker from the newly formed Glasgow Asylum Seekers Support Project (GASSP) at the 'concierge station' in a high rise block of flats. Although I had grown up in Glasgow, I had never been to Sighthill before, and was to find an unwelcoming landscape of grey tower blocks, graffiti and windblown rubbish. The support worker was already there when I arrived and we took the lift to the flat. The young woman who answered the door had arrived in Glasgow a few days before with her four younger siblings. Her name was Maria and she was 18 years old.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the GASSP worker, provide Maria with an 'orientation pack' (in English), advise of different services in her area, explain the 'settlement process' and provide her with emergency funds to last her until her state-provided support was set up. She spent most of the meeting in silence, only nodding to suggest she had understood. Her younger brothers and sisters stayed in the room, one of them cried throughout the visit, clinging to Maria's knees. The others sat very still and silent in what was a dreary and barely furnished room, poorly heated, the wind outside rattling at the window frames. We came to the end of the appointment and the worker told her she would be back in a couple of days to see how she was getting on. She then suggested to Maria she 'get out and about' to familiarise herself with the area. Maria looked at her blankly. After we left the worker explained to me in the lift that prior to working with this project she had been a social worker and so was used to working with vulnerable people. However despite only being a couple of months in her new post, she already felt out of her depth. I was also upset by what seemed a desperate situation: how could we leave this young woman on her own? The worker agreed, but said that she didn't know what else to do. She told me that there weren't any other Angolans dispersed to the area at that time, but there were some families due to arrive in another part of Glasgow. She said she would try to put them in touch with each other.*

The implementation of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act marked a lasting change in the way asylum seekers were resettled and supported in the United Kingdom. The Act had two key outcomes. The first was to separate the social rights of asylum seekers from those of other UK citizens and non-citizen residents (primarily intended to deter economic

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<sup>1</sup> All first names used in the thesis will be pseudonyms.

migration), and included restrictions on the right to work. The second was the establishment, for the first time, of the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) a nationally co-ordinated system for the resettlement and welfare support of asylum seekers (Wren 2007). This resettlement was part of a UK-wide dispersal policy, involving a programme of forcible relocation (on a no-choice basis) of people seeking asylum away from the South East of England - where many pre-existing networks of co-nationals, families and contacts were located - to a number of dispersal sites across the UK. Glasgow was and remains the only sizeable dispersal cluster area in Scotland, with more asylum seekers dispersed to Glasgow than any other regional site in the UK.<sup>2</sup>

Having started to work with asylum seekers and refugees as a Scottish French-speaking Community Interpreter in 2000, I saw first hand the devastating effects that the dispersal policy and long processing times of asylum claims were having on individuals: their newness to a city like Glasgow meant a lack of access to any form of pre-existing social network of co-nationals and bore heavily on feelings of social and cultural isolation. Their exclusion from institutions of integration, the precariousness of their asylum seeker status and the lengthy processing times of claims made it difficult to plan a future life. These factors combine to produce a context better understood as one of *non-settlement*.

However, in parallel with these ‘unsettling’ effects of policy-imposed liminality, parallel processes of migrant-led settlement were also occurring.<sup>3</sup> I was intrigued by the capacity of these very same people to come together and establish associations, which were as much about surviving the asylum system as they were about building a sense of home for their present and their future. I was curious to explore these processes as they occurred within an overarching policy context that was highly restrictive, punishing and exclusionary. Once I began my fieldwork as a PhD student and got to know the ‘private face’ of these associations behind the ‘public face’ I knew as an interpreter, I began to see associational emergence as providing an alternative way of existing. Rather than purely reactive, groups emerged as a grassroots response to the non-integrative norms of dispersal, and as a way of carving out a new ‘home’. This was not simply accommodation, but also about individuals collectively surviving *non-settlement* on their terms. This thesis is concerned with the

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<sup>2</sup> ICAR website <http://www.icar.org.uk/9963/glasgow/context.html> (accessed 13 February 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Settlement here is used primarily in reference to daily practices of interactions, contacts and feelings of home. When I use quotation marks - ‘settlement’ - this is to refer to settlement as it is often used in broader debates to conceptualise integration and assimilation as processes through which newcomers become incorporated into the receiving community’s economic and social fabric (Reinsch 2001). These are uncertain outcomes for asylum seekers and so are treated as problematic within this thesis.

nature and quality of associational forms as they emerge and develop over time amongst dispersed African asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow. I seek to explore the ways in which such associations provide an alternative context of reception and settlement in the UK, thus foregrounding agency and the capacity of asylum seekers and refugees to shape and condition for themselves their experiences of life in the exile setting.

Associational activity is not a new phenomenon and many scholars have, over the decades, called attention to migrants' disposition to form associations. Classical historical and contemporary studies alike on immigrant associational forms and practices emphasise the importance of social relationships to adaptation in the new society of 'settlement', reveal the complex processes underlying the establishment and growth of new migrant populations; and capture vividly the notion of changing 'communities' over time (Thomas and Znaniecki 1958; Breton 1964; Rex 1973; Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex, Joly and Wilpert 1987; Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In relation to migrant associations, these studies largely focus on their role as a form of network to facilitate further migration, labour market participation and family formation. They emphasise their role as a 'buffer' between the new settling communities and the dominant 'receiving' society. However, upon closer analysis, a number of tendencies emerge from this predominantly functionalist analysis of associational practice which becomes problematic when considering the 'settlement' experiences of asylum seekers.

This relates in particular to the way in which studies of immigrant associations conducted in Britain have been traditionally subsumed within the sociology of 'race' and ethnic relations (Rex 1970; Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex Joly and Wilpert 1987). Consequently notions of ethnicity come to be reified and ethnic-based groupness comes to be assumed as a natural process of emergent community amongst co-nationals. A further critique is that the dominant 'race relations' paradigm constructs immigrants as a homogenised mass possessing some form of unitary culture, history and politics leaving little scope for segmentation, diversity and difference (Solomos and Back 1995). Thus, the question of division within unity is not adequately addressed, nor is the question of emergent alliances across ethnicised boundaries. Finally, there is a tendency in both 'race relations' approaches and the classical and historical studies highlighted above to make assumptions about the understood rights to settle of immigrant populations, thus obscuring the practices and experiences of migrants for whom settlement possibilities are less certain. These

limitations will be explored further in Chapter Two, but on this analysis, asylum seeker, refugees and their associational practices do not align well with this paradigm.

A critical seam of literature was also emerging in the UK which challenges this dominant 'race relations' discourse and argued for a more explicitly radical engagement with 'race relations' (Sivanandan 1985, 1990; Werbner and Anwar 1991; Werbner 1991b; Eade 1991). Sivanandan (1985, 1990) argues that UK 'race relations' predicated upon a multicultural project has led to a new divisive culturalism and racist construction of exclusionary boundaries in society, which undoes practices of cohesive communities by imposing fictive unity upon ethnically bounded groups, thus creating new divisive lines. Werbner (1991a, 1991b) and Sivanandan (1985, 1990) question the centrality of 'ethnicity' and co-nationality to the growth of immigrant and minority associations, indicating that communities rally around issues and causes, and not just around abstract invocations of ethnicity, or an externally constructed fictional unity. This powerful critique, which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Two, speaks directly to the lack of attention to diversity and segmentation within 'communities' that can be identified as a key weakness of 'race relations' perspectives on the factors affecting emergence and trajectory of immigrant associations. Werbner in particular provides a conceptual language and framework that can cope with both change within associations and the possibilities of division within unity, fragmentation and emergent alliances. Although representing an important advance on the study of migrant associational practices, there remains nonetheless a functionalism underlying these approaches which continue to be subsumed in the field of ethnic and 'race relations'. Moreover, assumptions persist as regards the very existence of stable 'co-ethnic' or 'co-national' foundations upon which to build new lives, and engage in relations with the state and civil society. Equally, migrant status is presented as undifferentiated, arguably imposing homogeneity on a highly diverse population and leading to assumptions around the very notion of stability in relation to the immigration status of migrants themselves. For these reasons, there remains a lack of fit between these approaches and work on asylum seeker and refugee associational practices.

It is important to historicise previous studies and confront the problem of time relevance in social research. For example, when Rex, Werbner and Sivanandan were studying associations in the 1970s and 1980s, it was in a different historical and political juncture when most migration took place within the context of racialised labour migration from the



islands of the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent (Ballard 1994). Nonetheless, Britain was also home to labour migrants from a number of European countries. Moreover, although the increasing focus on asylum matters in the UK dates from the early 1990s, Britain has an established history of 'receiving' post-war eastern European refugee migrants, most notably Poles and Ukrainians (Burrell 2006). Although long since absorbed within a 'white Europeaness', these different 'minority' migrant worker and refugee populations faced intense hostility and racism from 'majority' groups in housing, employment, and other social contexts. For example, Robinson (2003) describes the xenophobia experienced by Poles in post-war Britain in relation to labour market participation. And Fortier (2000) explores the intense italophobia that was commonplace during this same period, compelling many Italian migrants to hide their 'italianness'. The important point here is that, historically, certain 'non-white' and non-labour migrant populations were excluded from the field of ethnic and 'race relations'. Had these populations been included in the emergent debates from the 1970s, then firstly a different set of questions might have emerged about the white/non-white dualism that has dominated the field of ethnic and 'race relations' research and policy, and secondly, this could have revealed important insights into the social, cultural and political effects of migrant status on 'settlement'.

In relation to asylum seeker and refugee associational patterns, the contemporary structural context is important and needs to be carefully considered. The state categorises asylum seekers in the UK as a distinct type of migrant and, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, since the mid 1990s, 'handles' them in quite specific ways compared to previous cohorts of 'quota refugees' from the 1970s through to the mid 1990s (Robinson 1999; UNHCR 2005). For 'quota refugees', refugee status was regulated from the point of arrival in the UK, allowing them instant access to institutions of 'settlement', such as work, housing and education. By contrast, since the end of the 1990s, integration and 'settlement' are contingent upon a positively determined asylum application, the harsh reality being that this can take years to be regulated. Taken together, these factors emphasise the extremely precarious realities of surviving the asylum system in the UK.

The implementation of the dispersal programme has given way to a wider growing academic field of what might be called 'Dispersal Studies'. This broad body of research explores the multiple outcomes and effects of dispersal on the resettlement and support of

asylum seekers since 2000 and will be discussed in greater depth in Chapters Two and Four. Dispersal has produced paradoxical results: with its rationale of ‘spreading the burden’, it set out to discourage settlement and distribute costs across a number of UK local authorities (Robinson 2003). One main effect of this policy was the obstruction of access to pre-existing social networks, isolating individuals from community networks as a source of support (Boswell 2001; Wren 2004). And yet it has also led to the emergence of new communities in dispersal areas, in particular in the form of nascent associational practices of newly establishing migrant populations (Griffiths *et al* 2005). The very specific exclusionary context facing asylum seekers in the UK has encouraged the development of solidarity ties with others in similar situations, and these shared experiences and connections have led to the founding of groups. A growing academic and ‘grey’ literature on ‘Refugee Community Organisations’ (hereafter ‘RCOs’) has since emerged as a kind of sub-discipline of ‘Dispersal Studies’ (Zetter and Pearl 2000; Griffiths *et al* 2004, 2005; Zetter *et al* 2005, 2006; Amas and Price 2008; Phillimore and Goodson 2010 and others). These studies make significant theoretical, analytical and political advances with respect to understanding how social networks may function as a source of social capital for asylum seekers and refugees, and as a mechanism for coping and survival in exile.

Ostensibly filling the gaps left by the literature on immigrant associations discussed above, this important *separate* body of work ‘brings the state back in’ by highlighting how historical and structural determinants have led to a fragmented and marginalised ‘RCO’ sector. This work also extends beyond the too often ‘colour-coded’ field of ethnic and ‘race relations’ towards a sociology of migration more generally. It emphasises the defensive rather than integrative role of such groups, reveals the effects of factionalism on sustainability, and addresses the liminal lives of people seeking asylum, and the challenges associations face in supporting their members and the communities they claim to represent. Even so, there remain limitations. Firstly a largely functionalist perspective underpins analyses of associations themselves. Secondly, in developing as a separate body of research, this scholarship has in some way also contributed to the compartmentalisation of such associational practices in terms of the presumed ‘refugeeness’ of the individuals involved. Finally, much of this work draws from data collected in the first five years or so post dispersal. There are of course specific features of the associational forms and practices of asylum seekers and refugees, but a key question is, are they enduring?

As Breton (1964) argues, ethnic communities are formed, grow and disappear. The associational practices of asylum seekers and refugees, often understood in academic and policy-related literature as representative of certain ‘refugee communities’, are no different in that they also evolve over time. The community life-cycle approach to the study of the integration and acculturation, or assimilation, of migrants is well represented in historical and contemporary accounts of immigrant associations (for example Thomas and Znaniecki 1958; Portes and Zhou 1993; Fortier 2003). However, the idea of change and transition into something of a ‘settled’ population, as opposed to the enduring unsettled nature of ‘refugeeness’, tends to be lacking in accounts of ‘RCOs’. Consequently, any sense of a community life-cycle is missing. This might be for a number of reasons, two of which I highlight for this discussion. Firstly, most post-dispersal ‘RCO’ research has been conducted during, and has thus focused on, the immediate and medium-term effects of dispersal, producing what could be described as ‘empirical snapshots’ of associational life at a specific point in time, namely the first 5 years following the implementation of dispersal. This political and historical context will, of course, have dramatically shaped the focus and direction of these associations at that time. Secondly, dispersal as an integral aspect of asylum migration management was at the time a relatively new development in UK policy (since 2000), and the research into ‘RCOs’ post-dispersal has concentrated on groups who were still in somewhat nascent stages of development. Again highlighting the importance of time relevance, these two reasons would explain the dominant focus on the defensive role of ‘RCOs’ which has required an organisational focus on specific asylum issues, as these groups have often been forced to fill the void left by the steady withdrawal of state support for asylum seekers in the UK.

However, dispersal is one part of a constantly shifting ‘asylum picture’ and is now a well established policy of asylum seeker incorporation in the UK. Whilst it directly led to associational growth in dispersal areas, it is only one of many factors affecting the continuity and development of such groups. Since its introduction in 1999 legislation, the membership and demographic of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations in dispersal areas have changed quite dramatically. Where members may initially have been predominately asylum seekers, many are now refugees, some are new citizens and the degree to which the role of such associations remains defensive and focused on asylum and refugee issues is rather unclear. Within this changing demographic (and political) context one might assume that the focus and direction of groups may also evolve into something else, and yet associations are still generally framed by policy-makers, practitioners and

academics as ‘RCOs’. This label then potentially fixes these associations, the structural context from which they have emerged, the individuals involved and the social relations located therein, in a specific time and space. One effect of this is that associations are permanently defined in terms of their ‘refugeeness’, if indeed this ever really defined them, and imposes an enduring liminal quality on their existence: no longer ‘unsettled’ as asylum seekers, but not quite ‘settled’ as refugees. As a result, their transition into something ‘other’ seems blocked. This thesis is concerned with questions around how associations have come to be defined, how they define themselves and how this develops over time. Given the seeming centrality of immigration status to collective identities and external categorisations, this study explores and problematises the complex relationships between individual immigration status, group formation, continuity and belonging.

A contributory factor to this tendency to label certain associational forms as ‘RCOs’ can be located in an uncritical adoption of categories, highlighting a theoretical and analytical weakness in migrant association research generally (and indeed, one might argue, in much social science inquiry). Despite the apparent consensus on the importance of networks for migrant ‘settlement’ generally, migrant or immigration status is only one of many conditions that encourage their founding and one of many factors that may support or inhibit their continued existence. Typologies can be helpful to guide academic inquiry, but often they obscure more than they illuminate, imposing artificial ties and boundaries on complex social realities. Rigid adherence to such categorisations limits analytical possibilities for understanding *all* forms and patterns of social relations as they emerge, grow, develop and sometimes disappear. Defining groups and collective practices solely by migrant status risks reproducing differences and inequalities, where ‘communities’ come to be unproblematically identified and reified. This approach not only tends to dominate migration studies, but can also be understood as a central feature of the postcolonial administration of migrants in the metropole. It has also resulted in a seeming incoherence between ‘RCO’ literature and immigrant association studies, potentially masking what might be useful commonalities. Attempts to trace possible analytical connections would require researchers to ‘move beyond labels’ and question, as advocated by Brubaker and Cooper (2000), whether categories of practice are necessarily categories for analysis. This thesis is concerned with thinking beyond ‘refugeeness’, and seeks to trace what are often neglected connections across and between bodies of research in order to frame this analysis of associational life as one of change and transition.

Categories also emerge from one-sided approaches to analysis and the portrayal of asylum seekers and refugees as a permanently marginalised minority would appear to be misconceived or to offer a limited perspective. Such an approach defines asylum seekers and refugees as ‘victims’, passive and homogenous. It not only obscures their agency, but is also unable to account for the many conditions and factors which shape associational growth and continuity. To explore such factors, there needs to be a shift in focus that highlights not only relationships between state and groups but relations within groups themselves and the complicated interplay between them and changing immigration status. In order to move beyond a focus on ‘refugeeness’, there is also a need to examine the internal structures that stimulate the emergence and continuity of groups. Associational development is as much affected by and is an outcome of internal struggles as it is a response to external domination (Werbner 1991a; Sivanandan 1990). Knowledge about internal processes is foundational to providing a total analysis of associational life, one that attends to the effects and outcomes of both external and internal factors. Nevertheless, studies of leadership, representativeness and participation within asylum seeker and refugee-led associations are noticeably lacking. This thesis seeks to explore the multiple social contexts in which people create associations (and how these come to be understood internally and externally as a foundation for ‘community’), by foregrounding the internal structures which frame associational life in its early stages as well as over time.

Failure to address the effects of internal structures results in a dominant focus on consensual relations which tends to obscure internal conflict, fragmentation and diversity. Where conflict is addressed, the focus tends to be on internally produced divisions of factionalism, thus masking other internally and externally produced sources of social division. As a result, social differences of gender, class, generation and immigration status within groups are often placed to one side. This implies homogeneity in relation not only to ethnicity, but also to a number of social factors, imposing a fictive unity on the relations (and individuals) located therein. Of course, categories are not only externally constructed. Associations also categorise internally between members around different social divisions that are fluid and evolving, revealing internal differences that can sometimes have detrimental effects on associational life. However, to a large extent, in much of the literature on asylum seeker and refugee-led associations, the actual experience of membership - how members perceive their own struggles and the dynamics of their organisation - is often either missing or presented as a homogenous experience for all members of that specific group. Equally, the impact of differentiated and changing

immigration status on social relations is unclear. This neglect of internal processes presents associational life as an experience that seemingly remains the same over time, despite the effects of internal and external factors on individuals' needs and expectations of associational involvement.

With this in mind, an anthropological perspective, centred upon a fine-grained analysis of social meanings and grounded in the constantly shifting life of the social unit being studied, can enable researchers to begin to really understand these groups of people: who they are, how they are settling in, what their troubles are, what their aspirations are, who their leaders are, who they consider members, where solidarities and allegiances lie, sources of conflict and difference, their politics, economics, and class divisions, and how these evolve over time. This thesis is concerned with the life of associations as well as associational life and seeks to challenge studies which depict groups as static and homogenous entities, meeting standardised needs and where all relationships are equal. The analysis presented explores the kinds of social processes that are occurring and the ways in which changing personal histories affect associational life and feelings of belonging. I seek to examine the intricate connections between meanings and understandings that members attribute to associational experiences and relations over time. I also consider the ongoing effects and outcomes that constantly evolving internal and external factors, constraints and opportunities have on associational relations.

Finally, in parallel with the growing attention to 'RCOs' across England, there is an absence of attention to the situation in Scotland. Whilst there are broad similarities with other parts of the UK in relation to the mechanisms of dispersal, a number of factors differentiate the Scottish context from other regional dispersal sites, and consequently affect the emergence of associational forms amongst newly establishing migrant communities. These factors, which will be explored in detail in Chapter Four, include: the demographic, political and social context for immigration in Scotland; the devolved situation of the Scottish Government and the political, economic, cultural and ideological struggle between devolved and reserved matters; and the broad political consensus that is pro-immigration and pro-integration, and which supports policies that challenge racism and promote multicultural community cohesion (Sim and Bowes 2007; Bowes, Sim and Ferguson 2009). Indeed, in contrast to the position adopted by the Westminster Government, the Scottish Government's approach to asylum seeker and refugee settlement

and support has always been one of integration from point of arrival, not from point of positive decision (Scottish Parliament 2006; cf. Home Office 2004). Amid studies of the settlement of asylum seekers in different places, the question of whether a pro-immigration context produces different outcomes in relation to associational practices and experiences of settlement and belonging has been necessarily overlooked by the overwhelming focus on dispersal and the nascent associational forms of asylum seekers and refugees across England. This thesis seeks to explore this question by providing a hitherto neglected Scottish perspective.

### ***Aims of the thesis and research questions***

The general aim of this thesis is to present a theoretically and empirically grounded account of the changing nature of asylum seeker and refugee-led associational practice in Scotland. More specifically, the aims of the thesis are: firstly to gain an understanding of the meanings, understandings and experiences that asylum seekers and refugees attach to associational practices; secondly, to explore how these experiences intersect with the social context of the life of associations, thus revealing internal diversity and the fluid and changing nature of associational life over time; thirdly, to sharpen the focus on how structural conditions underlie processes of internal social change and how these conditions directly affect not only group formation but also associational continuity; and fourthly, to identify the degree to which the associational lives of African asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow are an outcome of internal struggles as they are a response external domination. These aims are operationalised through the following research questions, which will be addressed in the chapters:

1. What are dispersed African asylum seekers and refugees' experiences of associational life in Glasgow? What do these experiences reveal about the strategies they use, about their capacity to act, and about 'settlement', belonging and surviving liminality?
2. What are the internal processes and structures that define the experience of associations? How are these affected by shifting internal relationships and constantly changing external constraints and opportunities?

3. What forms of solidarity and division emerge within associations? What factors influence conflict and unity, how do they change over time and what are their effects on associational life?
4. What effects does the passage of time and changing and differentiated immigration status have on individual relationships to and within groups? How does immigration status matter to individual members?
5. What effects does the passage of time and broader framework of asylum and immigration policies have on associational life? How do these factors enable or inhibit the trajectory of groups? What might this trajectory be?
6. How do members see themselves and their associations in the long-term? Where do they see themselves as belonging? What does settlement look like for them?

### ***The thesis***

Based on the data gathered, this thesis will make a number of key arguments. First, in contrast to dominant approaches in migrant association research, which frame the emergence of associations as primarily reactive (e.g. to state incorporation regimes) and which assume what ‘settlement’ looks like, I argue that the processes underpinning the emergence and continuity of groups can be more usefully understood as a response to structural constraints that are a way for members to develop parallel patterns of settlement which are person-centred rather than state-centred. This provides a starting point for redefining the experience of ‘settlement’ from the point of view of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

Second, against understandings of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations as fixed and homogenous entities and idealised places of solidarity, I emphasise the fluidity, complexity, and situational specificity of their collective identities. Analysing the internal and external processes, factors and conditions affecting associational emergence and continuity, and the interplay between such processes, provides a way to ‘unpack’ fictive unity within immigrant associations. This approach foregrounds the continuous push and



pull of social relations, of agreement and disagreement, of solidarity and conflict, and of mutual support and internal divisions.

Third, in thinking beyond the immediate and medium-term aftermath of dispersal, I argue that the structural context continues to have an important bearing upon associational practices. I emphasise that these associations exist within a broader social and political context relating to asylum and immigration which must be understood as constantly shaping their emergence *and* continuity, as shaping internal and external understandings of ‘settlement’, and as affecting feelings and experiences of collective identities and belonging. I argue for an analysis that foregrounds the importance of social *and* structural context to the creation and continuity of associations and the construction of groupness. Such an analysis exposes multiplex social relations, the politics of groupness and allegiances as well as social divisions and conflict as they evolve over time.

Finally, the dominant focus on accommodation and solidarity within groups exposes the fact that the nature of such associational practices are often idealised by state actors, policy makers, as well as NGOs and external community groups. This idealised construction fails to capture the insecurities and challenges associations face as part of newly establishing migrant communities, the complex relationships between external categorisations and internal identifications as specific migrant ‘others’, and the processes of transition and social change occurring within groups. The result is that in homogenising such associations as a specific type of group (an ‘RCO’), their desired development as (or transition to becoming understood as) other ‘others’ is potentially thwarted. Despite their specificity, I suggest that the categorisation of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations as a distinct associational form (‘RCO’) provides at best a limited perspective and results in significant omissions in conceptualising migrant associational practices as they evolve over time. This process risks reproducing inequalities and reinforcing differences by constraining these same groups to circulate within certain, homologous social networks whilst limiting their access to others. By presenting a study of associations in transition and their struggles for recognition, the thesis challenges the relevance of understanding asylum seeker and refugee-led associations as a pure form distinct from migrant associations generally.

## ***Contribution of thesis***

This thesis aims to make a fivefold contribution to theoretical, methodological and empirical research into the associational lives of asylum seekers and refugees specifically and migrants generally. Firstly, against representations of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations as a fixed, static and alien other, the thesis contributes an understanding of such associations that is fluid, temporal and rooted in the experience of establishing minorities of migrants more generally. Shifting the focus onto internal structures highlights the similarities between such associations and migrant groups more generally.

Secondly, against accounts of associations which seek to universalise and categorise, the thesis contributes a critical, grounded approach to studying associational lives of asylum seekers and refugees that problematises generalised definitions, and challenges the perpetuation of categories which are of limited analytical use. The thesis contributes to a theoretical and methodological transformation of how the associational lives and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees are studied, through highlighting the experiences of their members as individuals with identities, histories, cultures, social relations, personal lives and emotions, but as firmly located within a broader structural context.

Thirdly much of the literature on asylum seeker and refugee-led groups fails to capture the moving picture of immigration status, the complexities of internal diversity and how these affect group formation and sustainability. I argue that the broader asylum and immigration policy framework and the changing and differentiated immigration status of members have direct consequences on shaping associational life over time. This thesis then foregrounds the positive and negative effects of changing immigration status to understandings of associational practices, experiences and trajectories. I seek to move beyond 'refugeeness' by contributing to theoretical debates on the associational practices of migrants through adding a transitional perspective that carefully balances internal struggles with external domination.

Fourthly, in bringing together insights from the literature on immigrant associations and the literature on refugee community organisations, this thesis offers novel conceptualisations of associational life amongst newly establishing migrant communities by revealing ways in which they themselves ‘move beyond labels’.

Finally, although the thesis predominantly contributes to academic knowledge, there are also direct implications for policy and practice. In arguing for a need to move beyond ‘refugeeness’, the thesis makes a case for policy makers and practitioners to similarly move beyond labels in understanding the role of such associations within the broader integration, ‘settlement’ and community cohesion agenda which dominates UK policy discourse and practice.

## ***Methods***

The thesis is based on ethnographic research over a twenty-six-month period, involving extensive participant observation, individual interviews, group discussions, and analysis of online fora and printed materials. Participant observation was carried out with six different associations in Glasgow. I also conducted forty-six in-depth individual interviews (digitally recorded) with members from five of these associations, and carried out three formally organised group discussions. To use O’Reilly’s term (2005), I was part of a number of ‘opportunistic’ group discussions with members and other actors, which took place in a variety of field sites I was attending as a researcher with different members of the six associations. Two of the associations used an online group messenger service (Yahoo mail) to communicate association business and I was added as a member to both. These became an additional research site and source of data throughout the duration of the study. Finally, I was also provided with various pieces of association ‘paperwork’ and administration (for example, written constitutions, internal rules, member rules, minutes, newsletters, articles and so forth), and I amassed a wide range of printed material which was circulated at meetings or online. The written material was used to frame my understandings of associational development over time and to advance my own knowledge of both public and private representations of the associations. I also continued to work as a community interpreter for the duration of the fieldwork.

This thesis and the data presented draw primarily on the fieldnotes written up over this 26 month period of participant observation, supplemented by interview and email data. During fieldwork each of the associations considered me as a member but in varying terms: as a sympathiser member, observer member, active member and volunteer member. I was nominated to the Board of Directors of one of the groups and was also voted onto the management committee of another group. These varying degrees of membership meant that my participation was not always limited to attending monthly meetings as an observer. I was sometimes called upon, sent text messages or emailed to perform certain administrative duties such as typing up meeting minutes, proof-reading material, or updating membership databases. I was asked to interpret at different events in the absence of an interpreter and to take over from a ‘full member’ who would have had to perform this role. Prior to fieldwork and throughout the study, I was also invited to socialise with members at different association events and personal life events and occasions. Put simply, over the course of the fieldwork I was, to varying degrees, involved in association life.

### ***Plan of the thesis***

The present chapter has contextualised the thesis, introduced the research site, and outlined the background, context, research questions, methods and the contribution of the thesis. This chapter has introduced the key arguments and core claims, and identified the main theoretical and empirical approaches used.

Chapter Two provides a critique of the relevant academic literature, and identifies the theoretical and conceptual framework which will guide the thesis. In this chapter I critically review historical and contemporary accounts of immigrant associational practices, which I identify as largely informed by ‘race relations’ thinking. I then explore emergent radical perspectives in conceptualising and understanding immigrant and minority associations. In mapping out the strengths and limitations of previous studies, I argue for the need to move beyond solidarity models of migrant associations and for a focus on associational emergence as a staged process of organisational, ideological and experiential expansion (Werbner 1991a). This is followed by a discussion of and critical engagement with key ‘Refugee Community Organisation’ (‘RCO’) studies that have

emerged as a sub-discipline of immigrant association literature. I identify a number of limitations in 'RCO' work framed broadly around unproblematised conceptualisations of 'settlement', too narrow a focus on factionalism to explain internal difference, a lack of attention to internal group formation processes and a theoretical and conceptual focus on 'refugeeness' which imposes a corporate unity based on immigration status upon the social relations located within groups and ignores the notion of a community life cycle. I argue that these limitations combined obscure other sources of divisions that arise from both internal and external factors, and the equally pervasive effects these may have on continuity. I extend this literature review to consider how external factors such as immigration status and the broader asylum and immigration legislative framework also produce internal struggles. The thesis is centred on solidarity *and* struggle and to frame my arguments, I draw from and integrate different theoretical perspectives on migrant associations and 'settlement', on leadership, community and urban protest movements, and on identification and categorisation processes, drawing out novel connections and overlaps as they relate to asylum seeker and refugee-led associations. This integrated approach provides the theoretical groundwork for moving the focus of study beyond the narrow lens of immigration status.

In Chapter Three I describe the methodologies which have guided this thesis and influenced my reflexive, theory-driven ethnographic approach. Identifying the dominant paradigm in the study of refugee associations and practices as most firmly located within the Chicago School tradition of interactionism combined with grounded theorising, I explore an alternative methodological approach. This is grounded in Manchester School social anthropology and the use of the extended case method. Drawing from Burawoy's advances on the extended case method (1998, 2009), I describe the ways in which I develop the different methods most appropriate to the setting and context of the research, and explain the processes through which the research questions are put into practice. The thesis draws primarily from fieldnotes and the rationale for this will be explored in detail. I also consider the personal and professional circumstances guiding my methodology and which raised different ethical and practical dilemmas and challenges. Finally, to provide a transparent account of the analytical techniques used, I explain the analytical process from note-taking to coding and memo-writing, and present an adapted constant-comparison framework that draws connections between data, events and theoretical ideas.

Chapter Four provides the political, historical and local context. I summarise the relevant asylum and immigration policy and legislation which frames contemporary asylum seeker incorporation in the UK. I then offer a historical contextualisation of dispersal to the UK. I go on to consider in greater detail what makes the Scottish context distinct in relation to immigration, and I conclude this chapter with an introduction to the dispersal context of asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow and an analysis of how the changing policy context affects associational life. Whilst recognising some similarities in terms of the incorporation of previous cohorts of refugees in the UK, I will argue that there are a number of features of asylum seeker incorporation since the mid-1990s that distinguish asylum seekers from other migrants and contribute to their negative construction as a specific social problem.

Although some data will have already been woven into previous chapters, Chapter Five is the first of four substantive empirical chapters. Building upon the context-setting in the two preceding chapters, I introduce the six associations which have informed this study. This introduction foregrounds attention to the associations as living, dynamic entities and establishes early on the ways in which the interplay of external and internal factors shape their emergence and continuity. I then explore the experience of *non-settlement*, and ways in which the structural constraints placed upon asylum seekers act as drivers for the founding of groups. I argue that the development of associations is in and of itself a grassroots response to state policy (Dispersal policy), liminality, the stigma of the asylum seeker/refugee label, and the living conditions imposed upon individuals, as well as a way of resetting the parameters of the context of reception. This chapter will explore how seeking asylum becomes a common experience on a number of levels: how the negative categorisation of the asylum seeker/refugee is lived, and how it relates to the newness, exclusion and precariousness of asylum seekers, compared with other migrants. This discussion will also consider the ways in which associational life provides varying degrees of stability and familiarity in uncertain and unfamiliar contexts and how this develops into forms and practices of belonging.

Chapter Six turns to the internal processes of group life. Studying different internal structures are, as Werbner (1991a) argues, as important foci of attention as the relations between associations and the wider context. This chapter studies the complex struggles surrounding the founding and continuity of groups that are going on behind the public face

of the association. I argue that an analysis of internal structures and processes sharpens the focus on internal heterogeneity, on claims to leadership, representativeness and ‘community’, and on how associations try to address changing organisational purpose. These internal struggles need to be carefully balanced with external controls, and the analysis presented in this chapter ‘unpacks’ this complex relationship by revealing the ways in which institutionalisation and access to funding create divisions within and between groups, and contribute to their construction as specific migrant ‘others’.

Chapter Seven addresses the nature of difference and conflict within groups by problematising forms of solidarity ties and internal divisions. This takes the analysis of internal issues beyond those of factionalism, and identifies emerging sources of difference related to immigration status and other forms of social ranking. I also consider to what extent such differences are mediated by state and non-state actors. These emergent differences reveal the changing nature of solidarity ties with the passage of time, often neglected in studies of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations. I explore how the combined effects of external and internal factors can inhibit or ensure the continuity of groups, for example constraining the associations to operate within homologous networks and the detrimental effects of positive Refugee Status Determination on group continuity. These outcomes are traced to the stigmatisation of the asylum seeker/refugee label and to the wider asylum seeker incorporation regime in the UK.

In Chapter Eight, I seek to advance the analysis of claims-making through considering ways in which associations emphasise difference and similarity, and manage the tensions between asserting particular collective identities and identifying universalistic values. I investigate the orientation of such universalistic claims towards a claimed ‘African’ unity that can transcend difference. Given the newness of such associations, this is identified by group members as critical to their survival and their longer-term recognition as an established ‘African community’ in Scotland. Interestingly however, universalistic claims are also made in relation to other ‘minority communities’. I argue in this chapter that in claiming alignment with other ‘others’, associations and members are making a claim to settlement that is necessarily distanced from the ‘RCO’ category and which is illustrative of how these groups are evolving populations and communities. In sum, this chapter explores how members and associations themselves move beyond labels.

Finally, the conclusion, Chapter Nine, argues for an understanding of associational practices that is grounded in the experiences of members, (and drawing largely but not exclusively from asylum seeker and refugee populations), but which is sensitive to the changing immigration context which patterns associational continuity. Associational life is influenced by many internal and external factors that represent both constraints and opportunities for moving beyond 'refugeeness'. In sum, by focusing on the role, function and meaning of the associations for their members through various stages of change, the emphasis is shifted to how meanings of associational life and the life of the association evolve over time. To conceive of these groups as fixed in time and space paints only a very partial picture of a very complex reality.



## Chapter 2      Associational Lives of Migrants: A Critical Review of Literature

### *Introduction*

In the preceding chapter, I introduced the context of *non-settlement* facing asylum seekers in the UK since the mid 1990s. This is the context from which the associations that took part in this study have emerged. However, over time the issues and challenges associations face in relation to their continued existence extend beyond the immigration status of members. Thus, whilst ‘refugeeness’ might be understood as relating to the origins of groups, whether this is an enduring aspect of the associational lives of these newly settling migrant populations is a question I seek to address. This chapter develops the theoretical and conceptual framework guiding this inquiry, and in what follows, I outline the theoretical perspectives that I draw on, engage with, and contribute to in the thesis.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section - ‘Theoretical approaches from ‘race relations’ and radical perspectives on immigrant and minority associations: contributions and limitations’ - I begin by identifying dominant ‘‘Race relations’ approaches to immigrant and minority associations’. I set out the key features of ‘race relations’ thinking as founded upon the construction of immigrants as forming ethnically-bounded groups, and identify studies of immigrant and minority associations as largely focused on their structures and functions, linking group emergence to mobility opportunities and identity maintenance (Rex 1970, 1973; Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex, Joly and Wilpert 1987). This is then followed by a discussion of ‘Radical perspectives on immigrant and minority associations’ which challenge the dominance of ethnicised groupness through a systematic focus on wider structural factors which both encourage and hinder immigrant association emergence and continuity (Sivanandan 1985, 1990; Werbner 1991a, 1991b). In the second section - ‘Theorising internal relations, leadership and representativeness’ - I assess theoretical analyses of leadership and representativeness issues as they relate to urban social movements more generally and immigrant and minority associations specifically (drawing largely from the work of Werbner 1991a, 1991b; Barker et al 2001). This section discusses how these aspects of internal group processes are central to understanding the political, social and historical context in which

relations between ethnic minorities and the majority are played out. In the third section - 'Key 'RCO' studies' - I identify the key studies that have emerged since the late 1980s as a separate field of research focusing specifically on the associational practices of asylum seekers and refugees (Salinas, Pritchard and Kibedi 1987; Gold 1992; Wahlbeck 1998; Kelly 2003; Griffiths, Sigona and Zetter 2005). I map out developments in this sub-field and engage with their contributions to broader debates about asylum seeker incorporation. I identify a number of limitations in relation to the conceptualisation of 'settlement', an overemphasis on factionalism to explore internal difference, a lack of attention to internal processes and a conceptual focus on 'refugeeness' that is problematic for association continuity. In combining insights from studies on immigrant associations and 'RCOs' with an analysis of solidarity and struggle, and leadership and representativeness in social and urban protest movements, I argue for a broader perspective that draws out novel connections and overlaps between these fields of study. Rather than reducing the scope of the present study to either located in studies of 'RCOs' or immigrant associations, in bringing these different theoretical perspectives together I propose an integrated approach which draws upon knowledge developed in both fields of study. This will allow for the differences and similarities of both types of association to be emphasised, and a theoretical refinement to analysing association emergence and continuity to be developed.

### ***Theoretical approaches from 'race relations' and radical perspectives on immigrant and minority associations: contributions and limitations***

The study of groups and networks is often the dominant lens for analysis in research on migrant 'settlement'. This is because such a focus can examine the extent to which personal social worlds are disturbed and then transformed by migration (Marx 1990:191), and the role of associations and networks in the 'settlement' of immigrants and the incorporation of ethnic minorities has been found to be positive in many respects. These have generally come to be understood in largely functional terms, as easing adaptation for new migrants (Joly 1996), whilst also catering for specific 'ethnicised' needs (Rex and Josephides 1987; Josephides 1991). Established 'ethnic' networks can diminish the risks and costs of migrating (Massey *et al* 1998); serve as buffers between the dominant society and the immigrant community (Portes and Rumbaut 1990, Sivanandan 2000); and provide key advocacy, translation and signposting services as well as transmit cultural codes

(Griffiths *et al* 2005). However, as Schrover and Vermeulen (2005) observe, despite the apparent consensus on the importance of networks generally (and here I would add associations specifically), analyses of the *conditions* that encourage their founding or what *factors* support or inhibit their continued existence are less common. This is a gap the thesis aims to address: it appears particularly salient when studying the conditions that lead to the founding of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations and which affect their survival over time. From the discussion presented in the preceding chapter, it seems impossible to deny that the predominantly hostile UK environment facing asylum seekers has stimulated specific associational practices and the emergence of particular solidaristic ties.

The study of such practices, generally framed as ‘refugee community organisations’ (‘RCOs’) has largely developed from a long tradition of analysing immigrant associational forms more generally. As outlined in Chapter One, in the UK, studies focusing on the organisation of immigrant groups in their receiving society are largely based on ethnicity and ‘race relations’ theories (for example Banton 1967; Rex 1970; Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex, Joly and Wilpert 1987). In what follows I set out the general features of ‘race relations’ thinking and how these relate to immigrant and minority associations specifically. I then consider criticisms of these approaches generally and the extent to which these apply more specifically to studies of immigrant associations.

### **‘Race relations’ approaches to immigrant and minority associations**

In the UK, the work of Michael Banton (1967) and John Rex (1970) has been highly influential in the sociological theorisation of ‘race relations’. This field of sociology is characterised by attempts to analyse the social, cultural, economic and political interactions of different ‘races’ or ethnic groups in employment, housing and other social contexts (Solomos and Back 1996). Emerging largely from social transformations in the UK during the 1960s<sup>4</sup>, ‘race relations’ analyses are underpinned by a concern with the presence of

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<sup>4</sup> From the late 1960s, the ‘coloured’ immigration debate had led to the close association of ‘race’ and immigration’ (Miles 1982, 1993a), and was marked by an ideological and political shift from encouraging post-war labour migrants to controlling immigration, and specifically non-white immigration. The ideological and political debates spread to the ‘pressures’ this unfettered immigration was placing on public services: housing, employment, crime (Miles and Solomos 1987; Castles 1993).

social and political problems arising from inequalities and differentiation experienced by immigrant minorities (Banton 1967; Rex 1970; Rex and Tomlinson 1979). A general feature of 'race relations' approaches is an overwhelming focus on both situations of cultural contact and social relations between populations constructed on the basis of racial categories, and on assumed similarities within specific immigrant populations that are constructed around ethnicity (Banton 1967, 1991; Solomos and Back 1996).<sup>5</sup> Incorporating anthropological perspectives on ethnicity and social boundaries (Barth 1969; Banton 1983; Solomos and Back 1996:6), and by concentrating on the relationships between groups as determined by their racialised characteristics, core assumptions underpinning 'race relations' thinking include that 'race' has descriptive and explanatory value; 'races' are naturally occurring populations (Miles and Brown 2003:91), and shared ethnic origin facilitates group formation (Banton 2008), although there is recognition that ethnicity is itself socially constructed (Barth 1969; Banton 1983).

Whereas Banton focused on the changing patterns of interactions between racial and ethnic groups (Banton 1967), Rex brought a class perspective to 'race relations'. He made explicit connections between social relations of groups classed in 'racial' terms and the existence of certain structural conditions (Rex 1970, 1973). These conditions include conflict over scarce resources, occupational segregation, differential access to power and prestige, cultural diversity and limited group interaction (Rex 1970). Rex's perspective is concerned with situations in which such structured conditions interact with actors' definitions in such a way as to produce a racially structured social reality (Solomos and Back 1994:145). One outcome of this interaction is the production of a range of reactive-defensive political strategies from immigrant minorities. For example in response to their systemic disadvantage when compared to white peers, Rex and Tomlinson (1979) emphasise a concentration on capital accumulation and social mobility amongst West Asians and the construction of a black identity amongst West Indians (1979:275).

In considering specifically the theorisation of immigrant and minority associations in the UK, 'race relations' thinking has indeed been significant, and Rex's more critical turn towards the structural conditions that immigrant minorities confront holds much promise for an analysis of immigrant and minority associations that could move beyond

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<sup>5</sup> This is a focus which finds parallels with non-UK studies of immigrant associations, for example in the work of Portes and Zhou (1993) and Portes and Rumbaut (2001) in the United States.

assumptions of groupness constructed around shared ethnicity (c.f. Barth 1969; Banton 1983). In studies conducted in the 1970s (Rex 1973; Rex and Tomlinson 1979), the important and varied role of associations is acknowledged, albeit they are for the most part treated as one (rather peripheral) aspect of a broader analysis of immigrant 'settlement'. Largely speaking, analyses of association life emerging from theoretical thinking on 'race' from the 1970s mainly relate to ways in which groups can ensure social and economic mobility opportunities and maintain identity for members. Rex (1973) identified four main functions of such associations: overcoming isolation, providing material help to community members, defending the interests of the community, and promoting the community's culture. He later added maintaining links with homeland, and defending the group's interests in conflict and alienation from, and bargaining with, the wider 'host' society (Rex and Tomlinson 1979). What this reveals is that, despite important engagement with the effects of structural conditions on the social, economic and political experiences of minorities (evidenced in the work of Rex in particular), 'race relations' analyses of association practices specifically have, by and large, remained functional in nature.

Building on Rex's previous work (particularly Rex and Tomlinson 1979), and marking an important shift that took immigrant associations from a peripheral to central focus of study, Rex, Joly and Wilpert (1987) provide a comparative sociological and anthropological analysis of different associations in six western European countries. One of the main aims of this study is to compare groups which have migrated a short geographical distance and whose cultures do not radically differ either from each other or from that of the host countries, with groups which have migrated a greater distance and from more disparate cultural environments. Despite differences in organisational activities - for example political, cultural or mobility-driven associations - and research site, recurrent themes can be identified. One of these concerns organisational structures where, as Rex (1987) notes, associational life in the communities studied exists primarily within the structure of kinship and, to a lesser extent, within the structures of religion and political affiliation. A second recurrent theme can be identified in the way immigrant associations have been studied mainly with a focus on their aims to strengthen the ethnic identity of their group and to act as bridge builders between the receiving society and their group (e.g. Gitmez and Wilpert 1987). A third theme relates to understanding associations as essentially modes of adaptation to new social relationships and norms (e.g. Joly 1987). This presumes the central role of pre-existing migrant communities in the 'settlement' of migrants in new

societies where such communities are generally deemed necessary to provide the cultural, social, economic and moral resources considered crucial to help migrants 'get ahead' (a position also prevalent in non-UK research on associations, for example Portes and Zhou 1993 and Portes and Rumbaut 1990, 2001). Although these themes do highlight some of the conditions which give rise to immigrant associational forms, again the dominant functionalism that is characteristic of 'race relations' thinking on immigrant associations prevails.

Taking this inquiry into the conditions giving rise to association emergence further, Moya (2005) suggests that the principal stimulus stems from the migration process itself. This process, he argues, "tends to sharpen collective identities based on national, ethnic or quasi-ethnic constructs" (2005:839). He suggests that collective identities are heightened by contrast to the 'native population' and to the collective identities of other newcomers, often leading to the emergence of associations along national (ethnic) lines (c.f. Banton 1967; Barth 1969). Whilst there may well be some purchase in the idea of a sharpened national identity when in a different national context, this is also problematic and reveals further weaknesses with 'race relations' approaches cited above. Firstly, it takes for granted a world divided into discrete and autonomous nation-states (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Secondly, it presupposes an imagined national unity that seems to obscure other important identities such as class and gender (Anthias 2002). Thirdly, this idea assumes that individuals originating from the same place form naturally occurring groups (Kelly 2003). Following these assumptions, an underlying problem with key studies in the UK (and USA) of immigrant and minority associations (such as Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex *et al* 1987; as well as Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 1990, 2001) tend to reify notions of ethnicity and assume levels of groupness which are based on unproblematised co-national or co-ethnic ties, thus taking for granted the natural formation of 'community', and subsequently of 'community associations', amongst co-nationals. Finally, this perspective also fails to explain the emergence of 'generalist' associations or movements which group together migrants from different nationalities along gender, linguistic or other solidaristic dimensions (Sivanandan 1985, 1990; Quiminal 1997, 1998)

Reflecting upon dominant approaches to studying the various features of immigrant associations, given the harsh context of reception certain immigrant populations face, it is perhaps hardly surprising that functionalist analyses of the founding and continuity of

groups have tended to dominate 'race relations' thinking. This is especially so when traditional institutions - kinship groups and family - are lacking and where new institutions - the welfare state, employment, education and so forth - fail to satisfy the emotional, social, cultural and political needs of immigrants. However, a critical evaluation of additional structural factors - such as migrant incorporation regimes and local authority responses to such systems - and how these might affect associations in relation to encouraging or inhibiting growth and continuity is often missing from dominant functional perspectives (for example in the different contributions in Rex *et al* 1987). This lack of engagement reveals a general weakness in 'race relations' approaches to studying immigrant associations (Rex 1970; Rex and Tomlinson 1979). Although structural conditions reveal a range of reactive-defensive strategies, such an engagement would be a necessary component for addressing the range of conditions giving rise to groups as well as the different factors influencing their continuity.

Another drawback with 'race relations' approaches as they relate to immigrant associations is that little attention is paid to the existence and effects of differentiated immigration status on associational emergence and/or continuity (Rex *et al* 1987; Joly 1996). Nor is much analytical space afforded to explore how this might influence the nature of association practice and the internal relations located therein. Perceived difference between immigrants and non-immigrants is not just related to issues of culture, language or racialised differences such as 'colour', but also to the legal position of certain newcomers in a given society (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). This is where, immigration status and the broader asylum and immigration policy framework become key variables, influencing and shaping the emergence and continuity of associational forms amongst asylum seekers and refugees specifically but also migrants more generally. The lack of attention to the differentiated immigration status of migrants may in large part be due to the fact that, where the question of immigration status is addressed, and particularly that of refugee status, it is treated in terms of an already regulated status with rights to settle (see for example Rex *et al* 1987). This is indicative of the dominant approach to studying the resettlement of quota refugees, as was highlighted in the previous chapter (pages 15-16). However, as Salinas *et al* (1987) point out (and as will be discussed later in this chapter), there have of course also been non-quota refugees arriving in the UK since the 1940s who have formed associations for a variety of reasons.

Although explaining the development of associations over time and identifying some of their more visible activities, studies drawing from 'race relations' thinking to explore immigrant associations (for example, Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex *et al* 1987) do not take us inside the associations. As a result, they fail to reveal how these immigrants and minorities perceive their own struggles and the dynamics of their organisations. There is very little by way of in-depth analysis of internal social relations and processes, or critical engagement with aspects of leadership and representativeness, and how these might be theorised. Such an analysis would have provided a useful framework for problematising the assumed groupness of what often come to be understood as neatly bounded populations, a construction of immigrant groups that is characteristic of 'race relations' thinking. One outcome of this focus on imposed groupness has been the allocation of funding on the basis of ethnicised or racialised difference, creating competition between groups and offering a degree of power and influence for BME communities (via representation) (Sivanandan 1985). How this aspect of association life might affect association growth and continuity tends to be overlooked in approaches influenced by 'race relations' (e.g. Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex *et al* 1987; Joly 1996), although such effects are addressed by more radical perspectives of immigrant and minority associations (for example in the work of Sivanandan 1982, 1985, 1990; Werbner 1991a, 1991b and Werbner and Anwar 1991 which will be discussed further below).

Finally, there is very little in 'race relations' thinking to suggest or recognise newly emerging alliances that transcend ethnicity, grouping together migrants from different nationalities along gender, linguistic or other solidaristic dimensions. Such alliances might also relate to immigration status or other causes or issues such as discrimination in the workplace, housing or education. Again this is a consequence of a theoretical and conceptual approach predicated upon bounded difference rather than similarities between groups in relation to their structural positioning in society. This reveals how the reactive-defensive strategies Rex and Tomlinson (1979) identify come to be constructed around racialised and ethnicised boundaries. This also highlights the lack of attention to differences within groups. Similarities and differences are both difficult to measure, however measuring difference framed around a presumed ethnicity seems to dominate. This is because it seems to provide a ready-made sense of groupness that is taken as a given by the different authors mentioned above. Subsequently, groups are often referred to as possessing some form of unitary culture and history, leaving little space for diversity and community segmentation along various lines of division, or indeed unity despite



difference (Solomos and Back 1996). In sum then, this chapter has identified and critiqued general features of ‘race relations’ thinking and specifically how this relates to immigrant associations. In response to the various shortcomings identified above, a more radical seam of research into different aspects of immigrant associations has developed, to which this discussion shall now turn.

## **Radical perspectives on immigrant and minority associations**

In the 1980s, alternative perspectives began to emerge which highlighted how immigrant and minority associations can have a more radical mobilising effect on their ethnic group members. This is particularly powerfully illustrated by Sivanandan (1982, 1985, 1990) and Werbner (1991a, 1991b), whose various writings have focused largely on the experiences of South Asian and African-Caribbean populations in the UK.

The radical theorist Ambalavaner Sivanandan understands black self-help in the form of community groups and associations as emerging from discrimination in housing, education and employment (1982, 1985, 1990, and 2000). This self-help, he argues, led to the emergence of supplementary grass-roots support services, training schemes and other projects specifically targeting the ‘black community’ as a way out of discrimination, and can be framed as a form of urban protest movement. Sivanandan was highly critical of the ‘race relations’ industry, which he, alongside others (notably Miles 1984a, 1984b) claimed had been bolstered by a sociology of ‘race relations’ (e.g. Banton 1967; Rex 1970), and especially of institutional attempts to combat racism through race awareness training as a response to the ‘race relations’ political agenda (Sivanandan 1985). Administered by organisations like the Race Relations Board and Community Relations Commission (then to be collapsed into the single, and since disbanded, Commission for Racial Equality<sup>6</sup>), one of the roles of this ‘race relations’ industry was to implement integrative measures in the areas of education, housing and employment (Sivanandan 1985:80).

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<sup>6</sup> The Race Relations Board was established by the 1965 Race Relations Act; the Community Relations Commission was established by the 1968 Race Relations Act; and the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was established by the Race Relations Act 1976. The CRE was dissolved into the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2007

However, Sivanandan argues that these institutions were set up not to bring about the integration of the mass of black people in the UK but to create a tranche of black middle-class administrators who would manage racism (Sivanandan 2000:420), thus stifling protest and absorbing disquiet in relation to structural inequalities. The community self-help tradition and black unity movement Sivanandan describes as the ‘Black struggle’ (Sivanandan 1985, 1990), was effectively fragmented by the ‘race relations’ agenda, the funding structures in place and by the move to multiculturalism. In its celebration of cultural difference, Sivanandan argued, multiculturalism led to competing ethnicities and a dilution of the Black British identity into bounded ethnicised identities, e.g. ‘Asian’, ‘African’, and ‘African Caribbean’. Whereas racism divided communities, multiculturalism would further fragment them. As will be elaborated upon further below, this fragmentation manifested itself in new funding structures based on ethnically constructed segmentary divisions, which resulted in previously supportive groups now competing with each other for funds and influence (Sivanandan 1985). In Sivanandan’s analysis ‘race relations’ transformed the ‘black’ struggle from a political one affecting the whole non-white community to one being fought by individuals over position and power (1985, 1990).

The allocation of funding reveals some of the complexities underpinning the socio-political construction and administration of ‘race relations’ in the UK. One critical assessment of this is the suggestion that for citizens and taxpayers, state funding of associational activities constitutes both a ‘right’ and a form of indirect state control (Werbner 1991a). In terms of migrants generally, Werbner (1991a) argues that funding is a right firstly in that the ‘race relations’ agenda has meant that, during the 1970s, local authorities became important funders of black and minority ethnic organisations, financing in particular the respective self-help projects of Asians and African-Caribbeans which had previously been starved of funds (see also Sivanandan 1990). This new focus on ‘segmentary divisions’ between ‘ethnicised’ and racialised groups, resulted in the state reifying communities as perpetual communities in order to control and allocate resources in an ‘equitable manner’ (Werbner 1991a:21). It is in this sense, Werbner argues (1991a), that funding becomes a form of indirect state control. This has a number of effects, but I would like to concentrate on two of these in this discussion. Firstly there is the effect of an imposed fictive unity on these ‘ethnic’ segments: in the name of administrative equity and efficiency, there could only be, say, one association representing a particular ethnicised/racialised community (Sivanandan 1985; Salinas *et al* 1987; Werbner and Anwar 1991). Werbner’s exploration

of fictive unity in the contexts of state funding for communal ethnic projects, and of representation on multi-ethnic boards and committees examines the economic and political context in which relations between ethnic minorities and the majority are played out (1991b:114-116). This reveals how it is constructed by state, quasi, and non-state actors, legislation, political opportunity structures and modes of migrant incorporation. What is also important depends on who attributes or claims fictive unity (state, quasi, non-state actors and also groups themselves), how it is performed in the public sphere and the symbolic and ideological boundaries of belonging that it encompasses. These issues will be discussed further in Chapters 5-8.

The second effect is that the segmentation of different ethnicised and racialised groups contributes to a breakdown in “earlier cohesions of community, culture and class between different ethnicised and racialised groups” (Sivanandan 1990:84), which then increases competitiveness between groups over decreasing funding opportunities. The ensuing scramble for government grants and public funds on the basis of specific ethnicised identities then deepens differences and fosters rivalry (Sivanandan 1990:94). Werbner (1991a:33) conceptualises funding used in this way as a form of ‘internal colonialism’, adding a ‘divide and rule’ dimension played out via funding mechanisms in the postcolonial context, an argument that informs the analysis in Chapter Six. Following Sivanandan, Werbner argues that this transforms the field of BME welfare and support into a struggle between culturally ‘bounded’ communities (Werbner 1991a).

Whilst Sivanandan does recognise the need for recognition of difference within unity, he argues that the objective conditions that could have given rise to a black politics no longer exist: the self-help of the 1960s was, he posits, politically based in the community and funded by the community. Today, such ‘black’ groups are funded by the statutory sector and work along the lines of the white voluntary sector (Sivanandan 2000). However, Werbner (1991a) argues that processes of ‘ideological convergence’ that develop into acts of mobilisation (and which will be discussed in greater detail below) based upon an alignment that occurs across segmented groups facing common issues do in fact emerge, demonstrating this through an analysis of expressions of internal class relations in the British Pakistani community. Werbner and Anwar (1991) also highlight this trend across the formulation of political and cultural discourses amongst predominantly South Asian activist and groups, highlighting ways in which they seek to justify their distinctive

political within the broader political objectives of socialism. As a further comparison of ideological convergence that moves beyond the experiences of South Asian immigrant and minority groups in the UK, in France, for example, expressions of solidarity are particularly common in the African women's associative movement. This movement is made up of different groups representing the needs of migrant women from different francophone African countries who find themselves on the margins of the country's socio-economic, political and cultural domain (Quiminal 1997, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Sargent and Larchanché-Kim 2006). In their status as migrant subjects of a former colonial power, these migrant women share some similarities with South Asian and African-Caribbean migrants arriving in the UK since the 1960s. Indeed, Quiminal's extensive writing on the African women's associative movement in France reflects many of the features and practices Sivanandan (1982, 1985) identifies as the 'black struggle' against discrimination and inequality, and of Werbner's (1991a) conceptualisation of ideological convergence. This is especially the case where movement actors mobilise around issues and causes such as understanding changing legislation and its impact on immigrant rights, issues of equal rights, housing, health education and promotion and employment (Quiminal 2000a, 2000b). These associations designate themselves as spaces of mediation between migrant communities and wider French society. In this sense, they act as a 'buffer' between associations and the wider society, but also as a platform for mobilisation and action against discrimination. Quiminal's work provides a useful comparison of the associative practices of migrants whose immigration status is precarious, although as with other studies already highlighted (e.g. Rex 1973; Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex *et al* 1987), her work fails to take us inside the life of the association to see how member themselves perceive their struggles and relationships.

This example of collectivism in France demonstrates the potential reach of Sivanandan's arguments beyond the UK context. His assessment of the way in which 'race relations' has fragmented 'black struggle' reveals its problematic nature, not only in terms of understanding collective mobilisation around causes, but in how it affects institutional processes and funding structures. Nonetheless an evaluation of Sivanandan's approach also highlights some areas that require attention, firstly with the concept of 'community' and how it is deployed. This concept is central to his writing. He speaks of 'organic communities' (1990:52) and of South Asian and African communities who are key players in the 'black struggle' (1985), in some ways lending a romantic quality to how 'community' is understood. But 'community' is also an integral feature of his critique that

‘race relations’ perspectives impose a fictive unity on ethnically and racially bounded ‘communities’. The problem here is that he uses the term to refer to a number of related, but distinct phenomena: a physical locality, groups sharing a political struggle, a wider social movement, and to ethnicised groups (Sivanandan 1982, 1985, 1990). This leads to the question whether there is any scope for communities to fulfil a number of roles strategically and make claim to multiple identifications.

Sivanandan also fails to take us inside these ‘communities’ and groups and so, for example, the ways in which the internal relationships between the politically constructed ‘black’ cadre of which he is critical (1990, 2000), and the people they are identified as representing unfold and evolve fails to materialise. As a result, any potential dissent against or strategic opposition to these imposed ‘community representatives’ is missing, as is any sense of internal diversity and how this might change and develop over time. This produces a homogenising effect on the solidaristic ties within these ‘communities’, which are not sufficiently explored. How do members hold their ‘community’ representatives to account? Or are they simply dupes of their state-sponsored spokespeople? Lack of attention to what he means by ‘community’ and to the internal struggles and relationships within immigrant and minority associations means there is a danger of Sivanandan himself imposing a fictive unity upon group relations.

Finally, although Sivanandan does identify the joint struggles of refugee, migrant and black groups in Britain (1990:56), the dominant focus on immigrant and minority association experiences and forms of collectivism amongst South Asian, African and African-Caribbean populations reflects a broader weakness that is characteristic of studies emerging from ‘race relations’ thinking: namely the highly diverse experiences of non-white, non-labour migrants are obscured by a focus on ‘black’ labour migration. As a result, the political designations employed by Sivanandan (1982, 1985, 1990) do not always align particularly well with, for example, the discrimination faced by non-black quota and non-quota refugees who faced similar processes of structural exclusion (as detailed by Salinas *et al* 1987; Fortier 2000 and Robinson 2003, and as will be discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Four).<sup>7</sup> Even though Sivanandan does refer to the lack

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<sup>7</sup> Although Sivanandan does address both the social exclusion and racialisation of asylum seekers and refugees in later writing (2001, . This critique relates specifically to his focus on immigrant and minority collectivism in this writing in the 1980s and early 1990s.

of rights to 'settlement', including rights to work and limited access to welfare services facing asylum seekers and refugees in the UK, (Sivanandan 1990: 156), largely speaking, his evaluation of immigrant association practice presents the immigration status of those involved as undifferentiated. This arguably imposes homogeneity on a highly diverse population and leads to a further assumption about the very notion of stability in relation to the immigration status of migrants themselves.

Sivanandan's more explicitly critical perspectives on associational development challenge the largely functionalist analyses emerging from 'race relations' approaches to understanding immigrant associations. His radical approach emphasises that associations emerge through choice, but also through a desire for important social change in individuals' lives. In this sense associational emergence can be understood to have transformative qualities, especially where it aims to address discrimination, resolve conflict and challenge underlying inequalities, whilst recognising that experiences of opposition or indeed empowerment may mask continuing marginalisation (Sivanandan 1985, 1990; Werbner and Anwar 1991). From this perspective, collective action results in the formation of groups as conscious, subjective acts, specifically intended to counter experiences of marginalisation, segregation and disempowerment, and to effect change in how certain immigrant and minority populations are treated and perceived. The creation of groups is directly related to a set of social conditions, and a growing realisation amongst immigrants, and for the purposes of this study one may add asylum seekers and refugees, of the common predicaments in which they find themselves and which have the potential to unite them (Werbner 1991a, 1991b). This is despite the multiple differences within and between them along class, gender, age lines as well as immigration status. The effects of this growing awareness of a unity that could transcend difference can be profitably explored using Pnina Werbner's conceptual schema of three critical stages that set urban protest movements in motion: localised associative empowerment, ideological convergence and finally mobilisation (Werbner 1991a:15).

The first stage is marked by the development of an associative network that focuses on distinct cultural or political issues. Associative empowerment, Werbner argues, usually takes the form of associational growth, where associations emerge typically to address a wide variety of objectives ranging from social and cultural activities to political goals and concerns with group welfare (Werbner 1991a:15). This emergence has various

dimensions, often resulting from some form of struggle or battle for autonomy, power and/or resources. Alongside unifying aspects, associations can also be characterised by ideological and personal divisions and conflict, as well as competition for resources. Despite this competition between associations, seen as a whole this associative network is, Werbner argues, united in its drive to establish distinctive cultural or political institutions (1991a:16). The second stage is ideological convergence: the formulation of common discourses and a set of objectives in relation to the state and the contemporary condition of the group within the wider society (1991a:16). Through alignment with other minority groups, associations identify a set of universalistic values whilst working hard to maintain their particularistic goals. The third and final stage is mobilisation, where the movement emerges as a recognisable, public *protest* movement (1991a:17, emphasis in original). Werbner argues this usually occurs when there is an issue or event threatening community autonomy or solidarity. Whilst tensions and divisions exist both within and between groups, these associations (and the wider associative network) generally pool resources and skills through collective action and practices of solidarity. Werbner argues that these three stages capture the formative stages of *potential* urban social movements, whilst also recognising that many such associative networks never become fully fledged movements.

Werbner's conceptual schema is particularly useful. Firstly it provides a framework to explore and understand transformative change within groups but also across to other associations who share a common stand against structural inequalities. Secondly it provides a 'way in' to the internal dynamics of associational life, whilst recognising that the group exists within a wider context that presents both constraints and opportunities. Thirdly, through its three-stage framework, this schema also facilitates a deeper analysis of internal politics as they might evolve and develop over time. Too often, these politics are glossed over, lending an air of romanticism to analyses of migrant associations and sanitising the complex and sometimes difficult internal relations that directly influence association sustainability (c.f. Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Sivanandan 1985; Rex *et al* 1987; July 1996). It is argued in this thesis that a more thorough, critical account which includes analyses of acts of solidarity alongside internal struggles will generate a different, more holistic picture of the shape of an association over time.

However, despite offering a conceptual language for studying association emergence and continuity, and different internal and external factors affecting these processes, there are

also problems with Werbner's framework. Firstly, whilst such a framework is effective in that it can reduce complexity to a manageable form, it is at risk of presenting an overly stagist notion of social change as linear, suggesting associations move rather neatly from one stage to the next, thus failing to account for the ways in which different factors and variables affect this trajectory. Similarly to Sivanandan (1985, 1990) who argued that the 'race relations' political agenda fragmented cohesiveness across association practices that had emerged as part of a wider 'black struggle', an important question seems to be to what extent the changing structural context as it relates to asylum and immigration legislation will affect the trajectory of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations. A further problem with this framework is that the differences in the stages presented by Werbner can also be understood as co-present in each stage. Not all immigrant and minority associations at a local level 'ideologically converge', nor necessarily do so at the same time. Equally, different association types may also co-exist, for example they may concentrate on particularistic cultural or political goals, *and* converge around a broader set of structural inequalities. A focus on organisational trajectories over time may well reveal the co-presence of these differences, although this is not made clear in the way in which Werbner presents her argument. Moreover, state and local state policies may enable different interest groups to exist side by side. As I will demonstrate in this thesis the co-presence of differences in each stage can be partly explained by the processual character of immigration status. This is an important aspect which tends to be missing from even the more critical accounts of association practice (for example in the writings of Sivanandan and Werbner cited here).

Whilst offering important advances for the study of immigrant associational practices, both Werbner's and Sivanandan's approaches take for granted the very existence of stable 'co-ethnic' or 'co-national' foundations upon which to build new lives, and engage in relations with the state and civil society. The extent to which this represents the experience of all migrants is questionable. Equally, immigration status is presented as generally undifferentiated, arguably imposing homogeneity on a highly diverse population for whom the very notion of stability in relation to the immigration status cannot be taken as a given. Importantly, in much the way that bureaucratic administrators impose a fictive unity on ethnicised groups (a criticism levied at 'race relations' thinking by Sivanandan (1985) and Werbner 1991a), the failure to attend to the effects of differentiated immigration status and migrant incorporation regimes on the emergence and continuity of associations runs the very risk of constructing a fictive unity around the undifferentiated monolithic category of



‘immigrants’. Finally although Werbner’s framework provides an account of the process of change as it affects groups, and so does provide a life-cycle perspective, the effects of change on internal relations, and how such relations impact upon association trajectories is less clear, that is how this movement through her three stages is experienced from within..

Despite these shortcomings, the value of Werbner’s staged framework (1991a) is that it does provide a structure within which a complex reality can be considered. Indeed, I argue that the way Werbner conceptualises the different stages of associational emergence and mobilisation as a heuristic device means that there is scope for a less linear and overly stagist notion of change. In this sense it can be modified to account for the co-existence of discrete groups often in competition with each other for power and resources, but which, as Chapters 5-8 will illustrate, also assert strong universalistic claims of both ideological convergence, mobilisation and alignment with each other and other BME populations. Finally, Werbner’s critique of externally imposed fictive unity presents a particularly useful and insightful framework for considering internal processes within associations. Such processes relate to how associations are affected by internal relations including institutional structures, organisational hierarchies and issues of leadership and representativeness, to which the discussion shall now turn.

### ***Theorising internal relations, leadership and representativeness***

The theorisation and study of internal group processes and relations is generally lacking in many key studies of immigrant and minority association life (for example Rex *et al* 1987; Sivanandan 1990; Portes and Zhou 1993).<sup>8</sup> Such processes are underpinned by internal structures and Werbner argues that studying these is as important as studying the interface between groups and the wider context (Werbner 1991a, 1991b). This requires a detailed analysis of recurrent internal patterns and processes, including issues of organisational hierarchies and leadership, levels of representativeness and participation and issues of funding, all of which are important component parts of associational life. Following the above presentation and discussion of Werbner’s framework of associational emergence as a form of urban protest movement, Barker *et al* (2001) argue in relation to social

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<sup>8</sup> One important exception is Werbner and Anwar (1991) although the focus is very much on black and ethnic leadership, as opposed to wider internal relations between ordinary members.

movement organisations that, given their instability, the few material resources they can command, and the non-routinised nature of tasks, the success or failure of such organisations is highly dependent on the qualities, commitment and ‘craft’ of leadership (2001:2). The same uncertain context may also be applied to immigrant and asylum seeker and refugee-led associations and their subsequent dependency on leaders to encourage development and ensure continuity.

Leadership and representativeness pose specific problems for asylum seeker and refugee associations for a number of reasons: these groups can be seen as particularly fragile in comparison with other established communities, and their newness, precariousness, exclusion and internal diversity make the issue of trust between individuals particularly salient (Hynes 2003). Similarly to immigrant associations, where this translates into a lack of charismatic organic leaders, it can lead to a proliferation of small cliques which then blocks representativeness and access to resources (Werbner 1991a). Even where such a clique is absent, leaders are continuously under suspicion. Barker *et al* (2001) also state that leaders are challenged from within and without, and that the role of the leader is in principle situational and provisional, only as good as her or his last effort, held to account by wider members, and indeed external publics (2001:16).

Werbner argues that this is because the majority of ethnic leaders at the local level occupy an ‘intercalary role’: they deal with the state on the state’s terms and their access to elite networks through their leadership positions “makes them suspect, even if they are often esteemed for their communal work” (Werbner 1991a:17). Werbner’s use of the intercalary notion is particularly interesting as it builds upon Gluckman’s famous notion of intercalary roles of hereditary village headmen in the colonial context, who stood between and linked different forms of political integration (Gluckman, Mitchell and Barnes 1949). Manchester School anthropologists described and analysed the political activity surrounding the holders of such roles in the context of colonial administrations in Africa, especially in the terms in which these were subject to conflicting interests of both the political (colonial) order and the colonised subjects. Across studies into subjects as varied as the social networks in an urban African community (Mitchell 1956), the political hierarchy of colonial Africa (Gluckman 1968), and the politics, competition and relations among groups and individuals within an African village (Kuper 1970), the intercalary position is identified as one which straddles community, village and the state, where domestic and

political spheres are distinct (R. Werbner 1984, 2002). In the British colonial context, the emergence of intercalary leaders resulted from a 'divide and rule' ideology, where colonial administrations imposed social hierarchies which created small 'native' elites to help keep the broader population in line. However, this process also fostered distrust at a local level amidst community members of such leaders, deemed by the local community as complicit with the colonial order. Although the focus in these studies is on village life more generally, this can, Werbner (1991a) argues, be applied to a level of association life more specifically and in the post colonial context, the village headman finds its counterpart in 'elected office'. This reveals interesting parallels between the colonial administration of colonised subjects overseas and post-colonial administration of minority ethnic groups in the metropole. The critique of 'elected' representatives also resonates with Sivanandan's attack on the establishment of black middle-class administrators (1985). Despite their local esteem, Werbner highlights a mistrust of leaders within minority ethnic associations (1991a) which could be seen as a vestige of this 'divide and rule' dimension of indirect rule, resulting in the rejection of such intercalary leaders, who are considered by 'communities' to be complicit with the state in maintaining the status quo.

But rather than focus on an over-simplistic notion of effective leadership which can only be considered as legitimate if it is seen to be independent of the state, Werbner argues in a compelling and constructive way that issues of leadership and representativeness must be understood within a constellation of relations in terms of 'centre' and 'periphery' (Werbner 1991a:18). The 'ethnic centre' is constituted by its close-knit networks and intense 'ethnic-specific' sociability. 'Centres' are where dense networks of intense interaction are located, providing a social base and cultural *raison d'être*. This is where specific 'ethnic' interests are located (Werbner 1991b:119). The 'periphery' is made up of individuals who have developed and established social and cultural links across, in Werbner's terms, the 'ethnic' boundary, and in the present thesis can also be understood as across the association boundary. Organisations headed by leaders from the 'centre' are concerned to a greater extent with parochial or exclusive issues. Werbner contrasts this with 'peripheral leaders', who, in one sense or another move with greater ease and have greater contact with the wider society (1991a: 21). They fulfil the role of 'ethnic brokers', acting as a buffer between the interests of the 'community' and the wider society.

There is of course more to leadership than status: it is indeed a craft which builds upon individual resources and skills, including passionate engagement of will, commitment, and the capacity to speak and listen (Werbner 1991b; Solomos and Back 1995; Gibb 2001). However, these personal qualities are not enough. Leaders also rely upon resources supplied by structures: a thick web of communications or layers of people who share strategic ideas (Barker *et al* 2001:13). Such personal and structural resources, a critical source of capital and credit (Bailey 1969) are often learned through participation within organic movements (Lichterman 1996, 2002). This learning begins as unplanned but becomes highly effective, and it is this knowledge and experience which takes on premium value. In many respects it takes on a greater value than the cultural capital, in its traditional form, that an affluent elite may use to assert authority and influence public affairs (Barker *et al* 2001). This pattern can be profitably contrasted with Werbner and Anwar (1991), where the majority of black and ethnic leaders in their edited collection of essays did indeed belong to an ethnic intellectual or affluent business elite involved in the day-to-day running of association affairs (Werbner 1991b:126).

In theorising leadership-internal/external relations, Werbner suggests that the most effective and mobile immigrant groups appear to be those retaining a viable link between cultural 'centre' and an entrepreneurial 'periphery' (Werbner 1991b:117). Whilst this produces interesting insights into the relations between leaders and established minorities, the extent to which this argument holds for the internal/external relations for non-labour migrants/'unsettled' minorities is less clear. As this chapter will go on to discuss in detail, the circumstances that give rise to the emergence of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations and their leaders (or management committees) are not, however, the same as other ethnic minorities (Salinas *et al* 1987; Carey-Wood 1995; Kelly 2003). These are 'unsettled' populations which do not have the benefit of established elite networks or systems of patronage. If the 'centre-periphery' model is to have analytical purchase in relation to asylum seekers and refugees, it must also take into account their newness, exclusion and the fragmented and precarious nature of asylum seeker and refugee social ties in comparison to more established populations of migrants and the fact that although often competing with each other, migrant groups do not operate on a level playing field of opportunities. Finally, Barker *et al* (2001) argue there is a myth that all movements (and one can read here associations) think the same or act as simple and undifferentiated entities, and this lack of engagement with internal processes in many 'RCO' studies (for example Salinas *et al* 1987; Wahlbeck 1997; Griffiths *et al* 2005) is an important limitation

of these studies that will be discussed further below. Movements (and again, one can read associations) are “arenas of discussion and argument, out of which can emerge at best unstable and provisional forms of collective understanding, identity and action which are contingent and situational” (Barker *et al* 2001:4). Within these diverse entities, the issue of representativeness cannot be taken for granted.

Unlike leadership, representativeness is an issue frequently dealt with in the literature on immigrant and BME associations. As identified at the beginning of this chapter, immigrant and BME organisations act as a vital ‘buffer’ between the state and black communities (Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex *et al* 1987; Massey *et al* 1998; Sivanandan 2000). In return for this ‘representative’ role, the state has frequently been both a financial and political ‘patron’ of the BME voluntary sector (Sivanandan 1990; Werbner and Anwar 1991). The various contributions in Werbner and Anwar (1991) address the problem of local authorities co-opting associations in certain decision-making processes, a process further critiqued by Sivanandan as involving an inclusionary rhetoric which perpetuates exclusionary practices (Sivanandan 1985, 1990). More generally, the issue of who speaks for whom is highly pertinent to any study of association life, questioning whether association representatives are or can be being truly representative as voices of their membership. This issue also emphasises the importance of counter-balancing perspectives (an aspect dealt with here and at different points in Chapters 5-8). There are other aspects of representativeness that have not been sufficiently problematised in immigrant association studies (and ‘RCO’ studies as I shall go on to explore), and in this section I will address two of these. The first relates to the role of ‘leaders’ as delegated representatives of a ‘community’, the second relates to the issue of the homogenising effect of claims to representativeness.

An analysis of the role of leaders as delegated representatives builds upon the previous critique of black leaders identified through ‘race relations’ approaches (Sivanandan 1985), the above discussion of leadership and intercalary roles and the shaping of ‘centre-periphery’ relationships by internal/external relationships (Werbner 1991b). Although Werbner and Bourdieu do not directly engage with each other, Bourdieu (1991) offers an interesting analysis of the relationship between a representative and the represented which connects with Werbner’s arguments. Common-sense understandings about delegation of representatives might suggest a unidirectional flow of power and control: the group

appoints the representative and the group collective will serve as the basis for any decision a representative makes on the group's behalf. Noting, however, that the power of a representative, or delegate, can "transcend" that of the group represented, Bourdieu inverts this understanding (1991:203). He suggests that "in appearance the group creates the man [*sic*] who speaks in its place and in its name" but "in reality it is more or less just as true to say that it is the spokesperson who creates the group" (1991:204). A delegate's power transcends that of the group, not because the group assigns its collective power to one delegate, but because it is the delegate who has the ability to define, or "incarnate" the group (1991:204), in Werbner's term, taking on the intercalary role (Werbner 1991b).

Bourdieu explains how a delegate exercises power beyond that of the group she putatively represents. The delegate is not just a representative of the group, but "function[s] as a sign in place of the totality of the group" (1991:206). The values of the group come to be defined by the delegate. The delegate "make[s] himself [*sic*] appear necessary" by "produc[ing] the difficulty that he [*sic*] alone will be able to solve" (1991:210). Eventually the delegate makes him or herself one with his group (1991:211). Bourdieu describes this last move as the "oracle effect" wherein the delegate is endowed with the transcendent power of the group. The delegate not only speaks for the group but can speak to members of the group, specifically in order to define who is or is not a member. At this point individual members lose control over the definition of the group. The only option open to would-be dissenters is to break off and start another group (1991:212). The delegate, speaking in the name of the group, calls it "into visible existence" (1991:207). The group serves the purposes of the delegate and not the reverse.

This interesting inversion relates to the above discussion of the construction of intercalary leaders and the mistrust they can also foster, leading to dissent (Werbner 1991a) and will be analysed in greater detail in the empirical chapters to follow. It also reveals a process by which external support agencies may equally take on a delegated representative position, thus reinforcing power asymmetries. In relation to asylum seekers and refugees, Rainbird (2011) argues that the dominant representation of asylum seekers as problematic, isolated and largely vulnerable dependents by service providers has specific implications, revealing the asymmetrical relations between this population and external actors. Following Bourdieu (1991), Rainbird perceptively highlights ways in which such constructions enable support agencies to assume an "exclusive position of expertise and

knowledge of asylum seekers' predicament which is used to sustain their own existence" (Rainbird 2011:6). Again, there are parallels here with Werbner's conceptualisation of intercalary leaders (Werbner 1991b), except in this instance it is an external agency taking on this role. This depiction of asylum seekers as a vulnerable commodity (Harrell-Bond 1986) is one way in which funding can be sought by external agencies to provide assistance, thus rationalising and ensuring their own existence as support agencies representative of the needs of these populations, aspects of which will be discussed later in this chapter and in Chapters Six and Eight. Weaving together Bourdieu's inversion with Werbner's analysis of intercalary leadership and Rainbird's argument outlined above, I will argue at different points in the subsequent empirical chapters that, by adopting the exclusive position of expertise and knowledge, external agencies hold the power to also render these associations into visible existence on national and international political agendas, and to further ensure their stake "in the asylum seeker industry" (Rainbird 2011:5). Framed in this way, external agencies could be understood as acting as representatives of groups to other external actors - adopting an intercalary role - thus taking control over the definition of the group. Bourdieu argues once that delegate is charged with representing the group in the larger social or political field, members of the group have less reason to come together themselves and act (Bourdieu 1991:218), thus reinforcing the exclusive position of the delegate/expert external agencies. Whether or how ordinary members question the intercalary role experts can be understood as adopting (following Werbner 1991a) remains largely unexplored by Werbner or Bourdieu and will be analysed in the later empirical chapters.

While Bourdieu rejects a simple conception of unidirectional control from group to delegate (and see also Barker *et al* 2001), he does not present the delegate as "a cynical calculator who consciously deceives the people, but someone who in all good faith *takes himself to be* something that he is not [*sic*]" (Bourdieu 1991:214, emphasis in original). Delegates do not operate to fulfil pure self interest but rather the coinciding interests of delegate and group, believing themselves to be working for the group. This is not to say that interests always coincide. The delegate (whether a management committee or an external support agency) can redefine the interests of the group and defend those interests with an appeal to the group she purportedly represents. But, in believing she operates in the interests of the group, the delegate is sincere in her actions (see also Rainbird 2011). Bourdieu's inversion of the group/delegate relationship appears to undercut any notion of group agency, and whether this is indeed the case will be explored in Chapters 6-8. He

suggests that the act of delegation is a conscious decision of the group, but the result of the inverted relationship of the delegate-leader is not recognised consciously by the group members, or indeed by external support agencies. These issues will be explored in the empirical chapters, as will the patterns Bourdieu presents as occurring following the delegation of representatives, the implications of delegation for ensuring ongoing representativeness, which in his perspective is questionable as it relates to the wider membership, and the effects this has on associational continuity.

The second aspect of representativeness to be addressed relates to the issue of the homogenising effect of claims to representativeness. The quest to define and categorise nascent communities as belonging to some minority imposes artificial ties and boundaries on complex social realities (Wahlbeck 1998). In much the same way that immigrant associations are unproblematically viewed as the formal platform of minorities in terms of representation (Home Office 1975; Sivanandan 1985; Werbner and Anwar 1991) so too does the ‘RCO’ come to be considered by state and non-state actors to be the formal ‘community platform’ for refugee communities (Home Office 2004, 2009; Daniel *et al* 2010). The issue of representation in relation to asylum seeker and refugee-led associations often focuses on internal relationships rather than the effects of an imposed fictive unity by external actors. As has been argued in this chapter (following Sivanandan 1985 and Werbner 1991a, but also Phillimore and Goodson 2010), resource allocation is driven by imperatives of administrative efficiency and equity, imposing a fictive unity where organisations often then mediate access to resources for all the ‘members’ they supposedly represent. The problem with this fictional unity is that only one particular association may be seen to speak (and hence be funded) for a specific community (Salinas *et al* 1987; Griffiths *et al* 2005). The enhanced role ‘RCOs’ are expected to play in service provision (see Home Office 2004:15) makes this increasingly problematic, as does the fact that associations can be characterised by great internal heterogeneity, in relation to class, gender and immigration status.<sup>9</sup> Finally, what of the specificity of the ‘RCO’ label itself in capturing this internal diversity, or indeed in reflecting processes of change within such groups? A central argument of this thesis is to move beyond ‘refugeeness’ by recognising that it is only one of many different intersecting social identities that exist within groups.

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<sup>9</sup> This point on the enhanced role of ‘RCOs’ echoes the political rhetoric of the Home Office in 1975, when it identified the vital need to ‘tap into the reservoirs of resilience, initiatives and vigour within racial minority groups’ (Home Office 1975),



Thus far, this chapter has explored ‘race relations’ approaches and more radical perspectives to understanding immigrant and minority association practices, from which I have identified a number of important insights but also limitations. A central weakness of the studies discussed is their lack of attention to the experiences of non-labour migrants, and specifically to the associational experiences of asylum seekers and refugees. A central problem then can be framed by how well these studies ‘fit’ with the structural context accommodating asylum seekers and refugees and the association practices of these newly settling populations who face some similar, but also many different and new challenges, in building social networks in the place of exile. Their differences lie mainly in the conditions asylum seekers face: their *newness* to their place of ‘settlement; their significant *social exclusion* from mainstream institutions; and the *extreme precariousness* of their members’ immigration status (Zetter and Pearl 2000; Hynes 2003; Bloch and Schuster 2005) all of which combined produce a context of *non-settlement*. Despite the sense that many asylum seekers share this experience of *non-settlement*, these are nevertheless *internally diverse groups*, bringing together individuals from different social, economic, classed and gendered positions, and with different immigration status, as will be discussed below. In this last respect they are of course similar to immigrant associations generally (and other forms of association). However, the relationship between these features is often overlooked when these associations are labelled with a specific, fixed collective identity by external actors (Home Office 2004, 2009). The interplay of newness, precariousness, social exclusion and internal diversity is also central to continuity, but, as will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter, it is often overlooked in key studies exploring, specifically, ‘refugee community organisations’ or ‘RCOs’.

### **Key ‘RCO’ studies: contributions and limitations**

The last decade has witnessed a growing body of social scientific research that has developed as a sort of sub-discipline of immigration associations, particularly since the implementation of dispersal policy under the UK 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act. This research explores the specific emergence and role of asylum seeker and refugee associations and the different conditions giving rise to their emergence. Generally, but not exclusively, categorised as ‘Refugee Community Organisations’ (‘RCOs’) (Salinas *et al* 1987; Gold 1992; Wahlbeck 1997; Zetter and Pearl 2000; Kelly 2003; Zetter *et al* 2005,

2006; Griffiths *et al* 2005; Phillimore and Goodson 2010)<sup>10</sup>, these studies offer important insights into how associations and social networks may function as a source of social capital and as a critical mechanism for coping and survival in exile. The wider literature on dispersal and asylum stresses the point that groups emerge from desperate circumstances, and will be considered in greater detail in Chapter Four (Hynes 2003; Bloch and Schuster 2005; Griffiths *et al* 2005). The instability of individual lives is apparent in the ambiguities associated with their unresolved immigration status and it follows, in my view, that any study of their associational activities must be located within this wider structural context of *non-settlement*. This is a key foundation for the analysis presented in this thesis. The ‘RCO’ studies cited above effectively address many of the limitations of ‘race relations’/immigrant association studies already discussed in this chapter, particularly in recognising the specific circumstances relating to asylum seekers and refugees, the way in which community is conceptualised and their complex asymmetrical relations with the state. The following section will focus on what I have identified as key studies in the emergence of ‘RCO’ literature, mapping out developments in this sub-field since the late 1980s.

The first significant study to emerge is a London-based analysis of what are described as Refugee Based Organisations (RBOs), made up of quota refugees and individual asylum seekers for whom UK government programmes had made no special provision (Salinas, Pritchard and Kibedi 1987). The research was designed around semi-structured interviews based upon a questionnaire with RBO representatives (with leaders and employees but not ordinary members or service users), with ethnic associations for a comparative perspective and with government officials. A key assumption underlying this study is that the process of resettlement is not adequately understood or supported by external agencies. Its aims include examining the functions of refugee associations, identifying the problems most affecting refugee communities in Britain and the gaps in services provided to refugees. Salinas *et al* (1987) focus on groups that have established in London at different times (identifying different waves of Polish and Ghanaian migrants in particular), and this has, the authors argue, influenced the focus and objectives of group practice. For example, they found that established refugee groups focus on cultural activities generally, with welfare

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<sup>10</sup> A basic and important premise of this thesis is that ‘RCO’ constitutes a bureaucratic category, which in many respects fails to capture the internal diversity and dynamic nature of the associations studied in my own research. When I refer to ‘RCOs’ I do so in relation to previous studies which use this as a category for analysis. I refer instead to asylum seeker and refugee-led associations or simply associations when discussing the groups involved in my research study. The term asylum seeker and refugee-led captures the migrant status of majority members at the point of association emergence.

work concentrated on specific groups such as the elderly or the young in their community. In contrast, newer non-quota based groups concentrate welfare work on the broad range of problems affecting asylum seekers.

Although it is clear in this study that members of the different groups studied have different legal status, engagement with the effects of differentiated immigration status is largely limited to the subjective experience of undecided status, (for example, respondents spoke of more severe experiences of depression linked to the uncertainty of undecided asylum claims and how associations may support this (Salinas *et al* 1987:14)). Potential effects of differentiated or changing immigration status on internal relations and organisational capabilities and sustainability are not explored. Furthermore, given that different timescales of migration are identified as a source of internal diversity, Salinas *et al* (1987) pay little attention to different legislative policies relating to asylum seeker or refugee incorporation. Nor is there critical engagement with the notion of ‘settlement’, how this might change over time, and how it is understood from the refugees’ perspective. In fact, no definition of ‘settlement’ is offered and so its meaning appears to be taken for granted, often confused with ‘integration’. This results in conceptual confusion, with both notions being used in a unidirectional way: what refugees do to integrate/‘settle’, rather than what external actors (state, quasi and non-state, housing authorities, schools and employers) may do to facilitate better integration and “accommodation in British society” (1987: 31). An assessment of the notion of ‘settlement’ in terms of the social and structural conditions facing asylum seekers and refugees is necessary on two levels. Firstly to identify the many structural barriers facing such groups and their members, and secondly to begin to frame association practice as a potentially transformative experience rather than in purely functional terms. I have already identified this last point as a key problem in immigrant association literature and it is one which continues to surface with this study.

Interestingly, there is a focus in Salinas *et al*’s study on factions as affecting continuity, particularly along political and class lines. The authors recognise that these differences do not limit cooperation, and identify umbrella organisations which emerge particularly around the structural exclusion of members, despite ideological, political, class differences. Salinas *et al* (1987) also identify articulations of solidarity between refugees and migrants generally in response to discriminatory treatment they each receive. So despite identifying

a focus on particularistic identities, groups are indeed united over many issues such as the need for training, improved employment opportunities and challenging racism. In this sense, the study presents as an alternative perspective on the divisive culturalism that Sivanandan (1985) argues is characteristic of communitarian politics in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. A more explicit engagement with Sivanandan's argument on the divisive effects of 'race relations' on community solidarity (1985) and how this fragmented a political cohesiveness amongst differentiated communities would have provided an interesting comparative framework. Furthermore, although suggestive of practices of solidarity mobilised around causes rather than thin, externally constructed evocations of shared ethnicity and imposed fictive unity, Salinas *et al's* (1987) analysis lacks a conceptual framework for understanding unity despite difference. In this regard it may be usefully mapped onto Werbner's three stages of associative empowerment, ideological convergence and mobilisation (Werbner 1991a), as will be explored further in Chapter Eight. Failure to engage with ordinary member's views is an important shortcoming of this otherwise insightful study, especially as this means the authors cannot provide the insider experience of group life. Finally, despite recognition that groups change over time, the life cycle perspective is missing: there is no discussion on how change occurs or manifests in groups which is disappointing and in some ways surprising given Salinas *et al* (1987) are researching groups who have emerged over a relatively wide timeframe. Again this can be understood as a consequence of the largely functional approach adopted in this study.

In his comparative ethnographic study of adaptation to resettlement in California on the part of Soviet Jew and Vietnamese refugee groups, Gold (1992) attends to some of the limitations identified in Salinas *et al* (1987). Based on the author's experience as an English language teacher and resettlement worker from 1982 to 1990, Gold rejects what he terms an artificial distinction between refugees and immigrants and, emphasising the self-determining aspects of both groups, draws upon wider migration literature to explore community life. The present thesis seeks to build upon this by problematising the notion of 'refugeeness' that the term 'RCO' reproduces. Gold argues that studies of refugee adaptation have been guided more by the policy and problem-oriented approach of social services agencies than by sociological inquiry, and that this has created a literature that overemphasises community solidarity among refugee populations (a theme later picked up by Griffiths *et al* (2005) and which will be discussed further below).

A key argument in this study is that (and against dominant ‘race relations’ thinking on the natural formation of groups), ethnic mobilisation and the development of ethnic communities are not inevitable for all migrants, and that refugee populations are equally likely to be characterised by diversity and fragmentation. Gold’s research depicts a lack of community-wide organisation and a prevalence of informal associations at the local level, and again Griffiths *et al* (2005) concur on these findings in their study of ‘RCOs’ in the UK post dispersal. He identifies diversity rather than ethnic solidarity as the defining characteristic of both groups; although he does allow the possibility that such solidarity may emerge over time. Echoing Rex and Tomlinson (1979), Sivanandan (1985) and Salinas *et al* (1987), Gold also explores the emergence of what he calls a reactive solidarity (1992:160) when groups reject the paternalistic approach to resettlement support that they feel does not account for their interests, but those of both public and private sector funders who are concerned primarily with eligibility for funding (Gold 1992:236; see also Sivanandan 1990 and Werbner 1991a, 1991b).

Community segmentation and diversity are key findings in Gold’s analysis and emerge in both groups in terms of class, ethnic and national identity, religion, region and ideology. However, his evaluation of community life fails to engage with any systematic discussion of the internal processes and structures of these (sub)groups, the politics of social relations and how these are mediated by internal and external processes. This is despite Gold’s own explicit concern with studying different lines of internal division around class, ethnicity, religion and ideology and how these lead to stratified and fragmented communities (1992). As with Salinas *et al* (1987), Gold notes that the refugee groups he studied are divided into distinct subgroups and “waves”. However, the potential effects of different immigration status of, and the legislative frameworks affecting different “waves” of refugees on association life is missing, which would have added a useful critical layer to this study of ‘settlement’ through collective experience. Nonetheless, Gold’s efforts to move beyond policy-based categories is an important contribution to the literature on refugee communities, as his return to the longstanding tradition of the immigrant ethnography (as seen in work of Thomas and Znaniecki [1918-1920] (1958) and Wirth (1928), and which this thesis seeks to build upon). Also significant is his analysis of local level collectivism which, Gold argues, although effective in some regards is often blocked by a lack of power and resources to solve different problems refugees face, especially in relation to employment, housing and political engagement. Taking Gold’s questioning of the inevitability of community further, and addressing it in a way that has been largely ignored

in 'race relations' approaches is a key feature and strength of the following 'RCO' studies by Wahlbeck (1997, 1998) and Kelly (2001, 2003).

In exploring Kurdish community associations in London (1998) (and an earlier comparative study of London and Finland (1997)), Wahlbeck discusses the extent to which the politicisation of refugee associations is a help or hindrance for refugees in their new country of settlement. Using an interactionist approach adopting grounded theory techniques, and drawing upon previous experience of working as a social worker with these populations, Wahlbeck conducted semi-structured interviews (half of his interviews in the UK required a Kurdish Sorani or Turkish interpreter) both with refugees who were active in associations as well as with persons who avoided all Kurdish organisations. In this sense, he provides an important, and often-neglected, engagement with active members, ordinary members and disinterested parties. Interviews were combined with analysis of printed association materials and ethnographic methods including a limited number of field visits to associations and several different Kurdish public gatherings and private meetings at various locations (although the significant language barrier limited participation and so observation was used largely to confirm findings from other methods).

Wahlbeck explores the effects of political events and conflicts at 'home' on emerging associations and how these continue to influence and often divide associations in exile. He found limited scope for Kurdish refugee organisations to establish themselves in the long-term. Notwithstanding these divisions, Wahlbeck also found evidence of well functioning smaller groups and concludes that these same political differences could unite individuals, and that despite the strong orientations to homeland, these groups can in fact provide useful resources for refugees in exile (1997, 1998). This study very usefully highlights the importance of connecting refugee resettlement policy to more fundamental and wider reaching ideological developments relating to the role of the state, civil society and the relations between them. Of note is the emphasis in British society on 'local community' that resonates with more recent debates relating to neoliberal concerns to constrain welfare provision and increase processes of 'self-reliance' and 'participation' in civil society (Phillimore and McCabe 2010). This notion of local community is founded in the multicultural discourse in the UK, which sees people as belonging to specific, usually culturally defined communities distinct from each other with clear boundaries (Sivanandan 1985, 1990, Griffiths *et al* 2005). Importantly, Wahlbeck describes the notion

‘community’ as it is ascribed to refugee populations as putting “a label put on a very complex reality” (1998:219). So although Wahlbeck recognises a value of associations, he highlights the danger that authorities may impose artificial ethnic boundaries on a complex and diverse social reality (in line with Sivanandan 1985, 1990; Werbner 1991a and Kelly 2003, whose study into Bosnian community will be discussed further below).

Interestingly Wahlbeck (1998) contends that (at the time of publication of his study) refugees are seldom distinguished from other migrants or ethnic minorities in British public discourses. He goes on to argue that, because of the dominant communitarian policies towards ethnic minorities in Britain, there is a tendency to regard refugees as ‘ethnic minorities’ in a multicultural society, but that refugee communities have very different experiences and these are in danger of being overlooked. This thesis will explore this further, but from a reverse angle: firstly considering whether the compartmentalisation of asylum seeker and refugee-led associational practices as those of a specific migrant group actually works against their ability to access alternative BME discourses and identifications; and secondly, reflecting upon the effects of such compartmentalisation on the categorisation of asylum seekers and refugees as (un)settled populations. Wahlbeck (1997, 1998) reveals a number of important insights: he identifies how the politicisation of groups as opposed to mobilisation around ethnicised and/or religious identifications is potentially divisive and has exclusionary effects. Nonetheless he argues that the practical functions of groups can be very effective for early settlement experiences, for example, transmitting information, orientation, social and practical support. Many associations may indeed exist but whether they are representative of a Kurdish community is contested.

This last point is taken up further by Kelly (2001, 2003) in her analysis of ‘community’ amongst Bosnian refugees granted temporary status protection in Britain. Similarly to Wahlbeck, she adopts an interactionist and grounded theory approach, conducting semi-structured interviews and some participant observation, although the latter is used primarily comparatively with interviews to confirm or contrast findings. Like Gold (1992) and Wahlbeck (1997), she too draws upon her professional experience of working with Bosnian refugees. Kelly argues that policies of encouraging the formation of community associations and self-help organisations were originally intended to assist labour migrants and later minority ethnic groups in Britain, in line with the model of multiculturalism developed in Britain (2001). However these have become an imposed model of

organisation that is problematic, constructing a fictive unity around community relations (following Sivanandan 1990 and Werbner 1991a although she does not directly engage with their analyses). Kelly found that the Bosnian community groups in her research emerged primarily from suggestions by social actors outside of the ‘community’ that ‘they’ should organise, rather than from the willingness of Bosnians themselves to form groups (c.f. Sivanandan 1985; Bourdieu 1991 and Rainbird 2011).

Questioning the very existence of ‘community’ within emergent groups, Kelly conceptualises the practices of collective action she studied as those of ‘contingent communities’ whose public faces are formed for specific ends to conform to ‘host’ society expectations in order to gain the advantages of a formal community association (and in particular access to funds and other forms of support) (Kelly 2003:41). By contrast, the private face of the group remains unconstituted as a community, or, put more simply, a group has a formal structure but no informal community supporting it. This concept of ‘contingent community’ seems important to challenge often unproblematic assumptions that refugees naturally form communities in their place of exile, and whether the needs of individuals are best met by formal associations (an argument also taken up by Wahlbeck 1997 and later by Griffiths *et al* 2005). Indeed, it can also be extended to evaluating immigrant and minority associations more generally.

Building upon Gold’s (1992) focus on community segmentation and diversity, both Wahlbeck (1997, 1998) and Kelly’s (2001, 2003) findings contest the dominant multicultural framework that underpins refugee and immigrant ‘settlement’ in Britain because, as they argue in their studies, there is no singular community to speak of. As Wahlbeck and Kelly point out, these groups are disinclined to mobilise around ethnicity. However, although both authors critique the dominant communitarian policies of multiculturalism, neither draws from more radical perspectives (for example led by Sivanandan (1982, 1985, 1990) or Werbner (1991a, 1991b) as discussed earlier) on how ‘race relations’ have undone cohesiveness and imposed fictive unity upon ethnicised/nationalised groups. Such an engagement would have firstly provided an opportunity to extend Sivanandan’s critique of the corrosive effects of ‘race relations’ thinking beyond the focus on labour-migrants and colour-coded understandings of difference. Secondly through exploring how imposed fictive unity might affect refugee associations, it would have provided a potential pathway forward for moving beyond



‘refugeeness’, to reveal different manifestations of cultural divisiveness and how these are operationalised by immigration policy and migrant incorporation regimes more widely. As argued earlier in this chapter, Sivanandan’s work is particularly instructive in revealing not only earlier cohesions between differently categorised (ethnicised/nationalised/racialised) groups but also ways in which these cohesions come undone by the very same policies Wahlbeck and Kelly both identify as imposing artificial ties on the complex social realities of refugees.

Despite providing an insightful analysis into association emergence, both Wahlbeck (1997, 1998) and Kelly (2001, 2003) lack a framework for understanding how associations develop over time. In this sense, they would have benefited from engaging with Werbner’s work on the stages of association mobilisation (1991a), which could have provided a useful way of exploring the life cycle of the associations. As it stands, there is very little sense of what happens to groups over time, and how life is affected by wider structural contexts. Taking this further, critical engagement with Werbner would also have challenged her three-stage framework as both Wahlbeck and Kelly argue that there is a distinct lack of ideological convergence and a greater focus on local and particularistic collectivism (as with Gold 1992). This would then be instructive in revealing and explaining the lack of mobilisation as both Wahlbeck and Kelly see it: lots of associations but no wider mobilisation. Such an engagement would have also highlighted the potential reductionism in Werbner’s framework (1991a, 1991b), particularly where ideological convergence is limited to ‘similar’ groups of co-nationals with shared objectives, for example Southeast Asians (Werbner) or Kurds (Wahlbeck) or Bosnians (Kelly). A final comment is that, although adopting an interactionist approach, neither Wahlbeck nor Kelly takes us inside groups to explore micro level interactions by way of internal processes and structures and issues of leadership, leaders and their relations with ordinary members. This would seem particularly salient to a study on political association practice (Wahlbeck 1998).

Whereas Wahlbeck and Kelly focus on specific groups (Kurds and Bosnians respectively), the first, and to date only significant comparative research into different ‘RCO’ groups is Griffiths, Sigona and Zetter (2005)’s important detailed analysis of UK-based ‘RCO’ experiences post dispersal. Drawing from semi-structured questionnaires and interviews with ‘RCO’ representatives, Griffiths *et al* (2005) compare ‘RCOs’ and current integration structures and strategies in London with those of two UK dispersal regions outside London

(the North West and West Midlands regions). This study explores various aspects of 'RCO' structures including managerial structures, geographical sizes of dispersal regions, establishment dates of 'RCOs', degrees of solidarity and how these features affect network development and organisational capacity. Griffiths *et al* (2005) identify that 'RCOs' have become formally incorporated as key stakeholders in the reception and integration of refugees and asylum-seekers, and provide a detailed examination of the roles and resource power of 'RCOs' in the context of restrictive state policy and legislation and unstable 'race relations'. Although the focus of study, the authors are critical of an over-emphasis on formal organisations at the expense of informal networks, which may be more significant for the maintenance of a wide variety of support mechanisms at a local, national and international level (2005:208).

This research highlights structural barriers 'RCOs', refugee networks and organisations more generally face in relation to integration and capacity-building, and finds that most 'RCOs' remain marginalised in the formal partnership arrangement with statutory authorities and NGOs, an argument Phillimore and Goodson also present as a continuing problem (2010). Griffiths *et al* (2005) also argue that many 'RCOs' actively avoid formalising their activities in order to retain autonomy in their actions, decisions and priorities and to avoid participating in the competitive funding-driven model of the British voluntary sector, (although Phillimore and Goodson (2010) did not identify this avoidance trend in their analysis of institutional barriers facing regional 'RCOs'). But Phillimore and Goodson (2010) did also find a divisiveness that translated to 'RCOs': some 'RCOs' in the West Midlands were reluctant to work with others because they felt they were all competing for the same funds. Rather than adopting an approach that would mean pooling of resources, ideas, information and contacts, these were instead guarded closely (2010:187). One outcome of these patterns that contribute to marginalisation is that most 'RCOs' are hard-pressed to identify and provide essential 'settlement' and integration services to all who require them.

Griffiths *et al's* (2005) critical review of the literature on social capital, social cohesion, and integration is an important theoretical contribution toward understanding why 'RCOs' remain challenged. This is particularly so in relation to the limited power 'RCOs' have to negotiate resource needs compared with their more powerful partners and so find they cannot initiate and sustain the development of individual and community resources. In many respects, these findings build upon those of Salinas *et al* (1987) and Gold (1992).

However, whilst offering important insights, one limitation of Griffiths *et al* (2005) relates to its insufficient engagement with the ways in which internal processes and structural (and institutional) arrangements affect association continuity. In what has become a common feature of immigrant and minority association studies generally and ‘RCO’ studies specifically, internal relations are by and large glossed over. As a result, very little attention is paid to the different aspects of micro-level interactions. It has been argued earlier in this chapter that internal relations and processes are important as they provide an interface between groups and the wider context (Werbner 1991a, 1991b). But it is also important to emphasise that internal relations are mediated by a range of factors including gender, age, class, but also immigration status. This last factor seems particularly significant when the subject of study is the ‘RCO’.

Although it is clear from their study that ‘RCOs’ exist within a context of legislative change, Griffiths *et al*'s (2005) analysis of this is relatively narrow. It appears limited to how it affects individuals and their personal engagement with groups, rather than addressing the effects of policy change on associations in terms of capabilities, orientation, focus and continuity. Legislative change might well have important ramifications for association continuity, however the lack of attention paid to this aspect of association life runs the risk of contributing to the fixedness of the ‘RCO’ label at a specific political juncture. This serves to contain groups within the confines of bureaucratic and policy-driven categories that, with the passage of time no longer necessarily, if indeed they ever did, reflect the needs and aspirations of individuals and associations. This leads to a further limitation: the ‘RCO’ remains the dominant category used to frame and describe associational practices. Despite the fact that Griffiths *et al* identify this is a problematic label with no definitive definition (2005:11), their continued use means that the ‘RCO’ category maintains a narrative of unity whilst, temporarily at least, ignoring a *de facto* diversity and division (Werbner 1991b). The ‘refugeeness’ implied by the ‘RCO’ label tends to classify associations as an undifferentiated group of refugees, ignoring other forms of social difference and similarity. Finally, Griffiths *et al*'s (2005) comparative analysis reveals very little about processes of change within associations over time. Thus whilst very effectively capturing the conditions leading to emergence, different factors affecting continuity are not addressed. This also relates to the impact of a changing asylum and immigration legislative framework which foregrounds ‘RCO’ emergence’. In this respect, a life cycle, or indeed staged approach (as advocated by for example Werbner 1991a)

would have been instructive, whilst of course recognising the reductionist tendencies of such a framework, as identified earlier in this chapter.

The ‘RCO’ studies presented here build upon each other to produce a more thorough analysis of the experiences, motivations and challenges facing asylum seeker and refugee-led groups. A first common finding across Salinas *et al* (1987), Gold (1992), Wahlbeck (1997), Kelly (2003) and Griffiths *et al* (2005), is that refugee associations face considerable difficulties, including internal divisions, factionalism, in-fighting and a shortage of people willing to devote large amounts of time to the association. These studies also suggest that factionalism can inhibit attempts to create a formal association and, where an association is formed, it may be unrepresentative. This firstly directly challenges assumptions of an unproblematic and natural formation of community along ethnic-national lines and of homogeneity within ‘RCOs’ (and immigrant associations). Secondly, attention to factionalism problematises the overwhelming positive gloss on the social relations located therein generally found in policy discourse relating to ‘refugee integration’ (and not, significantly, to ‘asylum seeker integration’) (Carey-Wood 1995, 1997; Home Office 2004, 2009; Daniel *et al* 2010). As Kelly (2003) argues policy discourse tends to idealise ‘RCOs’ as places of community solidarity where conflict and difference tend to be overlooked. This is revealed in the Home Office’s focus in 2004 on the ‘strong impulse for self help’ contained within ‘RCOs’, their internal capacities and unique internal resources (Home Office 2004:15). The idealisation of ‘community solidarity’ occurs despite the fact that conflict is as much a part of social relations as unity, and so must also be examined if the social relations underpinning belonging and collective identity are to be understood. Equally important to challenging the way ‘community’ is seen as a naturally occurring process is the issue of representativeness and this highlights a second common finding.

In studies of ‘RCOs’ presented here and on ‘refugee community’ more widely (for example Griffiths 1999; Loizos 2000; Zetter and Pearl 2000; Zetter *et al* 2005; Temple and Moran 2005; Hopkins 2005; Jones 2010; Phillimore and Goodson 2010) the representativeness of leaders or an active few speaking for a community is also commonly problematised, as is the argument that a homogenised notion of community fails to capture diversity. Concerns are expressed about the exclusion of women and sub-groups (Griffiths *et al* 2005; Hopkins 2005; Phillimore and Goodson 2010). Some studies have actively

sought out disinterested members of a population in order to ensure that a wider range of voices are represented in the respective studies of refugee community (Wahlbeck 1997; Lewis 2007). Phillimore and Goodson (2010) critique the increasing tendency to look for a single representative of multiple communities, seeing this as ultimately disempowering 'RCOs' at a political and policy level (2010: 189). Despite this, policy makers remain happy to grant 'RCOs' the role of representative and interlocutors with British institutions (Home Office 2004, Daniel *et al* 2010). Whilst these common findings are extremely insightful and importantly build on existing knowledge of different aspects of association life, the key 'RCO' studies cited in this section suffer from a number of limitations the present thesis seeks to address, and the remainder of this chapter will explore these in turn.

### **Problematizing 'settlement' and engaging with 'solidarity'**

An initial problem with the key 'RCO' studies identified in this chapter is that the notion of 'settlement' in relation to asylum seekers and refugees tends to be used in a 'common sense' way, as if the path to 'settlement' and what this will look like is clear, despite the particularly harsh asylum seeker incorporation regime in place in the UK. This regime is characterised by a particularly aggressive context of reception, tightening border regimes, increasingly restrictive immigration controls, and harsher punishment of asylum seekers throughout the process of claiming asylum (Back 2003; Bloch and Schuster 2005; British Red Cross and Refugee Survival Trust 2009, 2011). Moreover, the way in which the refugee category has become fractioned through the increased implementation of subsidiary forms of protection (Zetter 2007) means that 'settlement' remains an uncertain outcome for the many who have received a positive decision, as well as one which is experienced at different points for members. Salinas *et al* (1987) and Gold (1992) both highlight that 'settlement' has different meanings for different actors at different stages in the asylum process, but fail to take this further. I would argue a more in-depth and critical engagement with this notion is necessary because, and building upon Sivanandan's analysis of associations mobilising around issues (1985), groups do not necessarily coalesce around agreed campaigns of 'settlement' goals, nor do they necessarily see 'settlement' issues and solutions similarly. Lack of engagement with the notion of 'settlement' also reveals a tendency to focus on migrant adaptation and accommodation, which is characteristic of the largely functional studies of immigrant associations (for example Breton 1964; Rex 1973; Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex, Joly and Wilpert 1987;

Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). The aim of this thesis is not to offer an alternative definition, but to problematise the concept of ‘settlement’ as one of *non-settlement*. *Non-settlement* better captures the ongoing and long-term dislocating effects of surviving the asylum system in the UK, where individuals and groups have to find strategies to exist in both the liminal ‘asylum’ space, and the often continued liminality individuals experience after positive decisions as they try to put down new roots.

Associational emergence is one instance of individuals coming together over the hardship of *non-settlement* and adjusting to life in the place of exile. Contained within this response are also acts of opposition to specific policies (campaigning against detention and deportation policies) and resistance to immigration rules (exchanging vouchers for cash, or housing fellow asylum seeker members who find themselves destitute). These are not necessarily about great acts of public protest which ‘make headlines’ (Scott 1985: xvii), but ordinary, everyday actions which are often less visible and less documented, and which are about individuals developing into associations and coming together, or ideologically converging (Werbner 1991a) to help each other out, interactions from which emerge sorts of ‘organic communities’ (Sivanandan 1990). In this sense, the more radical perspectives put forward in Sivanandan (1985, 1990) and Werbner’s (1991a) work on associations as a transformative vehicle for effecting change is, I argue, useful to explore solidarity beyond ethnicised boundaries as it emerges in response to causes and issues. As such, this provides a way to move beyond the focus on ‘refugeeness’ in asylum seeker and refugee-led associations to consider how these groups also (following Werbner 1991a) ideologically converge with other populations, through engagement with wider issues of racism, discrimination and structural exclusion facing asylum seeker and refugee populations specifically and migrants and minorities more generally.

Problematizing ‘settlement’ and framing associational emergence as a way to collectively confront and survive *non-settlement* provides a way of challenging prevailing representations of asylum seekers as vulnerable and ‘lacking’, as often dominates in state and non-state actors and agencies analyses of the experiences of asylum seekers (c.f. Harrell-Bond 1986; Rainbird 2011). I am suggesting that this idea reframes the collective space as one which is action-orientated: it provides a critical asylum support mechanism; a safe place to discuss problems and concerns with asylum claims; a space to share experiences of the asylum system; to trade information on lawyers, on services and to

collectively work out ways of coping with the daily struggle of uncertainty. These aspects of surviving *non-settlement* via solidary action will be explored in greater detail in Chapters 5-8. Importantly, this is not to fall into the trap of over-emphasising solidarity models of community in relation to 'RCOs', which Griffiths *et al* (2005) identify as problematic in much 'RCO' research and a weakness in 'race relations' thinking on immigrant associations. Solidarity is necessary, but it is not sufficient to understand associational life; it must be considered alongside conflict. Moreover, different forms of solidaristic ties can be distinguished, as can the different goals of solidarity actions which may also change over time.

Problematising solidarity within social relations, (for example, what it means, assumptions that it exists) also allows for different forms of solidarity to be teased out to help explain why groups cooperate on some matters while being divided regarding others, and why some solidaristic ties seem so ephemeral. This will better account for changes in solidarity over time, whilst integrating those cross-cutting identities that increase and decrease in importance depending on different social contexts. This perspective also provides a way to modify Werbner's overly stagist presentation of mobilisation processes (Werbner 1991a), through highlighting the co-presence of different solidaristic ties. Again, providing a theoretical and conceptual path for moving beyond 'refugeeness', identifying who individuals and groups turn to and for what kinds of help - for example, family, metaphorical kin, mainstream organisations - is also important to problematise meanings of 'solidarity'. Equally, if the particularly punishing experience of claiming asylum in the UK results in forms of collective solidarity then situations may also arise where solidarity is not asserted. Indeed 'alleged' connections and solidarity may often be rejected for different reasons, and may reveal themselves as particularly weak in practice (as Kelly 2001, 2003 identifies). 'Ethnicised' solidarity might also be called into question because of the nuanced and complex ties people have with 'home', wherever that may be. As has been illustrated, this can equally result in a rejection of a presumed 'national' identity in exile (Wahlbeck 1998; Kelly 2003). As Salinas *et al* (1987) have pointed out, refugee based organisations are made up of individuals who are often very different in terms of class, politics, religions and so forth. This highlights one way in which associations are complex hubs of social relations, where seemingly 'natural' social boundaries and institutions are better understood as permeable and dynamic, with individuals and relations crossing boundaries rather than accepting them (Hannerz 1980:172, also Sivanandan 1985, Werbner and Anwar 1991). As Anthias (2008) argues, the social relations that develop

within such boundary crossing networks are shaped by the interplay of different social characteristics in relation to gender, ethnicity, class, and so on. I would add immigration status to this list. The political designation of individuals as asylum seekers and refugees does not represent an irreducible or bounded collective identity. Furthermore, within associations, members have different forms of immigration status that also produce different forms of solidarity. However, recognition and analysis of such effects represents a significant omission in each of the 'RCO' studies explored in this chapter.

Despite the fact that it is often considered as relatively unstable, especially where groups are seen to be divided into factions (Eade 1991; Wahlbeck 1998), solidarity at a 'community' level is often situationally invoked by state and non-state actors. Indeed the earlier discussion on factionalism within 'refugee communities' as a recurrent feature of the key 'RCO' studies cited in this chapter and elsewhere (for example Loizos 2000; Hopkins 2005; Lewis 2007a) strongly suggests that 'ethnic' solidarities, to the extent that they do indeed exist, are often permeable, situational and a response to a particular event, whether social, political, economic or some other kind. Critical and radical scholars of 'migrant community' argue that unity of action is an achievement in itself given the divergent interests than can exist within a supposedly homogenous local community (see for example Sivanandan 1990; Eade 1991; and Werbner and Anwar 1991). Nonetheless, collective identifications are vital building blocks of the conceptual framework being developed in the present study to illuminate what is happening at a group level. Usually a united public face is underpinned by social allegiances, but these will vary in terms of quality, nature and depth between members. Rather than focusing on either consensual or conflicting forms of interactions, I suggest there is greater analytical purchase in seeing these as constituent parts of associational life, that in themselves reveal the complex challenges of continuity for certain groups.

### **Recognising and challenging the fixedness of the 'RCO' label**

The discussion of key 'RCO' studies in this chapter highlights that associations led by asylum seekers and refugees face specific issues in forming and surviving compared to other immigrant associations. This is reflected in the very emergence of 'RCO' studies as



a sub-discipline of immigrant association literature and as such tends to consider such groups as a *completely separate* associational form. My question is whether limiting the scope of study in this way contributes to perpetuating categories which may well be of limited analytical use, but which have nonetheless taken hold in policy discourse (Carey-Wood 1997; Home Office 2004, Home Office 2009; Daniel *et al* 2010). Despite post-structural understandings of identities as fluid and dynamic, such categories become static, obstructing how practices thus characterised evolve. I argue there that the emergence of a separate sub-field of ‘RCO’ studies can be seen as contributing to this process, fixing in time the organisation and its members, producing ‘snapshot’ analyses of associational life, focusing on ‘refugeeness’ as if it is a defining identity and consequently obscuring ways in which groups may make claim to multiple identifications. In this way, the ‘RCO’ studies cited in this chapter contribute (albeit to varying degrees) to the compartmentalisation of groups as a specific form of association that remains the same over time. This process is exacerbated by the fact that attention to the community life cycle is often missing, and so the notion of change is either minimised or obscured. As a result, there is often a failure to see associational practices as dynamic, and in constant flux, affected by a range of internal and external factors.

The notion of change is an important aspect that engagement with radical perspectives of immigrant associations may go some way to address (Werbner 1991a). When the immigration status of members changes, does the ‘RCO’ remain an ‘RCO’? Can such a label represent the needs of all members regardless of migrant status? Another way of asking this question is to consider whether the group shifts from ‘RCO’ to ‘migrant association’ paralleling individual member changes in status from asylum seeker to refugee and from there to ‘other’? And does this lead to the formulation of a common discourse with other minority populations in relation to the state (Werbner 1991a)? These questions arise from the critique of ‘RCO’ studies presented in this chapter and they emphasise both the dynamism of association life and the need to sharpen the focus on how structural conditions such as migration incorporation regimes and asylum and immigration legislative frameworks affect group formation and associational continuity. This would also provide a shift in focus away from ‘ethnic’ or political factionalism, (which has tended to dominate and as it relates to internal identifications, can be contrasted with the idea of externally constructed fictive unity imposed upon such groups around their immigration status), to explore and explain internal tensions and conflicts around other sources of internal difference, such as differentiated and changing immigration status.

Finally across the key ‘RCO’ studies identified in this chapter, there is very little critical engagement with the ‘RCO’ label itself. That is, how groups themselves might perceive this label and the extent to which it represents their understandings of collective identity. This relates the earlier discussion on fictive unity, and the ways in which the ‘RCO’ label imposes such unity upon the group in question. What is clear from the literature reviewed (Griffiths *et al* 2005, Phillimore and Goodson 2010) is that groups do find ways of working within the confines of the label. But less clear are the ways in which members of groups contest the label, or any sense of how groups might equally strategise around the ‘RCO’ label. Such an engagement would provide a way of moving the main focus of attention away from ‘refugeeness’, and reframe immigration status as one of many collective identifications called upon by groups to advance their organisational goals. It would also introduce an important layer of agency on the part of groups in terms of how and when they choose to identify themselves as ‘refugee groups’ or as ‘other’. Equally the degree to which such strategising is perceived internally, affects internal relations or is a source of internal/external consensus or conflict is unclear. These questions will be explored in greater detail in Chapters 6-8.

### **Moving beyond factionalism as the main source of internal difference**

Following the last point, across the ‘RCO’ studies cited in this chapter, factionalism is often understood as a significant, if not major source of internal conflict and contestation within groups. This reveals a number of problematic tendencies. Firstly as Anthias (2008) points out, it reveals a predisposition to focus on a national imaginary that presupposes levels of unity which, as this chapter has highlighted, Sivanandan (1985, 1990) Werbner (1991a), Wahlbeck (1997) and Kelly (2003) describe as fictive. There is a subsequent tendency to focus far less on other sources of social difference such as gender, class and generation within groups, and here I would add immigration status as an additional source of internal difference and politics. Consequently, one is left with a sense that the actual experience of membership is a homogenous one for all members of that specific group, and one that seems to remain the same over time (for example in Salinas *et al* 1987; Home Office 2004; Griffiths *et al* 2005). These last two points are particularly problematic in that, similarly to approaches to studying immigrant associations discussed in the first half of this chapter, they reveal assumed levels of groupness whilst also negating the influence

of internal and external factors on group formation, forms of identification and experiences of belonging.

But what about divisions (and indeed allegiances) that emerge within groups because of differentiated and changing immigration status? Does individual immigration status matter to group formation and sustainability? If so, what effects does the broader framework of asylum and immigration policy and changing and differentiated immigration status have on organisations? Across the literature reviewed on immigrant associations and ‘RCOs’, none of the studies critically or systematically engages with these questions which are nonetheless significant to understanding change within associations. They are also particularly relevant questions given that asylum claims are not all regulated neatly and at the same time. Different members will have different immigration statuses: some members are granted positive determinations many years before others. This suggests further questions around the effects of changing immigration status on association continuity, questions such as: when, ‘officially’, one person moves up this scale of migrant desirability how might this affect group dynamics? Do all members see each other as equal? Did they ever? Does their immigration status influence their relationships to others and to the group? How does their changed immigration status come to be perceived externally and internally? And when majority members are no longer asylum seekers, can an association remain an ‘RCO’ or does it follow a similar linear path to becoming something other? And what might that be? Again, the limiting nature of the ‘RCO’ label constrains groups by a specific immigration status, imposing an enduring quality on ‘refugeeness’ when this might no longer be necessarily relevant, nor reflective of the members in the group.

Differentiated immigration status as a source of tension within groups has been largely ignored in both academic studies on immigrant associations’ and ‘RCOs’ (for example in Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Banton 1983; Rex *et al* 1987; Salinas *et al* 1987; Sivanandan 1990; Werbner 1991b; Gold 1992; Wahlbeck 1997; Kelly 2003; Griffiths *et al* 2005; Phillimore and Goodson 2010). Too often research presents unrelated, static snapshots of specific groups at specific times, “without any attempt to add value to these studies through comparison, classification or contextualization” (Robinson 1993:7). The present study aims to provide more than a snapshot in two particular ways. The first is through tracing how immigration status affects social interactions and shapes not only the

emergence of a number of (mainly) francophone African groups, but also their development and ultimately sustainability (and how this is played out in group behaviour and social interactions). The approach advocated in the present thesis, which brings together macro and micro-level analyses through linking immigration status to internal conflicts and tensions, does not contradict the previous discussion of solidarity and struggle. Rather it provides, in my view, a compelling example of the dialectical interplay between unity and difference that characterises social life within such associations. Despite apparent divisions and conflict that emerge within immigrant associations, as Werbner (1991a) observes, these also reflect the “enormous cultural vitality of ethnic or religious groups and the commitment they have to the long-term continuity of the group and to its perpetuation” (1991a:20). From this perspective, divisiveness at one level then implies the possibility of a transcendent unity at another level. The second way this thesis aims to provide more than a simple snapshot is through ethnographic analysis of internal processes of group formation and identification.

### **Refocusing on internal relationships, processes and structures**

Any study of how and why organisations emerge, survive and change over time should also consider their various internal processes and informal practices. Following Werbner (1991a), I argue that a closer analysis of internal dynamics is central to moving beyond ‘refugeeness’ because it reveals how such relations are shaped by a number of cross-cutting identities and asymmetrical social relations that are present at a micro and macro-level (as will be explored in the empirical chapters). This reveals a final issue with the ‘RCO’ studies mapped out in this chapter: namely where such aspects are addressed (for example Salinas *et al* 1987; Gold 1992; Griffiths *et al* 2005), they tend to fulfil only a ‘scene-setting purpose’. This is also a problem with much of the immigrant association literature (Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex *et al* 1987; Portes and Zhou 1993) and highlights an oversimplification of what is involved.

The earlier discussion on the need to study internal processes (Werbner 1991a and Barker *et al* 2001) argued that such processes and practices provide many foundations for collective identity and belonging as they develop over time, and are central to

understanding the different dimensions to the founding and, importantly, continuity of social movements and associations. This relates to organisational hierarchies and issues of leadership; representation and the ambiguities between ‘RCOs’ and members they are assumed to represent; funding; internal fragmentation; unity and so forth. Finally, refocusing on internal relationships and processes highlights a methodological limitation in key ‘RCO’ studies to date. Despite oft-repeated claims to adopting an interactionist approach to understanding ‘community life’,<sup>11</sup> very few studies take us inside the associations to explore the messiness and complexity of association life through micro-level interactions. Such a focus on internal processes and relations is central to understanding the dynamics of group life and how it is understood and experienced by a range of members beyond leaders and an ‘active few’. It is critical to revealing how internal relations are shaped by a wide ranging of cross-cutting social identities beyond those related to immigration status, and in this sense internal processes cannot be separated from wider external factors. It is also necessary to understand shifts and changes in solidaristic ties. Finally a focus on internal processes and relations is essential to understanding change within associations over time. The overreliance in studies on interviews with ‘community leaders’ or an ‘active few’ (Kelly 2003; Griffiths *et al* 2005) and on questionnaires (Salinas *et al* 1987; Kelly 2003) provide only a snapshot of association life, revealing the limitations of such methods with respect to studying the minutiae of internal processes and how these evolve with the passage of time. This highlights the potential benefits of ethnographic research into association life through prolonged and active participant observation, suggests a way to weave in insights from radical perspectives of immigrant associations and engage with work on social movements and urban mobilisation. This then allows for group practices and forms of collectivism to be conceptualised beyond immigration status alone.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has considered and analysed the theoretical perspectives engaged with to answer the research questions. Exploring firstly approaches to immigration associations emerging from ‘race relations’ thinking, I argued that the dominant focus on structures and functions of immigrant and minority associations fails to address the important structural

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<sup>11</sup> Chapter Three analyses the strengths and limitations of the ‘interactionist’ methodological approach which tends to dominate ‘RCO’ studies.

context of association emergence and continuity. This exposed a number of limitations in relation to imposed fictive unity based around notions of ethnicised groupness, understandings of internal differences and failure to explore the effects of internal processes and how these are mediated by external factors. Importantly, the voice of non-labour migrants was identified as missing. These limitations were partially addressed through radical perspectives on immigrant and minority associations which challenged fictive unity and considered emergent alliances beyond ethnicised and racialised identities. Drawing from these approaches provided a theoretical and conceptual language and framework for exploring association emergence and continuity, unity within difference and processes of change within associations over time. I also drew upon conceptual schema from literature on urban protest movements, critically exploring how leadership and representativeness are theorised, the internal structures of associations and their interplay with external constraints and opportunities. However the sustained focus within immigrant association studies generally on the experiences of labour migrants means that migrant communities are understood as established and that individuals enjoy the right to ‘settle’. Subsequently, the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees were still missing, leading me to question how well these studies fit with the emergent association practices of asylum seeker and refugee populations.<sup>12</sup>

I then identified key studies in ‘RCO’ research that have an explicit focus on asylum seeker and refugee experiences of local collectivism, and critically engaged with their main arguments. These studies make significant theoretical, analytical and political advances with respect to understanding how social networks may function as a source of social capital for asylum seekers and refugees, and as a mechanism for coping and survival in exile. Ostensibly filling the gaps left by the literature on immigrant associations discussed above, this important *separate* body of work ‘brings the state back in’ by highlighting how historical and structural determinants have led to a fragmented and marginalised ‘RCO’ sector. This work also extends beyond the too often ‘colour-coded’ field of ethnic and ‘race relations’. However, I identified a number of limitations in this work framed broadly around unproblematised conceptualisations of ‘settlement’, too narrow a focus on factionalism to explain internal difference, a lack of attention to internal group formation processes and a theoretical and conceptual focus on ‘refugeeness’ which imposes a corporate unity based on immigration status upon the social relations located within groups

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<sup>12</sup> And for that matter the association practices of other precarious ‘others’ such as undocumented migrants or *sans-papiers* although not the focus of the present thesis.

and ignores the notion of a community life cycle. Underpinning these limitations is the fact that the wide-ranging conditions and factors affecting both association emergence and continuity over time tend to be neglected. The aim of this thesis is to build upon both the strengths and limitations identified in this critical review of literature. In doing so I seek to address the important overlaps, insights and connections between immigrant associations and 'RCO' studies which tend to be overlooked by the compartmentalisation of the research field.

In combining different areas of social theory and arguing for an integrated micro-macro level approach, I have presented alternative theoretical and conceptual frames for understanding associational practices of asylum seeker and refugee-led groups that can allow for a move beyond 'refugeeness'. For asylum seekers, their specific immigration status may be a catalyst for mobilisation, but any emergent collective identity cannot be assumed to result from this shared experience of seeking asylum or be exclusive to this. Through the research questions, this thesis is an attempt to work through how a range of collective identities evolve and develop over time from the perspective of groups, but which is nonetheless framed within an analysis of wider structural pressures. Using this as the foundation for the thesis, I will argue that the present study of associational life of mainly francophone asylum seekers and refugee-led associations can be located somewhere between 'RCO' studies and research into immigrations associations, rather than being bound by one body of research or another. Situating the research in this way provides a theoretical, analytical and conceptual way of moving beyond the narrow lens of migrant status and 'refugeeness'. The following chapter discusses the methodologies, methods, and orientations I developed to achieve this.

## Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods

### *Introduction*

In the previous chapter, I critically reviewed existing academic literature on ‘RCOs’, highlighting a number of tendencies which risked fixing such groups in time and space, and with an imposed ‘refugeeness’. To overcome these limitations, I argued that associational practices are better understood as a dynamic process occurring over time that is subject to internal and external forces and pressures. As should be clear from this thesis so far, reception and incorporation in countries of exile, and subsequent experiences of ‘settlement’, are dramatically shaped by external forces such as immigration and asylum legislative frameworks and migrant incorporation regimes which cannot be ‘bracketed off’ from associational life. In my view, this requires an analysis that relates to internal processes (such as organisational hierarchies and issues of leadership; representation and the ambiguities between ‘RCOs’ and members they are assumed to represent; internal fragmentation; unity and so forth) and external structures (for example funding arrangements, legislative frameworks, migrant incorporation regimes). In this chapter I set how I engaged methodologically with the relationship between micro-processes and macro-forces, adopting and adapting an approach advocated by the extended case method (Gluckman 1958; Burawoy 1991).

This chapter is divided into three main sections. In the first main section - ‘Chicago School microsociology’ and ‘The Manchester School turn to the macro’ - I link methodological orientations to research aims and questions. I provide an overview of Chicago School sociology, identifying the interactionist approach as the dominant methodological paradigm within the field ‘RCO’ studies. Importantly I will go on to explore why this is an insufficient methodological approach to answer the research questions as set out in Chapter One. So whilst this section acknowledges its continued significance in ‘RCO’ studies (as highlighted in Chapter Two), it must be emphasised that the discussion presented here serves as a departure point for the methodological approach I went on to adopt, namely the extended case method. I then explore Manchester School social anthropology and the extended case method as an alternative methodological framework, detailing my own critical engagement with Michael Burawoy’s development



of this approach (Burawoy 1991, 1998, 2000, 2009). In the second section - 'Methods' - I set out the methods used in this study, focusing on long-term participant observation supplemented by interviews, group discussions and analysis of printed and online materials. I also reflect upon my prior knowledge and experience of working with asylum seekers and refugees as a methodological tool, as well as issues of access and consent. The final section - 'Analytical considerations' - details the techniques I used to integrate micro and macro levels of analysis, integrating situations from fieldwork that illustrate how I incorporated the extended case method into data collection and analysis. Rather than treating ethical considerations as a separate section, these are woven throughout this chapter.

### ***Chicago School microsociology***

The study of 'race' as a field of social scientific inquiry and research originated in the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most notably influenced by the work of Robert Park and emanating from the University of Chicago. Park was influential in developing what was to become established as the study of urban ecology and 'race relations', with his conceptualisation of the 'race relations life cycle' (Park [1925]1967; Bulmer 1984; Deegan 2001). Although he never conducted any full scale study of immigrant group experiences (Lyman 1968), making only a very small number of references to this cycle in his work (Kivisto 2004), Park developed what was to become an influential model of four sequential stages underpinning the origins and evolution of racialised group relations: contact, competition, accommodation and assimilation, arguing that the process is apparently progressive and irreversible (Park 1964).<sup>13</sup>

According to Park (1964), ethnic groups come into contact with each other on a regular basis, and when contact occurs, a 'race relations cycle' takes place. After the initial contact bringing two different groups of people, they then compete for power and resources. The subordinate group, which is usually the migrating group, adjusts to a new social situation. This stage is a critical component of the 'race relations' cycle and often

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<sup>13</sup> Although Portes and Zhou later argued that the end-point of the assimilation process is *segmented* into a number of different possible trajectories, thus highlighting a more multidirectional view of immigrant incorporation (Portes and Zhou 1993).

takes place rapidly. Finally, he postulated this leads to assimilation, (although it may take a long time for the subordinate and/or migrant group to finally reach this final stage), where two or more cultures merge into a single, shared set of traditions, ideas and memories (Park 1964). Although these ideas have been influential in public and academic discourse on the topic of ethnic group interaction, they are not without their limitations: the cycle does not sufficiently analyse the historical background and development of a particular racial or ethnic group within a national or world context; nor does it attend to the power imbalance and inequality in racial and ethnic relations (Bulmer 1984; Kivisto 2004).

Park's ideas on 'race relations' and urban ecology were influential in initiating theoretical approaches to studying the immigrant experience. Two seminal texts which became cornerstones of Chicago school sociology on immigration and 'community' maintenance, marking a critical moment in the emergence of urban ethnography and of Chicago School sociology, were Thomas and Znaniecki's study of Polish immigrant associational forms and processes of adaptation, and Wirth's analysis of how Jewish immigrants adapted to life in urban America (Thomas and Znaniecki [1918-1920]1958; Wirth 1928). Alongside Park, Thomas was a leading figure in Chicago School sociology, and his study of *The Polish Peasant* ([1918-1920]1958) marked the school's ascent to a position of national and international leadership (Bulmer 1984). These studies are exemplary of the theoretical changes which occurred in Chicago from the 1920s and 30s, under the intellectual leadership of Park and Burgess. The Chicago School produced many classic works on urban ethnography (for example Cressey 1932; Whyte [1943] 1993; Hughes 1958; Goffman 1959, 1961; Becker 1961, 1973). This body of work marks a direct departure from traditional anthropological ethnography, where typically the anthropologist moved to faraway places to study 'natives' in their natural habitats. By contrast, the sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists in Chicago turned their eye to what was happening in their own cities and neighbourhoods, and to the neglected 'underclass' of Chicago's socially disorganised urban areas (Brewer 2000; Deegan 2001).

One of the most important methodological premises of the Chicago School was that sociology should be an empirical science, with social phenomena being studied in their own natural settings (Park [1925]1967). Indeed the blending of first-hand inquiry with general theoretical ideas is a hallmark of the Chicago School (Bulmer 1984:3). In order to

distinguish different patterns of social interaction and association amidst the rapid urbanisation of the city, Park advocated intensive field work around first-hand observation:

Go sit in the lounges of the luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the flop-houses; sit on the Gold Coast settees and in the slum shakedowns; sit in the orchestra hall and in the Star and Garter Burlesque. In short, gentleman, go get the seat of your pants dirty in real research (Park in the 1920s, cited in Brewer 2000:13).

A central objective of participant observation is to produce the most direct evidence about action as the latter unfolds in the ‘everyday life’ of the participants (Lichterman 2002). This method enables the researcher to put herself in the place of the research participants and thereby understand their point of view. Characteristic of participant observation is the researcher’s ability to enter into different social worlds over an extended period of time (Bulmer 1984:105) to observe micro-level social interactions, as Park advocated, as they occur in ‘real time’.

Participant observation came to be closely associated as the method of choice of symbolic interactionists. Symbolic interactionism, largely credited to Blumer (1969) grew out of the Chicago School sociology and came to define the dominant epistemological paradigm and theoretical approach of many Chicago scholars (Deegan 2001) (although the school’s orientation was both eclectic and diverse (Bulmer 1984; Hammersley 1989)). This tradition meant subscribing to and doing participant observation in order to understand the different layers and interconnections that constituted the complex nature of social life (Hammersley 1989). Very simply put, a symbolic interactionist approach assumes that the organisation of social life arises from within the society itself and, more specifically, out of the processes of interaction between members of society: its focus is on understanding the symbolic meanings people attach to situations (Blumer 1969; Burgess 1982). In this tradition, the persons under study are considered as *subjects* in their own right, and researchers study the *processes* involved in sites being researched: symbolic interactionists are insistent that social life must be studied through “firsthand observation” (Blumer 1969:38). Symbolic interactionism is also related to the Weberian perspective advocated by John Rex (see for example, Rex and Tomlinson 1979), both traditions emphasising that one should understand social actors’ own points of view and the meaning they give to their actions.

The theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism guides the methodological principles of grounded theory, which developed as a parallel innovation from within this tradition (Glaser and Strauss 1968; Strauss & Corbin 1990). Grounded theory requires and encourages in-depth familiarity with, and a fine-grained analysis of micro data to produce empirically grounded research, backed up by generalisable theoretical claims. The determination of data through disciplined examination produces categories, hypotheses are then constructed relating to such categories, which are then tested and theory is constructed (Glaser and Strauss 1968). With its emphasis on theory as an emerging, ever-developing entity, grounded theory corresponds well with the symbolic interactionist view of social life itself as emergent and fluid. Another association between the two relates firstly to the constant comparative component as advocated by Blumer (1969), which guides the researcher to respond flexibly to the data. Blumer secondly emphasises ‘inspection’: the “intensive focused examination of the empirical content of concepts and their relations (Blumer 1969:45). Here the researcher theorises the data, then checks those conceptualisations against the data, a process which is strictly consistent with grounded theory analytical techniques (analytic induction, codes and categories) (Glaser and Strauss 1968, Strauss and Corbin 1990). It must be re-emphasised however that although symbolic interactionism, grounded theory and participant observation came to dominate Chicago School sociology, its output was indeed eclectic, including an often neglected emphasis on quantitative methods (Bulmer 1984:152).

Despite its popularity in urban sociology, symbolic interactionism has been critiqued from a number of different perspectives. It should be highlighted that Thomas and Znaniecki (1958), alongside Wirth (1928), were theoretically and empirically innovative: firstly they advanced notions of assimilationism and transnationalism long before contemporary debates; and secondly they produced historicised accounts of cross-cultural adjustments over time and space that result from internal processes and external forces. However, the innovative ‘extroversion’ of their approach, that is, extending their analysis beyond the immediate field of study, was short lived. Denzin (1992) summarises the main criticisms of interactionism as related to its astructural, apolitical, acultural, ahistorical and overtly rational common-sense biases. The symbolic interactionism that went on to dominate Chicago School sociology - with its focus on micro-level processes and micro-scale social interaction for the study of self-society relationships - produced an ‘introverted’ sociology (Hannerz 1980:54-58; Burawoy 2000:11-15). Burawoy is dismissive of its insularity, arguing that the wider structural context is bracketed off from the interactionist focus on

micro-level processes (Burawoy 1991, 1998, 2009).<sup>14</sup> This then risks presenting a closed off, decontextualised body of work, where the institutions of power which lie behind behaviour, which confer legitimacy and guide daily routines are missing from analyses (Bourdieu 1991; Thomas 1993; Burawoy 2000). Furthermore, Burawoy (1991) argues, the role of power and reflexivity is more often obscured by the insularity and ‘introversion’ of interactionism, the supposed scholarly detachment that grounded theory aims to achieve, and attention beyond the immediate research setting to considering the researcher’s position in a wider historical and political context.

Given that the aim of the discussion of Chicago School sociology presented here is to provide a departure point for the methodological approach adopted in the present thesis, it is not possible, nor considered necessary in this chapter to detail the immense body of work to come from the Chicago School. However, it is instructive to briefly state the methodological and theoretical influences from this tradition that have guided the study.<sup>15</sup> These are firstly the primary assumption that qualitative methodologies, especially those used in naturalistic observation, are best suited for the study of urban, social phenomena (Park 1964, 1967). Secondly there is the development of the notion of social worlds to describe the complex inter-group patterns of social interactions, and the barriers to and effects of exiting such a ‘complete’ social world (Wirth 1928). Social worlds often have a high degree of isolation, either internally encouraged or externally enforced, with social clubs being an example of the former (Cressey 1932) and Wirth’s ghetto (1928) and example of the latter. Thirdly, there is the broad theme of culture contact, conflict and potential threats to social order (in particular Thomas and Znaniecki 1958) and of groups interacting and competing to establish their institutions and ensure continuity of their cultural communities. Finally, each of the above points highlights a sustained focus on the study of process as a constitutive aspect of social relations.

Although I use Chicago School sociology as a departure point for the methodological approach I adopt, it is interesting to note that the theoretical and methodological paradigms of interactionism and grounded theory tend to pre-dominate in studies of refugee

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<sup>14</sup> Blumer’s symbolic interactionism *was* largely a reaction to the dominance within sociology of structural functionalism, as represented by Talcott Parsons, during the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that Blumer emphasises agency at the expense of structures (Blumer 1969).

<sup>15</sup> Amongst others, Hannerz (1980) and Burawoy *et al* (2001) provide excellent detailed accounts of the developments in this tradition.

associations (Gold 1992; Wahlbeck 1997; Kelly 2001; also Hopkins 2005). This emphasises its continued relevance not only in the field of immigrant associations and communities, but more generally in sociological and anthropological research. Given its predominance in 'RCO' studies, one might then presume that participant observation would also be the central method in studies of 'refugee communities'. In some of the studies cited in the previous chapter, observation was indeed a feature (for example, Gold 1992; Wahlbeck 1997; and Kelly 2001). However, it was more generally used to complement and confirm information already gathered by other means, such as in-depth interviews (Gold 1992; Kelly 2001), semi-structured interviews (Wahlbeck 1997; Zetter and Pearl 2000; Griffiths *et al* 2005; Zetter *et al* 2006), or the use of oral history narratives (Hopkins 2005). As Chapter Two also highlighted, there is a preponderance in 'RCO' studies for micro-level interactionist approaches (Wahlbeck 1997, 1998; Kelly 2003, also Griffiths 1999 and Hopkins 2005). Nonetheless, it would seem obvious that to understand of refugee adaptation, 'settlement' and the experiences of asylum seekers following dispersal, macro structures such as economic inequalities, racist ideologies and migration policies also play a very significant role.

And so in a departure from the dominant 'RCO' methodological paradigm, I found that although the micro-level interactionist approach was *necessary* to my own concerns with social interactions within associations in varying social contexts, it was *insufficient* for my research questions. In the field, I soon realised that remaining at this micro level would be to miss a critical point: namely the need to locate what is happening at a micro-level within the wider changing external structures which have not only set the terms of migrant incorporation (in particular through dispersal), but which also continue to effect the lives of individuals and groups in various ways. To meet these research aims, I had to build upon and move beyond the interactionist tradition. I had to consider how external structures shape group practices and how individuals and groups respond to these external forces. How then to integrate micro and macro levels of analyses (such as political, economic, cultural processes and forces) within a reflexive framework? The extended case method advances this particular goal and Manchester School social anthropology became a key reference point in my approach to this study.

## ***The Manchester School turn to the macro***

Concurrent with the developments in sociology emanating from Chicago, anthropologists also faced new challenges. Traditionally, anthropologists researched the small-scale society, adopting an approach that was ahistorical, ethnographic and comparative (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:6). But colonial anthropology had to confront the wider context of fieldwork as it was occurring against a backdrop of increasing decolonisation, rapid industrialisation and growing urbanisation (Little 1965; Kapferer 2006). This led not only to theoretical, but also methodological innovations, most notably in the work of Max Gluckman, his students and colleagues (for example Mitchell 1956; Van Velsen 1967) and what was to become known as Manchester School social anthropology.

With symbolic interactionism as a starting point, Gluckman and his colleagues identified the need to balance the social interactions of actors within the wider situational framework in which they occur (Gluckman 1958, 1961, 1967; Mitchell 1956, [1982] 2006; Van Velsen 1967). The methodological and theoretical approach these scholars advocated was developing against a social and political backdrop where social relations between colonisers and colonised subject were characterised by conditions of colonial change, urbanisation and labour migration. It was within these conditions that Gluckman, his associates and students developed the most significant methodological innovation emanating from this school: the extended case method (Gluckman 1961; Van Velsen 1967). Anticipating practice theory and with an implicit political charge, the extended case method developed as a novel way to study social change which was localised, but which also ‘extended out’ beyond the field. The Manchester School social anthropologists advocated an approach to studying the micro-world *and* its relationship to wider structural contexts such as political regimes, colonialism and later decolonisation, racism, the labour market, social inequality, and so forth. The archetypal extended case method is Gluckman’s famous *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand* (1958), which begins with an account of a bridge opening ceremony in 1938 in Zululand. In this paper Gluckman describes the relations among different individuals of South African society and details the social dynamics at play on a local level. However his analysis then extends out from the field: he identifies the interdependence of different social actors, relations of conflict and consensus, and patterns of instability and equilibrium that all surface in micro-level interactions. Gluckman drew parallels between these micro interactions and wider macro forces of colonisation, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. His analysis of the

bridge opening ceremony illustrates how the extended case method provides ethnographers with theoretical tools to delve into connections between micro practices and macro structures, tracing internal contradictions with external constraints and opportunities (R. Werbner 1984; Burawoy 1998).

There are a number of defining innovations of the Manchester School anthropologists. These include the attention to processes and the integral nature of conflict and drama to societal forms (Prowse 2008); changes in fieldwork techniques that equally demanded a focus on practices, norms, behaviours and rules they exemplified (Van Velsen 1967; Burawoy 2000); highlighting that the ethnographic account should focus on a small number of the same (often related) individuals or groups showing changes among these persons over time (Gluckman 1961); attention to the wider context and external forces (Mitchell 1956; Gluckman 1967); and the parallel study of urbanism in the colonial and postcolonial contexts (Hannerz 1980; Burawoy 2000). Central to this approach is the need for case material as seen over space and time, that is as a series of specific incidents affecting the same set of persons over a long period, and how these incidents relate to changing social relationships within the framework of their society and culture (Mitchell 1956; Gluckman 1967; Van Velsen 1967). Each of these innovations has a direct and immediate relevance to the present study as outlined below and in further detail in this chapter.

Firstly, this thesis seeks to understand the internal struggles and conflicts located within groups as much as their struggles and conflicts with external forces, but it also focuses on the processes and practices of associations over time and space as they adjust to changing internal pressures and wider constraints and opportunities. As will be explored in Chapter Four, the specific incorporation of asylum seekers since the late 1990s cannot be bracketed off from historical and political context of migrant incorporation in the UK. This study is also an urban ethnography, taking place in and around the industrial city of Glasgow, where naturalistic environments of the associations were predominantly members' homes in high rise flats in estates of multiple deprivations. Finally, the present study is one of complex, multi-directional relationships changing over time. It is only through an extended period of analysis with groups as they evolved over time that the actual complexity of their internal social relations and their interactions in multiple social contexts (internal and external) could be observed. Many of the people involved in this



study had arrived in Glasgow in the years prior to the fieldwork (2007-2010), and I had come to know them as an interpreter. This history in Glasgow and experience of asylum processes shaped not only individuals relationships to the state, field relationships between members and myself, but also my own preconceptions that I brought with me to the field, despite my own (perhaps naïve) efforts to minimise these (issues I will address further later in this chapter).

The extended case method (as adopted by Gluckman 1958; Mitchell 1956 and Van Velsen 1967) then can be understood as taking the seemingly mundane aspects of everyday life and social interactions, and analysing them in such a way as to expose broader social processes of control, asymmetrical power relations and various mechanisms which impose one set of preferred meanings or behaviours over others (Thomas 1993). To Chicago School introversion, the extended case method contributes a critical ‘extroversion’: it too looks ‘within’ but also ‘back’ and ‘forward’ (Burawoy 2000:15-21). Highlighting the reflexivity of the method is perhaps Michael Burawoy’s most significant contribution to its development (he was himself a student of Van Velsen (Burawoy 1991)), and how he did this will be discussed later in this chapter. Hence, as I shall go on to explain, I adopted this method as a plausible way forward for using participant observation as a primary method for moving beyond the micro focus of interactionism, and, following Burawoy’s contributions to the method, for reflexively combining microscopic and macroscopic analyses. Before presenting the main dimensions of the extended case method as defined by Burawoy, it is important firstly to return to the question of reflexivity in social science.

When it comes to understanding the social world, methodologically there are two strategies which dominate: the first is the “positivist” strategy, where researchers minimise involvement, insulating themselves from subjects, observing them from the outside ((Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:4-5). Underpinned by the “positivist” principles of reactivity, reliability, replicability and representativeness (Katz 1983:127-130), this strategy embraces detachment as a way to control various field effects. For example, participant observers are seen to contaminate the data they collect by their participation; they have no systematic way of selecting from their mass of observations; they produce idiosyncratic results that cannot be replicated; they have no way of knowing how representative their findings are (Burawoy 1991). One response to these criticisms is defensive, that is, participant observers can accept these “positivist” precepts as guidelines

for research and try their best to emulate them. In sociology, this approach has been operationalised by adhering to the following principles: firstly, one strategy for participant observers may be to take on a ‘total researcher’ role, where researchers adopt an “objective” and, as far as possible, non-involved relation to their field site (Gans 1982). Secondly, they should go about gathering and analysing their data in a standardised manner (Becker and Geer 1982). Thirdly, participant observers should make clear exactly how they have gathered the data so that someone can follow in their footsteps to replicate the study (Glaser and Strauss 1968). Finally, variance in the field should be explored through comparing situations so that the claims made by participant observers have greater generalisability (Glaser 1982). The second, alternative strategy is a reflexive one which arises from critical engagement with the above ‘defensive’ responses.

In this strategy, researchers thematise their participation in the worlds being studied and this engagement, or implication, is seen as the road to knowledge (Gouldner 1970; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Burawoy 2009). Reflexivity can be understood as a response to “positivist” critiques of ethnography and participant observation outlined above.<sup>16</sup> Burawoy sees ethnography as a “reflexive science” which begins by embracing context, affirming situatedness, and acknowledging theoretical dispositions (Burawoy 2009). He distinguishes his stance from interpretive approaches to field work (for example Geertz 1993) and positivist approaches (in which he includes grounded theory), both of which aim for objectivity through scholarly detachment and attempts to let facts speak “for themselves”. In contrast, Burawoy proposes a method that values the researcher’s embeddedness in presuppositions, especially those derived from theoretical readings, as will be explained in the following section on Burawoy’s four dimensions of the extended case method.

The extended case method uses participant observation to reconstruct existing theory, and in this sense it is ‘theory-driven’ (Lichterman 2002). Burawoy advocates that researchers start with a ‘favourite’ theory (Burawoy 1991), although this can be a broad conceptualisation of ideas and very general (Lichterman 2002). The point is that the researcher is guided in the field by tacit or explicit theoretical assumptions and concepts,

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<sup>16</sup> Although Burawoy focuses on ethnography, he argues that the four ‘Rs’ of positive science are in any case impossible in any social science because wider field effects are *always* beyond the researcher’s control (Burawoy 2009:32-33, emphasis added).

but also by subjective experiences and micro-level interactions in the field. Unless she is responsive to the stimuli in the field, the aim of the extended case method will be doomed from the outset: data will be shoehorned into a theoretical straightjacket (Eliasoph and Lichterman 1999; Burawoy 2009). In the present study, and as I will go onto detail later in this chapter, I entered the field, on reflection, probably overly focused on ‘refugeeness’ as a dominant concept from the literature on the associational practices of asylum seekers and refugees. Once in the field, I realised that what I was observing was telling me something different, that this concept ‘silenced’ certain groups and practices. And so I was led by the data to revisit the theory with an aim of theory refinement.

### **Burawoy’s four dimensions of the extended case method**

Burawoy presents four dimensions of ‘extending out’ which guide the extended case method and analysis. Each dimension is also underpinned by a reflexive principle (Burawoy 1998, 2009). The first is the *extension of the participant-observer in the community being studied*. Here Burawoy emphasises the reflexive principle of intervention, (or ‘implication’ to use Althabe and Hernandez’s term (2004)), of the ethnographer in the social world. Researcher effects should be ‘turned up’ and appreciated, rather than prohibited (Burawoy 1991; Okely 1996). The uniqueness of the ethnographic encounter requires a responsiveness on the part of the researcher to the often unpredictable ebb and flow of everyday life. Reactivity is embraced as an inherent feature of all social science, which involves a relationship between observer and participant. Extending oneself into the community of participants also requires attention to the nature of field relationships and the inherent power struggle between researcher and participants. Burawoy calls this the power effect of domination (Burawoy 1998): as researchers, we are always ‘there’ for ulterior motives - to produce knowledge - no matter how noble our intentions or how much we believe we identify with participants (Lichterman 2002). But as I found in this study, and will go on to discuss in detail below, this does not preclude the development of a range of relationships in the field. Equally the distance created by the ‘researcher position’ can provide an important space for reflection in the field (Lichterman 1996).

The second dimension of the extended case method relates to *the extension of observations over time and space*. There is no fixed time for how long one is in the field but the ethnographer must be long enough involved to discern the social processes that give integrity to the site (Burawoy 1998), although how one can tell one has been there long enough is less clear. Long-term immersion in a social world allows ethnographers to link situations and circumstances, compare them with theory, and build up a picture of social processes (Prowse 2008). The social world is of course fluid and this constantly evolving context leads to problems for reliability: focusing research over time and space makes it difficult to fit experiences into a predetermined frame which allows for standardised responses. This dimension is guided by the reflexive principle of aggregating situational knowledge into social process (Burawoy 1998). If responses cannot be standardised, then a preferred position is to focus on making sense of what respondents say and do. Registering all voices where possible is central to fieldwork. However, in bringing together social situations and integrating multiple observations into social processes, researchers unavoidably make choices, thereby silencing particular experiences and voices (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Silencing is inevitable in all social science research, and the researcher must be reflexively aware of her power to privilege certain voices over others (Burawoy 1998). As I was to find in the field, using prolonged and active participant observation as the primary method helped me include a wider range of voices than if I had used observation as supplementary to interviews or focused on scholarly detachment. Reporting back findings, and being open to questions and refutation of theoretical concepts and ideas also helped me to reflexively attend to silencing effects.

The third dimension of the method is *the extension from the micro-processes to macro-structures and forces*. Extending from micro to macro requires a process of contextualisation which necessitates an understanding of how the global influences the local (Burawoy 1991). It is this extension outwards to restraints on social action that allows this approach to overcome the limitations of symbolic interactionism, thus producing a more forceful analysis of social interaction. The reflexive principle guiding this dimension is what Burawoy calls 'objectification'. This is an awareness of the inherent danger of giving macro forces primacy in determining social actions and practices (Eliasoph and Lichterman 1999; Tavory and Timmermans 2009), or indeed of giving them a false sense of durability (Burawoy *et al* 2000). Objectification in Burawoy's sense is a direct response to this critique of the primacy of macro over micro through the explicit recognition of the capacity and innovation of social actors. The method is used by

Burawoy (see Burawoy *et al* 1991 and Burawoy *et al* 2000) to explore the many ways people defy and reify the very structures that attempt to disenfranchise or oppress them: it becomes an unambiguous methodological tool to connect personal troubles to public issues (Mills 1959), and to explore social action in the form of resistance to this domination. This dimension relates to the problem of replicability that would require, unrealistically, conditions of social research to be fixed. Rather than strive for this impossibility, a virtue should instead be made of the lack of replicability, through insisting on locating all social situations in the field of relations which determine them (Burawoy 1998). In the case of my own research, associational emergence and continuity were set against a constantly changing broader political backdrop of asylum and immigration legislation. These constant ‘field effects’ meant that expressions of association life and responses in interviews, conducted at specific points in time, were always going to be shaped by external conditions beyond my own and the participants’ control. These could not be bracketed off from what was developing in the field.

The fourth and final dimension is *the extension of theory that is the ultimate goal and foundation of the extended case method*. Starting with a theory that guides interactions, “we seek not confirmation but refutations that inspire us to deepen that theory. Instead of discovering grounded theory, we elaborate existing theory” (Burawoy 2008:16). Burawoy recommends that observed anomalies and exceptions are used to test theories, and to provide new angles of vision for understanding and expanding on pre-existing theories. Anomalies in the sense used here can be understood as ‘problems in the field’ (Lichterman 2002). They denote any observation that troubles a theory, either through contradiction or by revealing a silence. Anomalies allow researchers to move from the particular to the general, itself a response to the issue of representativeness. In the case of the present study, dominant theoretical perspectives consider migrant associations through the lens of ‘settlement’, integration and adaptation. I entered the field with themes in mind that I had carried over from pre-existing concepts and theories I had read, and from my personal experience of working with asylum seekers and refugees. But, as I shall go on to explain, these seemed inadequate to capture the complex interplay between external structures, (changing immigration policy, extended processing times, continued inequalities and social segregation of asylum seekers) and what I could see happening in relation to associational development and continuity.

The combination of these four dimensions of the extended case method has guided my attempts at refining theoretical perspectives of the associational lives of migrants. The danger however in reconstructing or refining theory is that data is shoehorned into a 'favourite' theory or theory is altered needlessly to incorporate superficial data (Prowse 2008:7-8). Equally, with a 'theory-driven' approach, uncertain data and speculative theoretical ideas can be too easily abandoned (Tavory and Timmermans 2009). This reveals the power effect of normalisation: that is, disciplining the world we study to fit our theoretical frameworks (Burawoy 2008). The later sections in this chapter on analytical considerations explore in detail how I dealt with these issues.

An important issue to briefly consider here is that of generalisability. Burawoy sets aside critiques about the generalisability of ethnography and case studies by arguing that generalisability is a process, not an end point (Burawoy 2000, 2009). He argues that reflexive science moves from incident to incident, from case to case, successively acquiring more generality. Within the model of the extended case method, the comparisons made between cases and situations are used to illuminate the differences and dynamics at the macro level and how they materialise in the local (Vaughan 2009). Cases are not compared to formulate some general law because each occurs under different historical, political, and economic circumstances. Nonetheless, generalisability is an issue for social scientific research, and a pertinent question is how can the extended case method yield more than rich, historically, culturally and socially contextualised accounts of social phenomenon? The clues are to be found in the method itself.

In the present study, extending into the world of participants over time and space meant attending a number of meetings where representatives of other associations (not directly involved in this study) were also present, and who reported similar concerns (to those associations who did participate). Further important insights were also drawn from informal conversations with individuals and workers from a range of agencies working with asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow, illustrating a form of data triangulation, where data were gathered using several forms of sampling strategies (Denzin 1970). But perhaps most importantly this research design is inherently comparative: this is a study of six different associations where each is a different entity, made up of individuals who make claims to different collective identities. Simply put, there are various levels of constant comparison occurring simultaneously throughout this study: empirically between

the different associations and between members within respective associations; theoretically between studies of immigrant and minority associations and ‘RCOs’, between migrant associational practices and social movement processes and so forth; and methodologically through different methods of data collection. Emphasising the intrinsic comparative nature of the research highlights the representativeness and generalisability of the research. The combination of information from observation and interviews allowed me to move from the general to the particular and back to the general. This suggests a theoretical generalisability which, within the framework of the extended case method, is revealed through modifying existing theoretical perspectives or aspects of them with new material (Snow and Trom 2002:165; Snow Morrill and Anderson 2003). In the following section, I describe and analyse my own engagement with this methodological orientation. Woven into this discussion are a number of considerations relating to my various roles and positions throughout the fieldwork, as well as different ethical issues in doing research with asylum seekers and refugees.

## ***Methods***

Ethnographic research was conducted in Glasgow over a twenty-six month period. The central method was participant observation, combined with individual interviews, formal and informal conversation-style group discussions and analysis of printed materials (such as association promotional material, constitutions, internal rules, annual reports as well as emails). Avoiding reliance on a single method allowed for a methodological triangulation of techniques (Denzin 1970). This triangulation helped me to assess the reliability of information provided in interviews by multi-directional cross-checking with material gathered through observation and in printed materials, whilst acknowledging that different sets of data are not unambiguously comparable or equivalent in their capacity to address the research questions (Bryman 2004b). Participant observation was carried out with the six different associations, who will be introduced in Chapter Five, mostly during their monthly meetings and drop-ins. I also conducted forty-six in-depth individual interviews with members from five of these associations; organised three formal group discussions; and engaged in a number of additional ‘opportunistic’ group discussions and informal conversations across the range of field sites I attended. Two of the associations used an online group messenger service (Yahoo mail) and I was added as a member to both fora. Finally, I was provided with various pieces of association ‘paperwork’ and administration,

(for example written constitutions, internal rules, member rules, minutes, newsletters, articles and so forth), and I amassed a wide range of printed material which had been circulated at meetings or online. I also continued to work as a community interpreter for the duration of the fieldwork.

The six associations that took part in this study will be introduced in greater detail in Chapter Five. A number of factors influenced the focus on these specific groups: firstly, I identified them from my previous experience of working as a French interpreter in and around Glasgow from 2000 to 2010, as such there were varying degrees of familiarity with individuals and groups. This personal history has been very important to the research. It not only gave me a broad base of knowledge from which the research could be developed, but also a unique insight into the way policies affecting many asylum seekers and refugees were implemented in practice, and how they were experienced subjectively. Secondly, at the beginning of the study, these were the only established ‘non-political’ groups from Central and Western Africa (there was one other Congolese group in existence at the time which was a political group). Thirdly, they had each been in formal existence as constituted associations for roughly the same length of time (since 2003/2004). This meant that they had each emerged from the same (UK) political context, which shifted throughout the duration of the project, providing a useful comparative framework for studying how they have evolved and the constraints and opportunities they have faced. Fourthly, the political geography of members’ nationalities added an interesting comparative layer: the colonial histories of these countries were predominantly French/Belgian and I was interested in what this means for the ‘settlement’ of populations who do not necessarily share a linguistic, historical, political or cultural connection to the UK. Finally and importantly, having interpreted at a number of community-level research projects, I had seen first hand the benefit of working with groups in French. I was also acutely aware of the complexity of working through interpreters, and was keen to avoid any reliance on interpreters to facilitate the project.

The field from which these associations emerged extended beyond ‘African’ associations, and included organisations representing newly settling Tamils and Singhalese, Iraqis, Eritreans, Somalis and Turkish populations of asylum seekers and refugees. Whilst these other groups all provided similar roles to the groups who are the focus of this research, the field itself also extended to other types of groups. Joly (1996) suggests a four-fold



typology for categorising refugee associations: political organisations; focus on issues of settlement; cultural and ideological; and recreational. (Of course, to suggest these are discrete categories would be an oversimplification of the reality; there is clearly overlap between these ‘categories’ as will be explored in the subsequent chapters.) This typology can be identified in the present study: for example, a Tamil Sikh group, an Ivorian Muslim group and a Congolese political group also emerged during the fieldwork period. The Congolese group was made up of activists politically aligned to the UDPS party in the DRC (*Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social*).<sup>17</sup> I did in fact approach this group about involvement in the research and after consultation with members, they politely refused. I was told they focused on political matters and were keen to keep their activities ‘under the radar’. This meant that whilst the six groups selected produced a more consistently comparative study, the motivations, objectives and internal and external constraints and opportunities of other forms of association, (for example religious or political groups) did not feature. This also suggests, following Joly’s typology of the orientation and functions of different categories of ‘refugee associations’ (Joly 1996), that the nature of internal and external relations might be a function of the types of groups studied. Identifying the associations marked the beginning of extending myself into the world of the participants and where I began to think through my ideas and questions about ‘settlement’. I could see associations and groups develop despite the extremely difficult circumstances of long processing times of asylum claims, and I was curious to understand what this experience meant for the many asylum seekers whose future in Glasgow was uncertain.

### **Already being ‘there’: bringing previous experience to the field and managing research relationships**

Previously working with refugees, or continuing to work or volunteer during fieldwork is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon in research with asylum seekers and refugees (see for example Gold 1992; Stead 1996; Kelly 2001; Hynes 2006; Lewis 2007a; Gibb 2008; Schuster 2011). As an interpreter I was employed primarily by Glasgow City Council.<sup>18</sup> This job brought me into close contact with workers of a number of organisations involved in administering asylum policy and legislation, a wide range of

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<sup>17</sup> UDPS is the largest opposition party in the DRC.

<sup>18</sup> I was also employed as a sessional interpreter for the Scottish Refugee Council and the Home Office, although the nature of the funding for interpreting services in Glasgow meant that sometimes I worked at the Scottish Refugee Council offices as a Glasgow City Council interpreter.

public service providers and NGOs supporting asylum seekers and refugees, as well as various local-level organisations, including church drop-ins and community centres. Working alongside these different organisations and groups (before, during and after fieldwork) without being part of their organisations, placed me in a unique position. I was able to observe their actions and interactions with asylum seekers and refugees, and with each other, in a way that those working for these different agencies and those unconnected to them could not. Their familiarity with me, and the fact that I was not 'tied' to any organisation meant that staff would sometimes vent to me their own frustrations with 'the system' (here indicating the asylum processing system), with their organisations, with other organisations and sometimes with the individuals and groups they supported. It was only because of my position as both insider and outsider that I was party to these conversations and comments. Extending into the field in this way meant I was able to observe many different aspects of dispersal, support and accommodation over time, and obtain information that would not have been readily available to an outside researcher. This also helped me connect associational life to wider macro events, constraints and opportunities.

I had also become a known interpreter to many French-speaking Africans in Glasgow. I had established a rapport with many people based upon levels of confidence and trust and I had to consider how this prior knowledge (of individuals and their personal stories, but also of service providers) was going to affect my field relationships, my approach to fieldwork and data analysis. In a place one already 'knows' there is of course the advantage of understanding its hidden norms and latent discourses. I was also aware that I might take a great deal for granted, making it more difficult to make the 'familiar' strange or unexpected (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). I wondered, was there a danger that my allegiances would already be cemented? How would I, and others, handle the change in my role from interpreter to researcher? To some extent the reputation that I developed during the time I worked as an interpreter did help my transition to researcher. Many service providers, asylum seekers and refugees saw me as honest, reliable and able to maintain confidences. They trusted me as an interpreter and I hoped to build on this as a researcher. Moreover, participants' views of the researcher and the research situation had significant implications for the way they presented themselves and reacted to me (cf. Okely 1996). When I began attending association meetings, many individuals made a concerted effort to approach me and demonstrate their familiarity with me. Or if someone was formally introduced to me by someone else, he or she would laugh and say "of course I

know Teresa, she's *my* interpreter". In many ways this 'reactivity' facilitated field relations and helped me settle into the different groups. But to ensure I did not solely rely upon people I knew to tell me about associational life I also sought out people with whom I was less familiar, or whom I had never met, or with whom I had not been on especially friendly terms. In this way I hoped to gain the opinions of people who perhaps did not know me or care about me as well as those who did. The research design and use of observation as primary method helped achieve this, although as I will discuss later, there were instances of mistrust of my 'new' role as researcher and participant in association life.

Similarly to the relationships I established with workers as outlined above, I also found that, because I am not an asylum seeker, the people I got to know and worked with in this study would talk at length on association matters. This might have been difficult to do with someone from within that supposed 'community'<sup>19</sup> Indeed I was to find that being a 'white' French speaking Scottish researcher produced similar effects to those of being a 'white' French speaking Scottish interpreter. For example, I was often told that I was trusted because I was *not* a member of a specific African community. As a non-asylum seeker and UK citizen, I was considered as a way for individuals and groups to access a different 'local' and 'national' audience. Differences can clearly stimulate dialogue and participants may indeed speak to the white researcher as a representative of 'white' people in general (Crozier 2003), treating the researcher as a way to convey their views to a wider (and 'whiter') audience. One might infer from this that as a 'white' Scottish researcher, I was seen as a channel for communicating the experiences, work, activities, and aspirations of the non-Scottish migrant association.

As a Scottish researcher I was also considered as a person with local knowledge and this facilitated dialogue with others through the sharing of experience and knowledge. Indeed it would appear that the fact of *not being* an asylum seeker/refugee or indeed African was in many ways an important field resource. This highlights some of the benefits of

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<sup>19</sup> As an interpreter, a preference for some level of 'cultural matching' was regularly raised by professional service providers who often told me they would prefer a Lingala speaker (from the Democratic Republic of Congo). 'Being with one's own' can be highly problematic (Flores Borquez 1995; Kuwee Kumsa 2006), and I was also regularly told by clients they specifically *did not* want a Lingala interpreter because, in their view, a Lingala interpreter would gossip within the 'community' of Congolese. Whether this was indeed the case remains to be seen, but I could see how such perceived 'mistrust' may have similar implications in a research setting.

difference in social research and provides an important balance to arguments for ‘racial or ‘ethnic’ matching (von Unger 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Such methodological and ethical concerns with matching assume congruent interests based on ethnicity and risk essentialising ‘race’, suggesting an artificial harmony based on ‘colour’ (Rhodes 1994). They also fail to attend to other sources of similarity and difference, such as age, gender and class (Temple and Edwards 2002; Edwards, Alexander and Temple 2006). Clearly then, extending into the world of participants is contingent upon the observer. Without doubt, another ethnographer who had no previous knowledge of the participants’ social world, or who was from the same ‘ethnic’ background as some participants in this study, or who approached the research less or more reflexively could well have come to a different set of conclusions and findings.

Adopting a reflexive approach to social inquiry by no means solves all problems in managing field research relationships. Burawoy argues that intersubjectivity is a reflexive response to reactivity, and is achieved through the extension of observer into the life world of the participant. However, prior knowledge and familiarity, and joining the participants in their space and time do not eliminate the relation of power between observer and participants, and can distort the mutuality of intersubjectivity. Throughout the research I was extremely aware of the power imbalance between myself as a ‘white’ British citizen and the people with whom I was researching. As an active participant, I sought out practical means to attempt to redress power and difference between us: being involved in events; undertaking different tasks within the groups to ensure some reciprocity in the field (for example as a workshop facilitator, interpreting, providing informal training on database management and word processing). I also responded to personal questions, letting people into my life in the same way they had let me in to theirs. Already ‘being there’ was particularly useful in shifting from interpreter to researcher. As this discussion has highlighted, prior knowledge helped in many different ways, not least in negotiating access to the groups and attending group meetings. The latter became the primary source of data collection and negotiating access marked the beginning of the second stage of extending myself further into the world of the participants.

## **Extending into the world of associations: negotiating access, gatekeepers and ongoing questions**

Making first contact with the different associations involved identifying gatekeepers, for which I drew upon my personal and professional networks. In the first instance I always contacted the President of the association in question (by telephone or email, numbers and addresses found through my own networks). Mindful at all times of the politics and power relations tied up with issues of access (May 2001; Bryman 2004a), following an initial conversation with the association president, we agreed that my research would be made an ‘agenda point’ at the next meeting, which I then attended. At this second meeting, I introduced myself and the research, also providing a brief paper copy overview, in English and French (see Appendix Three for the English version), and answered any immediate questions from those present. I would then leave, so the group could discuss whether to participate in the research. Knowing who has the power to grant or withdraw access and who is considered by others to have this authority is an important aspect of sociological knowledge of the research setting, and I wanted each group to have the opportunity to collectively decide, in my absence, if they wanted to proceed.

With the one exception of the Congolese political group, all the groups agreed and I began regularly attending monthly meetings. These were usually held at the end or at the beginning of the month, and sometimes I ended up attending two meetings in the one day. During the early months of fieldwork, the wider association membership also took on a kind of ‘gatekeeper role’, regularly posing challenging questions related to access, consent and indeed power: “Why this group?” and “What’s in it for us?” At one association meeting, a member who had not attended for a while wanted to quiz me on the purpose of my research. When the chair of the meeting said this had already been explained and it was not on the agenda for that evening’s meeting, the member persisted that he wanted answers. It was after all ‘his right’ as a member to know what I was doing there. Feeling a bit uncomfortable and not wishing to take up precious meeting time by going over my research again, I suggested we speak at the end of the meeting. This seemed satisfactory and the meeting business continued. Later when I sought him out, he politely dismissed me. It seemed the detailed chat was no longer necessary.

On reflection, I think a number of things were occurring here: this member was considered one of the ‘elders’ in the community, and I think he was asserting this position of authority. I also think he was making a point about representation discussed in Chapter Two, namely, that although he respected what he saw as a committee-level decision (even though it had been a wider membership decision to participate), by insisting upon further information, he was nevertheless challenging the assumption that the committee automatically ‘spoke for him’. This also reveals the problem of consent and negotiating access. That he did not then require further clarification made me also wonder if he was simply performing his higher status role for the benefit of myself and others present. Even so, this interaction illustrates the importance for taking into consideration participants’ personal expectations in terms of granting access and consent themselves, and that gatekeepers do not necessarily speak for all members (Mason 2002). When placing spokespersons or ‘chosen insiders’ centre stage, issues around legitimacy and validity of their authoritative voice have to be sensitively handled (Jan-Khan 2006). Although gatekeepers’ voices were also authentic, I wanted to avoid an overreliance on them and a silencing of others’. Extending into the world of participants through long-term observation and attending meetings and events allowed me to address this power effect (Burawoy 1998), providing the opportunity to observe and participate in interactions between ordinary members and management committee members in the associations over an extended time period. This also meant I was able to answer any direct concerns and questions from ordinary members relating to their involvement without relying on an intermediary. I do recognise within this sample that the people observed at meetings and the interviewees were all members of the groups. Whilst this might suggest that they would articulate a relatively homogenous narrative of participation and involvement, there was in fact a great deal of diversity in the subjective experiences of the group as was expressed during interviews and observed during fieldwork.

Regular questions regarding the nature of the research also forced me to confront issues surrounding trust and the usefulness of the research. Ordinary and management committee members alike wanted to know various things, such as who was funding my research? Whose idea was it? Was it related to the Home Office? What would I do with the findings? Of course at the time of negotiating consent, it was not clear how the findings might be used in the future. I was asked by a number of individuals whether taking part was “*a way to show the Home Office how integrated we are and that it might help our*

*asylum cases?*<sup>20</sup> Such questions of trust can be found in other studies on doing research with refugees (Temple and Moran 2005; Kissoon 2006; Tait 2006; Hynes 2009), highlighting an ethical and political issue about what/who data are for, in turn drawing attention to the ‘vulnerable’ status of the participants. This also highlights the way in which external structures impinge upon associational life. Homan (1991, 1992) argues that the notion of true informed consent, where study participants are given a full explanation and are able to reach a clear understanding of what participation involves, exists more in rhetoric than reality: it is impossible to know all the consequences of participating before a study has commenced. However I always made clear that this study would not in any way influence participants’ asylum claims. I also reassured participants that I had completed a rigorous process of ethical review through the University of Glasgow. By being clear about the aims of the research, that the research had received ethical approval and ensuring that people understood that participation was voluntary, research participants were better placed to make an informed decision regarding their involvement (Bryman 2004a; O’Reilly 2005).

Because I found myself fairly regularly explaining why I was ‘there’, negotiating access and gaining consent ended up being a staged process, and was revisited at different points in the study. The need to keep addressing consent was also due to the complex nature of changing immigration status which affected participation levels and onward migration. I also had to contend with new members joining the groups throughout my time in the field, and the constitutional turnover of management committees and chair people, as required by the associations’ constitutions. The next section details the different field sites I engaged with once access had been brokered with the different associations.

### **Extending further into the world of associations: the field sites and participant observation**

Observation fieldwork was carried out in two main types of ‘field site’ which could be described as ‘private’ and ‘public’ settings respectively. Firstly, most observation took

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<sup>20</sup> This question relates directly to Case Resolution, a policy that will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Part of Case Resolution requires that asylum seekers provide the Home Office with evidence of their integration. This can come in the form of testimonials and letters of support from the wider community. During this study I provided 5 such testimonials.

place during monthly association meetings. These 'private' meetings are the main opportunity for management committees (MC) and ordinary members (members who are not office bearers in the MC) to come together and discuss the business of the group. Meetings were to become a particularly valuable research site. They revealed not only the types of issues discussed, but equally which issues are prioritised over others, and as such can be conceptualised as indices of individual and collective activities, values and interests. I also undertook observation at a members-only monthly drop-in run by one of the associations. I describe these meetings as 'private' because they generally took place in the 'private sphere' of members' homes. The second main set of observation 'sites' were association meetings with external partners (charities, funders, NGOs); association AGMs; cultural events such as National Day and Commonwealth Week celebrations; organised 'community events' such as Refugee Week and International Women's Day, as well as Christmas parties; baptisms; First Holy Communions, wake-keepings; and graduation parties. Over the course of fieldwork I attended a number of conferences and seminars where associations would be represented. Finally, I also observed interactions in some of the specialist 'African shops' across Glasgow, as a 'shopper bystander'. I describe these sites as 'public' events because they took place in a 'public sphere' and hence would be publicly observed by a wider non-membership audience, including sympathisers and friends, professionals or observer bystanders.

My involvement with the different associations varied. In some cases, it was limited to attending monthly meetings (in themselves the main form of contact for all members). During observation it became clear to me that friendships had developed between different members that then involved a degree of contact between meetings. However, limiting my involvement to attendance at monthly meetings was 'typical' of many members' contact with the association and with each other, allowing me to 'replicate' to a degree the level of social interactions they had with each other. For other groups, I was able to observe meetings and interactions with external state and non-state actors. With regards to keeping in touch in between meetings, two groups used an online email group messenger system, where members could post information about the meeting (e.g. minutes, constitution) as well as news from 'home' and updates on various association and private matters. My name was added to both groups, so I had access to email exchanges between members during the study. I also received emails and text messages on a range of issues from the different groups.



Most meetings took place in members' homes. This was primarily because at the time of fieldwork, none of the groups had a formal 'office space' or 'community base'. Towards the end of the fieldwork period, one association did acquire office space, and this then became the venue for their MC meetings. The same group also used a church hall for its drop-in. A 'community' or office space was often discussed by the different associations as a much yearned for resource. Many members considered that such a space would raise their visibility and credibility within their 'communities' as well as the wider 'Scottish community'. The intimate 'home' setting also reflected how member's social lives were not generally located in an external setting (pubs, cafes, community centres) but in the individual's homes. This was a point made by many as a main reason for attending. All the meetings would be clearly separated into two main 'events': the formal business of the association, followed by an informal social event, which always involved eating together. This indicated to me the centrality of the association experience to individuals' social lives. The 'home' site then took on a particular significance: members welcomed others into their 'private' spaces; were assisted financially by the wider membership with 'hosting' meetings; and were expected to 'take turns' in hosting meetings. These meetings transformed the rather bleak setting of NASS accommodation into a vibrant and lively place, making them immediately more 'homely', practices that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Through prolonged immersion I began 'extending out' into associational life and this meant becoming part of and privy to a number of opportunistic group discussions as well as many, many conversation-style 'interviews' with members. I was aware that observation was helping me to consider my research problems in specific ways and generated a large quantity of fieldnotes. As Hannerz (1980) notes, a limitation of urban ethnography is that not all processes and interactions are capable of being observed. Some are hidden from view (for example, meetings where only management committee members attended). Furthermore, 'around-the-clock' observation is just not physically possible, although they are not groups who interacted 'around-the-clock'. Whilst I was learning a lot about the different group dynamics and the macro effects on internal processes, struggles and continuity, I was also keen to capture subjective experiences of associational life and how these were mediated by external structures. Therefore, alongside ongoing

observation, I carried out forty-six in-depth interviews with a small sample from five of the groups.<sup>21</sup>

## Reflecting on interviews

There were several people in each of the groups who did not want to be interviewed, nor did they want me to take their contact details. Around the time I began interviewing members, I was waiting in Véronique's house for a meeting to begin. Véronique was a committee member of CAMASS, the French speaking Cameroonian association. I was first to arrive as usual and so we were catching up on life in general. She asked me how the interviews were going - members knew I was interviewing and I also knew they talked about the interviews between themselves. Some told me how they had encouraged others to be interviewed, telling them "*it's just like a chat, it's not hard*". Anyway, Véronique told me that some members thought I was a "Home Office spy". She said they had seen me at the Home Office and then seen me in the group and "*put two and two together*". This may explain in part the reluctance of some to be interviewed. I realised that, although when I worked for the Home Office I tried hard to maintain and project an independent and objective professional persona, I could not control how others saw and labelled me. Although Véronique found it amusing, I was upset by this (I didn't want to be seen as having anything to do with the Home Office), but could see how people might have come to this conclusion. I realised I would need to keep reminding groups, through brief updates, that this was independent research. Despite explicit refusals to be interviewed, I continued to see these people at meetings and engaged in conversations and small talk with them. Clearly, continuing observation was important to build rapport and trust, but also to provide an alternative opportunity to the formal interview for more personal informal discussions to take place.

Like the observation fieldwork, the individual in-depth interviews I conducted were significant ethnographic encounters, whether they took place in members' homes, in a local café, and in one instance in a member's workplace. I was aware of the change in dynamic in the one-to-one setting and the shift in power from the researcher as participant

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<sup>21</sup> By early 2009, the Glasgow Congo Brazzaville Association had disbanded (see Chapter Five) and so I was not able to carry out interviews with members.

member listening and observing, to the researcher with the digital recorder, asking questions. I tried to mitigate this shift in different ways. I used a thematic interview schedule to help guide me through the interviews and to ensure, as much as possible, that I covered the same themes in each interview (see Appendix Four). As I went along, I revisited the questions and adapted the schedule to reflect new ideas and concepts as they emerged. Using the schedule as a guide allowed each interview to flow and move in different directions. Although many interviewees seemed a little nervous at the beginning (to judge by their body language), they quickly got into the rhythm of the interview. In the vast majority of cases, interviewees spoke openly and at length about their experiences of the group. On average, interviews lasted one hour and 20 minutes and were all digitally recorded (with one exception, an interviewee who had stress-related chronic laryngitis and who wrote her answers in French).

On reflection, my own long-established presence in their groups undoubtedly helped gain trust and helped members relax into the interview. There was a strong sense that we already ‘knew’ each other fairly well, but I did need to keep my own preconceptions in check. For example, one member who was very chatty in the group setting was much more reserved in the interview and subsequently this interview was much harder work than I had anticipated. The relatively unstructured interview style I adopted helped, as did the thematic guide, which lent itself to a more free flowing discussion and made the discussion feel more ‘naturalistic’. During interviews there were regular references to the meetings, and comments like: “*well you can see for yourself what it’s like at meetings*”. This suggested to me we were both ‘insiders’ and I had successfully extended myself in to their ‘association world’. But I think it was also more than that, it was also a way to avoid direct critique of the group: problems or internal issues were there for all observers to witness themselves. Nonetheless, this did not seem to inhibit interviewees from expressing what they felt was problematic with their respective associations. It was particularly important to be able to connect the interviews with observation fieldwork, as what people say and what people do are often different things. Equally, personal histories with the interviewees helped me to relate how changing personal circumstances regarding immigration status also affected their personal relationships with the associations. This interplay was very revealing of how the macro environment shaped subjective interactions with the groups, and will be explored further in the subsequent empirical chapters.

In relation to recording consent, simply asking people if they could read, understand and sign a written consent form is not a sufficient (or always appropriate) gauge of literacy levels. So rather than make assumptions about literacy or make people feel uncomfortable, verbal consent was sought and recorded at the beginning of each interview. Most interviews were in French, but some were in English and one was in English and French (the interviewee jumped between both languages during the interview). Due to demands on time, I made the decision not to translate interviews and so worked from data in both French and English. All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim.<sup>22</sup> Being able to communicate with participants in both observation and interview situations without recourse to an interpreter was a real strength of this study, and language played a central role in facilitating my 'extension' into the participants' world. It not only privileged access and facilitated communication between myself and the participants throughout, but also went some way to redress power imbalances, in ways I had not always anticipated.

### **Extending through shared language: a methodological tool and reflexive aide in the field**

It has long been an expectation of anthropologists that they will learn the 'local' language, although the extent to which they actually manage or achieve a level of fluency is often glossed over in the literature. As a French-speaking researcher, language gave me opportunities with this particular group in terms of research methods that would not necessarily be open to monolingual researchers (cf. Wahlbeck 1997 and Kelly 2001). Speaking a shared language meant I was able to immerse myself more readily in the culture and norms of participants, an essential component of ethnographic inquiry (Bryman 2004a; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007); it also facilitated the sampling strategy and lessened the reliance on others to filter who might be accessible. I did not need to rely on interpreters and could avoid what Temple and Edwards (2002) describe as triple subjectivity, where additional filters are added to the communication process.

Doing research using the language of participants also facilitates 'small talk', that is the ordinary topics of conversation that establish each of us as 'normal' (Oakley 1981; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). The value of 'small talk' is often missing from research

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<sup>22</sup> See Key to Transcription Conventions Used, page 9

with asylum seekers and refugees. This may be due to language barriers, but also to the wider set of external circumstances affecting asylum seekers and refugees: there are often more pressing topics for discussion. However 'small talk' can provide some much needed social intimacy and normality in extremely difficult personal circumstances and conditions. In the case of this research, I believed from the outset that it was very important to find common ground to normalise communication and social interaction: not all talk needs to be 'asylum talk' or even 'association talk'. 'Small talk' allows for alternative narratives and social connections to develop and consequently we were able to talk about a wide range of topics related to the research context and life more generally (Gans 1982). The power of 'small talk' in the participants' language was one way to practice social proximity and make a virtue of reactivity, a key component of the extended case method's reflexive logic. Through 'small talk', information about me was part of the research process: my nationality, where I learned French, where I grew up, and my family background. 'Small talk' as a reflexive methodological tool offers an important and under-theorised dimension to the sociological methods literature generally. This absence is not necessarily a feature of feminist research (Oakley 1981; Stanley and Wise 1983; Finch 1984). From the feminist standpoint, a willingness to share experiences and knowledge is considered central to diminishing barriers and equalising relationships. Equally, in anthropological studies, engaging in participant observation research involves establishing and maintaining social relationships with people and 'small talk' is considered a key aspect of this.

Sharing language also related to the language of 'asylum and immigration matters'. That I had experience in this area meant that there was an insider language we already shared, that is, in how people talk about asylum matters generally. The different systems and processes were familiar to me and did not require explanation, which certainly helped with understanding and was a unique asset in terms of gaining access. However, this also had a potential downside: there were likely to be features of this language which I then took for granted and which I needed to work at observing with fresh eyes, as if I had only just entered the field. I also had to take care not to silence voices, experiences or interactions. The reflexive principles underpinning the extended case method helped guide me through these ethical and methodological concerns.

Of course, shared language is not entirely unproblematic: language carries accumulated and particular social, cultural and political meanings. Equally, our social locations influence our experiences and the way we describe these (Edwards 1998; Edwards *et al* 2006). Language is not a neutral medium, and as suggested earlier, shared language is only one marker of similarity among many other markers of difference (Rhodes 1994; Edwards 1998; Twine 2000). In this study, field sites were multilingual environments, where I was sometimes excluded from conversations which switched from French to Lingala or Swahili. This would have been because this other language was in fact a first language, and so easier. But sometimes this might have been a deliberate switch on the part of the research participants, when they wanted to exclude me from their discussion. Although I could not know this for sure, I had some indication this was indeed the case. During fieldwork at a community event, I was sitting with some Congolese women who were talking about another interpreter who had begun learning Lingala, much to the consternation of this group who felt “*it was not her business to speak their language*”. When I replied that perhaps she just wanted to be able to say some basics, they shook their heads, “*No, she wants to know what we talk about when we speak Lingala*”. Finally, non-verbal behaviour is equally a particular strength of observation, in that it allows the researcher to focus on behaviour that individuals do not verbalise, as well as the rhetorical strategies they *do* use: facial expressions, gestures which sometimes contradict what is said or absences of spoken utterances or silences (examples of which are provided throughout Chapters 5-8). Long-term observation provides this type of ‘grounded knowledge’ necessary to help contextualise and interpret field events (Lichterman 1996; Okely 1996).

Language is an important source of difference, and is used as a boundary marking mechanism in the field. Most often I was on the inside of the boundary, but sometimes I was clearly placed on the outside. This would be done through language switching as discussed above. As a researcher I had to reflexively attend to how I silence participants, and to how I was also ‘silenced’ on such occasions, one example of this became apparent in members’ assumptions that I would translate in the absence of an interpreter. In the first months of fieldwork when I was sometimes called upon to translate, (as did happen as I negotiated my role switch from interpreter to researcher), I felt that I might be (or be seen as) undermining the agency of others in the group who could also have interpreted. However, the fact that there was always someone present who could have done this, but that I was asked (and in such a way I couldn’t refuse) suggests another way in which the lines of the relationship between us were always being redrawn. They were not necessarily

‘relying upon me’ but instead had recognised a way to use my skills and were ‘getting something out of me’. Members did not explicitly ‘tell me’ to translate, but I often felt pressure to do this. This was an important reminder to me that my presence as a participant observer (and some-time member) was always subordinate to their status as full members. In this way, they kept me ‘in check’ reminding me I wasn’t the insider I might have presumed. Despite the varied complex aspects of language in the field, researching in the language of participants creates a different research environment that can stimulate communication and helped me to work around my continually shifting position as the researcher within the research process. Language certainly facilitated and privileged access, in that I was able to make direct contact with groups themselves, and undoubtedly this helped me to find my own place in the field sites.

Such instances in the field and my own reflections would always be written up and integrated into more general fieldnotes. This would detail people, relations, interactions, what was going on at meetings, who said what, how they spoke, the language they used. I tried to capture as much about the event as I could. Initially descriptive and focusing on form and content, these notes became gradually more analytical as I kept returning to the field, as did my own commentaries, which I integrated into fieldnotes from the outset. This process gave way to a more focused analytical inquiry.

### ***Analytical considerations***

With some important exceptions, (Goffman 1959; Glaser and Strauss 1968; Whyte [1943] 1993; Emerson *et al* 1995; Lichterman 2002; Charmaz 2006) many ethnographers either gloss over the practices and procedures of analysis, or fail to articulate them in their final reports. Consequently, this produces the effect that qualitative analysis is a haphazard enterprise (Small *et al* 2003). Whilst it is clear that some form of analysis takes place, the ‘how’ of analysis tends to remain rather vague. Even with the extended case method, the methodological process of fieldnote writing and the analytical process that ensues are rarely discussed by its proponents (Tavory and Timmermans 2009). Perhaps one reason for the lack of discussion about analytical technique is that a random or fortuitous approach to data is common rather than atypical. So what analytic techniques can a researcher deploy when using the extended case method framework? Tavory and Timmermans

(2009) contrast grounded theory methods with the extended case method, seeing them as incompatible because of their divergent logics of inquiry, and presenting them as forming two distinct positions on a continuum of the relationship between data and theory in fieldwork (2009:247). However, in his analysis of what developed into a study of suburban activism, and the tension between individuality and sustainable political commitment, Lichterman (2002) presents a theory-driven ethnography (using the extended case method) which uses some of the analytic techniques most commonly found in grounded theorising, namely the constant-comparative method to be discussed below (Glaser and Strauss 1968). This, Lichterman argues, presents a way of assisting a project that follows extended case logic, which is very much focused on identifying ‘problems in the field’ and differences among similar cases to further explain existing theories (Lichterman 2002:129). Following Lichterman’s approach, I drew upon analytic techniques derived from grounded theorising to help me begin to sort and code the various forms of data.

### **Adapting ‘field-driven’ techniques to a ‘theory-driven’ ethnography**

Fieldwork produced what felt like a mountain of data: typed up fieldnotes from twenty-six months of observation with six different associations; verbatim transcripts of forty-six in-depth interviews; email exchanges; association literature and other materials I had collated from different field sites. I very quickly realised that I needed to have a structured process for organising and managing the data but one which allowed for flexibility. Interviews were in French, English, and sometimes a combination of both languages. After initial attempts at using Nvivo software to help me sort the data, the volume of data in three different language classes became too awkward to handle. Nor did I have the time to translate all material into one language. So I proceeded with a manual analysis of fieldnotes and interview transcripts. Although this was also difficult to manage and very time-consuming, it kept me very close to the data and kept the data contextualised within the fieldnote and interview.

Turning to actual analysis, I found the constant-comparison technique - involving open and focused coding and memo-writing - particularly helpful and well-suited to the constant comparison between the six different associations in the study. Burawoy critiques, rather



cursorily in my view, these coding techniques (and does so without offering an alternative approach). He argues that they focus on correlations rather than processes and they suspend context so as to make cases comparable, but result in a disengagement from wider power relations (Burawoy 1998). However it is not clear how exactly these coding techniques are incompatible with a theory-driven ethnography. Indeed in his study of suburban activism, Lichterman (2002) demonstrates a very clear use of the techniques of coding and memo-writing using what he calls a “coding and observing strategy” (2002:129) to assist the extended case method progress towards a problem in the field, and ultimately theory refinement. Following Lichterman’s approach, the strategy I used involved entering the field with expectations, from which I developed rough ‘sensitising’ concepts that were then honed and finely-tuned each time I returned to the field. In this sense I revisited the field with evolving questions that developed from the previous set of fieldnotes/field visits. These then informed the development of concepts and thematic categories.

The extended case method argues for data collection and analysis to be interwoven (Burawoy 1998). Burawoy advocates returning to the field with fresh hypotheses and this can only emerge from constant comparison, which Burawoy describes as a dialogue between data and theory. In the present study, this dialogue is evident in comparison between members, between associations, and between theoretical perspectives. It also develops from anomalies or exceptions that arise when comparing data, people, events or documents. It is important to emphasise that constant-comparison was used in this study to inform the theory-driven approach and to help identify anomalies in the theory, or ‘problems in the field’. The following discussion details the processes involved.

### **Analysing data, identifying anomalies, finding sociological questions**

I used the coding principles of *Initial Coding* and *Focused Coding* as a style of ordering data and developing concepts (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Lichterman 2002; Charmaz 2006). *Initial Coding* involves a close reading of the data. I used a line-by-line breakdown of interviews and a paragraph breakdown for coding fieldnotes. Staying close to the data in this way kept me interacting with the data, forcing me to keep returning to previous interviews and fieldnotes and helping me see these in new ways. This process also

influenced what I was then looking for in the different field sites. I tried to preserve actions by using gerunds in my codes: for example *challenging labels; rejecting categories; asserting collective identities; establishing local connections; avoiding disclosure; questioning leadership; aligning with 'others'*. Keeping the codes active and brief helped to reflect what people were doing or what was happening so that I could view the codes as potential categories. I then moved onto the next stage of *Focused Coding* (or selective coding). This less open-ended and more directive stage involved taking the most frequent codes from the initial coding and tying emerging concepts to the data (as a form of verification).

In parallel to coding, I had already started *Memo-writing*. *Memo-writing* begins as a preliminary analysis stage and is commonly presented in grounded theory literature as the end stage in a linear process (i.e. moving from coding to memos) (Glaser and Strauss 1968; Emerson *et al* 1995; Charmaz 2005). However memo-writing can in fact begin at any point and I began with my first observations and sets of fieldnotes. Memos detail expectations, sensitising themes, theories and concepts, whether these have been formally thought through or in their embryonic form (Emerson *et al* 1995). They are a way to explore the data, and come to be drafted and redrafted in order elaborate and refine categories, emergent patterns and processes. For example, I would write up memos in as much detail after the field event, and consider what was happening, how members spoke and interacted, what they said, who said what and so forth. When memo-writing, I was guided by my theoretical ideas and expectations, but looked for exceptions or problems with these ideas.

I had originally organised the fieldnotes on a group basis. Methodologically this seemed the best way both to show the distribution of attitudes and the social relations between members within a specific association and also to relate individual attitudes to group attitudes and collective identities. Whilst I observed a great deal of variety in ambitions, orientations, patterns of interactions, attitudes towards external representations of the groups and behaviours in different settings among the different groups observed, I also identified many more similarities between them. Accordingly this constant-comparison technique helped me organise the fieldnotes thematically, so as to draw out emerging patterns and comparisons across the associations. I compared (1) data from six different associations (such as orientations, goals, objectives, what makes them specific, what

characteristics do they share, how they defined themselves); (2) different people from the various groups (such as their beliefs, situations, actions, accounts or experiences); (3) data from the same individuals at different points in time (and from different field settings); (4) data from observation with interview data and (5) data from events within and between associations, as well as informal data collected from other individuals and groups with whom I interacted in the course of fieldwork. Using this constant-comparison technique, the following brief vignette illustrates the analytical process by setting out some of the steps involved in using the extended case method: starting with a theme, identifying problems in the field and the beginning of theoretical refinement.

During a CAMASS meeting, one of the members was providing feedback from a Refugee Policy Forum meeting he had attended. As he spoke, other members questioned why this was on their meeting agenda. The Refugee Policy Forum was, they felt, of little relevance to CAMASS members. At the time, I thought ‘hold on, it does... some of you are asylum seekers and many of you are refugees’ (annotating my fieldnotes to reflect these questions). This distancing or rejection of the refugee category troubled me and I had to ask myself, if this ‘label’ didn’t relate to them, what or who was this ethnography about? Then sometime in the first months of attending meetings I began to worry less about where I thought their interests belonged and to listen more to what they were saying and doing, how they interacted and used the collective space of the association. I began to listen out for categories of person, or setting or group that members would use in contrast with other categories. When I was also to stand back and listen, I was struck by how groups kept contrasting this label of ‘RCO’ or ‘refugee group’ with how they saw themselves invariably as a ‘minority community association’, an ‘African group’, or as a ‘new migrant group’.

I had already begun developing ‘initial codes’ using interview transcripts and fieldnotes. As fieldwork continued, I returned to these data and began to think about how to focus the coding, with an aim of building thematic categories. I will briefly discuss the development of two main thematic categories to illustrate how this process evolved during the study. The research questions, as set out in Chapter One, were framed around broader issues of identification and categorisation: how this occurs internally and externally and the ways in which these processes are mediated by the association and external actors. Going through the data I was then able to ‘focus’ initial codes. For example, initial codes such as

challenging labels, rejecting categories; alignment with ‘others’; prioritising ‘settlement’; feeling displaced; being different; (in)visibility; projecting forward; being ‘new’ were then grouped under two thematic categories of ‘Refugeeness’ and ‘Alignment with other ‘others’’. These categories seemed to better capture the fluid processes of identification and categorisation and the overlap between them: ‘Refugeeness’ was emerging as an externally defined thematic category, and whilst an important quality of the associations, it did not appear to capture what was happening within groups. This led me to question its enduring nature. And ‘Alignment with other ‘others’’ was emerging as an internally defined category. It seemed to better describe the discursive and practical strategies used by groups themselves to move beyond this focus on migrant status, and assert a broader set of identities to describe who they were, what they were doing and how they envisioned their own pathway to settlement. Importantly, I was able to take these thematic categories back into the field, and this helped me to begin to see associational life in different ways.

As I revisited the field and returned to fieldnotes, this tussle over categorisations and identifications revealed to me something about the predominant ways of imagining groups in specific ways related to their migrant status. The collective identity I had expected from theoretical presuppositions built around their ‘refugeeness’ was misplaced, and in many ways seemed part of the problem they themselves faced in breaking away from migrant status as defining them. (I also had to ask myself, did my own presuppositions make me complicit in this.) How groups were imagined was inextricably linked to categorisation processes. Such processes relate to how difference is constructed by the state and how certain migrants are seen as more ‘settled’ than others, or at least seemed to be able to access the dominant narratives of ‘settlement’. This also said something about how externally produced categories of migrants work to contain certain groups within certain boundaries. The effects produced by categorisation were suggestive of social control: who was defining them and how they were being defined - as ‘RCOs’ - also set the parameters of access to resources and supports and was closely linked to funding imperatives that demanded representation of minority groups. These micro-level interactions reflected macro-level issues such as migrant incorporation policies, social difference and inequalities, racist ideologies. Could rejecting the label and aligning with other populations be understood as a form of confronting and surviving *non-settlement* and categorisation processes?

Seemingly ordinary ‘comments’ in the field revealed much about how the macro world - permanently there but constantly moving - penetrated and dominated micro-level experiences and revealed problems with theoretical perspectives. The response from CAMASS members seemed to me an anomaly, but how exactly was this an anomaly? And did other groups feel or talk about this in the same way? When I began to recognise such connections between the micro and macro levels, and how the former is shaped by the latter, I sought to make comparisons across the associations, between interview data, events in the field and theoretical ideas. I was to hear similar comments in other groups about how they were being categorised, and this revealed to me a problem in the field for dominant theoretical perspectives that organised groups along migrant status lines.

## ***Conclusions***

This chapter has described and analysed the methodologies, methods, and orientations that underpin the present thesis. I have sought to make clear the various personal, intellectual, and practical issues that guided my choice of research design, method, and analysis. In the first main section, I identified dominant methodological approaches in the study of refugee associations and practices as most firmly located within the Chicago School tradition of interactionism combined with grounded theorising. However, having argued in Chapter Two that group formation processes are influenced by both external and internal factors and pressures, I sought out a methodological approach to reflect this concern with both micro processes and macro forces. Subsequently, I turned to Manchester School social anthropology, identifying the extended case method, and specifically Burawoy’s development of this, as an approach which can most fruitfully offer this synthesis.

Theory refinement is the main goal of the extended case method. As discussed in Chapter Two, dominant theoretical paradigms concerning asylum seeker and refugee-led associations tend to draw upon the functional integrative role of such groups. I also argued that much of the academic and policy related literature fails to attend to the moving picture of associational life and the complex interplay of internal and external factors that effect not only emergence, but importantly continuity. As set out in this chapter, the methodological approach adopted - following the four main dimensions of the extended case method - seeks to address these limitations. This chapter has in effect set out how

theoretical refinement is operationalised methodologically. Using observation as a primary method, I combined this with in-depth interviews, formal and informal group discussions (in meetings and online) and printed materials. This triangulation was used to check validity and reliability, and added a richness and complexity to the study. I then described and analysed the methods and techniques used to incorporate the extended case method into data collection and analysis. I sought to demonstrate how the methodological approach adopted can refine and improve upon existing theoretical perspectives into the associational practices of asylum seekers and refugees. Finally, to provide a transparent account of the analytical techniques used, I explained the analytical process from note-taking to coding and memo-writing and presented an adapted constant-comparison framework that drew connections between data, events and theoretical ideas. This framework guided me towards theoretical refinement.

In order to build upon the theoretical contextualisation in Chapter Two and the methodological approach presented here, it is important to explore the political and historical contexts from which the six groups in this study emerged. This context was also central to shaping the research questions, the theoretical ideas and methodological approach used. The following chapter provides this contextualisation, moving from the general asylum and immigration legislative context in the UK to the experience of dispersal in Glasgow.

## Chapter 4 Contextualising the Ethnography

### *Introduction*

This chapter aims to locate the ethnography firstly within the structural context of migrant incorporation in Britain, and secondly, within the specific context of dispersal policy and Glasgow. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first main section - ‘The asylum and immigration legislative context’ - I provide a brief historical overview of political and ideological debates on migrant incorporation in the UK and of asylum and immigration legislation. In the second part - ‘A brief history of dispersal of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK’ - I offer a historical contextualisation of dispersal as a migration management tool with previous cohorts of refugees. In the third section - ‘Immigration and the Scottish political climate’ - I set out a number of factors differentiating the Scottish context from the other dispersal sites of England and Wales. In the final section - ‘Dispersal and Glasgow’ - I introduce the dispersal site of Glasgow. Whilst recognising some similarities in terms of how the state has historically ‘handled its outsiders’ (Soysal 1994), I argue that there are a number of features that distinguish asylum seeker incorporation since the mid-1990s, and which contribute to the construction of asylum seekers as a specific problem.

### *The asylum and immigration legislative context*

Contemporary asylum seeker incorporation regimes cannot be considered in complete isolation from how the UK Government has historically ‘handled its outsiders’. In post-WWII Britain, when the emphasis was on both the supply of cheap migrant labour and controlling migrant numbers, the themes of control, conditionality, compliance and irreconcilable differences in relation to immigrants dominated (Solomos and Back 1996). These themes continued to dictate the immigration policy agenda throughout the 1960s, where ideological and political debates focused on ‘pressures’ that unfettered immigration placed on public services, housing, employment and crime (Miles and Solomos 1987; Castles 1993), the migrant becoming constructed as the ‘usurper’ of material and symbolic

national resources (Schuster 2003b, 2003c). Such debates continued throughout the 1970s, but there was a further shift in policy focus to the management of urban crises following increasing migration and welfare cuts. During this time, increasingly explicit links made by politicians between urban decline, poverty and 'too much' immigration gave way to the 'race relations' agenda, which continues to influence UK policy (Rex 1970; Sivanandan 1985, 1990; Miles 1993a, 1993b; Castles 1993; Schuster and Solomos 2004; Ray and Reed 2005). According to Miles (1982, 1993a) and Sivanandan (1985, 1990), the 'race relations' agenda failed to depoliticise the question of black immigration and managed to obscure the structural location of racism in British society. Despite this obfuscation, and bolstered by policy driven sociology (Rex 1973) the 1980s and 1990s continued with the 'race relations' focus on public order, the long-term position of minorities and immigration control.

In the mid 1990s, the issue of asylum seekers as a distinctively problematic migrant category moved higher up the political agenda. Although a specific legislative focus on asylum migration in the UK predates the election in 1997 of the New Labour government, the latter legislated on immigration on an unprecedented scale. With seven substantive Acts of Parliament in thirteen years (six under New Labour, the seventh under the current Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition), a raft of accompanying secondary legislation, and other legislation with an immigration dimension, immigration has been subject to continual legislative change. The seven Acts passed have primarily focused on asylum controls, presenting asylum movement as a new channel for economic migration. This has been in partial response to a sharp rise over much of the 1990s in asylum applications to the UK: between 1998 and 2002, the number of people seeking asylum in the UK grew significantly, reaching a total of 84,130 principal applicants in 2002. Following the ever-tightening of immigration controls, between 2003 and 2007 this trend was reversed and the number of applicants fell year-on-year.<sup>23</sup> Table 1 (Appendix One) presents a summary of Acts of Parliament introduced since 1993 relating to immigration, and highlights the different elements of the Acts that are specific to the incorporation of asylum seekers and refugees.

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<sup>23</sup> Source: House of Commons Library, Asylum Statistics, Standard Note: SN/SG/1403. Last updated: 1 October 2010, Section: Social and General Statistics <http://www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/briefings/snsg-01403.pdf> (accessed 13 March 2011).



Although all migrants are subject to an increasingly restrictive immigration regime, which corresponds to trends across Europe (Schuster 2005), the tightening of legislation specific to asylum seekers can be identified very early in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993. This Act embedded the 'safe third country' removal process into asylum seeker incorporation policy; imposed restrictions on those who could apply for asylum in the UK; and restricted access and entitlement to local authority housing. The next most significant piece of legislation relating to asylum seekers was the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 which marked a growing hostility towards all migrants, but particularly those considered least 'wanted' or desirable. This Act introduced sanctions on employers who gave work to unauthorised asylum seekers; imposed severe restrictions on welfare entitlements; reduced access to social services including social housing for certain asylum seekers; and removed entitlement to benefits for in-country applicants. Despite their brevity, both the 1993 and 1996 Acts were highly restrictive and laid firm foundations for the further withdrawal of state support and tightening immigration mechanisms in subsequent Acts which were used to 'deter' asylum migration to the UK. This was most evident in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. The 1999 Act removed all remaining mainstream welfare benefit entitlement from all asylum applicants (maintenance to be provided at 70% of standard benefit levels) and replaced cash benefits with a voucher system for all asylum seekers. It set out the framework for the centralisation of support services, via the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to provide basic support and accommodation to destitute asylum applicants on the basis of a no-choice dispersal policy; it outlined measures for support to be removed if destitution is deemed to have ceased; it set out measures for dispersal for 'destitute' asylum seekers; it strengthened the powers of immigration officers and it set out the mechanisms for one-stop appeals (Kushner and Knox 1999; JCWI 2002; Morris 2002; Sales 2002; Schuster 2004; Bloch and Schuster 2005; Kerrigan 2005; Hynes 2006; Mulvey 2010).

Mulvey (2010) suggests that part of the reason for so much legislation specific to asylum matters is not only international migratory dynamics, but also an element of reactive policy-making combined with populism (2010:439). Arguably the measures described in the 1993, 1996 and 1999 Acts have all fed into and developed from popular perceptions that asylum seekers are 'suspect' and 'bogus', a problem population for the UK that requires increasingly punitive solutions, with the media also playing a key role in shaping these perceptions (Lynne and Lea 2003; Finney and Robinson 2008). It is clear that control, compliance and conditionality of stay continue to be the main objectives of

contemporary approaches to ‘managing asylum migration’, operationalised through containment measures such as dispersal, segregated welfare support and restrictions on housing, movement and employment (Schuster 2003b, 2005). It might be argued that these measures are simply an extension of a well-embedded UK migration management regime: the state plays a critical role in regulating the entry and incorporation of migrant labour; these regulatory measures are intimately linked to economic, political and ideological contexts; these contexts have historically shaped legislation and continue to do so, bringing about the present articulation between exclusionary practices and social policies against discrimination; exclusionary practices have been, and continue to be, underpinned by public and private concerns for material and abstract goods, the former concerning the welfare state, the latter national identity (Schuster 2003a, 2003b). Despite the parallels between migration management generally and asylum seeker management specifically, there are important differences with respect to the ‘handling’ of asylum seekers since the mid 1990s.

These differences can be found firstly in the multi-ethnic composition of the UK (Vertovec 2007), the maintenance of diasporic identities, and “a political context shaped through the lens of increasing national paranoia around asylum, terrorism and difference” (Lewis and Neal 2005:437). Secondly, whilst migration is not a new phenomenon, it has gone through a number of transformations, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, as population mobility has grown in volume and taken new forms. The scale and directionality of migratory flows produce a complex situation that many states argue requires increasing controls and securitisation. Thirdly, whilst the themes of control, conditionality and compliance are characteristic of UK migration management, the UK government’s approach to the welfare of asylum seekers had not been seen before in modern times. Fekete (2001) has compared it to the Poor Law of 1834, where it was seen as essential to make the workhouse so uncomfortable, punitive and stigmatised as to deter all but the most ‘needy’. Fourthly, although the UK has a legal obligation as a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees to host asylum seekers and refugees, state responses to asylum migration have often been at the expense of human cost that can be counted in terms of death (Back 2003; Athwal and Bourne 2007), destitution and poverty (Bloch and Schuster 2005; Schuster 2011), depression and imprisonment (Kushner 2003).

A final defining difference, and outcome, of contemporary asylum migration management is that, as a result of long processing times and restrictive policy responses, people seeking asylum are left to languish in a status void “midway to nowhere” (Kunz 1973:133). Kunz (1973, 1981) identifies the place and space occupied by the individual, as they transit from citizen of homeland to non-citizen in another land, as a pressure specific to forced migration. Succumbing to an overwhelming sense of not belonging, the individual is then ‘plunged’ into the unknown, no longer able to withstand the pressure: “...the longer the individual remains in this no-man’s land of midway-to-nowhere, the longer he [sic] becomes subject to its demoralising effects” (Kunz 1973:133). In my view, this produces a context better captured by the notion of *non-settlement*. *Non-settlement* more closely reflects the contemporary experience of claiming asylum in the UK: subject to exclusionary legislation and extensive processing times, ‘settlement’ seems beyond the reach of asylum seekers. The conceptualisation of contemporary asylum seeking in the UK as an experience of ‘*non-settlement*’ has implications for the development of belonging in exile and constitutes, in my view, a conceptual cornerstone for exploring the processes of group formation and continuity that occur in relation to asylum seekers.<sup>24</sup> A central contributory factor to the emergence of this context is the use of Dispersal as an integral asylum seeker management policy, which explicitly sets out to obstruct access to any pre-existing form of social network.

### ***A brief history of the dispersal of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK***

As already highlighted in Chapter One, dispersal has formed an occasional part of Britain’s migration regime throughout the twentieth century. Alongside detention and deportation, it has tended to be used in response to particular events or ‘crises’, such as wartime concerns over alien ‘spies’, or the arrival of a significant number of refugees fleeing conflict or political upheavals (Schuster 2004:1; also Robinson 1999; Bloch and Schuster 2005; ICAR 2005). For example, in the early 1970s, the main focus of the UK resettlement strategy for the Ugandan Asians was to find them mainstream housing, though many found their own accommodation through informal networks (UNHCR 2005). During this same period, the Joint Committee for Vietnamese Refugees co-ordinated a

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<sup>24</sup> Although not the focus of study in the present thesis, this can similarly apply to conceptualising the association experiences of undocumented migrants.

number of charities to carry out the operational details and service provision for a programme of resettlement of Vietnamese displaced persons who had arrived in the UK. In this case, the absence of a pre-existing ethnic community contributed to high unemployment rates and significant secondary migration for this community (UNHCR 2005). Typically during this period, the UK government relied heavily upon the voluntary sector for much of the resettlement work of dispersed programme refugees (July 1996).

The precursors to the dispersal system of asylum seekers introduced in the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act were the 1994 Bosnia Project and the 1999 Kosovan Programme, both of which arose out of agreements between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and European governments (Schuster 2005). Glasgow, alongside other UK cities, participated in these programme to 'receive' evacuated refugees. Similar strategies were used for the 'resettlement' of Bosnians and Kosovars: refugees were dispersed across the UK in 'clusters' in order to form ethnic communities (Robinson and Coleman 2000; Kelly 2003; ICAR 2005). However, a broader definition of resettlement and integration needs underpinned the Bosnian programme than in previous programmes. This went beyond identifying simple housing needs to include access to education, welfare, employment, training, language support and to identifying tolerant and accepting local populations (Robinson 2003:12). Both the Bosnian and Kosovan programmes were seen as relatively successful in integrating refugees in UK society, in that individuals settled long-term in dispersal areas. Although Robinson and Coleman (2000) suggest that the absence of any pre-existing Bosnian (and Kosovar) communities in any part of the UK prior to these programmes negatively influenced the onward migration decisions of refugees, and it was this, rather than a desire to stay in dispersal areas, that led to geographical immobility.

The historical dispersal programmes for Ugandan Asians, Vietnamese, Bosnians and Kosovars share a number of characteristics. Firstly, these were mainly mono-national groups, although they were of course internally diverse. Secondly, dispersal was used in response to particular events or crises and connected to quota programmes, and so was an occasional aspect of refugee resettlement. Thirdly, these cohorts were already categorised as refugees, not asylum seekers, at the point of arrival in the UK, allowing them to work, study and move on if they chose. This last point is central to understanding the difference in the processes of asylum seeker incorporation since the mid 1990s and the specific

challenges related to *non-settlement*. Dispersal enshrined in the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act was, quite simply, different. As Schuster (2005) concludes, “deportation, detention, dispersal and destitution have historically been used in different combinations and at different times when thought necessary to control or manage immigrants. What links all four strategies is their exclusionary nature” (2005:608).

The implementation of the 1999 Act marked a permanent change in the way asylum seekers were resettled and supported in Britain: it separated the social rights of asylum seekers from UK citizens and non-citizen residents and it established a nationally coordinated resettlement and support system. These key outcomes were framed by a set of discourses around ‘burden sharing’ and ‘burden shifting’ which placed geographical and time limits on the right to claim asylum (Schuster 2003b, 2003c, 2005). Prior to the compulsory dispersal set out in the 1999 Act, the majority of newly arrived refugees settled in areas where they had family, friends or where there were pre-existing communities (Bloch 2002), most commonly London or the South East of England. A primary aim of dispersal was to ‘shift’ this ‘burden’ away from the local authorities in these areas. Dispersal had an additional explicit aim of expanding the role and expectations of voluntary sector agencies and community groups in the provision of services in new dispersal areas (Zetter and Pearl 2000). The process was overseen by what was, at the time, a new agency, the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), which provided support and accommodation to adult asylum seekers via contracts with various councils in England and Wales.<sup>25</sup> Glasgow City Council (GCC) was the first, and remains the only, local authority in Scotland accommodating dispersed asylum seekers, entering into a contract with NASS in 2000 to provide 6,000 units of mainly void, high-rise accommodation across a number of neighbourhoods in Glasgow.

The dispersal process can be summarised as follows: following an initial claim, asylum seekers who are unable to support themselves are provided with initial accommodation and are required to partake in an induction process. This involves being housed temporarily whilst the application for support is assessed. After the induction process, and once an application for support has been approved; asylum seekers may be dispersed to one of a

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<sup>25</sup> As part of Home Office restructuring in 2006, NASS ceased to exist as a directorate and all asylum support issues are now dealt with by the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA). Nonetheless, NASS has entered into the daily vocabulary of asylum seekers, refugees and service providers alike, and ‘NASS support’ has come to be used as a kind of ‘generic term’ for state-provided accommodation and subsistence.

number of destinations across the UK. In Scotland, dispersed asylum seekers are sent to Glasgow and most are received by the Glasgow Asylum Seekers Support Project (GASSP), which in the beginning of the implementation of dispersal, involved being met off overnight buses coming most commonly from London or the South East of England. Accommodation is offered on a no-choice basis, and asylum seekers are sent to wherever suitable housing is available within the United Kingdom as provided by various Home Office partners. In Glasgow, the Home Office five-year accommodation contracts (2000-2006, 2006-2011) specified that 81% of asylum seekers would be accommodated by Glasgow City Council (in partnership with Glasgow Housing Association), with the remaining 19% being shared between Y-People (a voluntary sector provider, formerly known as YMCA), and the Angel Group (a private sector provider) (COSLAa).<sup>26</sup> According to Home Office/UKBA quarterly statistics, as at September 2010, 10% of all asylum seekers in the UK were living in Scotland.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Immigration and the Scottish political climate***

While there are broad similarities with other parts of Britain in the way asylum seeker dispersal and support have been managed, there are a number of factors which differentiate the Scottish context from other regional dispersal sites in England and Wales. Firstly the demographic and political context for immigration in Scotland is different to the rest of the UK (McCrone 2001; Sim and Bowes 2007; Wren 2004, 2007). The black and minority ethnic (BME) population in Scotland has remained proportionally lower than in most parts of England (Joshi and Wright 2004), and the numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Scotland prior to the 2000 dispersal had been relatively modest. Of course, a smaller BME population compared to England does not mean that racism, anti-immigration or anti-asylum seeker discourses are ‘not a Scottish problem’. Up until the mid-1980s, what tended to predominate in Scottish political discourse was a sense that Scotland had ‘good ‘race relations’’ (Miles and Dunlop 1986; Dunlop 1993). This is despite the fact that racism against other ‘white’ minority ethnic groups and fractionalised along sectarian lines

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<sup>26</sup>Information posted on COSLA website, <http://www.asylumscotland.org.uk/theasylumprocess.php> (accessed 10 August 2011). However, this is set to change quite radically from May 2011. A drop-in numbers being supported by GCC housing below the agreed minimum triggered a contract review between GCC and UKBA. As a result, the contract has been transferred to Y-People (formerly YMCA) and Angel Housing. (Accessed 10 August 2011).

<sup>27</sup>Home Office/UKBA Quarterly Supported Asylum seekers by constituency September 2010 (unpublished) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmselect/cmselect/733/73303.htm> (accessed 15 August 2011).

(e.g. Irish immigrants) has its own long history, in particular in the West of Scotland. Nonetheless, this demographic context has contributed to the absence of ‘racism as a Scottish issue’ within Scottish political or policy debates. It took developments following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry to bring the ‘race’ issue to Scotland and the *laissez-faire* attitude has since given way to an agenda of nationally responsible policies (Williams and de Lima 2006).

A second major difference relates to connections in UK government policy discourse between maintaining secure borders and the promotion of positive community relations, connections that have a long history in political discourse on immigration. Sim and Bowes (2007) note that, within the restrictions of devolution, the general disposition of Scottish Government policy has been to portray Scotland as a place where inward migration is actually welcomed. When the 2001 census raised concerns over Scotland’s declining population (a result of an ageing population combined with low fertility rates), highlighting concerns about future economic development, this prompted political initiatives to attract more skilled migrants to stay in Scotland (Joshi and Wright 2004; Scottish Government 2005; Williams and de Lima 2006). *Fresh Talent Working in Scotland* was one such joint initiative between the Home Office and the Scottish Government (formerly the Scottish Executive) that was announced in 2003 by the then First Minister, Jack McConnell. Its central aim was address Scotland’s declining and ageing population by encouraging students already in the UK to extend their stay by switching to a working category, and settle in Scotland without the need for a work permit.<sup>28</sup>

Another important campaign that reflects the political commitment to positive community relations in Scotland is ‘*One Scotland. Many Cultures*’. Although under the Scotland Act 1998, immigration is a reserved matter for the UK Westminster government, devolution has empowered the Scottish government to adopt a Scottish approach to UK issues (Scottish Executive 2005:4). The ‘*One Scotland. Many Cultures*’ campaign was introduced in 2002 in a Scotland-wide anti-racism campaign. It is a strong political message that is not replicated elsewhere in the UK. Although the campaign title was amended by the (then) Scottish Executive during 2005 to ‘*One Scotland*’, its anti-racism

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<sup>28</sup> This scheme has since closed to new participants and been replaced by the new points-based system (Tier 1: post-study work) which “allows the UK to retain the most able international non-European graduates who have studied in the UK.” [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk/tier1/poststudy/](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk/tier1/poststudy/) (accessed 8 November 2011).

and equality ethos has continued with successive executives. The (since renamed) Scottish Government's most recent campaign, linked to its 2008-2011 Race Equality Statement, is: '*One Scotland. No place for Racism*', with the tagline: '*No us. No them. Just we.*'<sup>29</sup> In this respect, political elites in Scotland have consistently avoided mobilising or drawing upon racist discourses precisely because the government wants more immigration to address Scotland's ageing population, declining birth rates and to boost its economic growth (Joshi and Wright 2004). Again, this is not to suggest there is no racism or anti-immigration sentiment, as I witnessed myself and as was recounted to me during interviews. However, political elites in Scotland do not envisage immigration as a threat to the national story, and, as *Fresh Talent* illustrated, immigration is actively encouraged to ensure Scotland's future. This could go some way to explain why for the associations, racism did not present as a pressing issue. Rather they were focused on putting down roots, perhaps feeling safe in the knowledge that Scotland is a country where, at least politically, this was being encouraged.

An additional reason might be that the group itself represents a way to cope with racism and discrimination. Parallels can be drawn here with Daniel's important study of racial discrimination in England (Daniel 1968). In this study, Indian and Pakistani respondents reported that over time, life 'got easier' in Britain and one reason given for this improvement was that their increasing numbers enabled them to "to protect themselves from the hostility and discrimination they faced by catering for their needs within their own communities", becoming a kind of insulating blanket against the effects of hostility and discrimination (Daniel 1968:50). In much the same way, and as will be studied in Chapter Five, and later in Chapter Eight, the associations in this study also provide a safe space to come together, exchange experiences and talk about coping mechanisms for dealing with issues. For others, groups are also a place to voice disappointment at their experiences and sometimes to laugh at the absurdity of some of encounters where they have faced colour-coded racism and hostility. In this sense, and following Daniel (1968), the social network of the group would appear to provide members with a way of adapting to this new predominantly 'white' social context and the complex social relations and interactions located therein. There are of course many possibilities as to why racism did not emerge explicitly as an issue for groups to address, some of which are explored in this and subsequent empirical chapters. Some individuals certainly felt they did not want to be

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/18934/RaceEqualityStatement> (accessed 10 November 2011).



seen as ‘troublemakers’ by reporting harassment. Others did not feel as asylum seekers they had rights to even do this. For others still, it was not a priority, living as they were with the terrible uncertainty of their asylum claims. And finally there may have been a concern not to discuss this in front of me as the ‘white’ Scottish researcher.

A third major difference in the Scottish context relates to its connections to multiculturalism. Sim and Bowes (2007) suggest that multiculturalism may have more prospect of success in Scotland than in England for two key reasons. In the first instance, it is not the absence of racism in Scotland, but the absence of a racialised politics that sets it apart from its UK counterparts (Miles and Dunlop 1986). There is a marked absence of a strong neo-fascist tradition, and the presence of right-wing parties is weak. The diminishing importance of the Conservative party since 1945 (Dunlop 1986), and a broad political consensus supporting policies that challenge racism and support integration are additional factors. A further strand to this potential for a more widely accepted multiculturalism in relation to immigration is that it is underpinned by a particular form of centre-left Scottish nationalism, described by McCrone (2001) as Scotland’s civic liberal nationalism. Miles (1993a:78) argues this nationalism has focused on perceived economic and political disadvantages of the Union without reference to ‘race’. This might suggest that Scotland’s nationalism creates open spaces for BME groups to adopt Scottishness as part of their ‘hybridised’ identities. This gives rise to some ambiguities in the conception of a Scottish national identity (Miles and Dunlop 1986). As Virdee, Kyriakides and Modood (2006) found in their study of the relationship between ‘race’ and nation in an ethnically mixed neighbourhood in Glasgow, Scots themselves have multiple identities as both Scottish and British, but not English. Virdee *et al* (2007) argue that whiteness is an unstable identifier of Scottishness, Scottishness is an unstable identifier of whiteness, and that the ‘Scottish nation’ cannot easily be imagined as white in ethnically-mixed neighbourhoods. They also found that nuanced understandings of racialised ‘others’ emerged through everyday interacting in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods. Whilst recognising that racist discourse does prevail in Scotland, these characteristics of the Scottish context suggest that asylum seekers may be able to better negotiate multiple identities as part of integrating into Scottish society. This may also partially explain why public discourses on asylum in Scotland have been less exclusionary, and immigration and asylum have not been politicised to the same extent as in England.

The devolution question adds a final interesting layer to this analysis of what makes the Scottish context different. Immigration is a reserved matter under the Scotland Act (1998) and for that reason decisions on immigration control are the preserve of the British Government. Nonetheless, primary legislative powers for many services supporting the ‘integration’ of asylum seekers and refugees are devolved to the Scottish Government, including education and training, health, social justice, police protection, local government, housing, volunteering, health, ESOL, legal aid provision, children’s services and the promotion of equal opportunities. Moreover, in Scotland, the political position in relation to the integration of asylum seekers is that it should occur from the point of arrival in the UK, as stated very clearly by Malcolm Chisholm, former Minister for Communities during a debate on Race Equality at the Scottish Parliament:

*When we talk about the Scottish refugee integration forum, we mean asylum seekers and refugees. Since the dispersal of asylum seekers began in 2000, Scotland has learned a great deal about how to make new arrivals feel welcome and integrate into our communities. My belief is that effective integration is beneficial not only for refugees, asylum seekers and their immediate communities, but for Scotland as a whole. Refugees and asylum seekers bring useful and sometimes rare skills and knowledge to Scotland. If they integrate successfully they can bring huge benefits to the whole of society”* (Scottish Parliament, 28 June 2006 (emphasis added)).<sup>30</sup>

This is in stark contrast to the Home Office position of integration from the point of positive decision:

*It follows that this integration strategy does not cover asylum seekers whose applications are either still being considered or have been rejected. While the Government does accept that the experiences of asylum seekers before they are recognised as refugees will affect their later integration in a number of ways, it believes that integration in the full sense of the word can take place only when a person has been confirmed as a refugee and can make plans on the basis of a long-term future in the UK* (Home Office (2004) point 1.6 (emphasis added)).

Nonetheless, although the Scottish Government can develop its own strategies for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, asylum seekers in Scotland are subject to UK immigration law, which ultimately determines their entitlement and access to social rights (Wren 2007:4).

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialreports/meetingsParliament/or-06/sor0628-02.htm> (accessed 2 April 2011).

## ***Dispersal and Glasgow***

From 2000 to 2010, more than 22,000 asylum seekers have been housed in Glasgow, and in this ten-year period Glasgow went from having a relatively non-existent population of asylum seekers to having the highest number of NASS supported asylum seekers in the UK<sup>31</sup>, housing around 2,300 in 2010.<sup>32</sup> A current decline in numbers being supported is commensurate with a decline of the number of asylum seekers in the United Kingdom.<sup>33</sup> Up-to-date statistics on numbers arriving, country of origin, demographics, socio-economic background and dispersal per household of asylum seekers and refugees are extremely difficult to access, however there are some figures available on nationalities. In 2005, the top four groups of asylum seekers coming to Glasgow were from Turkey, Pakistan, Somalia and Iran (Wren 2007, citing unpublished NASS figures). In 2007, over one third (34%) of the asylum seekers sent to Glasgow were nationals of Iran, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia (COSLAa).<sup>34</sup> In March 2011, almost 60% of all asylum seekers in Scotland were nationals of just five countries: People's Republic of China, Pakistan, Iran, Nigeria and Iraq (COSLab).<sup>35</sup> This diversity has contributed to a 60% increase in the black and minority ethnic population in the city, which presents new challenges for support agencies providing services for the BME population (Wren 2007: 395).

As with previous dispersal programmes, rather than an approach based on other relevant factors such as transition into employment or even language-cluster, the dominant trend in Glasgow for accommodating such diverse populations has been housing-led 'resettlement'. (Needless to say, linguistic groups are not homogenous and are also cross-cut by national, ethnic, generational, gendered and political divisions.) Most asylum seekers have been dispersed to vacant high rise accommodation in areas of multiple deprivation with around

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<sup>31</sup> By way of comparison, in 2009, the three local authorities in England with the highest populations of asylum seekers in dispersed accommodation were Liverpool (1,375), Birmingham (1,345) and Manchester (950) (ICAR).

<sup>32</sup> The Guardian, 24 November 2010 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/nov/24/asylum-seekers-glasgow-face-eviction> (accessed 25 November 2010).

<sup>33</sup> The Home Office Control of Immigration: Quarterly Statistical Summary July-September 2010 states that the number of applications for asylum, excluding dependents, was 13 % lower in the third quarter of 2010 (a total of 4,440) compared with third quarter of 2009 (a total of 5,110) (accessed 5 April 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Information posted on COSLA website, <http://www.asylumscotland.org.uk/theasylumprocess.php> (accessed 10 August 2011).

<sup>35</sup> Information posted on COSLA website, <http://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/migration-info-centre/migration-statistics/asylum-seekers-scotland> (accessed 10 August 2011).

10% of the city's asylum seekers lived in the Petershill area in North Glasgow in 2008 (COSLAa). Whilst it was not possible within the framework of this study to elicit from the state any consistent rationale for the decision to use void high rise housing, it would seem that it is part of a wider national trend, (Robinson 2003; Anie *et al* 2005; Schuster 2005; Wren 2007), where dispersal is characterised by an element of 'spatial control' and 'implicit surveillance' (Zetter and Pearl 2000). In this context, containment within high rise units would promote these goals. Although asylum seekers have been and continue to be dispersed across the city of Glasgow, North Glasgow, and specifically the Sighthill estate, remains home to the majority of dispersed asylum seekers and has been the site of racialised tensions over the years. Such spatial concentration has radically altered the demographic landscape of these local areas. It also reveals how locality and context have contributed to the stigmatisation of asylum seekers and others living there. As Adegoke a (non-asylum seeking) Cameroonian student pointed out to me during an interview:

Ehm... personally I hate the bus just now... I really hate the bus. Because you just get on the bus and the way people look at you and things like that. I think one thing, when I came to Glasgow I didn't know anybody here, but I knew Rexon [...] I called him up and he told me he lived in Pinkston Drive so I lived with him for maybe a week or so and I got a flat in Pinkston Drive. Then I don't know, maybe after a couple of months of living in Glasgow I knew that Pinkston Drive was... a very bad place to live. It has a kind of stigma, asylum seekers and things like that. So one thing I've experienced is when you are going to tell people you live in Pinkston Drive and, you know, you are African, you are just associated with asylum... They think you are asylum seeker and people look at you like you are being a drain on the resources of Glasgow (*Adegoke, Cameroonian man, student*).

Adegoke's words reveal not only the stigma attached to living in a dispersal site, but also how the asylum seeker category has come to be a racialised and classed identity. Through the coincidence of being 'black' and living in an economically deprived dispersal area, he is constructed as a specific migrant other, and a particularly undesirable one at that. This labelling process highlights that despite the Scottish Government's efforts to promote anti-racist messages about 'cohesive Scottish society' through *One Scotland. Many Cultures*, and subsequent campaigns, racism is not absent, but an experience that is always in the background. This interview excerpt illustrates ways in which it has become coded by wider debates around deservedness, belonging, entitlement (Sales 2002), as well as socioeconomic status and class. During interviews individuals talked about being racially abused in their housing estates, at bus stops, in supermarkets, and on the streets. However, when people spoke to me about these experiences, they did so in pragmatic terms: they

didn't want to "*cause trouble*"; they felt it more important to "*keep their head down*"; that 'white' Scottish people were simply "*not used to seeing black faces*" and over time this would improve as "*more 'black' people settled in Glasgow*" (cf. Daniel 1968). That people did not want to raise this as a problem demonstrates that society operates within a racialised order and that social relations are indeed racialised (Miles 1993a). Racism of course does not only manifest itself in acts of violence or abuse, but in how people are treated generally, and locality and context are important variables affecting relations and interactions, aspects of which are explored here and later in Chapter Eight.

As soon as he was able, Adegoke left the Sighthill area in North Glasgow. His socioeconomic background and migrant status (a self-funding, international Masters Student at university), meant he was then able to move to a more affluent 'student' area in the West End of Glasgow, where locality and context meant he did not face the stigma he spoke about above. However, asylum seekers are not 'mobile migrants' and so are 'contained' within dispersal sites, unless they are forced to relocate. Since 2008, GCC's demolition strategy for high-rise estates across the city has been implemented, leading to the secondary compulsory dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees from neighbourhoods that have been their homes for many years. In some cases this has involved relocation to different areas of multiple deprivations, not considered multi-ethnic, but rather mono-cultural and predominantly white-Scottish. Given that much of the housing stock made available to asylum seekers has been scheduled for demolition, it is clear that the accommodation of asylum seekers was driven by short-term considerations, with little overview of longer term 'community cohesion' (Robinson 2003).

The multiple outcomes and effects of this dispersal-centred approach to managing asylum seeker migration has become the focus of attention of academic studies across a wide range of disciplines. This has led to a growing academic, and policy related field of what might be called 'Dispersal Studies'. This broad-ranging body of work includes analysis of connections between dispersal, racism and xenophobia (Kelly 2000; Fekete 2000, 2001); dispersal and social exclusion (Zetter *et al* 2005; Hynes 2011); dispersal and access to welfare and support (Geddes 2000; Home Office 2001); healthcare issues (Creighton *et al* 2004); community relations (D'Onofrio and Monk 2004; Wren 2004, 2007; Temple and Moran 2005; Finney and Robinson 2008; Spicer 2008); refugee community organisations (Zetter and Pearl 2000; Griffiths *et al* 2005; Zetter *et al* 2005; Phillimore and Goodson

2010); housing (Chartered Institute of Housing 2001; Carter and El-Hassan 2003; Robinson *et al* 2007); destitution (Lewis 2007b; ICAR 2007; Asylum Support Partnership 2009); legal rights and access to legal services (Smith 2001; Smart 2008), and dispersal and mobility (Stewart 2009). There is also a growing Scottish-focused body of research exploring the effects of dispersal on devolved services such as housing, education, health, and social work (Barclay *et al* 2003; Wren 2004, 2007; Sim and Bowes 2007; Bowes, Ferguson and Sim 2009).

Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to detail the findings of these studies, four main themes are woven into their different analyses. Firstly, the use of dispersal as an integral migrant management tool for asylum seekers (and not, significantly refugees), combined with segregated welfare support, constructs the asylum seeker as a distinct type of migrant requiring a separate set of solutions. Their ‘handling’ through dispersal and NASS support presents them as an undesirable ‘burden’ that must be shared, making them a ‘national problem’. Moreover, dispersal not only effectively influences and forces the geographic distribution of this distinct migrant group, it is also used to curtail and restrict the onward movement of refugees. Section 11 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 sets out that a ‘local connection’ would exist where a refugee had last been supported (in a dispersal area), thus inhibiting possibilities to apply for social housing in other areas of the UK. This is just one way in which dispersal continues to be used to manage not only the ‘burden’ of asylum seekers, but also the ‘burden’ of refugees.

A second theme is that the arrival of high numbers of asylum seekers to the UK since 1999 has been characterised by what Vertovec (2007a) calls super-diversity.<sup>36</sup> The UK has not perhaps been a traditional migration destination for the many different nationalities arriving to claim asylum. Moreover the spatial concentration of dispersed asylum seekers in (most commonly multiply deprived) neighbourhoods has dramatically altered the demographic composition of these areas. This is not to suggest that these areas were all characteristically ‘white’ neighbourhoods prior to dispersal. Nonetheless, existing residents and new arrivals alike have had to adapt very quickly to new super diverse neighbourhoods. Whereas previous cohorts of dispersed refugees at least had the option of

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<sup>36</sup> Super-diversity is a term which underlines a transformative ‘diversification of diversity’ underpinned by the complex and dynamic interplay of variables including country of origin, migration channel and legal status which co-condition integration outcomes (Vertovec 2007b).

onward migration, the restrictions upon temporary leave to enter and the compulsory nature of dispersal on a no-choice basis forces this development of super-diverse local communities, which in turn raises questions about effective and appropriate support and services, but also about belonging and long-term ‘settlement’. A third theme is that dispersal affects all aspects of social, political and cultural life and experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Hynes (2011) argues that dispersal is a major contributory factor to the social exclusion of asylum seekers and refugees. She identifies a significant relationship between dispersal locations and areas of deprivation combined with the tensions of the structure and process of implementing dispersal, which results in a system that maintains asylum seekers in a state of limbo or liminality. In this sense, dispersal is central to understanding how the context of *non-settlement* not only arises but is also maintained by the state as a desirable, if not explicit, outcome of contemporary asylum seeker incorporation regimes.

A fourth and final theme is that at the very core of dispersal is the disruption and fragmentation of social networks. Such networks feature prominently in the migration studies literature as integral to successful ‘settlement’ outcomes, as was discussed in Chapter Two (for example Rex *et al* 1987; Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Joly 1996; Massey *et al* 1998). They are also considered by the Home Office as playing a critical role in the ‘settlement’ and integration of refugees (Home Office 2004, 2009). Yet, the use of dispersal as a central policy tool to manage migrant numbers suggests that networks are also seen as problematic, constituting a primary ‘pull’ for further asylum migration (Massey *et al* 1998). This produces the following paradox: the state puts mechanisms in place to disrupt networks, whilst relying heavily upon them to provide essential social, welfare, cultural, emotional and practical support (see Home Office 2004, 2009). The questions I am interested in are how do individuals cope with dispersal? What social relations emerge from *non-settlement*? How do groups respond to increasingly punishing incorporation regimes? And how do policy measures affect association emergence and sustainability?

The story of my own introduction to working with asylum seekers presented at the very beginning of this thesis reflects the sense of suddenness and unpreparedness that was typical of the first months of dispersal in Glasgow. The chaotic nature of its implementation is captured in the following extract from an interview with Sefu, a

Congolese asylum seeker, about his experience of ‘being dispersed’, the *staccato* nature of his words capturing the abruptness of the process:

On 16 June, two weeks, after I arrive (*in the UK*)... and they (*Home Office*) are talking to me. They said okay I will go to another place tomorrow. I said, eh? It’s not here again? They said no, they said you and your wife you are going to place called Glasgow. Ah, Glasgow. How many hours? 9 hours, 10 hours they tell me. I asked another friend, because for me I was just coming from a country that was fighting and I asked: it’s not the same as the place I come from? Because I arrive from Congo there was fighting and torture there. If you take me to another place, it is the same? [...] I was worried because I think maybe they send me to Congo again, because it’s my first time to hear about Glasgow, it might be any place. [...] They said yeah, you will be safe and you will like that place. Okay... I take my bag. We get the bus to Glasgow. It is night time. [...] and when I arrive in the morning, not many blacks... and we come out (*off the bus*) we look, right, left, and we said yes okay, but where to start ‘cos we don’t know anyone. They put us in Ibrox. They said we will send someone who will come to see you in the high flats... So we sit there and the first day no one come. Then the next day Colin (*GASSP worker*) comes but no interpreter. So the next day <laughs>, he comes and finds us an interpreter. The interpreter then tells us about Africa Umoja Scotland and Mani (*president of the association*)... and we are so happy <smiles broadly>. Mani comes to see us a few weeks after. And so for me it was quick I met other Africans (*Sefu, Congolese man, asylum seeker*).

Sefu’s experience was typical in that asylum seekers frequently arrived in Glasgow (and to other dispersal areas across England and Europe) during the night, with no prior warning and little explanation or time for the individual to prepare herself, let alone for any basic receiving community preparation to be in place. Service providers’ responses were largely reactive and ill-prepared rather than carefully thought through (Wren 2007). As an interpreter, I would regularly receive out-of-hours phone calls from GASSP workers uncertain and panicking as to how to communicate with traumatised individuals, who had suddenly found themselves in high rise flats, with no English or knowledge of where they were, and why they had been transferred. The night-time arrivals contributed to the increasing sense of suspicion surrounding the dispersal of asylum seekers from the local perspective (Wren 2007), and added to the menacing image of ‘the clandestine asylum seeker’. This was also exacerbated by myths surrounding the way resources were perceived to be allocated. Anecdotal comments on new washing machines, new suites and carpets could be starkly contrasted with the harsh reality of living in poor quality vacant housing, riddled with damp, infestations, second hand appliances and poor heating (Anie *et al* 2005). Whilst there has been an improvement in the quality and nature of service provision, with better communication between agencies as well as an understanding of the



specific needs of asylum seekers, undoubtedly the positive outcome of ‘settlement’ has been significantly hampered by lengthy asylum claim processing times.

Over the course of my work as an interpreter, I was to meet many, many individuals and families who shared very similar experiences to Sefu of sudden relocation, fear and continued uncertainty as to what lay ahead of them. In the present study I am interested in the different forms of collectives and social relationships that emerged from these shared experiences of existing in a state of temporariness in a strange city. From the very beginning of dispersal, parallel lives began to develop: the life as an asylum seeker, where economic and social participation are highly restricted and controlled by state instruments, and the life as a human being, living and interacting in communities at a local, national and even transnational level. The isolation individuals experienced upon arrival and in the first months after dispersal soon gave way to the formation of friendships, and the development of contacts with people in similar circumstances that had been dispersed to the same neighbourhoods. This then extended across the geographical boundaries of dispersal sites and informal groups began to emerge which transcended the national, ethnic, generational, gendered and political divisions that are characteristic of all forms of social relations. As will become apparent in Chapter Five, these groups each emerged from the context of *non-settlement* described above and can be seen as a grassroots response to how this was experienced.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the asylum and immigration policy context is one that is constantly being amended, updated and added to. Whilst dispersal is the dominant policy context that framed the emergence of groups in what were called the ‘dispersal regions’, a change in policy was introduced at the beginning of the present study that was to directly effect association life. In November 2007, the UK Home Office announced and implemented its Case Resolution programme. This was a policy to review outstanding claims that predate the Asylum and Immigration Act of 2004. Case Resolution (also known as Legacy Review) introduced a new form of subsidiary protection that effectively removed the right to indefinite leave and introduced a revised status: Refugee status with five years limited leave to remain in the UK (in line with Government’s Five Year Strategy for Asylum and Immigration announced in February 2005). This status is held under ‘active review’ which may occur anytime during the five years of residency

granted.<sup>37</sup> Whilst Case Resolution produced a sense of optimism, the lack of information from the Home Office about the process meant that many people continued to feel unsafe. The Home Office's approach seemed to be to release very little information relating to how Case Resolution was to be implemented; which cases would be dealt and in what order; timeframes for review; criteria for positive/negative decisions and so forth. The process was, it seemed, shrouded in mystery. During this time, local level FFD, integration network and asylum seeker and refugee-led association meetings were generally very well attended, with 'Case Resolution update' a regular feature on meeting agendas. When I worked as an interpreter at the Home Office reporting centre in Glasgow, all Case Resolution inquiries I witnessed were met with the standard response "speak to your lawyer". However, 'speaking to one's lawyer' generally failed to shed any light on the process.

Over time, NGOs, support and voluntary groups were able to glean information from individuals whose cases were being successfully resolved: family cases predating the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 were being prioritised, followed by unaccompanied asylum seeker children, then a second tranche of families seeking asylum who had claimed after the 2004 Act, followed by 'single people'. From these individuals, information also began to seep through the groups and networks about the actual process: a questionnaire was usually sent asking for evidence of 'integration' which seemed an important criterion for a positive outcome and the kinds of information the Home Office was looking for as this 'evidence'. This tended to be followed by a further request for passport-sized photos. The groups in the study began to proactively respond to this, communicating what little information they had to their members:

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<sup>37</sup> At the time of the fieldwork, some participants were approaching the end of their five year limited leave to remain and were uncertain as to what would happen next. Some were actively seeking legal advice but the specific process for renewing limited leave to remain was unclear.

When they were handing out the legacy (*case resolution*) forms, I didn't hear about that from the Scottish Refugee Council, it was through Umoja (*Africa Umoja Scotland*). When I did hear, I went to the SRC and they said they didn't know... I should speak to my lawyer. I asked my lawyer and he said 'sit and wait, don't do anything'. But then the management committee of Umoja had been sending us emails for about 6 or 7 months before I got it through legacy. And then I realised Ah! They were saying to us 'go to your churches, wherever you take your kids, ask for letters' and all that (...) and then we heard the information that was coming out in the forms, but that came later and I had already started asking for my letters of support. To be honest we didn't really know what we were asking for, just that we had to get these letters (...) [...] So being a member helped me to prepare. When I needed the letters I had already asked my priest and the schools, so you know when the important time comes you can send them all to the Home Office. It was really an advantage you know [...] I told other people not in the group, but people in my block that I knew; I said get letters of support. If I hadn't been a member I wouldn't have had this information and I wouldn't have got it in time (*Agathe, Congolese woman, refugee*).

During this uncertain period of Case Resolution, associations (and other groups such as FFD and organisations like the SRC) provided an important information and emotional support to members. For the individuals involved in the present study, Case Resolution has produced overwhelmingly positive results, with most of the members across the associations granted the 5 year limited leave refugee status. When it was introduced, it undoubtedly stimulated participation levels across the different associations, as well as in local support meetings. However, as cases were being resolved, participation levels were again affected and began to dip. As refugees, individuals faced a new set of pressures as they then entered an enforced 'moving on period'. This refers to the 21-day transition period imposed upon refugees who were no longer eligible for NASS support to access mainstream services, including securing appropriate housing, accessing mainstream benefits and other relevant services. This is a particularly vulnerable time for new refugees as they have to make the transition from complete dependency upon UKBA, to being responsible for negotiating the complex housing, health and benefits system in the UK and paying for energy costs. The pressures of the 21 day 'moving-on' period have gained increasing attention in academic and policy research, with recent research suggesting that this particularly short timeframe has led to increased levels of destitution amongst newly granted refugees (Carter and El-Hassan 2003; British Red Cross and Refugee Survival Trust 2009, 2011; Lindsay, Gillespie and Dobbie 2010). Different effects of Case Resolution on association life are woven through Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight.

Whilst recognising the importance of historical and political context to understanding associational emergence and continuity, widening the lens of study to encompass ongoing policy changes provides some important foundations for moving beyond ‘refugeeness’. This widened perspective does this through firstly acknowledging the context of dispersal policy which acted as a driver for groups to form in the ‘dispersal regions’; secondly, extending beyond the immediate and short-term aftermath of dispersal to consider ways in which external structures, in the form of changing policy frameworks and incorporation regimes, continue to mediate associational practices and sustainability; thirdly exploring what happens to groups in these moments of passivity or inactivity, when the struggle for status appears to be resolved; and finally providing a way to study how groups strike a balance between managing internal differentiation or fragmentation and confronting external actors that seek to constrain their activity in some way.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has offered several layers of context for this ethnography. I firstly provided a political-historical contextualisation, and identified parallels with previous migrant incorporation regimes in the UK. This highlighted a number of similarities in the ways migrants have been ‘handled’ in general by the state, and the foundations this has since laid for the state’s ‘handling’ of asylum seekers. However, there are also a number of features that set the treatment of asylum seekers apart, specifically the mechanisms of dispersal and separate welfare support, which produce a context of *non-settlement*. I then presented the context and experience of dispersal in Scotland and the distinct Scottish political landscape that provides the backdrop for this study. In spite of dispersal policy and the experience of suspended existence in the country of asylum, asylum *is* a process, time passes and collectives do form. One of the unintended consequences of dispersal is that a policy designed to ‘deterritorialise’ through the uprooting of people already ‘settled’ and ‘amongst their own’, has resulted in processes of ‘re-rooting’ as asylum seekers and refugees have begun to engage in processes of place-making and home-making in dispersal sites. In presenting the political context and the emergence of groups as a response to this, I have framed dispersal as a catalyst for collective mobilisation and action in dispersal areas. In considering the effects of Case Resolution, I explored ways in which groups continue to mobilise around further policy changes and highlighted how such policy changes continue to directly effect association life.

In the next four chapters, I explore empirically the different aspects of associational life as it unfolds within this context, with an aim to answer the research questions as set out in Chapter One. As observation was the dominant research method used, the fieldnotes are the primary source of data used to support my thesis and form the basis of the four empirical chapters. Whilst the data presented are drawn from fieldwork involving specific members of the groups, the research has also been informed by many other members I have come to know or come across over the course of the research. Therefore, the data presented throughout this thesis also relate to members with whom I have had many informal conversations at various events, meetings and from generally ‘hanging out’ with the associations in a number of social contexts. These fieldnotes highlight the ordinary interactions, routines and conditions under which these associations exist and the internal and external constraints and pressures to which they are subject.

## Chapter 5      Associational Life

### ***Introduction***

This chapter is the first of four empirical chapters exploring associational life. They each begin from a micro-level analysis of interactions, identifying struggles and conflicts within groups. These internal struggles and conflicts tell an important story about how changes that are occurring within groups reflect and are shaped by historical and contemporary migrant incorporation regimes. They also reveal the complex nature of associational responses to external constraints and opportunities.

The chapter is divided into four parts. In the first - 'The Associations' - I introduce the six associations who are the focus of the study. This introduction is preceded by a brief discussion on the legal structure options available to voluntary associations in Scotland. In this section I highlight the similarities and differences between the groups, and reveal the many ways in which the interplay of external and internal factors shapes associational life. In the second part - 'The meeting as a space of belonging' - I describe the typical meeting space in members' homes. I argue that the NASS accommodation space is appropriated by the individual and the collective in different ways to subvert the experience of *non-settlement* and to produce, or reproduce, 'home' 'here'. In the third - 'Content of meetings' - I describe a typical meeting in terms of its constituent parts, identifying patterns that emerged across all of the groups in this study. Alongside the familiarity of the home setting, I will show how recurring elements of associational practice, explored through the meeting itself, provide an important degree of stability in an uncertain environment. I also begin to explore common patterns of interaction, recurrent issues and tensions within groups that arise in meetings, and how these are directly related to wider external processes of change. In the fourth section - 'The social life of the group' - I discuss the physical and symbolic ways in which collective identities and feelings of belonging are enacted through food, drink and socialising together. I will argue that these enactments represent everyday ways of confronting and surviving *non-settlement*. I also consider how the social life of the group can go some way to mitigate internal tensions and struggles. As well as laying foundations for understanding association emergence and

group processes, this chapter foreshadows a broader discussion of continuity and change in later chapters.

## ***The Associations***

Before presenting the six groups which were the focus of the study, I will briefly describe the UK/Scottish legislative context pertaining to voluntary associations. In the UK, voluntary, member-type associations like the ones featured in this study are not required by law to adopt a legal structure unless their aim is to become registered as a charity. However, support organisations like the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) recommend that associations adopt some form of formal structure, and there are various models open to groups. These come with different legal obligations and the most common forms tend to be an unincorporated association (or membership club); a company limited by guarantee, but without a share capital (known commonly as a “guarantee company”); and a charity or a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (an SCIO).<sup>38</sup>

A more comprehensive list of the benefits and disadvantages of the different options is set out in Table 2 (Appendix Two), and here I offer some simplified distinctions. An unincorporated voluntary association is one whose main focus is to deliver social benefit in a variety of forms, rather than to generate profit for distribution to its members. The organisation does not have a legal existence separate from its members, it will usually be governed by volunteers, be independent of government and seek to pass on its assets to a similar organisation should it stop functioning. A charity is an organisation with exclusively charitable purposes and has a legal existence separate from its members. Most charities in Scotland, with certain exceptions, are registered with the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) under the provision of The Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. The OSCR also requires annual monitoring of annual reports such as accounts, business plan, activities and so forth. Charities failing to submit the required documents on time will be considered in default of their Registration and have a 12 month period within which to submit the required forms. Failure to do so may result in removal

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<sup>38</sup> See Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations: <http://www.scvo.org.uk/>

from the Scottish Charity Register. Finally, a company limited by guarantee is normally the preferred option if an organisation has a fairly substantial turnover, employs staff and owns or occupies premises (or aspires to do these things). Opting for charitable or limited company status is much more onerous, but limits the personal liability of individual members.

Three of the organisations in the present study are unincorporated voluntary associations, seeking to benefit a specific (most often ‘national’) membership. Three of the associations have charitable status, based upon the public benefit to a wider ‘African’ population in Scotland, and one is also a company limited by guarantee, as it is a trading company with one employee. All of the associations in this study are run by a management committee of elected members (*comité exécutif*) who are elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Each committee is made up of the following posts (or a variation thereof): President (or Chair), Vice President, Secretary, Vice-Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-Treasurer, and other roles as decided from time to time, for example, Public Relations Officer, Advisor, Social Affairs Secretary, Membership Officer. Office bearers may serve no more than two consecutive terms in that particular role. Each association has a quorum, generally two thirds of the committee, for making decisions on behalf of the group. In the absence of the quorum, decisions are suspended until the next meeting, or until an extraordinary general meeting is called. Each of the groups describes themselves as ‘apolitical’, which denotes an explicit distancing from, or lack of relationship to, the political sphere (or more precisely the sphere of party politics) of ‘home’ or in the UK. This has particular importance for the two ‘generalist’ associations, who consider an apolitical position in relation to ‘home’ politics critical to fostering positive intercultural relations between members. Finally, although ‘apolitical’, each of the associations is nonetheless connected to political issues through its active support of asylum seeker and refugee members as well as the wider asylum seeker population.

### **AFIG (Association des Femmes Ivoiriennes de Glasgow)**

AFIG (also known as the Ivorian Women’s Action Group in Glasgow) was set up in 2004 by a small number of asylum seeking women from the Ivory Coast, who found themselves suddenly located in Glasgow, with no existing social networks or access to an established



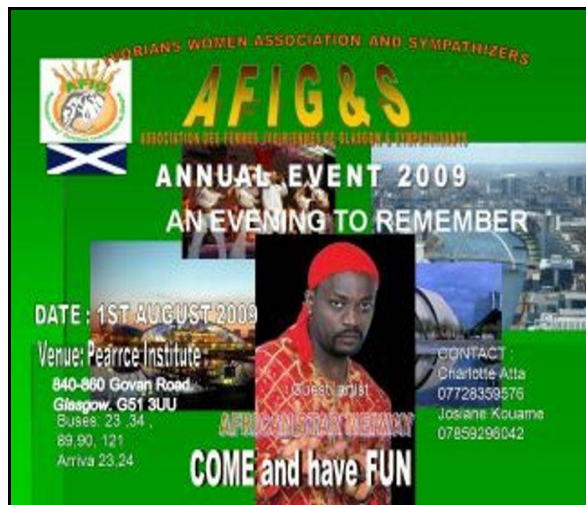
Ivorian community. Founding members met each other through chance encounters on buses, in shops, in high rise flats and in service provider offices. When the association was formed most members were asylum seekers, although many are now refugees. Members' ages range from 20 to 45 and all socio-economic backgrounds are represented within the group, as are varying degrees of literacy, previous experience of associational life and political engagement. AFIG is an unincorporated voluntary organisation. Its committee meets monthly in members' homes (on a rotational basis), meeting dates and times communicated by mobile phone, text message and informal meetings between members. Non-committee members may also attend these meetings. Over the years, and especially since 2007, membership numbers have noticeably dwindled from, at its peak, 25 women, to a core group of around 10 women. Full membership with voting rights is only open to women, although AFIG also counts a small number of men amongst its sympathiser members. With a dominant focus on life in Glasgow, an important associational objective is framed around changing attitudes of asylum seekers and raising awareness of Africans in Glasgow. To this end, AFIG has developed a community initiative, called 'Clean-up Glasgow' days (*Journées Coup-de-Balai*) in members' local neighbourhoods. The association considers these events as an opportunity for members 'to give back' to Glasgow, and to stake a claim to settlement and belonging at a local level.



Photo 1: AFIG clean up day, Govan 2007 ©AFIG

Whilst plans to build transnational connections between Ivorians in Glasgow and the Ivory Coast are regularly discussed at meetings, the association is primarily focused on life in Glasgow, although members have also developed national UK-wide links to other Ivorian groups in the UK. Social-cultural events are central to the group's sense of collective identity and what makes them unique, and they have organised a number of high-profile

events which have been widely attended by Ivorians, as well as other African groups and the wider Scottish community.



Flyer 1: AFIG cultural event 2009 ©AFIG



Photo 2: AFIG Refugee Week 2009 event

## Africa Umoja Scotland

Africa Umoja Scotland is a generalist African charity. It was formally established in 2002, (and then restructured in 2004), by a group of Congolese asylum seeker men who found themselves particularly isolated, being housed in emergency accommodation, separated from their families and lacking any form of social network in Glasgow. Africa Umoja Scotland's main objectives are to represent the interests of refugees and asylum seekers and in particular those from Eastern and Central Africa whose first languages are French, Swahili and Lingala. The group grew from chance encounters in dispersal neighbourhoods, at the Home Office reporting centre and the Scottish Refugee Council offices. Membership has continued to be predominantly made up of asylum seekers and subsequently refugees. Members include men and women, are aged between 20 and 50, and come from a wide range of socio-economic, intellectual and professional backgrounds, with varying degrees of literacy, political experience and engagement and previous experience of associational life.



Photo 3: Africa Umoja Scotland 2009 AGM, new Management Committee, ©Africa Umoja Scotland

The association has approximately 100 listed members, although numbers have fluctuated quite dramatically over the years, particularly since 2007. The committee meets monthly in members' homes (on a rotational basis), and meeting dates and times are communicated by mobile phone and text message. It is very much focused on developing the settlement experience of members, rather than having an orientation towards the different African countries from which its broad membership originates. The association sees itself as a platform for establishing a settled 'African' presence in Glasgow. Umoja is Swahili for unity and at our first meeting the President explained to me that the association's primary aim is "to unite Scotland and Africa". Through its informal work and networks, the association has emerged as a prominent community group and played a key role in supporting the settlement of Gateway resettled refugees in Motherwell.<sup>39</sup> When the Congolese families arrived in Lanarkshire in January 2007, Africa Umoja Scotland liaised between the families and North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) in the early months, providing interpreting and translation services as well as acting as general cultural advisors to NLC. Over time, this role has lessened as the families have become increasingly settled.

Africa Umoja Scotland has been actively involved in a number of campaigns relating to the UK asylum system and its effects on members and the wider population of asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland. The committee also provides ongoing 'behind-the-scenes' support to members who have been detained through regular phone contact and visits, where possible. In January 2011, I received an email from the President advising me he had to step down from this role due to work and family commitments. He was the last

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<sup>39</sup> For an overview of the Gateway Resettlement programme, see List of abbreviations, terminology and acronyms, page 7.

member of the management committee to be granted refugee status and had managed to find work. As such, he was not able to commit as much time to the group as he had before and consequently group activity was ‘on hold’ until another member was able to take up this position in the management committee. In May 2011, he advised me he had in fact returned as President.

### **CAMASS (Cameroonian Association and Sympathisers in Scotland)**

The Cameroonian group started to meet as a solidarity group in January 2003, formalising activities in 2004. Like the other associations it also grew from chance encounters in dispersal sites across Glasgow. Most of Camass’s male and female members were asylum seekers when the group formed, but over time, many have been granted refugee status, and there are also members who are in the UK on work visas, students and dependents. Members’ ages range from 20-45, and a wide number of socio-economic backgrounds are represented in the group, as are degrees of literacy and political engagement. All members interviewed had had previous experience of associational life in Cameroon: forming associations was in fact regularly described to me during fieldwork as “typical” of and “normal” to Cameroonians. CAMASS is an unincorporated voluntary organisation which offers an affiliated membership to interested parties who may not necessarily be Cameroonian, and who may be voted onto its management committee. Exact membership is uncertain, primarily due to the transience of many members in relation to their immigration status and to onward migration of members. Nonetheless, a group of approximately thirty people regularly attend monthly meetings. CAMASS holds these meetings in members’ homes (venue and hosting is rotated), occasionally hiring an external community space, such as a room in a local civic hall. Meeting dates and times are communicated via the association website, and online messenger group (Yahoo mail). This is also used to communicate information about Cameroon, to advertise jobs, general information on current affairs, immigration and policy updates and a whole host of information including jokes, moral tales, YouTube clips, links to football matches and other such online ephemera.



Photo 4: CAMASS 2008 National Day ©CAMASS



Photo 5: CAMASS 2009 National Day celebration:  
Guest speaker's address

Some members regularly visit Cameroon, which facilitates the occasional transfer of letters and packages 'home'. Members do occasionally make reference to developing transnational links as a collective, although CAMASS is mainly focused upon asserting the Cameroonian identity in Scotland and raising the profile of Cameroonians as a newly settled community. A small group of members are part of a *tontine* (a form of rotating and savings credit initiative) but this is not a stipulation of membership and is dealt with separately from association business. CAMASS requires members to pay a monthly membership subscription and these funds have two main purposes: firstly to support associational activities when external funds are not available; and secondly to support members in times of need. Keeping up-to-date with membership subscription is considered an important aspect of maintaining a sense of shared moral values, and failure to do so is met with sanctions, such as fines, and in extreme cases, membership is revoked.

### **ASSECS (Association of English Speaking Cameroonians in Scotland)**

ASSECS is a charity which formed in 2004 as a small social group of English-speaking Cameroonians. Founding male and female members were in fact members of CAMASS, however, as Anglophone Cameroonians, they had different ideas as to how they wanted the association to develop and felt under-represented within a Francophone group. A handful of members left and set up their own group which was, in its initial form, a *Njange* (a type

of rotating savings and credit scheme typically found in West African countries similar to a *tontine*). Over time, as more members joined, they launched as a formal association.

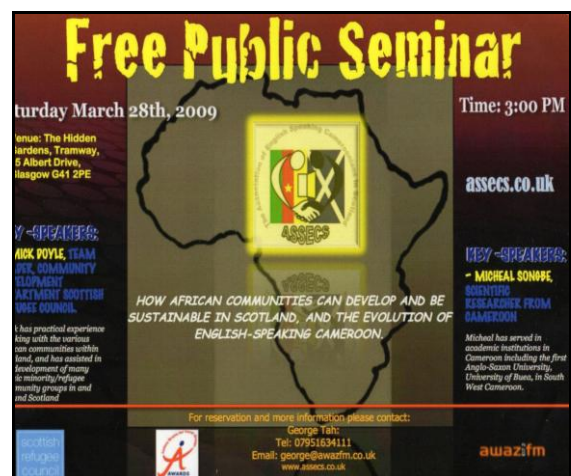


Photo 6: ASSECS 2009 AGM, President's address, in the background is their promotional banner

Membership is open to interested parties who are not Cameroonian but who share the association's values, although such members do not have voting rights. Members pay a monthly membership subscription, and these funds are used to support associational activities and members in need. There are around 30 'paid up' members, although non-members also regularly attend association meetings, which have a strong social element to them. These meetings are held once a month in members' homes (on a rotational basis), and dates and times are communicated via the associations' online messenger group (Yahoo mail).



Photo 7: New members, ASSECS monthly meeting 2008 ©ASSECS



Flyer 2: ASSECS public seminar 2009

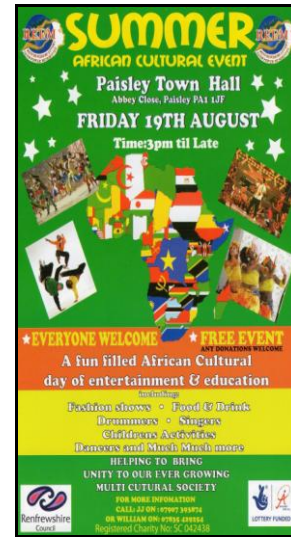
ASSECS brings together a broad section of Anglophone (and equally some Francophone) Cameroonians living in Scotland. Most of the members are 'general migrants', in the UK for work or study, and there are some asylum seeker and refugee members. The group uses an online messenger system (Yahoo mail) as a member forum to communicate updates on internal developments, for debate on a number of matters relating to the association, to circulate minutes and other association paperwork and administration of interest to members. It is also used to exchange information, news and updates on the Cameroon, to advertise jobs, recount traditional moral tales, as well as to conduct campaigning and advocacy work for asylum seeker members who find themselves in particular hardship, for example facing destitution, detention and deportation. Finally, as with the other associations, ASSECS is focused on life in Scotland, rather than orientating activities to Cameroon.

## **Karibu**

Karibu's beginnings date to 2001, when a handful of French-speaking African women asylum seekers started building friendships with each other in the dispersal site of North Glasgow. Through chance encounters in the high rise flats, local shops and at local church drop-ins, women began to meet each other in their homes to provide social support, advice and share experiences. This informal group then grew into a formal association which launched in 2003. Karibu is Swahili for welcome, and this is an important identifier for the group: members welcomed each other to the group but they are also seeking a welcome in Scotland, as well as welcoming Scotland into their association. The association was recognised as a charity in 2007 and as it undertook greater commitments with increased risks to personal liability, it registered as a Limited Company in 2011. Karibu's management committee of 10 elected members became its Board of Directors.



Photo 8: Karibu committee meeting October 2010 ©Karibu



Flyer 3: 2011 Cultural event, Karibu catering

Karibu has an estimated membership of 100 female members from Sub-Saharan Africa. Members ages range from 20-60+, and all socio-economic backgrounds are represented within the group, as are varying degrees of literacy, previous experience of associational life and political engagement. Karibu also offers an organisation membership category open to any organisation, group or body supporting the association's aims. Board meetings are held a number of times a month, and a quorum of one half of the directors is required for decision-making on behalf of the association. The association runs a monthly drop-in and this is attended by the wider membership (typically between 20 and 30 women regularly attend with pre-school age children), although since 2007 there has been a steady decline in participation levels. The drop-in provides an important space for members to engage directly with mainstream service providers and agencies. Meetings and events are communicated by telephone, by post and text message.



Photo 9: Karibu drop-in July 2009, consultation workshop



Photo 10: Karibu Refugee Week 2009 event, stall selling clothes from sewing workshop ©Karibu



In 2009, the association employed its first member of staff, a part-time development assistant who was then upgraded to a full-time post. Karibu also secured its first office premises in 2009 (in the east end of Glasgow), later relocating to a city centre-based office. With a focus on income-generation, Karibu runs a sewing project social enterprise. This involves members making alterations to garments and producing traditional African attire, western clothing and soft furnishings. They have sold their work at events for Refugee Week and International Women's Day, and have held exhibitions to commemorate Black History Month. Karibu has also been in talks with Oxfam to recycle products for sale. Its long-term aim is to develop its social enterprise portfolio and create an African café in the heart of Glasgow to sell traditional foods from the women's homelands. Karibu is strongly focused on life and settlement in Glasgow and even though members often discuss their desire to build development links with their different countries of origins, such links are very much viewed as a longer-term project.

### **Glasgow Congo Brazzaville Association (GCBA)**

This association was started as a solidarity and friendship group in 2004, and was formally constituted in 2006. Through word-of-mouth, a group of Congolese men decided to set up an association to help cope with their isolation and to better understand collectively the problems they continued to face in the place of asylum. In December 2008, I received word from the association President that associational activities had been placed on hold. He explained to me that this was mainly due to the changing circumstances of members: more were receiving positive decisions on their asylum claims and they thus had less free time to commit to the group. Nonetheless, I attended five of their monthly meetings, their Inaugural General Meeting (IGM) and two AGMs, and so have included them in this study. Because they have been inactive since 2008, I will only provide a very brief outline of their structure and activities. GCBA was an unincorporated voluntary organisation. Membership was open to all individuals from Congo Brazzaville and Africans living in Scotland and to associates who shared their values. They held monthly management committee meetings and usually only committee members attended the business of the meeting. Whilst the association was still active, there were approximately 35-40 male and female members, although GCBA-organised events always drew a wider attendance from the Congo Brazzaville population in Glasgow. Members' ages ranged from mid 20s to late 40s and all socio-economic backgrounds were represented by the group. Most members

were asylum seekers although this changed over time. Although members maintained personal links to home, this was not considered a specific collective aim of the association.

These different groups share a number of similarities in relation to their activities. All of the groups offer a range of informal services related to findings one's way in Glasgow, accessing services, interpreting, moral support and advocacy. Karibu is the only group to offer formal services such as a drop-in, ESOL and IT classes and a sewing project. Each of the associations are represented in, and members are equally active in local networks promoting settlement and challenging inequalities, including the Scottish Refugee Policy Forum (SRPF), the Refugee Women's Strategy Group (RWSG) and the Framework for Dialogue (FFD) initiative. Finally, they all provide a range of social and cultural activities for members and which on some occasions are open to the wider public. The varied aspects of associational life can be visually represented using a relatively simple diagram (Figure 1). This 'wheel' diagram highlights the dynamic nature of associational life as an entity in constant motion. The double headed arrows on the diagram suggest the interconnectedness of the association's many features, activities, foci, objectives and internal/external relations, and the ways in which these develop from and feed back into the association. This diagram also visually contextualises the 'association' within the multiple levels in which it operates. For each of the associations, the strongest focus is on establishing life in Glasgow. In this sense, the local context is the dominant context, hence it is shaded darkest. The radiating national and transnational contexts show that although associational focus is predominantly 'local', the groups each operate within these wider contexts which influence and shape associational life, in particular the national policy and legislative context.

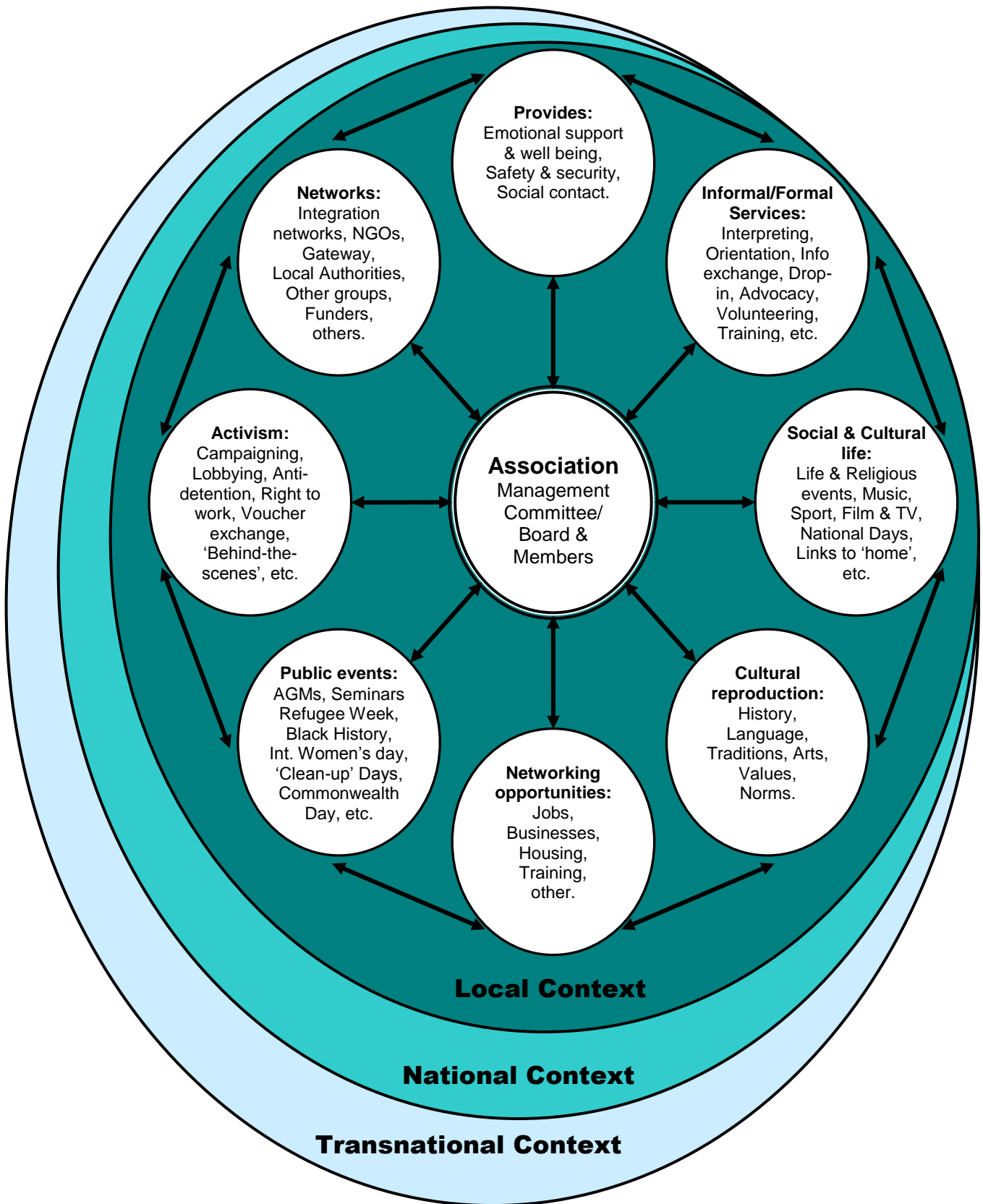


Figure 1: Associational life

A clear picture emerges from this introduction to the associations of the processes they have passed through in developing into formalised associations. Firstly, there is an overwhelming sense of newness, forced by dispersal, which emphasised the lack of pre-existing communities or networks at a local level. This newness produced a sense of urgency, as it was expressed by members, for a social group of some kind. Secondly, the exclusion many members felt as asylum seekers, and the precariousness of their individual situations in relation to migrant status, emphasises the context of *non-settlement* they face and the instability this creates. Both newness and *non-settlement* illustrate ways in which the national legislative context sets out parameters of engagement not only with the state but with each other. These local and national contexts were both important catalysts for individuals to seek out and create other bases for stability through group practices. Thirdly, internal diversity within groups reveals different forms of allegiances, solidarity ties and divisions, again mediated by a national context (differentiated migrant status) and a local context (ability to participate). Fourthly, a recurrent theme is that of the constantly moving relationship between the structural context and exclusionary effects of immigration status and the social context of establishing as a new migrant group. Fifthly, there is the notion of groups as dynamic, evolving entities, affected by a range of internal and external factors. Finally, each association is strongly orientated to settlement in Glasgow and sees associational life as a way of investing in and establishing particular and universal ‘African’ identities in Scotland. These factors, which have influenced associational growth and emergence, also potentially inhibit or ensure continuity, and this question will be woven throughout the thesis.

### ***The ‘meeting’ as a space of belonging***

As already outlined in the above introduction to the groups, association meetings generally take place in members’ homes. Although I attended many meetings in different ‘home sites’ I was struck by the similarities not just of the actual physical spaces, (these were mostly NASS accommodation flats in high rise blocks across Glasgow), but also their decor and layout for the meeting. The following account from a monthly CAMASS meeting is representative of this typical setting: I had arrived at 6pm at Sophie’s flat. She lived in NASS accommodation in a high rise block of flats in the North Glasgow area. As I approached her door, I noticed it was the only one in her corridor without a name plate. I wasn’t sure if I had already met Sophie, who was hosting this month, but when she

answered the door, we both recognised each other immediately. She smiled warmly and gestured to me to enter. Her children came running to the door, grabbing on to my legs to pull me inside. Sophie lived in a split-level flat, so upon entering, we immediately went down a flight of stairs into the main living area. When I entered her living room, it was clear that no one else had yet arrived, even though the meeting was due to begin at 6pm. The living room was dominated by a large television in the corner. It was switched on, but the volume was turned down. The room was very tidy. There wasn't much furniture: a small 2-seater sofa and armchair, a dining table and four dining chairs. A pile of DVDs lay beneath the television set. I could make out some children's films and some titles of religious music concerts (possibly African from the titles and cover photos). The windows were dressed with yellow flowery curtains and Sophie had placed small vases of plastic flowers on the window ledge.

Photos of her children and what looked like photos of Sophie in formal dress adorned the walls. Some were in picture frames; others were pressed into the frames or into the frame of a small mirror. These were school photos and there was one of her daughter making her First Holy Communion (I could tell from her dress and pose). There were also photos of what looked like extended family members in a group pose, and some of a younger Sophie, dressed for a night out, smiling back at the camera. From the backdrops, these photos did not look like they had been taken in Glasgow. Sophie had also hung a crucifix and some religious iconography. The sofa and armchairs had been pushed back against the wall to create an open space in the middle of the room. The dining chairs had been pulled out from the dining table in the corner and lined another wall to create a more open plan seating arrangement. Sophie asked me to take a seat, and then went into the kitchen, returning with a small bottle of water for me. Although we had recognised each other when I arrived, we did not really know each other, and the fact it was just the two of us felt slightly awkward. I asked how she had been, and how the children were. She replied they were fine, and then silence. She excused herself to go prepare the food for after the meeting and went into the kitchen, where she stayed for the next hour or so, now and again popping her head out to check whether I needed another drink. I offered to help with any preparations, but she politely declined, saying I was her guest and that I was to sit and relax. The next member didn't arrive until 7.30 pm (fieldnotes, CAMASS, 28 June 2008).

Sophie's flat was unremarkable in many ways: in terms of size and layout it was a typical Glasgow high rise flat (as I knew from having visited many over the years from interpreting across the city). It was decorated in the standard NASS style of thin, dark coloured carpet, plain coloured sofa, dining table and chairs, walls covered with woodchip lining paper, artex-ed ceilings and standard yellow floral curtains. Whilst this space is unexceptional in itself, as a 'temporary home space', in my view it illustrates one of the ways in which the categorisation of asylum seekers by state actors (housing providers) is extended from the public sphere to the private sphere. This state-funded accommodation has a homogenising effect - all asylum seekers are housed with more or less identical furniture - and attempts to personalise these spaces are thwarted by different regulations. Asylum seekers are temporarily housed in NASS accommodation and unlike other tenants, are not permitted to redecorate. (This was an important issue in flats that were in a very poor condition, I would often see corners in rooms that were blackened by mould and damp patches.) In my experience of home visits as an interpreter and from attending association meetings, no flats housing asylum seekers bore name plates. This might have been for a number of reasons: the accommodation was temporary; a name plate was a cost to the tenant not to the housing provider; the practice of name plates on doors might be culturally specific to the UK; and finally in the greater scale of things, perhaps a name plate was simply not considered a priority. However, I also recall a health visitor telling me on one home visit that it was probably a good thing, as name plates would draw attention to unusual sounding ('foreign') names. Ironically, other flats commonly had name plates, so ones without immediately stood out.

These various aspects of the home setting increase the visibility of asylum seekers as different types of tenants to a general public of other tenants and visitors to their flats. The further restrictions on decoration, directly linked to the temporary nature of their immigration status, serve to further limit settling-in possibilities. (When I visited members' homes after they had had a positive decision, and had either been re-housed or had signed a tenancy agreement, their flats had always been redecorated by the members.) Asylum seekers also differ from other tenants in that whilst NASS accommodated, they do not hold a tenancy agreement. This means they can be moved at any time. I suggest that the conditions of their housing situation combined with the sparse, standardised decor illustrate some of the ways in which their structural positioning pervades their private sphere whilst also publicly reinforcing their liminal status. Nonetheless, there are clear

attempts to communicate to themselves and to other guests that people have ‘settled’, as Sophie’s home demonstrates.

Sophie has added her own touches to her flat to make it seem more ‘homely’: family photos, religious pictures, plastic flowers and the DVDs. The television was the main non-standard NASS item, and all homes I entered had one. These were commonly second-hand sets, and would often be the first item to be replaced upon a positive decision, usually for a large, flat-screen style set. It was common to see family photos prominently displayed in members’ homes, especially when these were photos of ‘home’, hung in the living room area, as Sophie had done. (On many occasions when interpreting I would go into other rooms in people’s flats and the walls would generally be bare, the exception being children’s bedrooms.) Usually, such photos would be formal family portraits as well as informal moments. Sophie’s home and her ‘homely’ touches were typical of many asylum seekers’ homes I had visited across Glasgow.

Photos are a particularly interesting public expression of ‘belonging’. Photos from ‘home’ act as a testimony to a settled life elsewhere before being categorised by the UK state as ‘unsettled’ asylum seekers. On the living room wall they are a daily reminder to the home occupier and to guests of a life lived somewhere else. Photos of the new ‘home’ are also testimony to a kind of ‘settlement’ in the UK in different ways. For example, the school pictures and the First Holy Communion photo, (other examples were photos of baptisms, christenings and graduations), are all indicators to others of participation and ‘integration’ into the new society’s processes and rituals, despite extreme exclusion as asylum seekers. All homes I entered would display photos in this way, and I asked one of the members whether they had managed to bring these photos with them when they left their country. She had said she had brought some (which was an exception, as most people leave their countries with very little by way of ‘home’ possessions) and had received others from family by post.

The ‘ordinariness’ and typical nature of the meeting sites is interesting because it establishes a connection between members. Entering one member’s flat can feel very similar to another’s because they are not only furnished almost identically, but also personalised in very similar ways. Equally, the striking similarities between NASS

accommodations create a very strong sense of familiarity within the unfamiliar context of the city or of different neighbourhoods. Members are able to see that (most of them at least) live within similar surroundings. This in turn produces a sense of groupness. Of course non-asylum seekers also live in the same high rise blocks and so this is not to claim that all individuals who live in similar properties necessarily identify as a group (although, tenants associations are a potent example of groupness linked directly to shared conditions of accommodation). However, contained within members' flats are those other indicators of making 'home' 'here' whilst simultaneously demonstrating another 'home' elsewhere, both of which are done through photos, DVDs, books, and such as like. In this sense, associational life provides a further practical way to keep refreshing connections with 'home'. The social networks that group membership fostered and facilitated were characterised by an intensive circulation of material culture, including music, DVDs, beauty products, clothes and material for making clothes, magazines, books and so on. On one occasion when I was in Annie's home (Annie is a member of AFIG), I noticed an African programme playing on the television in the background. She asked me if I had seen it before, and after watching it together for a few minutes, I realised I recognised it from another member's house. When I told her this, she laughed and said it was a popular soap opera from the Ivory Coast and that AFIG members circulated the DVDs amongst themselves. She explained to me that they would get the latest DVD when a member visited London or someone might send this from home. They did the same thing with religious concerts and music, and circulating 'home culture' in this way was a very common practice across each of the associations.

Alongside decor, homes would be almost identically laid out for meetings in the way Sophie had done. Laying out the room formalises the meeting, lending it a sense of occasion, expectation (of a formal meeting to take place) and anticipation (of numbers). By contrast when the business of the meeting was over this carefully arranged layout would be immediately transformed: members would move out of their chairs, and into smaller groups, sometimes removing chairs to create more space. The 'circular' configuration of the chairs (i.e. lining the walls) meant that there was no 'top-table' for the committee. Indeed, during monthly meetings held in members' homes, committee members usually sat amongst the ordinary members (the exception being the Secretary of Treasurer who might sit at the dining table to facilitate taking notes or collecting monies). As a result, although the associations are hierarchically structured, this hierarchy was never obviously demarcated during the meeting. However, whilst the non-hierarchical seating



arrangement can be seen as an expression of cultural, political or moral values - for example 'we are all equals, our management committee is democratically elected by our members, made up of members just like us' - the management committee does have a role to keep all members in check. Equally broader social and administrative hierarchies - along lines of class, gender, age and education - would become apparent. This might be through other forms of expression, for example in terms of address and the use of titles for some members; or where members stood or sat in the meeting space. Often 'younger' members would stand at the doorway of the meeting space and 'older' members would be seated. Such expressions and actions are important indices of accepted principles of social organisation which dictate how an organisation is to behave. They also reflect social hierarchies that exist more generally within other forms of groups, for example how individuals might participate in some large formal corporate organisation. Whilst some of the effects of these hierarchies within group life will be woven into the present chapter, these will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

Whereas the home site was used for meetings mainly because of a lack of alternatives, using the private sphere in this way suggests to me a process by which *non-settlement* and its liminal effects can be subverted. As I have suggested in the theoretical framing of the research questions, asylum seeker incorporation regimes, resulting in long processing times and extended uncertainty over one's asylum claim, produce a range of dislocating and destabilising effects. However the pattern of the meeting and the act of opening the home space to others in a social way provides a degree of stability and certainty in this 'unstable' environment. It seems an important process for producing belonging for individuals and groups. As Sandrine wrote in an online discussion about the future of ASSECS and the original values underpinning the association:

ASSECS during these years has played a very crucial role by creating a platform where new English Speaking Cameroonians coming to Scotland can meet in our homes and speak pigin, and eat eru (*wild leaf vegetable*), achu (*pound cocoyam*) and fufu-corn (*cassava*) giving them that sense of home. ASSECS also has played some very important role to supporting members both emotionally, physically and psychologically (*Sandrine, Cameroonian woman, refugee, email, 25 June 2011*).

That these practices of recreating 'home' occur within a home space and specifically within a 'NASS home space' is of particular importance. In my view, the goal of

recreating social intimacy of ‘home-making’, achieved through the practices discussed thus far, points to an aspect of associational life that is distinct from the post-business socialising that might be seen as a common feature of associations more generally. As I will go on to discuss in the last section of this chapter, the social aspect is as central to each meeting as the business aspects of association life.

The home setting also provides an indirect route into becoming familiar with the city of Glasgow. During an interview with Femi, a member of ASSECS, he told me that going to meetings in people’s homes, though sometimes logistically difficult because of the distance and cost of public transport, allowed him to get to know other parts of Glasgow he would not ordinarily visit. Another member went further to state this was in effect a key objective of rotating meetings in members’ homes. Building informal networks of contacts in this way can be understood as a way to collectively challenge, through the association, the non-integrative norm of dispersal. Femi also explained to me that, more importantly for him, meetings allowed him to visit others’ homes ‘as you would back home’. It allowed him some degree of living life as he did before:

Now that I have the group, when we are together it feels like downtown Yaoundé <laughs>. Really it does, because when you are together, it’s like... it’s like you are transported through time, you are back there... You visit your friends like you do back home, you talk like back home, you eat the food, you laugh at the same things, you listen to music, you feel so at home...<smiles broadly>. Yes! I can say this; it makes you feel at home.... And you know because you meet every month, you look forward to it. It’s like you know you are going home every month, it sounds crazy but that is how it feels. You know in Cameroon, you don’t live alone like here, your door closed, and no contact with people outside. No. You live with other people. And even, you know, after ... when I go home, I am alone, I feel sad, but then I feel happy ‘cos I know they are there so it makes me feel at home too (*Femi, Cameroonian man, asylum seeker*).

Femi’s comments were typical across the six different groups in this study, where consistently members spoke in interview about how the association kept them culturally, emotionally, socially and practically connected to both a past and a present. This emphasises the significant ways in which the ordinary event of the meeting held in the new home space can also ‘bring ‘home’ back in’. That is, the meeting event is a way of recreating practices that are reminders of alternative ways of socially and culturally existing and interacting with others. Having considered the meeting setting, I will now

look at some aspects of the meetings themselves to identify common patterns that display similarities between groups, whilst recognising their internal heterogeneity.

### ***Content of meetings***

Although each association was different, and each meeting displayed the different attitudes of its members and their varied social relations, many aspects of the associations' meetings were similar, particularly in relation to the content which took on some repetitive qualities. Common patterns relating to associational life include both mundane (monthly meetings) and exceptional events (AGM, National Days) but also many formal associational activities that were deemed socially essential to the social life of the group (or else they might have been abandoned). These include the setting of the agenda, written minutes, order of business, and how business is raised, as well as informal ways in which formal activities are performed: who can afford to be late for what meeting, who speaks to whom, and so on. In each of the groups, every meeting followed more or less the same pattern, which generally included the following components: prayer; approval of minutes; matters arising; correspondence; Treasurer/financial report; activities update; members' subscriptions (if relevant); any other business; date of next meeting. Although the association-specific content varied, the following account illustrates recurring patterns of behaviour and typical situations in the 'meeting' setting. It also recounts common happenings and concerns.

This observation took place at a monthly management committee meeting for Africa Umoja Scotland. The meeting was held at Mani's flat in a high rise block in the Southside of Glasgow. I had been told the meeting was to start at 7pm, and when I arrived on time I saw some of the committee members were already present. I apologised, thinking I had perhaps got the time wrong, but Mani (smiling) told me he said to the others the meeting would start at 5pm, knowing they would not arrive until nearer 7pm. The meeting was taking place in the living room; it was a small space with a sofa pushed against the wall and some dining chairs pulled next to it. At the other corner of the room was a dining table, with a laptop and printer set up. It seemed this space was being used as a dining room-cum-home office as there were lots of paper files, A4 folders, and a French/English dictionary. Although the room was sparsely decorated, the few photos and traditional

‘African’ art on the walls made it felt homely. Mani invited me to take a seat and I introduced myself to the others present. Oudry was immediately on my left and he shook my hand, so I took this as a sign to shake hands with all members there. Greeting each other individually was the common practice in the different associations. Even when members arrived late and the business of the meeting had already started, they would take time to go round each member, either shaking hands, sliding palms across each other or in some cases would do a kind of ‘knuckle tap’ greeting.

We all stood and the meeting began with a prayer of thanks for the safe arrival of the committee and for guidance that we would have a fruitful meeting. I asked if it was okay to take notes and the members nodded in agreement. Mani then briefly read out from memory (he had no notes in front of him) the agenda for the evening: approving the last month’s minute, getting an update on finances, discussing the development plan and then ending with miscellaneous items/any other business. The last month’s minute was read aloud, approved and seconded. Mani advised there had been good news from funders. He held a letter in his hand, it was from Lloyds TSB, and they had granted the association a sum of money (£4800) for ‘educational and community-based activities’. The members applauded this news and Mani circulated the letter to each of us to read for ourselves. However the application had been made with an aim to fund activities for Refugee Week and, as he explained, this had already passed, they would have to develop a new plan in order to spend the money within the 6-month timescale as stipulated by the funder. After a short silence, Mani asked the Treasurer, Simon, to read the financial report (basically outlining incoming and outgoing expenditure).

When he finished, Mani then continued through the agenda. No one was really adding anything else, and when Mani would look up expectantly at the members, no one said anything. When it came to the discussion on the development plan, he asked for ideas. Again the other members sat in silence, either looking straight ahead or at their feet, but seemed to be avoiding eye contact with him. At that point he said (a bit wearily but not in a way that was reprimanding them) that there was a need to decentralise responsibility and that others take on some responsibility within the group. Even though he was the chair, it was not his sole responsibility to come up with ideas. Simon asked if they could think about it for the next meeting. They all agreed, and Mani emphasised the point that they couldn’t let too much time pass, as they had to start planning different activities. The next

point he wanted to raise related to developing the association and building membership numbers. He recognised that the core committee was quite small but that ordinary members were also welcome at these meetings. He asked each member to come to the next meeting with a list of 10 people they personally knew and who they could actively target to join the association. The other members were looking down at their feet or straight ahead, again as if they were avoiding eye contact. Mani went on: “we need to use our networks. We’ve got to each know at least 10 people between us?” Mbuyu joked that he only knew 5 people and they all laughed. Then in a more serious tone Mani continued that “we need to focus on our numbers, we can’t say we are meeting a community’s needs and applying for funds and getting funds if there is not a community to speak of.” The members murmured agreement on this point but that was the limit of their contribution to this discussion.

As the meeting progressed, it seemed to me that the vision for the group lay mainly with Mani. This is not to question the others’ commitment, but that perhaps because Mani seemed so effective as a leader, and well connected from the conversations he described with external partners (e.g. funders and voluntary sector organisations), responsibility for the group seemed to rest with him. When he tried to delegate tasks, he was met with some resistance, mainly around the lack of free time members had to commit to these activities. Of note is that of the members present, only Mani was still seeking asylum. The others had already had positive decisions or were non-asylum seeker migrants. This seemed relevant because, as Mani was not working or in full-time education, he appeared to be the one with the most free time. Mani explained, I think for my benefit, “Everything we do is voluntary, we offer up our time to help the community to integrate”. The other members nodded in agreement, but Mani then went on to say that he also had a life outside of the group and that he had other priorities too. He asked them all to make more of an effort to take on some of the meetings. (Later as he was walking me out to my car, Mani said to me that this was the big problem, but that what could he do? He wished others would be more actively involved.)

After an awkward silence, we continued to ‘any other business’. There was a point of clarification regarding the use of an external catering company at an event they had organised. (This was a catering company that had been set up by two members of Karibu who regularly catered at formal events I attended for the different associations involved in

this study, as well as wider ‘community’ events such as Refugee Week of International Women’s Day.) It seemed there had been a breakdown in communication. Mani then made a comment suggesting, in a seemingly diplomatic way, that one of caterers was particularly demanding (although he never mentioned her by name, he referred to her as ‘our sister’ and the members all seemed to know exactly who he was talking about, as they smiled and nodded at his comment). He then went on that “in the interests of keeping the community happy” and to be able to use the caterer again, they should apologise for the misunderstanding. I was then invited to present my research. After a brief overview, I was asked whether I would now become an ‘official member’ or an ‘observer-member’. I looked to Mani, who said I was now an official member, which, he warned me jokingly, meant that I was a member for life. The other members nodded and I thanked them. Mani then brought the meeting to a close and there was an almost instant transformation to the ‘feel’ of the meeting. Another member Oudry immediately went to put some music on (Congolese music he explained to me) and Mani left the room, soon to return with plates of rice and chicken to share. He then went back to the kitchen, reappearing with a tray of beers and soft drinks. Although members had been relatively quiet during the business meeting, they immediately began chatting between themselves, catching up since they had last met the previous month. Oudry moved next to me and began telling me more about himself, that he worked outside of Glasgow so it was difficult to make it to meetings. Sometimes he was offered work on Saturdays and so had to decide whether to earn extra money or be with his ‘family’ in Glasgow. I nodded, indicating I understood this dilemma. He then told me he preferred to be with his ‘brothers and sisters’ as much as he could; especially now as he no longer lived in Glasgow, he felt more isolated (fieldnotes, Africa Umoja Scotland, 9 August 2008).

All association meetings followed this standard format of the meeting agenda which formalised and ‘professionalised’ the business part of the meeting, despite the very informal home setting. It was quite common to discuss ‘finances’ at these meetings, in particular applications for funding of activities to external bodies. This seemed important as a sign to members that the management committee was active and that the association was recognised by external bodies, a successful application being evidence of this recognition. It also indicated that the association was ‘being taken seriously’ by an external public. However, funding also brought different internal pressures, as illustrated above and as will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Connected to the issue of being taken seriously and recognition by external audiences and partners was the

problem of ‘time-keeping’. All the groups’ meetings ran behind schedule, often starting anything from one to three hours later than planned. Furthermore, as each association required a quorum of two thirds of its committee for decision-making, this often added to the delayed start. The general pattern however was that committee members would always arrive before ordinary members (even though they generally arrived late for meetings).

Lateness would often be explained to me as a problem of people being on ‘African time’. However over the course of fieldwork I wondered if other factors were also at play and came to two conclusions on this. Firstly those ordinary members perhaps felt that the association business was the responsibility of the committee, and so arriving late was not an issue because they did not need to be present for decision-making. A second conclusion I came to was that poor time-keeping was related to ordinary members’ general perceptions of the group. By this I mean ordinary members seemed to perceive the group primarily as primarily a ‘social’ group, where one might presume that lateness would be more tolerated. During a CAMASS monthly meeting, whilst the Secretary was reading out the minutes, ordinary members continued to arrive. As all the seats were taken up, some late-comers stood in the doorway, joining the younger members already congregated there. They quietly greeted each other and caught up on each others’ news. However, other late-comers made a bigger show of their arrival, going around each member hand-slapping or shaking hands. One man in particular was very showman-like, not only taking time to greet everyone, but also striking up conversations with members. When Guy (the President) asked him to quietly take a seat as the meeting had started, he looked surprised. Feigning offence (he was half smiling and seemed to be ‘acting-up’ to the others present) he walked to the middle of the room and said aloud: “Ach President... now I am not even allowed to greet my fellow country men?” There was some laughter at this ‘performance’, and after some fussing, he eventually stood at the back of the room, although continued chatting with other members. This ‘big entrance’ was a taster of what was to come, as he continued to disrupt proceedings with jokey behaviour and pretend exasperation at the management committee (fieldnotes, CAMASS, 28 June 2008).

Despite protestations from management committees and attempts to sanction this behaviour, no group seemed able to effectively address the problem of poor time-keeping. At another of CAMASS’ monthly meetings, so frustrated by the low attendance and the steady trickle of latecomers through the door throughout the evening, Victorine, a

committee member suggested making latecomers pay a fine. This suggestion (perhaps only half-seriously made as she was smiling when she suggested it) was met with hoots of laughter and derision, and her idea was waved away by other members. CAMASS was not the only association searching for ways to instil what they saw as a cultural change in relation to timekeeping. I would often hear discussions between committee members who found poor timekeeping a source of embarrassment, as illustrated by the following excerpt from observation at one of Karibu's monthly drop-ins, which in the end was very well attended despite commencing two hours later than scheduled. At this drop-in, the management committee had organised two guest speakers to discuss opportunities for setting up a business and changes in benefits legislation that would directly affect many of the members, once they had got their papers. The drop-in had followed the usual pattern of business first followed by lunch. Even though the drop-in ended up running extremely late there was still time made to eat together. After the food had been served, I noticed some members had already begun leaving the hall and were saying their goodbyes. Pascaline also saw this and began shouting the date of the next drop-in over the general noise and slightly chaotic situation of collecting children from the crèche.

I asked Heloise and Pascaline if they felt this drop-in had been a success. They felt it had, there was a good turn out despite the late start, although "that was to be expected". Heloise then wondered aloud to us why it was that the women were able to make Home Office appointments on time, or get to the post office, or even get to college on time, but not make Karibu appointments on time. She also suggested they should only reimburse the travel expenses of the women who arrived on time (this was the only association that did this). She feared some women just came for the £2.50 cash for their bus ticket. Sometimes members would turn up just before lunch and leave immediately afterwards. I had also observed this happening at other drop-ins. Pascaline nodded in agreement. She then added "*Maman*<sup>40</sup>, you know it is embarrassing, people will not take us seriously. They will not take African women seriously if we are always late". Heloise nodded and sighed, but then said this (the drop-in) was an important chance for women to get out of the house, and alleviate the boredom of life as an asylum seeker, so it was difficult to know how best to encourage better time keeping and more active participation (fieldnotes, Karibu drop-in, 23 January 2008).

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<sup>40</sup> Pascaline addressed Heloise as '*Maman*' (literal translation: mother), as both a term of respect and endearment. Heloise was older than Pascaline; she was also the president of the group, and considered as an elder in the 'community'. She was not a family relation, and so the translation 'Mother' would be incorrect.



From fieldwork, it seemed to me that ordinary members could always be late for meetings and events, whereas committee members were expected to be there before and certainly no later than ordinary members. If committee members were not present, this would then be brought up during the course of the meeting by ordinary members, suggesting one rule on timekeeping for ordinary members and another for management committee members.

Although time-keeping seems a small aspect of association life, many committee members felt it undermined their professionalism. They worried it would lead external actors and potential partners to question their status as an association that displays the skills, values and attitudes required to engage with others in various social fields. Timekeeping is one small, but important, aspect of this. It also seemed to demonstrate an understanding of how things are done 'here', an insight that members used as an indication of the level of their 'integration'. Little (1965) describes the role of voluntary associations of migrants as one of inculcating in members the standards and norms of the new environment.

Management committee members would regularly complain about time-keeping, and repeatedly explain to members why it was important. I would often hear the management committee tell ordinary members at meetings "you're not in Africa now; this is how they do things here". The only events to start on time would be externally organised events or meetings (such as religious ceremonies, or meetings with funders or state actors). 'Public events' such as AGMs or National days where non-members would be invited to attend would also always run late. At such 'public' events, when I spoke to invited guests I would regularly hear comments about how events always ran late. In fact, I attended several AGMs where guest speakers also arrived three hours later than scheduled because, as they told me, they 'knew' that's how things were done, citing 'African time' in a knowing manner, implying I would immediately understand what they meant.

The interactions at meetings in the above fieldnotes are also typical of each of the groups in that they illustrate a common issue of over-reliance on leaders and an 'active few'. In Chapters Six and Seven I will describe and analyse aspects of organisational hierarchies and internal pressures and tensions in greater detail. However the above fieldnote is indicative of a wider concern which, whilst never raised during meetings, was voiced to me a number of times during interviews: namely whether the groups would survive without their leaders. The problem of an 'active few' and overreliance on leaders was one reason that actions would often be postponed. This commonly occurred in all the associations, other reasons for this would be because time would be taken up on other internal matters, or the necessary preparatory work had not been done, or the groups were ill-equipped to

take ideas through to actual action. The repetitive nature of the meeting in terms of content and form means members have a sense of what to expect. A degree of stability then comes with participation which can, in my view, be effectively contrasted with the uncertainty of *non-settlement*. Even where there are the chaotic moments or differences in opinion, the groups always managed to place these tensions to one side during the second ‘social’ part of the evening. Again this has a stabilising effect on the members and creates a space to express and enact forms of belonging and groupness.

### ***Preparing food and eating together: the social life of the group***

Every association meeting and drop-in followed the same pattern: association business followed by ‘socialising’, which always involved sharing food together. Although this social aspect can be understood as a common feature of associational life generally, in what follows I argue that socialising together takes on additional significance for the groups in this study. Whilst the context of *non-settlement* differentiates the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees from other migrants, various studies have highlighted food as central to migrant praxis generally (see for example Hage 1997; Mankekar 2005). It is well established in migrant studies that food and drink have a key role in maintaining kin, social and cultural ties brought from other places; in reinforcing perceived collective identities brought from elsewhere; and in creating divisions, both among immigrants themselves and between migrants and ‘receiving societies’. In this section I want to explore how the practice of socialising together - eating, drinking, listening to music - adds a particular dynamism and significance to associational life as it is practised in the context of this study. Later, in Chapter Eight, I discuss and analyse the significance of a growing number of ‘African’ grocery stores, shops and services as a further challenge to *non-settlement*. Their emergence can be seen as an extension of ‘recreating home’ in terms of cultural consumption, building ‘institutional completeness’ (Breton 1964; Werbner 1991), and practising alignment with other minorities.

Within associations, the common practice of preparing and sharing food makes a statement of continuity within a changing social context. The interactional process of preparing and eating together demonstrated to me a very specific way in which collective identities and belonging are enacted. In contrast to the very structured first half of association meetings,

with its focus on agenda-driven association business, the second social part of the meeting was always more spontaneous and dynamic, whilst also retaining some elements of repetition. Eating together was an important shared practice all members (and guests) were expected to share. Food represents a particularistic cultural symbol which emphasises group boundaries, and the food prepared was always described to me (and other guests when served at more public events such as the AGM) as ‘typical’ of the national cuisine of the particular association. Even though I was considered a member (to varying degrees), I was still an ‘outsider’ and I would always be asked what I thought of the Cameroonian/Congolese/Ivorian food being served. A big fuss would be made of talking me through each dish before I ate. Sometimes, members would ask me if I had ever seen food prepared in this way, reinforcing my difference (and their sameness). Over time as I became more and more familiar with the food, I became less of a novelty and ‘food novice’ to the different associations. On one occasion, at a 2009 Refugee Week event organised by Karibu which I attended with family, overwhelmed by the attendance of the general public, one of the members asked me help serve the food “because I knew what it was and so could explain in English” to their guests.

The following excerpt from fieldnotes describes the social part of a monthly meeting. It is from observation with AFIG, but in many ways is typical of how this part of the meeting would unfold in each of the associations. When the meeting had ended, I noticed Annie quickly disappear into the kitchen to get the food read to serve. (She had spent most of the business part of the meeting popping in and out of the kitchen checking on the food.) She came back into the living room for me and asked me to go to the kitchen with her. In the kitchen she then told me she had prepared a fish dish for me as a special guest in her home. Annie said that I was to take as much as I wanted. I thanked her for her kindness, and told her I felt embarrassed to have this special treatment. I insisted I only take a small portion and the others also share the dish, but she shook her head, heaping more on my plate and then fondly pushing me out of the kitchen. She had also prepared a feast of beignets, *attiéké* (grated cassava), fish stew, meat, (her famous) hot sauce and salad. The other members had already begun chatting with each other about non-association matters and conversations were taking a natural turn to family, the Christmas holidays, and catching up since the last meeting. One of the sympathiser members (a friend of the group who was not a full member) lived in Greenock and was only able to attend every second or third meeting, so he was busy moving around the group, speaking to each member. Another sympathiser member, Christian, who regularly attended meetings, had put one on some

Ivorian music which was now playing loudly and the members' children ran in and out of the living room with small plates of food. They would then be chased out by their mothers lightly chastising them, "go and eat in the bedroom" but they said they wanted to come and see what is going on in the adult room. Christian was by now serving drinks, handing out beers, soft drinks, a homemade ginger fruit drink, and Malta, a non-alcoholic sweet drink, produced in Nigeria that was popular with this group and often served at their meetings and events.

The other members then moved to the kitchen: it was a small, long galley-style kitchen and there was not a great deal of space, so they would stand at the door whilst Annie 'plated up' food for them which they took into the living room. Amidst comments of 'bon appétit' we all sat and ate together. I felt a bit embarrassed as it seemed my plate was laden with more food than the others, but it didn't appear to bother anyone else. One of the members joked with me that "this is the way to prepare and eat fish" (the fish had not been filleted, as was the custom, and so I was picking the flesh off the bones). Virginie jokingly asked me why it was that when 'the Scottish' prepare fish, they do everything they can to disguise what it once was, cutting off the tail, head and fins! She seemed proud when she then added, "*When we prepare fish, it still looks like fish!*" Annie wanted to give me a second helping, but I explained I was full. She then told me she would wrap up the remains of the fish dish for me to take home to my husband. When everyone had finished eating, plates were cleared away and the music was turned up louder. Some members were dancing; everyone seemed to be in the 'party spirit' (fieldnotes, AFIG, 31 January 2009).

With the expectation of Karibu, which held afternoon meetings in external premises, meetings regularly ran so late it would be well after midnight before food was served. On those occasions I would feel exhausted, my hunger had already passed and the thought of eating a heavy meal of plantains, beignets, sauce, rice or stew so late into the evening held very little appeal. However, I very quickly understood that to leave a meeting and not have participated in eating together was considered as an insult to the host and to the association. If I tried to make my excuses and leave, the host would give me an offended look and insist, pushing me into the kitchen, placing a plate in my hands and telling me to eat. Eating together was such an important part of association life that even members who claimed to be unskilled as cooks would be assisted with hosting by another member. This was most often the case when single men hosted the meeting. On such occasions, female

members would arrive laden with plastic bags of food they had prepared at home and transported to the meeting. In CAMASS, ASSECS and Africa Umoja Scotland, women's roles were not limited to providing food and refreshments; they each had female members serving on the management committee. Nonetheless, in terms of the social part of the evening, women generally took responsibility for food, and men took responsibility for drinks.

This gendered division of labour can be viewed negatively and positively. Time spent preparing food usually meant time away from the meeting business, a role a female member invariably took on, thus reducing her involvement in association business. Sometimes comments would be made that this reflected 'African culture' of women dominating the domestic sphere and men the public sphere, although in practice this was not the case in these groups. However, and despite the danger of cross-cultural generalisations, cooking was always seen as being 'properly done' by women. An alternative perspective, however, is that in adopting this role, women performed a key task in fostering and facilitating the sociability of the group, in itself an integral part not only of associational life, but of establishing roots in Glasgow. Without women playing this role, this essential aspect of the social and cultural life of the group, and the stability it provides, might suffer. Therefore the association's continuity can be seen as very dependent upon the female members' willingness to cooperate in their additional duties in relation to refreshments. This analysis is consistent with studies conducted in Paris by Trauner (2005) into Malian migrant *foyers* and Quiminal (2000) into African women's associations. Trauner found an informal economy had developed for women to run men-only *foyer* kitchens, thus facilitating men's connections to 'home' through food consumption. And Quiminal recognised that women's associations play a comparable role in providing similar services relating to cooking as described above for their male counterparts, and that this was central to the continued welfare of the men's associations. This is also the case in the present study: cooking dishes from 'home' is necessary to recreate the convivial social atmosphere of 'home' and suggests that women's dominance in this respect gives them a particular 'power' within associations. Although the actual reach of this power might be questionable, in practice, women members did not just cook but also held office: they found ways to fulfil both roles. This raised their social standing, indicating that their 'power' extends beyond the 'domestic sphere' of the kitchen, and is important for overall morale of members to see both men and women's interests represented in the organisational hierarchies.

In looking at the practicalities of ‘hosting’ this part of the meeting, the burden of the cost of buying food and drinks was always shared between members. In two of the groups, members paid a monthly ‘hosting contribution’, although I understood the other groups informally contributed some money each month to the host. For the smaller groups this suited them better, as there was less to buy and prepare. The routines of buying and preparing food indicate how the seemingly mundane practices of shopping, preparing, cooking and eating take on a symbolic value for the members of these groups: all aspects around ‘food’ and commensality are elements of shared practice that indicate belonging and solidarity with each other. In particular the practice of eating together can be understood as an enactment of ‘there’ ‘here’; by this I mean it is a practice of place-making using food. A number of members told me that eating together at meetings was for many of them the only occasion they got together to share food from home in this kind of group setting. This was meaningful because, they would tell me, it was a way of replicating an important ‘home’ practice, namely eating with family and friends. It also had something of a levelling effect as all members, regardless of background and personal circumstances, ate the same food together.

There is a further aspect to the processes of buying food and hosting meetings which I would like to explore. With the exception of Karibu, which had office space and used a community hall for its drop-in, there is an expectation in each of the associations that all members take the responsibility for hosting and preparing food. Indeed, it is more than that; it is a stipulation in many of the associations’ constitutions. However over the fieldwork period, I noticed that some members never hosted. Some were unable to do so for very practical reasons. For example, students who lived in halls of residence had no space to host a large group of people and in these instances, student members took their turn to help with refreshments. However, other members managed to avoid the task by never offering their home, by making excuses when they were nominated or by refusing outright. In one particular instance a member of ASSECS wrote on their online forum:

I have elected not to host ASSECS now and not even in the possible future. I note that hosting ASSECS denotes some showcasing of measurable responsibility, but my remit in the light of responsibility to ASSECS has also been measured in other sacrifices that supersede the steam of hosting ASSECS meetings. Although that is not an excuse for not hosting ASSECS, I am delighted to be judged by my frank response and if my punishment means ostracising me from ASSECS, I am happy to serve such a punishment (*ASSECS online forum, 1 July 2011*).

The ‘punishment’ to which he refers relates to the breach of membership rules set out in the constitution which stipulate the rotation of hosting of events. The member in question was of the firm opinion that he already made a valued contribution to ASSECS associational life (as he saw it, his greatest contribution was his intellectual strength, ideas and expertise). On the online forum, no member challenged this refusal and there are several possible explanations for this. Perhaps this was due to the force of the personality of the member in question, or his rhetorical flourish, or perhaps even a collective resolve that he was very selective in terms of his involvement in group life. Regardless of the reason, the President of ASSECS let this pass unsanctioned.

However, other members who were destitute or on emergency support were also unable to host meetings: some were effectively homeless and stayed with friends; others had very poor quality accommodation or shared accommodation with other ‘Section 4’ asylum seekers. The stress of living in extreme circumstances of destitution and uncertainty was also undoubtedly an important factor inhibiting this level of involvement in associational life. A direct link could be made to practices of ‘home’ food consumption and the asylum seeker incorporation regime in the UK. The preparation and consumption of food ‘from home’ represents an important act of surviving both the much maligned voucher system, as provided in Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (‘hard case support’) and its successor the ‘Azure Card’. The association has become for many the only place where they can really eat food from ‘home’, purchased as it generally is from smaller specialist stores and the growing number of ‘African grocers’ emerging across Glasgow. These are stores which do not, officially at least, accept vouchers or the Azure card. Although members received a hosting contribution, they generally ‘paid up front’ for the shopping and were then reimbursed at the meeting by the Treasurer on the production of receipts. Section 4 supported members are not able to do this. This shows not only the internal diversity of members but also the internal differences that existed in terms of individual status within the group. Consequently, a member whose migrant status was more precarious than others was less able to ‘perform’ their membership duties in the same way as other members whose migrant status was more certain. This is one way in which external forces dictate individual involvement. From observing at meetings, there seemed a tacit understanding as to which members faced these particular limitations. Only on a handful of occasions during the course of fieldwork with the different groups was a member nominated to host who was unable, forcing the member to explain to others why s/he was unable to do so. Although this happened rarely, it raised the visibility of the

member as someone quite distinct from and less 'able' than others to perform membership responsibilities.

The social part of the meeting was a time to 'diffuse' any tensions that had emerged during the course of the meeting, and members seemed to understand this was an important element of this part of the evening or afternoon. In meetings where there had been angry exchanges, rebukes and disputes, I never witnessed these 'spilling over' into the social part of the meeting. This is not to say this never happened. As an observer I am not privy to all interactions between members during meetings or indeed outside of the meeting event, once described to me as '*problèmes de quartier*' by Victorine during one meeting. (Methodologically, observation inherently forces the researcher to select events and incidences over others as the focus of her attention.) Nor was I able to attend every meeting of every association. However, given that disagreements would often be 'acted out' before the members, there was no reason to expect these to be hidden from members in the social part of the meeting. This would most often be the case in two of the associations where members paid a monthly subscription. The pattern was generally as follows: the Treasurer would read out from a list what membership subscription money was due; the amount would be accepted or challenged by the member in question; this amount owed would then be explained by the Treasurer; the member would debate the amount; the other members would then shout down the member, insisting he pay (from observation, these disagreements always involved male members); in the end, after much debate and discussion the amount owed would either be paid or postponed to the next meeting.

This aspect of the meeting almost always took on the qualities of a 'performance': the discussion would be 'played out' in the middle of the room in full view of everyone attending and the members took on an 'audience role'. Different roles were performed: there were silent onlookers, others would jeer and challenge, 'egging the member on', and the President or Vice-President would mediate. Although generally the matter would be resolved, tensions would rise. One such discussion during a CAMASS monthly meeting ended with another member resigning his membership because he was so fed up with the way members spoke to each other, and felt it was disrespectful (fieldnotes, CAMASS, 26 September 2008). Despite this act of protestation, he remained after the meeting business had been concluded to socialise with the other members. He also continued to attend



monthly meetings during my fieldwork period. This suggests that although he resigned as an active member (and was now effectively a sympathiser member), and had given up his membership rights (for example, voting rights and holding management committee office); he remained committed to the idea of the association and wanted to maintain his connection to this group of people.

Paying monthly subscriptions generated very lively discussions, and even when there were some very tense moments, they were generally resolved and a convivial ambience was resumed. However, during the meetings, some members would sigh wearily, shift in their seats, suggesting a bored frustration with these debates. And in interviews with members from these two groups, the debates over money were sometimes raised as indicative of a wider problem within the association. Some members expressed irritation, and sometimes even mild embarrassment, that such performances were defining the group, rather than a broader set of values and objectives. There was a sense that this was undermining group effectiveness and could potentially negatively affect the group's continuity. As Guy told me in interview:

You know arguing over the accounts takes up all the time. It is not what CAMASS stands for, but as you see it takes more time and stops us doing other things (*Guy, Cameroonian man, migrant*).

A common perception was that this perpetuated a stereotype of Africans who 'were always fighting with each other', who 'argued over money', and who 'mistrusted each other'. Mani, of Africa Umoja Scotland, told me that a main reason his association had decided not to have a monthly subscription was that "Africans and money don't mix". On occasions, when discussing association problems, I would hear remarks along the lines of 'no wonder Africa is the mess it is in today', suggesting that members felt there was an 'inherent' or 'cultural' incapacity within groups to resolve differences for the greater good of the association, and that conflict within and sometimes between groups was seen as a metaphor for conflict, disarray and lack of unity in Africa. Whether there was indeed this 'inherent' incapacity to resolve problems or whether it was an unfortunate example of racialised stereotyping is questionable. Nevertheless money was the source of much debate over transparency and accountability in the two Cameroonian groups. Although debates over monthly subscriptions did not occur in the four other groups, there were other funding-

related issues that raised a different set of problems for all of the associations and these will be addressed in the next chapter.

Despite the tensions described above, I was always surprised by the ability of the group to put differences to one side when it came to the social part of the evening. On one occasion, as I was leaving a CAMASS meeting after a particularly vocal disagreement about owed monies, I found myself in the lift with Sabine, who was also heading home. She jokingly asked me whether I was shocked by that evening's arguments. She knew it was not the first time I had witnessed such disagreements as I had been attending meetings for a number of months by then. But in all honesty, I had been taken aback by the behaviour of one member, whom I found to be particularly aggressive (and continued to find him so at other meetings), although I didn't say this to her. Instead I smiled and told her I was getting used to it. But, I did wonder to her why no-one said anything to this member. He had not only shouted and argued with the management committee for a large proportion of the meeting, but in my view, he had also been really disruptive: stomping around the room, storming in and out, not letting others speak and trying to dominate the debate. I personally found him to be very rude, aggressive and disrespectful to others, though I didn't say this to her. She laughed and told me that this was just the way they did things and that members regularly 'fall out' with each other but always 'fall back in'. That was why it was important to eat together after; it was a time to "make peace over bread". Clearly Sabine did not see conflict over individual financial obligations as being detrimental in the long-run to the group's continuity and it seemed to me that the social life of the group plays a central role in mitigating the effects of internal tensions.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter began with an introduction to the six groups which have informed the study. Whilst this introduction focused mainly on mapping their development from friendship groups to formalised associations, and highlighted the similarities and differences in their objectives and trajectories, the dominant themes of change and continuity emerged. These foreshadowed the notions of associations in transition and of the community life-cycle. I then introduced, described and analysed the association and the meeting site as the principal collective space and place for *non-settlement* to be problematised. This is

revealed in different ways: through practicing home-making in the temporary home space; transforming the home-space into the hub of associational life; and through the sense of familiarity, certainty and stability that participation in associational life brings to individuals and groups. I have suggested that the social life of such associations takes on particular significance for members, providing a way to enact and practice belonging and to reconnect with cultural lives and histories left behind. Socialising also has a unifying and levelling effect on internal differences. I have argued in this chapter that the association provides a space for readjustment to both the loss of a tightly organised community (family, friends or kinship networks), and to the extended and unrestricted field of social relationships that arise from the multiplicity of contacts between migrants and others beyond the boundary of the association. In this understanding, the association provides an alternative context of reception for its members and an important buffer between what Werbner (1991a) calls the 'centre' (in this instance, migrants and their associations) and the 'periphery' (mainstream civil society and structural institutions).

The ways in which associational life is enacted indicates that these formally constituted associations do not just 'exist' but are underpinned by a number of internal structures and processes, in themselves influenced by external forces. These are critical not only to association emergence but also to continuity. Explicating the intricacies of group processes emphasises the dynamic nature of associations and the ways that, over time, members have changing needs and expectations. A key argument of this thesis is for the need to move beyond 'refugeeness' when analysing associational practice. In the following chapter, I will argue that understanding these micro-level processes provides an important step towards moving beyond a focus on migrant status and thinking about these groups in more general associational terms.

## Chapter 6 Internal Structures and External Constraints

### *Introduction*

In reviewing the relevant migrant studies literature in Chapter Two, I found that analyses of internal group processes and organisational structures are often missing from research into the associational practices of asylum seekers and refugees. This has the effect of presenting only a partial picture of associational life. However, as Werbner (1991) argues, internal structures are as important foci of attention as the interface between associations and the wider context. It is only by exploring in detail the internal processes underpinning associations that the complexities and struggles for the founding and continuity of groups going on behind their 'public face' are revealed. In previous chapters, I have also detailed how the associations in this study all emerged as a direct result of dispersal policy, and these origins set them apart from other types of migrant association. However, they share many characteristics that are commonly found across a wide range of voluntary and activist organisations more generally. Building upon the arguments in the previous chapter, I will put forward in this chapter that studying such shared features can be understood as one way to move beyond a focus on migrant status and 'refugeeness' towards developing a deep understanding of the associational lives of new settling migrants. Moreover, moving beyond 'refugeeness' reveals other bases of social difference that shape internal relations, producing positive and negative effects on associational continuity.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first - 'Committee life: motivations, personal agendas and differentiated migrant status' - builds upon the general experience of membership discussed in the previous chapter by considering experiences of associational life at committee level. This section focuses on subjective motivations and anticipated benefits for involvement at committee level and whether this higher level contribution has a 'levelling effect' in relation to the differentiated migrant status of members. The second - 'Leadership roles, relationships and issues' - sharpens the focus of study on claims to leadership, the relationships between members and leaders, and the complex 'centre-periphery' relations between leaders, members and external publics. The third -

‘Representativeness and participation’ - considers the effects of external processes which impose a fictive unity on social relations within such associations. I also examine how the changing external context shapes the direction of groups as they struggle to meet members’ evolving needs and expectations. The fourth - ‘Funding’ - brings this discussion to a close by analysing the ways in which institutionalisation and funding imperatives create divisions within and between groups. I connect these imperatives to general historical migrant incorporation regimes, and highlight how they contribute to the construction of these associations as specific migrant ‘others’. As with the previous chapter, the notions of continuity and change are woven throughout the analysis.

### ***Committee life: motivation, personal agendas and differentiated migrant status***

I was attending one of Karibu’s drop-ins, and after registering at the table set up at the entrance to the church hall, and taking the relevant pieces of paperwork for the session, I heard someone call out to me. It was Malika, a Congolese woman I had first met through interpreting and who had recently begun attending Karibu drop-ins. Although she had been in Glasgow since 2004, she had only joined Karibu about 6 months before. (Malika had previously been on the committee of an informal (unconstituted) Congolese group which had since become inactive as more members had received positive decisions. She told me Karibu was exactly what she was looking for to keep her involved in ‘community life’.) She greeted me warmly and we stood and chatted, catching up with each others news. She smiled broadly and told me “I did it, Thérèse; I made it into the management committee!” She then held up her hand in a ‘high-five’ gesture. I congratulated her. It turned out she had been co-opted onto the committee. However, as she told me, her “skills and experience had immediately become apparent” and she was asked to take on the role of Secretary. From the way she talked, I got the distinct impression that a role in the management committee was, she felt, more befitting a woman with her professional experience and standing (fieldnotes, Karibu drop-in, 2 December 2009). This was something she went into in greater detail during our interview.

Malika was a well-educated, highly articulate and confidant woman. By her own accounts she had come from a wealthy and well-connected Congolese family. She told me she had

brothers and sisters across the world in Belgium, Canada, the United States, all of whom were “professionals” and that she was the only one to have claimed asylum in the UK. Her family ran a humanitarian organisation in Kinshasa which was connected in some way to the Ministry for Social Services in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). She also told me her family had made a substantial donation to a medical wing in a Kinshasa hospital. Given her background and the work she did prior to leaving the DRC, she felt “in her element” in an office-bearing role. She felt she was now more able to take members concerns and worries directly to the management committee. For example, she had sent out drop-in invitations to members that were written in English. Someone had then phoned her and asked her what the letter was for; they didn’t understand English, but had seen her name and mobile number on the letter. She felt that that putting her name to the letter reflected her new status within Karibu. As a committee member, she could take action and that the committee and the president would have to listen to her as she had a responsibility to the other members, and she could be more proactive in trying to do something about this. This was, as she saw it, one of the main benefits of being involved at committee level. However, as we talked more in the interview, she went on to describe further benefits to being part of an association and to holding an office bearing role:

Each time I go for job interviews, and I’m asked what interests I have outside of work...when I tell them (*potential employers*) about my committee work... It’s something people always tell me I should continue. It counts for so much. When I put that in my CV, it gives me some real importance, it takes me up a notch. They say, ‘what’s that?’ They want to find out more you know? I never really thought about it that way before, that it could give me such ... importance. Apart from my own qualifications, Karibu really adds value to what I can offer here (*Malika, Congolese woman, refugee*).

Malika’s comments about the wider benefits of being on the committee raise a number of interesting points that relate to personal motivations. They also relate to wider structural issues facing asylum seekers and refugees, and how these issues influence patterns of involvement within associations. Firstly, her opening statement to me about ‘making it into the committee’ reflects not only an end goal in terms of aspiration but also a significant moment of realisation: it gave her a sense that not only did she matter ‘here’, but that what she had done before also mattered. A wider point to be made here is that, in much political, media and public discourse, asylum seekers are not generally seen as individuals who ‘matter’ either in the place of exile or in terms of what they did in previous lives before seeking refuge. Instead they are objectified and nameless, depicted

as a faceless statistic that must be reduced and a burden that must be spread. Moreover, the UK asylum process, in removing the right to work, has effectively stripped many individuals of the possibility to reconnect with how they see themselves in professional terms. Most management committee members worked in some capacity in their home countries. And even for those who did not work, the committee role provided an opportunity to develop new skills in the UK.

Secondly, the committee role meant that Malika was able to achieve a more sophisticated status within Karibu because, by taking on a particular duty, however minor that may be, the committee member learns a fresh role (Little 1965). Some committee members were able to take on a position that reflected past professional experience; for example Noelle had an accountancy background and was Karibu's Treasurer. However, more often than not committee members had very limited, if any, experience of the specific duty. For example, Simon was the Treasurer of Africa Umoja Scotland but had left the DRC as a minor, arrived in the UK as an unaccompanied asylum seeker and was now studying IT at university. Annie was AFIG's Secretary despite not being able to read English or French when she arrived in Glasgow. Rodrigue was a school teacher before leading ASSECS, and Sabine was a biologist before becoming CAMASS' Treasurer. Similarly to Malika, Annie was also able to use this experience to her advantage when applying for jobs. She told me that it was the only UK experience she was able to put on her CV, but it seemed to work as she found a part-time cleaning job. Equally, Gaby's experience as President of AFIG helped her get a job as development worker with Karibu, and Rodrigue's experience as Chair of ASSECS helped him find employment with a BME-sector organisation. The handling of association business in an office bearing role and the kind of experience gained had the potential then to be highly influential and valuable to personal success beyond the boundaries of the group itself (Little 1965). That committee experience would advance employment possibilities was a point often evoked at the different associations' AGMs to encourage members to nominate themselves to the management committee.

Thirdly and related to both previous points, Malika's opening comment to me, and telling me about her own education and professional background, suggests that an office-bearing role reflects a desire to have a marked standing within the association. It also affords members a more defined place in intersecting internal and external hierarchies of class,

gender, 'race' and migrant status. This point was revealed in interviews with other participants. For example, Chima of Africa Umoja Scotland told me:

When you are just a normal member of the group, I can say you don't know everything. Because some other things you don't know...like Mani what he is doing going to Edinburgh or wherever. He can say some stuff in public. But other small stuff cannot be put in public but he can only say it to the committee, telling us what is going on and telling us what to expect, what to do and, you know, you get access to different informations (*Chima, Congolese man, refugee*).

It is clear that when operating at committee level in any association, one is in a privileged position and has access to a wider range of associational information than ordinary members. As Chima puts it, committee members belong to an 'inner circle'. This gives the individual an elevated social status internally and, to some degree, externally as well. But I think there is more to this. An elevated position within the hierarchical structure of the committee could be seen to transcend a lower positioning in other externally constructed social hierarchies of education level or migrant status. This point relates directly to an interesting phenomenon which revealed itself over the course of fieldwork. With the exception of ASSECS, when each of these associations was in its early stages of development, a common pattern was that most members were still in the asylum process. Subsequently, at the beginning of fieldwork in 2007, most committee roles were taken up by people claiming asylum. So whilst occupying a particularly low social position in relation to their migrant status, these members occupied an elevated status within their association as office bearers. Over time, asylum claims were processed, and the UK government Case Resolution policy led to many people being granted a positive decision. A new pattern then emerged: many committee members across the different associations became less actively involved, with some conspicuous by their absence. Apologies would be read aloud out at monthly meetings, or if they did continue to attend, they were less conscientious in fulfilling their delegated duties and responsibilities. Committee members would often state that the new pressures they faced as refugees (getting a job, finding new housing, concentrating on family reunification) meant they had less time to give to the group.

However, it also seemed as if the elevated standing within the association that their committee role offered to them as asylum seekers, and which helped them to 'matter' to



the group and to external audiences, was no longer as necessary (or useful) to them as refugees. These changes in commitment and motivation to undertake committee roles reflected a wider pattern in associations, and ASSECS is a good example of this. Within ASSECS, for some members there was a social hierarchy that became apparent to me over time, based on the complex interplay of social differences of class and education, and increasingly migrant status. Many ASSECS' members were 'general migrants', that is, not asylum seekers or refugees. As such, migrant incorporation regimes permitted them to work and study, and their pre-migration experience directly affected settlement opportunities in the UK. In this sense, their past lives 'mattered' in ways that they did not for asylum seekers who are prohibited from accessing mainstream institutions of integration, such as employment, education and housing.

It also became clear from interviews and informal chats at meetings that these 'general migrant' members did not conceive involvement at committee level in terms of enhancing career, even life opportunities. These diverse levels of engagement at committee level show the different experiences and needs of associations that distinguish asylum seeker members from 'general migrant' members. Many asylum seekers and refugees saw the committee as a way of helping them to 'move on' and build their future. They saw it as developing skills that could be used as a pathway to employment and 'settlement'. But rather than as providing tools to help build a new life in the UK, 'general migrant members' mostly considered associational life as predominantly a social-cultural activity, a pathway to maintaining connections to 'home' culture. Whilst this can be contrasted to Little's (1965) study where migrants saw committee level involvement as a way of getting ahead in the new urban environment, this difference in orientation and expectation is consistent with Quiminal's findings from studies of associational practices of African women and Malian men in Paris (Quiminal 1997, 2000), where women saw associations about 'settlement' in France and men saw them as a way to connect to Mali. This analysis of committee level involvement indicates ways in which differentiated migrant status within groups is directly implicated in association emergence and continuity. It is suggestive of an internal hierarchy of associational need that is directly linked to external constraints and opportunities: some members ('general migrants') did not need the committee for raising personal status and self-advancement in the same way as asylum seeker members. Those 'general migrant' members also remained peripheral and tended not to occupy office bearer or leadership roles. During the fieldwork period, no leaders emerged from the pool of 'general migrant' members, and yet were they were often the

most vocal critics of the management committee. A commonly expressed view was that this was a way of keeping the committee ‘in check’. Ordinary members play their own role in ensuring the committee serves their purpose and not necessarily the reverse, as Bourdieu argues when depicting the inversion of power between delegated representatives and members (1991).

One might also expect that as asylum seekers become refugees, that the differences in status would be less evident or relevant to associational life. However, even as refugees, many members were to find that serving on the committee was not always to provide the advantages they had anticipated, failing to place them on a more equal footing with other migrants. Their years of engagement at committee level could not counter their years of worklessness as asylum seekers. Over time, refugee members’ steady withdrawal from committee life began to resemble the distant involvement that had become characteristic of ‘general migrant’ members. Although Malika, Annie and some others stated that they had been able to use their committee experience to enhance employment opportunities, more often members spoke of their disappointment at how little this was valued beyond the group boundary. After retraining as an accountant in Glasgow and working in Karibu’s committee as Treasurer, Noelle told me about her frustrations when applying for jobs:

All those years on the committee don’t count for much in the end. Because I did everything they said...I volunteered when I couldn’t work. But every time they ask me ‘what is your professional experience in the UK?’ Even when they know I couldn’t work, it doesn’t matter. It wasn’t a waste of time, but it didn’t count like I thought it would (*Noelle, Congolese woman, refugee*).

Without doubt the particularly harsh global economic climate has influenced opportunities for employment generally and refugees are competing with a wide range of people of varying migrant and citizenship status for fewer jobs. However, as was apparent from interviews, refugees find themselves facing multiple disadvantages that result from *non-settlement*: years of worklessness, lack of equivalency in qualifications and undervalued voluntary experience within associations. Frustrations also arise in individuals because they are actively encouraged by state and non-state actors to be active in the voluntary sector and so have expectations that this will indeed ‘count’ for something. Subsequently, in comparison to ‘general migrant’ members, refugee members continue to occupy a lower social position as they trail behind those migrants in their groups who have always had a

fuller access to work and education. During fieldwork, although committee level activity suffered as a direct result of increased positive decisions, the leaders of the associations and what remained of management committees were left with the responsibility of maintaining associational activity levels. They continued to be held accountable by their wider membership and external partners as will be discussed below.

### ***Leadership roles, relationships and issues***

As has been explored to some degree in Chapter Two, leaders of associations face a number of struggles and challenges. They take on much responsibility for organisations, are in charge of galvanising the management committee and ordinary members into action, and more often than not, they represent the public face of the association. Operating between different social hierarchies they are expected by internal members and external audiences to act as a conduit between the group, the ‘centre’ of which they are part, and the ‘periphery’, the external world as it exists beyond the group boundaries (Werbner 1991a). This ‘intercalary’ role is a source of capital and conflict (Gluckman 1949, R. Werbner 1984, Werbner 1991a).

In each of the associations, the leaders at the time of fieldwork were all what could be described as very well networked. They had developed a wide range of professional and personal contacts that they used to advance the interest of their respective groups. Indeed, the extent of their social connections meant that the burden for much of the association work fell upon their shoulders, as illustrated in Chapter Five. In some instances, it also led to questions about their integrity and their personal motivations for self-betterment, where leaders would be accused of social climbing despite public esteem for their work. Related to this last point is the issue of leaders (and management committees) leading with an agenda that is considered to have limited relevance or meaning for its members, so members who are on the periphery feel excluded or disappointed. This most often revealed itself when some members felt excluded by what had become ‘ethnicised solidarities’. However at the different events and meetings I attended, there was a real commitment to adopt a broader inclusive agenda across the groups and to assert a unity despite different social divisions and conflict. Whether this was always successfully accomplished remains to be seen. For the mono-national groups, assumed co-ethnicity was

problematic, as Benoît points out in his strong criticism of leadership of the Cameroonian association CAMASS:

I think that after the division between Anglophone and Francophone, those people that took over the leadership in CAMASS, most were Bamileke, you understand? And when they made elections of the group to lead CAMASS, they just award this position, most are from the same (*geographic*) place and if you give the power to the same group of people others feel, okay is it because we are a minority? [...] people start feeling hesitant to come to the group, they start to feel excluded, and that's the reason why 99% that attend the meeting are Bamileke. They even call it the Bamileke association <laughs>. CAMASS included all Cameroonians, but when you look at those who lead, most are Bamileke, it's not representative. [...] but it is important about how the group develops and the directions of their work. We think, are all interests being represented? (*Benoît, Cameroonian man, migrant*).

Benoît expresses his feeling of being a minority within the minority, and he is frustrated by the lack of representation of his 'ethnic group' within a mono-ethnic group. Because of this, he feels the group has little relevance to him. Mani, the President of Africa Umoja Scotland, also faced questions of how an association under his leadership could be representative, when as a Swahili speaker, he was not considered a 'real' Congolese, and suspected of being a Rwandan. As Mani explained to me, given the long and bloody conflict between Eastern Congo and Rwanda, calling someone from Eastern Congo (as he was) a Rwandan was a particularly offensive insult, not only of one's character, but also one's standing in the community and credibility. That he spoke Swahili meant that he, and his suspected 'agenda', was highly mistrusted by some of his purported 'community'.

Despite such instances of suspicion and accusation of leaders trying to further their own agenda, and of using their position for their own advantage or for social climbing, leaders were seen, in the main, as individuals who genuinely had the interests of their members at heart, and who would not prioritise personal gain over that of the group. This suggests to me that leaders generally were recognised as having both 'capital', used here in the sense of political resources (either material or moral) which s/he actually has, and 'credit' used here in the sense of resources and potential resources which supporters believe the leader has (Bailey 1969). Of course, the issue of 'capital' and 'credit' can still be a very troublesome source of internal conflict with members competing for status. Nonetheless, members generally told me during interviews that they recognised the challenges of leading such an organisation and even when critical of their management committee,

members were usually appreciative of their efforts and commitment. This was most often expressed in concerns about what would happen should the leader move on. At best, new leaders would rise up from the ranks and develop similar forms of capital and credit. At worst, groups would be left 'leader-less' and activities would be placed on hold. During an interview, Sefu told me that he was worried about what might happen should Mani leave as president:

Mani is the president, the secretary... every job we give it to him. But we call ourselves that we do voluntary work but no... we need to find a way to help each other to do our voluntary work [...] Maybe one day he says he come to resign, what would happen? For me I think about that. I worry, you know (*Sefu, Congolese man, asylum seeker*).

In effect, when Mani did decide to step down as President of Africa Umoja Scotland, due to getting his papers, having to find a job and changing family commitments, the association's activities were indeed 'put on hold'. This was because no other member of the management committee was able or ready to take up leadership. In May 2011, I caught up with Mani to talk about my findings, and he told me that he had to return to the association as President. When I asked him why, he explained that their inactivity was at risk of jeopardising their charitable status. He had felt too much hard work had gone into the association for it to just 'die', a concern often voiced by outgoing leaders and committee members at AGMS.

Relations between leaders and ordinary members, and between leaders and wider networks, were equally complex within the other associations. When Karibu carried out a consultation of members' feelings on the value of its drop-in, members specifically remarked that it should continue because, amongst other reasons, it was a rare chance to meet with the management committee. Members often felt 'out of step' with the management committee, and stated that they would like more regular contact. They felt the committee rarely contacted them on many matters, despite the fact there was nothing to stop them contacting the committee themselves (fieldnotes, Karibu consultation, 23 July 2008). That ordinary members did not know what was happening was not necessarily the result of poor communication or poor leadership generally. For example, wider membership participation would commonly increase and then drop over the course of the fieldwork period. This, I was told, was typical of the groups, especially when there was a

marked increase in positive decisions through Case Resolution, an emergent pattern in associational life that I discussed in the previous section.

Having spent a considerable amount of time with each of the groups I was well aware of the efforts made by leaders and management committees to be inclusive. For example, I spent one afternoon at the computer in Karibu's office updating their member database, whilst another member phoned each member (on a list of over 100 members) to check their details and confirm their membership was still 'live'. At any events they held, Africa Umoja Scotland always prepared a membership list, asking members to check their details upon arrival (to keep records up-to-date). They also used this list to recruit new members who might be attending for the first time. This was not restricted to when members or guests arrived, but would continue throughout the evening, with a management committee member going from table to table, checking details of existing members and recruiting new members.

Leaders also suffered from fatigue and frustration at the demands on their time, and having to bear much responsibility for the association on their own. At AGMs, presidents would often be voted in for a second mandate, and in most cases would accept. However generally after two years, they would be thankful they could no longer stand and would pass the baton to others. Heloise, the President of Karibu, retired from her position on health grounds. The demands of others had become too much for her as she herself tried to adapt to her life as a refugee. She told me:

Those women who have got their papers, it's been really negative for us. What really disappoints me is that these women want to take but they never give. So should I carry on giving all by myself...to a thousand women? I can't do it. I need to stop. I'm only going to think about giving to myself. I was always thinking of others, but I need to think about myself... and also for the association, it needs to develop with other people and not keep counting on me (*Heloise, Congolese woman, refugee*).

She went on to talk about 'severing the umbilical cord' between her and Karibu (the metaphor of the association as a living, breathing entity was commonly evoked by leaders, as was the notion of dependency). The different ways in which the association replaces a broader family and kinship network, as detailed in Chapter Five, does make them distinct

from other voluntary associations. However, what Heloise describes here could be seen as a defining characteristic of voluntary associations and activist organisations more generally, where the line between personal life and civic life becomes increasingly blurred and the associations in this study were no different (Phillimore and McCabe 2010). Leaders tended to be ‘on call’ 24 hours a day and this bears heavily on personal and family life, as the following illustrates.

At an ASSECS AGM, for example, the outgoing President, Rodrigue, was re-nominated for a second mandate. As he stepped up to accept this, his wife, Sandra, shouted “No, I will not allow it” from the back of the hall where the AGM was taking place. This was a rather shocking incident, and I had certainly never witnessed this kind of protest before. It seemed to contravene the protocol on such matters: usually members decline nominations, not their family members. Sandra then moved to the front of the room, saying again “No, I will not allow it... it is out of the question”. The chair then firmly asked her to calm down, take a seat and said that she was breaching membership rules by blocking nominations, but she would not be silenced. She shouted again “This association had taken my husband from me for two years already and enough is enough”. For Sandra the association had taken over their personal family life and she felt they never got any thanks or acknowledgement for this. Some of the members (men) waved her off, as if not taking her seriously; her husband looked a bit embarrassed and tried to calm her down. Someone shouted “Rodrigue, who makes the decisions in your household?” which provoked sniggers and laughter. From the front of the hall Rodrigue pleaded with her “please, let’s talk about this later”, but she was adamant and refused to allow him to accept the position, saying if he did, she would resign as a member. She then said that they had had enough of people talking about them behind their backs, accusing them of taking money. As she said this she looked over at a section of the convened members, who were looking straight ahead, avoiding eye contact with her. She continued that they were no longer going to take on these responsibilities. Eventually, after much uncertainty about how to proceed and awkwardness at the whole situation, Rodrigue agreed not to accept the nomination and sat back down. This incident was then the talk of the AGM ‘social’ and after at subsequent meetings, with Rodrigue rather stoically shrugging off any comments made directly to him (fieldnotes, ASSECS AGM, 9 May 2009).

Two points highlight the different challenges leaders face. Firstly, Sandra was complaining about the way the association had impinged upon her private life. When I met her at social occasions, she would always make some comment about how her husband was ‘married to ASSECS’. Although she said this in joking manner, it suggested that family and personal life suffered from his commitments. On top of dealing with association business, it seemed that when any individual had a personal problem, they would contact Rodrigue for help, also a common occurrence with the other groups, and a responsibility which leaders, most times willingly, but sometimes wearily, accepted. The second point is that, despite the overwhelming commitment Rodrigue did make to ASSECS as its President, and to the possible neglect of his personal family commitments, certain members were highly critical of him and would regularly question his commitment: he never seemed to be doing enough for the group. They questioned his integrity, mistrustful of the position he occupied as a ‘buffer’ between internal and external interests. In their view he used this to feed his ambition for self-advancement above the needs of the association. He was often accused of using his contacts, of failing to consult other members, and of putting his own personal agenda before that of the association. This shows the fine line leaders have to tread between being the first port-of call for individuals in times of crisis or difficulty and being accused of abusing their position as leader to further their personal ambitions.

Solving members’ problems placed huge demands on all leaders across the associations and became an inevitable part of associational life. What was clear was that those leaders who became experts in problem-solving and who gained deeper understandings of state systems began to interpret problems as policy-related rather than seeing these in exclusively personal or racially discriminatory terms. So for example, leaders would keep certain specifically policy-related issues on the agenda related to right-to-work, detention and deportation. They would request members to vote with their feet and participate in demonstrations, signing petitions, sending emails to lobby MSPs and MPs, and to heads of airlines against deportation and so forth. Sometimes ordinary members would respond to personal problems with a degree of resignation, considering that the issue in question was due to their status as asylum seekers and there was nothing to be done. By contrast, leaders who had honed their craft and developed expertise as problem-solvers would see alternatives to effecting change, or to addressing the issue of discrimination. In their view, this was an important if not central role of the association: to challenge the exclusion of its members from mainstream civil society and to provide important practical and emotional



support to members in need. The particular precariousness of many members' migrant status when the groups were in their nascent stages of development reinforced this support role of associations and leaders, although this was to change as groups developed over the years.

These different aspects point to an interesting difference between leadership in these associations and in the minority associations discussed in other studies. Werbner (1991b), for example, found, in her study of Pakistani community leaders, that there was often a rift between 'peripheral' community leaders and the needs of the 'centre', the wider, non-elite, non business 'community'. However in stark contrast to virtually all the essays on black and ethnic leadership in the UK, presented in the edited collection by Werbner and Anwar (1991), the majority of leaders during the fieldwork period did not belong to an ethnic intellectual or affluent business elite. Nor was such a cadre involved in the day-to-day running of association business where it could assert its authority and influence communal affairs (cf. Werbner 1991b:126). All the leaders were or had been asylum seekers, and as such, they occupied a much lower social position than 'general migrant' or even refugee members, as well as other 'ethnic' leaders of BME groups more generally. Nonetheless, as demonstrated in the fieldnotes, leaders' 'intercalary' roles as demonstrated through access to patronage and revealed in the form of networks and contacts, often made them suspect even when they are often held in high regard for their public work. This is a clear indication of the difficult challenges leaders face in negotiating central and peripheral roles and relations.

Another interesting difference is that in the present study, groups were led by individuals who had claimed asylum in the UK. Subsequently, their experience as asylum seekers gave them opportunities to build networks from their own activism and participation in local community groups. By contrast, members who could be categorised as representing an intellectual and professional elite, were unable to make claim to the same contacts and experience. This had the effect of making the leaders who did emerge in many ways more representative of a large majority of their (asylum seeker and refugee) members than if they had been members of an entrepreneurial elite. Nonetheless, through the intercalary role they occupied between the 'centre' and the 'periphery', they could also represent 'general migrant' members. They were able to speak to the needs of 'general migrants' - in terms of their more general BME status - through their wide establishment of contacts

and networks they themselves made to wider BME networks, an aspect of associational life that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight. This allowed them to move with greater ease between the ‘centre’ and the ‘periphery’. The issue of representativeness does of course have many different dimensions. As well as its multidimensionality, it is dynamic, changing over time as the status, needs and priorities of members also change.

### ***Representativeness and participation***

As already discussed in Chapter Two, the quest to define and categorise nascent communities as belonging to some minority imposes artificial ties and boundaries on complex social realities (Wahlbeck 1998). When combined with the politics of delegation and representativeness, this makes the question of representation a very important one. An example of the complexities of representation arose with particular saliency within AFIG, the Ivorian women’s association. At one of their usual monthly meetings, a discussion was taking place about whether or how to develop the organisation. Some of the male sympathiser members had proposed that they be allowed to become full members, with concomitant voting rights and the opportunity to take a position within the management committee. I was quite surprised by this development, given it was a women’s association, and was constituted as such. One of the men, whom members addressed as Mr N’Guessan, (all other members addressed each other by first name or sometimes by their office bearer title), said that he and the other men felt that “being sympathisers belittles us”. He told the meeting he was also a member of ‘the Muslim association’ in Glasgow where his interests were better represented, but here (within AFIG) “he meant nothing”. This was met with nods and sounds of approval from the other men present. (There were three of them and again, I was a little surprised by this, as usually only Christian attended. However, as I did not attend all their meetings, the attendance of male sympathisers might have in fact been quite a common occurrence.)

To begin with, the women seemed to listen to what he had to say. But they then appeared to dismiss his requests, waving their hands as if to tell him to sit down and be quiet (all done in a rather jovial manner). Joelle explained that the organisation had been set up to support women who were feeling isolated, to give them information about where the African and Asian shops were, how to get around the city centre, where to get which bus

and how to register with the doctor, find out about college classes and schools and so forth. She added that for as long as she could remember, men hinted they wanted to be more involved but then never came along to meetings. Many of the women nodded in agreement. Mr N'Guessan said he was acting as a spokesperson for other members when he said he wanted to see membership opened up. Gaby then told him "we want to see these other people you speak for come along to our meetings and actively show their interest in being more involved in AFIG before AFIG will change its membership rules and allow you to become full members." The women all cheered in agreement and the men shook their heads.

Although there was some laughter from the women and what looked like half-smiles of resignation from the men, I got the impression that the men wanted to be taken seriously in their request. If the men did join then this would require a radical change to the constitution, the association's name and the ideology underpinning the group. This action could not be decided at a MC meeting and would require full membership voting at an AGM. Joelle's comments suggested that becoming a mixed organisation would mean losing some of what makes it unique. However, during the course of the discussion the women *did* accept that extending membership to men would recognise the years of support and commitment some men had indeed made to the organisation and in particular the three men who were present. This then became quite a lively debate; members standing to make their point, laughing at and with each other, with some women saying they could see the benefits, whilst others were clearly opposed to the idea. Everyone was talking at once although whether voices were being heard is another matter. The final word was given by the chair who said she wanted to seek guidance from the Scottish Refugee Council Community Development worker who supported the group and to get a sense of what would be involved. She wondered if there might also be implications in terms of the funds they apply for if they are no longer a women's group. This had to be taken into consideration. Again, everyone nodded in agreement. This was particularly relevant as funds for activities were becoming increasingly competitive, and that as a women's group they could apply for specific funds for specific events.

Gaby then turned to me and asked me what I thought. I shrugged, not to indicate disinterest but that I wasn't sure. Conscious that I did not want to influence the discussion but seeing members waiting for my response, I ventured that I could see that there was

perhaps a case for both allowing men to join and for staying a women-only group and that her suggestion to speak to the SRC seemed a good idea. Joelle then seemed to change her position slightly, conceding that “although they had begun as a woman-only group, things change, the vision can change, lives in Glasgow change. This might have served their needs then, but maybe it wasn’t the same need any more. As time passed the organisation was evolving and so maybe membership had to evolve to reflect this”. Mr N’Guessan then stood and moved to the middle of the room, saying a very loud and grand ‘thank you’, as if vindicated. Gaby then called order to move on to the next point of business (fieldnotes, AFIG, 28 February 2009).

This fieldnote raises a number of questions about representativeness and the tensions between formal and informal representation. As a formally constituted group, AFIG represents Ivorian women. Informally however, membership, and subsequent benefits, is not limited to women. Indeed during an interview, Christian was very clear about how he had benefited as a sympathiser member and that without AFIG, his life would have taken a very different path indeed:

Before I actually met AFIG I was kind of hanging out with... my friends were a lot of Asians alright... and then they were a lot into the drug business (...) I was really into so much trouble and some of my cases were pending. I mean, I was in court so many times I don’t actually know. But after actually when I got involved in AFIG I got to work with them... and they gave me encouragement to change. Even though there was a warrant for my arrest I didn’t know about... I actually got arrested and that was so bad, you know. But what AFIG actually did for me ...I mean ...they really help me a lot, you know, supporting me through all that. They got me on the right road, alright. You know, they did a lot, so to me, that effort of the organisation; it’s an organisation which is like a family (*Christian, Ivorian man, migrant*).

In some ways this reflects the ‘open-door’ policy of many groups. Whilst there were rules about membership set out in written statutes in the constitution, it is not a case of ‘concealing’ activities but a reality that for many groups, if they are called upon, they generally offer what help they can. The issue of representativeness centres around a key question: who speaks for whom? Officially, AFIG, and other associations who have membership rules, speaks for its members and not all Ivorians (or other nationalities as the case may be). Even where a national community is taken as the base for membership, this is intersected by divisions that exclude and include: religion, gender, age, class, language,

education, ethnicity and so forth. In the above example, officially a women's group cannot speak for a male member, whilst informally and unofficially there was more scope to speak for him and support his needs as an Ivorian.

Another example of how internal differences raise the problem of representation can be found in the existence of the two Cameroonian associations, one French speaking, one English speaking. Their differences, it was explained to me during interviews, do not relate solely to language, but also to cultural and political practices, some of which can be traced to Cameroon's colonial history. This past saw the country divided by the British and the French from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1960, when it was unified following independence. Of relevance to the question of representation is that, during the colonial period, the colonial powers encouraged the use of their respective languages. The British practised the policy of Indirect Rule where the use of indigenous languages was almost an imperative since British administrators governed through traditional authorities. In French-speaking Cameroon (covering the majority of the territory), administered as an independent territory, the policy of Assimilation aimed at transforming Cameroonians into Frenchmen and women gave little or no room for the use of indigenous languages (Echu 2004). The divisions established during colonial rule regarding political representation - English speaking Cameroonians feeling a minority - seem to continue to have saliency in the post-colonial context. As Gregoire explained to me during an interview, the French speaking Cameroonians certainly did not speak for him:

There were a lot of conflicting ideas between us the English speaking Cameroonians and the French speaking Cameroonians because the way we perceive things is not the way they perceive things. It's to do with our past... and, no offence to you Thérèse, but how we were colonised. So, many of us we were English speaking and we discovered we were always pushed behind. More or less it is the system in Cameroon, you know? We always find ourselves as inferior (*Gregoire, Cameroonian man, migrant*).

This very brief and simplified 'snapshot' of one aspect of colonial rule emphasises in my view two main points. Firstly, pre-migratory contexts can continue to heavily influence the emergence and development of associations. Such divisions from 'home' threaten apparent 'fictive' unity in the UK. Because of these divisions, "refugee associations are not able to provide equal services to all persons assumed to belong to the same ethnic group" (Wahlbeck 1998:228). Secondly, the complexities of representation affect

processes of group formation, the establishment of affective and political belonging and the different forms of collective identity that may emerge which can ensure or inhibit the association's continuity. A final comment though is that, while the Cameroonian associations set themselves up as culturally, politically and ideologically diverse, and members might not necessarily identify with each others' associations, I would regularly see members of one association attending events organised by the other. This suggests to me that although they might not feel represented at an organisational level, at some other 'community' level, they felt a strong sense of commonality and even of belonging that transcended difference.

This leads to a further issue relating to representativeness and continuity and the politics of delegation and representativeness: if a person's involvement is limited because of divisions, how relevant then is the association to that individual's conceptualisation of belonging and collective identity? Can an 'RCO' speak for non-asylum seeker and non-refugee members? Central to this problem is, in my view, the 'RCO' label itself. This can deter involvement from members of an assumed 'national community' who feel that a 'refugee community organisation' does not/cannot speak for them. The fluid dimension to representativeness means it has to change over time and this is especially evident when considering the different immigration status of members. All of the associations at their inception, with the exception of ASSECS, were made up either exclusively or predominantly of asylum seekers, and over time asylum seeker members became refugees. However, some were refugees with indefinite leave to remain, whilst others had been granted 5 years subsidiary protection.<sup>41</sup> They also count students, professional and skilled migrants and dependents in their numbers. The point is that this increasingly complex internal heterogeneity highlights an important shortcoming of studies that focus on representativeness of 'refugees' within 'RCOs' especially where those very same people no longer or indeed have never defined their associations as such, seeing themselves instead as 'nationals' of a specific country or as 'Africans'. Rejecting the label as non-representative can also be seen as a strategy of identification, a claim to alternative identities. As an act of agency, it can be conceptualised as a way of taking back control of the definition of the group from external actors (agencies, state). These external actors

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<sup>41</sup> The extent to which different forms of protection in and of themselves affect group continuity remains to be seen, however it does appear to already have had certain negative effects on an individual level in relation to broader settlement, for example finding a job or opening bank accounts. For example, during interviews, Layla of AFIG and Simon of Africa Umoja Scotland both told me about the challenges they faced when producing temporary papers to external publics and the obstacles this then produced for them in accessing services and opportunities.

have powers of categorisation and use this to advance their own position as experts vis-à-vis the groups predicaments, provide a rationale for their own existence, and in imposing this definition, use the 'RCO' paradigm to its own ends, that is to replace state support but on the state's terms.

Group development and continuity is affected by varying participation rates which also question how groups might be able to claim representativeness of a wider 'community'. Analysis of participation levels needs to be carefully balanced with a number of competing external and internal factors. As I have already highlighted, these factors relate to the detention and deportation of members, as well as the destitute circumstances some members find themselves in. On the one hand, such factors inhibit their ability to participate in meetings, as they need to make important decisions about spending limited money on a bus fare or eating that week. Sometimes individuals chose to spend the money on the bus fare, because their isolation was so great. Analysing participation and linking this to differentiated migrant status reveals that the most vulnerable are at risk of being the least well represented because of their absence. On the other hand, when a new policy was introduced by the UK government, this would generally lead to a flurry of increased participation in meetings and in the form of requests for information and advice. Other external factors included political events in the country of origin such as an election, or national days. Leblanc (2002) found in her study of West African associations in Canada that formal associations in Montréal had only limited membership and occasional participation, displaying an ephemeral nature but that they tended to be most active at specific cultural or political or religious events. Although for many members, participation was limited to such events, these did provide an important sense of continuity for individuals. It also sent a clear message to the group and to the wider community that they were still members.

In terms of internal factors, when fieldwork began, all of the associations were still relatively young, most of them having been established in 2004. They operated with very limited funds and relied heavily on volunteers. With the exception of Karibu, none of them had a formal space to provide services, and much of their work was highly responsive, often involving out-of-hours support. Many members were traumatised by the experience of flight and claiming asylum and then their exclusion in trying to 'settle' in Glasgow and felt unable to be active. Internal factors also relate to member characteristics.

The significance of one's immigration status in terms of expectations of the group was relative to the precariousness of one's asylum claim, and subsequent ability to participate. This is much in the same way as emotional constructs of belonging become more critical the more threatened one feels (Yuval-Davis 2006). Conversely, non-asylum seeker members may have greater confidence to be able to commit themselves and plan for the future. They may push for different agendas relating to longer-term integration that is not representative of all members' needs, unintentionally excluding other members from the development of the association. As discussed in this chapter and as will be explored in more detail in Chapter Seven, internal differences and divisions emerge which find different forms of expression.

I would like to conclude this discussion on representativeness and participation with two notes of caution. Firstly, an important point about representation is that treating it as a box-ticking exercise can only be an unhelpful oversimplification of overlapping identities that are situational and contingent. Secondly, critiques of the representativeness of such associations should not ignore the existence of underlying social allegiances, nor the powerful unifying force that an exclusionary asylum policy has produced in inciting individuals to come together informally and provide essential support to each other. Strong informal networks are the founding narratives of these associations and are critical to their continuing existence. I am not suggesting that the associations themselves were unconcerned with representativeness. They were not so naïve to think they represented a bounded community and they recognised that certain groups were not as well represented as others. During committee meetings with Africa Umoja Scotland, Mani would regularly discuss the need to have more female members in office bearing roles, whilst recognising barriers to participation such as childcare. At a CAMASS AGM, female nominees were selected over male nominees to the management committee. At a Karibu AGM, Heloise actively called upon women from all nationalities to nominate themselves for committee posts, to avoid over-representation of Congolese nationals on their management board. And as the above discussion shows, extending membership to men is being raised and considered within AFIG, although this particular debate highlights the connection between representativeness and funding imperatives as defined by external bodies. This indicates in my view one of the ways in which associational forms and practices can be influenced by external pressures in the form of funding, either from supporting NGOs or from the state.



## ***Funding***

The issue of funding highlights how associations have to address firstly issues of representation, and secondly strike a delicate balance between opposition and accommodation in relations with the state. Taking these two points in turn, I have already explored some of the problems associations face in relation to the first issue of representativeness, where groups find themselves either collectively, or members individually, rejecting the refugee or 'RCO' label. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters Seven and Eight. However, associations also find themselves having to adopt this label in order to access ever-decreasing state and public funds, which target 'integration' work or which support 'asylum seeker and refugee communities'. Members in CAMASS and Karibu told me on different occasions that they tailored activities and proposals to funder requirements, an approach that is no different from voluntary associations more generally. Once more, taking the example of AFIG extending full membership to male members, sometimes these male sympathisers were more actively involved and committed to the aims and objectives of the group than other female members. However, despite men performing different roles within the organisation, extending membership to include men would limit the scope of funding possibilities they could specifically target as a 'refugee women's association'. This was not the sole reason they decided to remain a women's group, but it was one of many deciding factors. Another illustration of this is ASSECS' applications for funds for Refugee Week activities despite questions raised internally about the event's relevance to their collective identity, a field event that will be presented in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

Leaders and associations have to decide whether to negotiate with the state for public funds and grants (which can be seen as part of the process of accommodation), whilst also protesting against state policy on detention, deportation, and destitution. Again, this highlights the intercalary level at which leaders operate. As discussed in Chapter Two, Werbner suggests that for citizens and taxpayers, state funding of associational activities constitutes a 'right', but is also a form of indirect state control (1991a: 31). It is a right firstly in that the 'race relations' agenda has meant that local authorities became important funders of black and minority ethnic organisations. But it then becomes a form of indirect state control where the state reifies communities as perpetual communities, and imposes a fictive unity in order to control conflict or allocate resources in an 'equitable manner'. On

the other hand, as I have argued the establishment of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations can be understood as a form of individuals collectively surviving *non-settlement* on their own terms, through building a parallel context of reception, that is, developing networks despite the non-integrative aims and social engineering project of dispersal. Within these associations, members will also, directly and indirectly, protest against state policies. Arguably this is a way to subvert indirect state control.

The question of funding as a 'right' becomes more contentious in relation to asylum seeker and refugee-led associations because their members are neither citizens nor taxpayers (at least whilst they are asylum seekers). Asylum seeker or refugee-led associations often find they have to adopt a formal organisational structure in order to have access to specific funding and resources, in a way that is typical of the British (and European) experience which encourages the institutionalisation of associative groups (Griffiths *et al* 2005). Constituted 'RCOs' are able to access European sources of funding, such as the European Integration Fund, as well as local authority support, for example through Communities Scotland (abolished in April 2008) and Glasgow City Council services (Development and Regeneration Services, Culture and Sport). They also rely heavily upon charities such as Awards for All, Big Lottery, Comic Relief, upon NGOs such as Scottish Refugee Council and Oxfam and upon internal contributions from members. The effects of a reliance on external funding can be seen within the associations in this study in terms of a general high-scale dependency on short-term and small-scale project-based funding. This has obvious implications for the sustainability of groups and their capacities to develop longer-term integration focused projects, central to which, of course is the issue of adequate funding.

Associations need funds to carry out a number of activities, but funding produces different internal pressures, from meeting funder deadlines to providing funder reports, and sometimes even to 'spending' the allocated amounts at the risk of having to return unspent funds, as was highlighted in the case of Africa Umoja Scotland in Chapter Five. This requires not only specific skills such as completing funding applications and report-writing, but also much imagination to develop fresh ideas for activities year in, year out. Such pressures would often reveal themselves at meetings, when presidents would look to management committees for ideas for 'development plans' and very few would be forthcoming. This problem of an 'active few' was exacerbated by the limited experiences

of members but also the precariousness of their position and the need to focus on immediate, defensive work. A further problem was the limited funds available and restrictions on the types of activities funders support. For example, many of the groups regularly expressed their desire for a community space; however, many funders do not subsidise rental of an office space. Taking the example of Awards for All Scotland, a main funder of all of the organisations (funding activities across the associations with grants ranging from £4000 to £10,000), this funder does not fund day-to-day running costs (for example, utility bills, council tax, rent and insurance), or materials/equipment. Even when groups have their own assets, a major problem is where to store material and equipments and how to put these to best use. For the CAMASS management committee, monthly meetings always involved the logistical nightmare of transporting chairs that were stored in various locations between meetings. Nor do funders provide for repeat or regular events they have funded before, which becomes problematic as groups develop. Those responsible for the orientation of the group (the management committee) need to be creative, finding new ways to maintain participation, interest and involvement whilst also developing the group. This problem is made worse by associations applying for the same limited funds from the same group of funders and charities, creating levels of competition between associations and also between associations and wider community groups. Such competition was one aspect which led to a significant rupture between Karibu and an umbrella 'African' organisation which will be discussed at length in Chapter Eight.

What is happening to asylum seeker and refugee-led associations, particularly in relation to funding constraints and their relationship to mainstream agencies, is rooted in the broader structural inequalities which continue to hamper ethnic minorities in the UK (Griffiths *et al* 2005). This is particularly so in relation to an increasingly divisive culturalism and competition between communities (Sivanandan 1990, McLeod *et al* 2001). Organisations like ASSECS, whose membership was predominantly non-asylum seeker or refugee, a fact which raised its own set of issues in terms of an imposed fictive unity, faced much competition with other established black and minority ethnic organisations. There was probably some pragmatism and strategising in their resorting to specific funders who support 'refugee integration activities', given the sheer difficulties and competition in obtaining other funds earmarked for wider BME initiatives. Such difficulties include the challenges, particularly for newer organisations, in presenting a track record. One association in this study explained to me it had been 'blacklisted' by a major funder for three years, due to mismanagement of accounts when the organisation was headed by a

previous management committee and president. Of course all forms of voluntary association face similar challenges in terms of funding. However the context of *non-settlement* exposes a particular fragility to these associations related to their newness (for example, lack of a track record), the precariousness of members and their overall exclusion from other mainstream institutions. Many funding applications were being made with the uncertainty of the future hanging over members' heads. Whilst immigration status did not officially preclude them from applying to certain funders, it certainly inhibited their ability to plan for the future or even for the medium-term.

In this study, the effects of funding pressures on associations revealed itself in different ways. Firstly groups felt under pressure to think strategically about how to access funds, either as a BME group or as an 'RCO' to access 'integration money'. Such decisions were driven by competition and external funding imperatives: where would they be most successful, where lay the political agenda most favourable to their needs? This forces groups to adopt certain categories. But in doing so, they are at risk of limiting themselves to the specified category, an issue I go on to consider at length in the next two chapters. Secondly, there was the establishment of two Cameroonian associations and the different Congolese associations that existed at various times before and during fieldwork. Multiple 'community' groups posed a problem for funders. In an extension on the above point that a group is labelled as either BME or 'refugee', the logic applied by state and some non-state actors follows a reasoning that only one group can represent a 'community's interests'. Werbner (1991a:33) conceptualises state funding used in this way as a form of 'internal colonialism'. State funding depends on a 'fiction' of unity and state largesse can be seen as creating both a dependency and a position of 'divide and rule', founded upon a divisive culturalism (see also Sivanandan 1990 and MacLeod *et al* 2001). I would also add here a divisiveness based upon externally constructed categories of 'RCO' or BME.

The state's approach to associations could then be framed as an extension of its approach to 'managing migrants' generally, as was discussed in detail in Chapter Four. This could be seen as a contemporary form of 'indirect rule'. In her study of South Asian communities, as I have discussed, Werbner recognised the intercalary position of 'community leaders' and the creation of small 'native' elites to keep the broader population in line as a way of administering this 'divide and rule' ideology. However, the associations in this study behaved differently, challenging the postcolonial administration

of migrants in interesting ways. Firstly, as I have already argued, leaders tended to be from the lower social ranking of asylum seeker or refugee, not from an affluent business or class elite. Secondly, leaders agitated amongst their members and encouraged dissent in the form of formal and less public activism, from marching on demonstrations and lobbying MSPs, to meeting in NASS homes and subverting the non-integrative norms of dispersal, discussed at length in Chapter Five. Thirdly, ordinary members themselves played an important role in keeping the management committee in line by demanding transparency and accountability, a feature of associational life that will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

Internal diversity, the existence of multiple groups, and the strategic use of labels suggest that associations refused to be purely defined by 'refugeeness' and saw themselves as discrete national or ethnic groups, for example, Cameroonians or Congolese. There were also many instances of solidarity and cooperation within and across groups, revealed in claims of unity as 'Africans' or as 'BME communities'. What seems important is that when this 'unity' was claimed, it was on the associations' terms rather than in terms of a fictive unity imposed by external actors. Some examples of cooperation in relation to funding applications included CAMASS (one of the Cameroonian associations) and AFIG (the Ivorian women's association) who made a joint application for funding and pooled resources to organise an event for Refugee Week in 2010. Another example is that, in 2010, the post of Development Worker in Karibu was filled by the (former) President of AFIG. When I asked if there was a conflict of interests, both groups told me that the two associations would benefit from the exchange of experience and ideas, but that this had to be built upon trust, thus challenging divisive culturalism based on the corporate unity of discrete groups. Members regularly articulated the need for greater unity that transcends difference in order to raise the standing of 'Africans' in Glasgow and Scotland. This oft-repeated call for developing universalistic values as Africans went some way to undermining divisiveness (although this did not dominate all interactions between groups, it admittedly never completely disappeared). As argued in Chapter Two, there must be caution in sanitising internal politics and relations, as well as recognition that these are groups with different and sometimes opposing aims, who are subject to internal power struggles over competing cultural objectives. These are particular associations who see themselves as quite distinct in a multitude of ways. As Werbner argues, there is a need to recognise division and conflict within unity, and analysing the processes of associational emergence has often to involve a combination of sometimes contradictory styles and

strategies of leadership, of protest and accommodation, and of particularism and universalism (Werbner 1991a:34).

## **Conclusions**

Knowledge about internal processes is foundational to providing a total analysis of associational life. In building on the general experiences of associational life presented in the last chapter, this chapter has explored in detail a number of aspects of associational life at committee and leadership levels, questions surrounding the politics of representation and participation, and the effects of funding imperatives. In contrast to the fictive unity most often imposed upon asylum seeker and refugee-led associations, and the fixed nature of 'refugeeness' to describe the social relations and internal processes located within such groups, this chapter has provided an analysis of internal processes and issues affecting group formation and continuity. It has emphasised internal heterogeneity and cleared a theoretical path to 'moving beyond refugeeness'. I also explored how macro processes, in the form of differentiated and changing immigration status, affect internal relations, a perspective often neglected in studies of migrant associations. From this perspective, the effects of structural processes in the shape of asylum and immigration policy and migrant incorporation regimes on internal processes become clearer.

In extending the framework for analysis to general internal processes, the association reveals itself as a site of internal solidarity and struggle, and of consensual and conflictual relations. Importantly, the sources of unity and difference are multiple and varied, and whilst the majority of these groups may have emerged from the context of *non-settlement*, the dynamic nature of this context has to be considered. Over time, solidarities, conflicts and tensions evolve and change, finding different forms of expression within associations. Equally, differentiated and changing immigration status of members affects individual relationships within, between and across groups. How do these factors influence conflict and unity? How do they change over time and what are their affects on associational life? These questions will be the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter 7 Internal Conflict, Accommodating Difference, Identifying as 'Other'

### *Introduction*

It should be becoming clear from the previous chapters that focusing on 'refugeeness' fails to capture the diversity and dynamism of the different groups in this study as their members respond in different ways to a wide range of internal and external pressures. The fictive unity associated to 'refugeeness' requires further consideration. One effect is that it masks other social differences that exist beyond a common migrant status. Whilst an important feature of associational life in the present study, in the last chapter I argued that migrant status is only one of many different forms of social division which result in interlocking hierarchies emerging along lines of class, gender, education, age and so forth. These externally shaped hierarchies are the source of much internal fragmentation and conflict, and groups have to find ways of managing these pressures in order to ensure associational continuity. In this chapter I explore the relationship between social divisions, changing immigration status and the passage of time on associational life. A central theme of this chapter surrounds the conflicts generated by both state and non-state actors' administrative dispositions to define these groups firstly in terms of their 'refugeeness' and secondly as a corporate unity (Werbner 1991a, 1991b).

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first - 'Conflict, tensions and fragmentation' - considers how sources of difference find expression within associations, and the effects and outcomes of such differences on social relations. This requires a move beyond 'ethniced factionalism' as the dominant source of perceived conflict. The second section - 'Accommodating difference in relation to migrant status' - explores how changing immigration status influences the foci of the associations and produces a number of effects. This creates significant tensions and presents specific challenges for leaders in managing increasingly diverse groups. The third - 'The dissonance between external categorisations and internal identifications' - questions how state and non-state actors' disposition to define and categorise groups in terms of their 'refugeeness' and as a corporate unity, affects associational continuity, despite this being a categorisation that groups themselves reject.

## ***Conflict, tensions and fragmentation***

In this study, internal conflict and tensions revealed themselves in different ways in all of the associations. The two Cameroonian associations represent a very tangible example of how conflict within one group led to a fragmentation that resulted in a second association forming (and effectively competing over the same resources). This was explained to me during an interview as an ideological split: Anglophone Cameroonians felt under-represented within the predominantly Francophone group (CAMASS). Of course this could be an *ex post facto* rationalisation of a split that occurred for other, more ‘banal’ reasons, such as differences of personality and so on. However, as discussed in Chapter Six, the existence of different French and British colonial administrations in Cameroon suggests that historical, political and ideological differences do play some role in how Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians perceive themselves and each other in the postcolonial context. In the case of the Cameroonian associations in Glasgow, some members felt there were conflicting perceptions and ideas about the orientation of the group and how it should be run. This ‘dissent’ led to a splintering off of some members to form what was at first a *Njange*, (an informal financial savings group), which over time developed into a formal association.

Although some members left one association for another, I would often see the same individuals attend both associations’ meetings. For example, in the previous chapter, I discussed the case of Benoît, who was particularly critical of the Francophone group (CAMASS) during his interview. However, despite his claims of being underrepresented and made to feel a minority, he continued to attend CAMASS meetings regularly. Furthermore, when he contributed to the debates taking place within CAMASS, it appeared to me that his contributions were always as welcomed as those of other members who expressed strong allegiances to the group. During one meeting he had raised the importance of maintaining a campaigning profile for members who were still asylum seekers. Everyone agreed this remained an important aspect to the group and this led on to a discussion about how to better use the online email messenger service to raise this campaigning profile. Later that evening as we ate together, I asked him if he had been feeling more positive about the group. He told me that he was deciding which would be better for him. He felt the Anglophone group (ASSECS) better represented his ‘ideology’ as he put it, but that coming to both helped him to widen his friendship networks



(fieldnotes, CAMASS, 28 February 2009). This indicated to me that whilst there might well be an 'ideological distance' between him and the French speaking Cameroonian group that the opportunity to be with others outweighed his sense of difference. His participation and involvement in both demonstrated how conflict and difference was as much a feature of groups as solidarity.

The 'Congolese community' in Glasgow had also splintered a number of times along different national, political, linguistic and territorial lines. When I first met Mani of Africa Umoja Scotland, he explained to me over a coffee that a particular strength of this association was that they were not mono-national and that members represented different Francophone, Anglophone and Swahiliphone African countries. In his view, mono-national associations struggled because of internal conflicts and divisions imported directly from home (the two Cameroonian associations being an illustration of this). But, he admitted to me, "it was a challenge, as people don't want how they think to change" (fieldnotes, Africa Umoja Scotland, 2 June 2008). A generalist association also brought its own difficulties regarding representation, especially at a management committee level. During interviews with Karibu and Africa Umoja Scotland, some ordinary members had expressed concerns that their generalist 'African' associations were being transformed into 'Congolese groups' because the committees were made up of predominantly Congolese nationals. At Karibu's 2008 AGM, the outgoing President made a specific call to members of all nationalities to nominate themselves to the management committee to ensure an inclusive representation at all levels and to counter such accusations. She explicitly stated "Despite what people think, we are not a Congo Brazza association" (fieldnotes, Karibu AGM, September 2008). Some women I knew in AFIG had been members of Karibu and had withdrawn because, as they put it, they (Karibu members) only spoke Lingala (suggesting a dominant Congolese identity that excluded them as non-Lingala speakers). As Annie told me:

Annie: I'm a member of AFIG but I was also a member of Karibu, yeah... but in Karibu I didn't stay as a member [...]. After the first AGM, I was part of it. Then after that it became... for me, it became an ethnic thing... it was *their* thing.

Teresa: What do you mean?

Annie: Well I stopped getting letters for meetings and all that. So then I was just a member of AFIG. It wasn't about spare time or anything like that. [...] When I first joined AFIG I was really stressed, I went to all the meetings and stuff so I did have time to go to Karibu. But in Karibu I stopped getting the invitations. I don't know, I said to myself maybe it's because I don't speak Lingala or something like that. They are more focused on Congolese women... yes there are lots of nationalities there, but many of them speak the same language, Swahili or Lingala, so yeah...if you don't speak those languages you can feel left out of things.

Another member of Karibu, Julie, mentioned to me during an interview that she too sometimes felt excluded due to language: as a Zimbabwean, she did not speak Lingala, French or Swahili, the most common languages amongst Karibu members. Julie had resigned herself to these feelings, telling me sometimes it bothered her and other times she just lived with it. This indicates that even though the generalist groups tried to transcend 'national' differences in the name of a greater unity, they faced different kinds of problems relating to representativeness that produced internal divisions and tensions. Mani had also experienced internal conflict in Africa Umoja Scotland and explained to me that some members had withdrawn because they 'questioned his allegiances', an accusation directly related to historical and contemporary conflicts in Eastern Congo. Although Karibu and Africa Umoja Scotland both hoped to be a unifying force for different African nationals arriving and settling in Glasgow, conflicts around 'ethnicised' differences or national identities remained. Some members felt others were favoured because of their nationality, whilst others excluded or felt excluded on similar grounds. As Mani found, a real test of leadership was to challenge preconceptions of others based on social differences imported from 'home' and manage these differences within the groups. Sometimes this was done successfully, other times differences were too great and groups splintered into smaller associations.

Internal conflict was not just limited to 'ethnicised' differences. During meetings, different forms of interactions between members exposed other tensions. In Chapter Six, I explored this aspect of associational life in relation to levels of involvement and participation at committee level, and expectations and needs of members in terms of migrant status. Other tensions relate to the perceived social status of individual members (both internally and externally constructed), and to the hierarchical nature of social relations located within associations. The following fieldnote explores this point further.

During a regular ASSECS monthly meeting, the President had wanted to discuss a meeting to be set up with an independent auditor to review their annual accounts (as was stipulated in their constitution). The members nodded in agreement and there were murmurs of approval, indicating the President should set up this meeting. However, one of the ordinary members then interrupted with the words, “my dear President, please tell us how you have identified this auditor? Is it someone known to you? And if they are known to you, are they independent?” I had seen this member attend a number of meetings. To the other members he was a highly educated man: his email signature on the yahoo group email listed his various educational qualifications and professional memberships and I was later to learn he was doing a PhD. He also considered himself to be closely connected to educational and professional networks, often making reference to these during meetings. He was always very smartly dressed in a suit or in stylish traditional dress during the summer, lending him a rather urbane air. When he spoke, he usually deployed very flowery language peppered with fables and proverbs to make his point. He used the same rhetorical devices in group emails, which seemed to reinforce his sophistication and intellect amongst the group. He was not on the committee; he often explained how he was “too busy with other commitments”. However he would on occasion lend his expertise on various matters, particularly in completing funding applications. During meetings he would regularly question the President’s decisions or actions, always implying that the ‘wider membership’ had not been fully consulted. When he spoke he seemed to have a captive audience in the ordinary members whilst some of the committee seemed less ‘in awe of him’, often challenging his observations and statements or displaying their impatience by rolling their eyes, or shaking their heads.

In response to his question about the auditor, the President confirmed (in a weary tone) that he did know the auditor, but that as she was not a member, she was indeed independent of the organisation. He tried to move on but the member interrupted, having now got out of his seat and standing to address the whole room. The member “begged the house’s forgiveness” for his ignorance, he was “only an academic after all, and unfamiliar with how these things worked”. But he continued to question who had the authority within the group to identify an auditor, seemingly implying that all members should be consulted on such matters, rather than being the sole responsibility of the President (as he was suggesting had happened). The President shook his head at this, and the Treasurer, addressing the member as “*Professeur*”, explained this was indeed a transparent process and that the President was hiding nothing. The President had identified the auditor from

his own professional networks, and the association should be grateful to the President for his networks rather than question his motives. He then advised that he (the Treasurer) was the one who would make contact and who would be handing over the accounts. During this discussion the general mood seemed to have shifted and been replaced with sounds of disapproval of the President's motives and calls for transparency. The member who had questioned the President then bowed to the association, in a gracious gesture, saying he accepted this explanation, but that clarity was required on all matters. He was "only using his role as ordinary member" to advise the 'house' on the importance of transparency.

Another member then asked to speak, and the member chairing the meeting addressed him as 'Doctor'. He stood and made a similar point on the need for transparency. This was then followed by a further discussion between members about transparency and managing the accounts. After a while, I could see Gilles, the Vice-President, shifting in his seat, looking increasingly agitated. He stood and asked the chair if he could make a comment. He asked "why do some of us need to use titles to address each other, Doctor this and Professor this and Mr this? We are all equals in this house, no one is better than anyone else". Some members nodded in agreement. Gilles then went on to ask why it was important and "couldn't members just use first names, making us all more equal?" One of the 'Doctors' then stood up, and with a solemn look, stated he should be called what others thought was appropriate. He too then bowed to the members in such a grand way (whilst half-smiling), as if feigning deference to the group and this made some members laugh. Gilles shook his head, he looked annoyed. After a call for order from the chair, the meeting carried on (fieldnotes, ASSECS, 17 October 2009).

This specific incident was then raised again with me during an interview with another member, Gregoire, who had attended this meeting but had not been directly involved in the discussion. Gregoire told me "the stuff about the titles" really annoyed him and that some members thought they were superior because they had university degrees. He then went on to say that the networks and connections they had beyond the association were not down to 'them' (i.e. the academic/professional members) and that for all "their fancy words, they were not connected. They had limited use". Another member, Gilles, also told me during our interview, "They talk the talk, but don't walk the walk". And again on a separate occasion at an association football match I had gone along to support, I had a similar conversation with the President who laughed when he told me "all that debate, I

don't care if someone is a doctor or professor. They have the skills on paper, but they don't have the practical skills needed to run an organisation like ours" (fieldnotes, ASSECS, November 2009). The general pattern in groups tended to be that those who were the most vocal in their critique of the committee and the association were relatively inactive beyond attendance at meetings. Another perspective on this was that it was the role of the ordinary members 'to keep the committee in check,' a 'responsibility' that ordinary members of three different associations explicitly referred to on separate occasions (fieldnotes, Karibu, 23 July 2008; fieldnotes, AFIG, 9 August 2008; fieldnotes, CAMASS, 22 March 2009), a role generally overlooked in studies of migrant associations (cf. Rex *et al* 1987; Werbner 1991; Wahlbeck 1997).

These observations show some of the numerous ways in which conflict, tensions and divisions manifest and reveal themselves within associations through various forms of expression and action, as well as the different outcomes of such conflicts. In the above excerpt, references to education and status allude to what can be perceived by some as a 'naturally occurring ranking' of persons that mirrors an aspect of social class ranking. This is reinforced by the use of language and dress, indicating how these factors can also bear upon how one is categorised within a presumed homogenous group. Whilst not explicitly referenced, 'classed identities' are raised and used to differentiate between members internally in the ways some members act towards each other and interact.

Terms of address were important to all the associations in this study. They would be used as an expression of respect and to indicate the specific social status of members. For example, older women or women considered of an elevated social standing would be addressed as '*Maman*'. Children always called adult members '*tantine*' (auntie) or '*tonton*' (uncle) (and sometimes French speaking members would use these terms in English). During meetings, I would be addressed by my first name (or a 'French' version of it), but also as '*tantine*' and auntie and on the odd occasion as '*Maman*'. In some instances I was addressed as *Madame*, but this would usually be when someone was criticising Scotland or an aspect of Scottish culture: it would usually be in along the lines of "no offence Madame, but..." Interestingly I knew of some women who were highly qualified and university educated, some of whom had doctorates, but they were never addressed as Doctor or Professor. The use of titles such as '*Professeur*' to signify an elevated social status seemed to be reserved for male members. Whilst mainly a sign of expressing respect, titles and

terms of address can also be used as a way of demanding respect, and this reveals the hierarchical nature of members' relationships. This also shows, in my view, some of the rules of interactions that were discussed in Chapter Five, and the way that social status is perceived explains how certain members are then allowed to behave during meetings. Seeing this first hand provided insights into the ways in which members organise their perceptions and how this influences social interactions.

Perceived social status also revealed another interesting aspect of all the associations studied. As I discussed in Chapter Six, during the fieldwork period, these groups were not run by an affluent business elite but by asylum seekers and refugees, (although leadership did change over the course of the study, in line with constitution rules on mandates for office bearing roles). These 'leaders' had all also held 'professional' positions in their home country prior to arriving in the UK. Although they were prohibited from working, this did not preclude them from channelling their leadership and professional skills into the group. What is of interest in the present study and to broader questions of associational practices, is that the leaders in these associations occupied a low level social position as asylum seekers. By refusing to let migrant status translate into passivity, they regained some of their higher social ranking as community leaders.

Moreover, the intellectual elite of 'professionals' in the associations, who insisted upon being addressed by a title (Dr/Professor/Mr) and who, following Werbner and Anwar (1991), might have been expected to hold the higher ranking intercalary positions did not appear to have established links with the wider community beyond the group. At least, this was never brought to bear during meetings. They may have been able to draw upon their cultural and economic capital in their professional roles outside of the group, but their social capital (in terms of the resources accrued through membership) was limited, and this, it seems, was the capital that counted the most to associations in terms of getting things done. Although they made claims to symbolic power through their cultural capital, they had very little by way of political power and allegiances in 'centre-periphery' relationships. Perhaps this was what caused so much consternation and questioning on their part of leaders' practices (and ultimately the credibility of leaders). Although, this can also be seen as challenging a 'divide and rule' ideology, in that rather than just being the case that leaders and committees keep ordinary members in check, the reverse was also true. Demanding transparency and insisting upon accountability, as discussed earlier in

this chapter and in Chapter Six, are indeed ways for ordinary members to keep leaders and management committees in line.

Internal conflicts which led to tensions, splits and fragmentation of an ascribed 'community' are the source of both interest and confusion to external agencies. Over the course of the fieldwork, I had several conversations with community development workers in the public and voluntary sector regarding a 'split' within the 'Congolese community' which occurred in 2008: one association had fragmented due to internal differences and had then reformed as two distinct groups. From the information I was able to gather from informal chats with members of Africa Umoja Scotland and Karibu, two associations with a high number of Congolese members, and from casual conversations with other Congolese nationals over the fieldwork period, this was seen internally as an ideological and territorial split. Political differences imported from 'home' had seemingly made a unified public face impossible. Equally, regional differences were too significant to be ignored or glossed over. However external observers found it difficult to understand why groups 'were not able to put differences to one side' and work together. At a public conference I had attended, a public sector community worker who was familiar with my research had asked me if I could shed any light on what had happened "to the Congolese". When I explained that the split had centred on political differences that had fragmented areas of Eastern Congo, he looked at me and rolling his eyes, sighed "you'd think they'd just get along". I felt somewhat annoyed by his lack of sensitivity and explained that it was the same as trying to explain the situation in Northern Ireland to Congolese nationals here, really to make the point that ideological, political and 'ethnicised' differences that result in civil conflict around the world are extremely complex, and that finding a way to live together is not as simple as 'just putting differences to one side'. He agreed, but then went on to add that "as there wasn't many of them and they were so far from the Congo, you wouldn't think it still mattered" (fieldnotes, seminar July 2008, paraphrased summary of exchange).

On a separate occasion, another community development worker with an agency supporting refugees commented to me about this split during an integration network meeting. He told me the problem for his agency was that they did not have the resources to support two Congolese groups, and what little resources they had needed to be spread across different groups. This left him with the dilemma of which association to support. I

knew this person well enough to know he was extremely sensitive to the heterogeneity contained within the groups he supported in his professional role. However, the organisations funding his work saw things differently: in the name of administrative equity and efficiency, there could only be one ‘Congolese refugee community’. This imperative was driving resource allocation, forcing a ‘fictional unity’ upon these associations, and defining them by their migrant status (Werbner 1991b). It also contributed to the competitiveness between groups over decreasing funding opportunities. As discussed earlier, some groups have circumvented this constraint by developing into a generalist African association organised along a combination of geographic, linguistic and gendered terms (Africa Umoja Scotland and Karibu). However, as I also highlighted, this introduced further complexities about representation and group identification.

In relation to the groups featured in this study, the reality on the ground is of unity and solidarity *and* factional alliances and competition for resources (both material - funding, office space - and symbolic - standing in the wider community, representation and so on). Chapter Eight details a particular instance of rupture and struggle over material and symbolic resources between Karibu and an umbrella ‘African’ organisation that pulls together the various arguments presented in this section. Whilst ruptures within and between associations should not detract from the practices of solidarity that characterised these groups, extending into the participants world over time revealed how interactions within and between groups and associations are decidedly more complex than is often assumed. This is further complicated by the different forms of internal diversity. This discussion has highlighted how differences around ethnicity and perceived social status shape everyday interactions and social relations that can be problematic for unity. The next section will consider how different immigration status, as a further ‘externally constructed’ difference, has internal effects on processes of group formation and continuity.

### ***Accommodating difference in relation to migrant status***

In Chapter One, I argued that the multiple roles of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations (generally called ‘RCOs’ in the migrant studies literature) tend to be the focus of analysis. However, to understand the roles of associations, their leaders and members,



there is a need to analyse the organisational and structural contexts in which they emerge, mobilise support and engage in struggles for shared rights. Whilst in Chapter Six I examined the organisational context in detail, in my view, the wider structural context is central to shaping understandings of what is happening within groups. That is, the immigration status of members directly affects how the group is understood internally and externally, how individuals interact with the group, group solidarities and conflicts, their expectations and levels of participation and their motivation to be active or play a more peripheral role. The observation field work and interviews revealed interesting tensions regarding this aspect of internal diversity. Immigration status is of course only one aspect of a social identity and its significance in terms of expectations of the group will be relative to the precariousness of one's asylum claim. The following excerpts explore this point further from two perspectives from within the same association.

During Refugee Week 2009, I attended a public event that was taking place in a community centre in the North West of Glasgow. By chance I bumped into two women I knew as members of AFIG. I hadn't seen them at the monthly meetings for a while, although I had met them both outside of the group setting on a couple of occasions for coffee and we had kept in touch by phone. I asked Estelle how she was and she replied with her usual words of "by the grace of God, I am still here". Estelle had originally claimed asylum in 2000 and was still awaiting a final decision on her claim. She was a founding member of AFIG, but in the past 18 months she had increasingly withdrawn herself from the group. On a personal level, I felt this was a real pity as she had been so instrumental to the group's development. She was also becoming more and more isolated from the others in the association, who would tell me at meetings that they hadn't seen or heard from her in a while. She was on Section 4 support and this limited her ability to attend meetings as she could not afford the bus fare. She also had trouble getting to college for the same reason and when we spoke on the phone she sounded gradually more and more depressed. She was with Nadège, who still attended AFIG meetings. However when I interviewed her, she had expressed her own disappointment with the group. She felt it had 'changed' and that she was no longer part of things. She too was awaiting a final decision on her asylum claim. I asked them if I would see them at the planned AFIG Refugee Week event. Estelle shook her head and Nadège shrugged. I asked Estelle why she no longer attended monthly meetings. She told me: "We are like a scab... you pick at it and you are reminded of the pain. They don't want to be reminded of us. They don't want to be reminded of being asylum seekers. When everyone didn't have their papers we were

all the same. Then some start to get their papers. They want to celebrate but they don't tell you. They don't want you to feel bad, so they go off into small groups. But then you find out they are meeting up and you are not invited. So it gets like a club". Nadège nodded in agreement, adding "maybe they think we are jealous of them, because they have their papers and we don't". To which Estelle replied "No, I don't think so, it's not that they think I am jealous, but I am different. I'm different now" (fieldnotes, Refugee Week event 16 June 2009, paraphrased summary of exchange).

In the previous chapter, I described and analysed the effects of positive decisions on participation levels from the perspective of members who had been granted a form of leave to remain. This fieldnote provides the perspective of those still awaiting a positive decision and how they experience the changing immigration status of others. Estelle poignantly describes her developing 'outsider-ness' in the group that she had set up. She had shifted from the centre to the margins: as an asylum seeker she felt she had become a minority within a minority and no longer felt represented by her group. Her difference had become reinforced internally, with detrimental effects. Of course a number of factors could be at play, none the least personality clashes and personal dislikes between members; however it seemed to me that her asylum seeker status had rendered her both more visible and invisible within the group. She would often describe how she felt stigmatised as an asylum seeker, especially as she was not allowed to work. This stigma was experienced as exclusion from wider society and she was now feeling this exclusion from her 'community group'. Another dimension to this concerns the relationship between ability to be actively involved and immigration status. Estelle found her asylum seeker status as increasingly debilitating for her involvement in the group. As she saw it, it contributed directly to her internal marginalisation. Other participants in different associations expressed similar perspectives during interviews. For example, Sabine of CAMASS told me that:

There was definitely a change (*when she got her papers*). Because not having your papers, you feel frustrated you know. Even when you are amongst your brothers, people from your country, all that... I think it (*migrant status*) does influence you. You think 'I'm a bit weaker than them'. I definitely felt that. For example, sometimes decisions were being made which I didn't agree with, but I couldn't say so, I felt I couldn't speak up as an asylum seeker. [...] and you know with the business of having your papers, there is a part of you that says, why bother getting involved in all that (*association business*) because you don't know if you will still be there tomorrow. I think that really influences a lot of people's participation (*Sabine, Cameroonian woman, refugee*).

Of course, Sabine's increased involvement could also be linked to more general processes of growing familiarity and knowledge about life in Glasgow, as well as an increased confidence in asserting her opinions on 'how things should be done'. However, she makes a point echoed by a number of other members: that being an asylum seeker limited levels of involvement within the association and that as a refugee, one not only had a stronger voice, but others were more likely to listen.

This relates directly to the discussion and analysis presented in Chapter Six concerning how involvement in committee life might raise one's personal and social standing, both within groups and the wider 'community'. As a refugee member, Sabine felt more able and confident in articulating her ideas as well as her disagreements. Implicit in this is that as a non-asylum seeker, her voice mattered more. Sabine's experience provides a further insight into the shift in focus within associations away from 'asylum matters': the orientation and agenda of groups develops to take in wider 'settlement' concerns, not purposefully to exclude members, but changes in direction that occur as a result of the passage of time. The effects of time passing on group life is rarely analysed within these types of associations and yet seems a central element affecting continuity. Associations clearly struggle to be all things to all members, and so they arrive at compromises to deal with changing personal and collective situations. Nonetheless, the passage of time reveals how differentiated and changing migrant status within groups can in some way produce effects which reflect the exclusionary effects asylum seekers face in wider society: with asylum seeker members feeling less represented, less able to be involved, and in some cases becoming increasingly invisible within their own groups.

Returning to Estelle and Nadège's complaints at being side-lined, I had noticed at AFIG meetings (and other groups' meetings as well) that 'asylum issues' were indeed being tabled less frequently on the agenda. This is not to say that the associations in this study no longer dealt with asylum-related problems, but their priorities had shifted somewhat towards wider 'settlement' issues such as how to organise cultural activities, how to build their standing in the community, day trips and social events. Despite Estelle's own feelings of internal marginalisation, at meetings I attended, whenever a specific issue was raised relating to the asylum seeker status of a member (or sympathiser), it was discussed and the association tried to find solutions as a collective. This is what happened at a regular AFIG monthly meeting, the focus of which had been forward planning and

development of the year's activities. After we had eaten Annie asked me to come back into the kitchen where there was another woman standing washing dishes. I had never met her before. It turned out she was an ordinary member (Laura), who had moved away from Glasgow for a while, but had now returned. I picked up a dishcloth to help dry the dishes, unsure as to why I had been called to the kitchen. They closed the kitchen door and then told me that they had an Ivorian friend (not a member) in detention in Dungavel Detention Centre. I nodded and said I was really sorry to hear this. They wanted to know if I had the number of any anti-detention groups they could contact to help him. They explained he had been detained on the previous Friday to be moved on the following Monday to an English detention centre (this was a Saturday night).

As we spoke, it became apparent that they were already doing the necessary things: they had contacted his lawyer in Glasgow and an anti-detention group. I suggested another group to try to contact. Laura then said she would try to call the detained friend on his mobile phone and they told me to go with them to Annie's bedroom. Once in her bedroom, they pulled the door shut, put the mobile phone on loudspeaker and dialled his number. When their friend answered, he sounded really pleased to hear from them. He said he was okay, that he had spoken to his lawyer who was taking the necessary actions. Things were looking a bit more positive he told us, as there should be an injunction letter from the High Court putting a stop to the removal. Laura told me she called him every couple of hours to keep his spirits up. Because he was on loudspeaker, we could hear a lot of background noise, and it was unclear how private this conversation was. The two women reassured him that they were doing everything they could. (It was a strange moment, their meeting had been very much in the vein of looking forward as a group, but they were still connected to the world of asylum seeker issues and complex Home Office processes and how they could support fellow nationals through these processes and personal difficulties with their asylum claims. Here we were, doing anti-detention work in a bedroom in North Glasgow, whilst simultaneously in the next room there was a social gathering with music, food and laughter.) We all agreed that the situation was looking a bit more positive than it had been and I promised to email any new support group information the next day. We left the bedroom and joined the others. It was getting late and so I decided to head home. I asked if I could give anyone a lift home but they were all staying for the evening. It was too early for them to go home. Annie and Laura thanked me for my help; I said my goodbyes and left (fieldnotes, AFIG, 3 October 2009).

This excerpt illustrates how the ‘asylum seeker’ story remains a constant for associations, and whilst perhaps no longer at the forefront of activities, the issue-based work is still done by members as and when required. Members were consistently ready and able to draw on their wider experiences and knowledge - gained through having been through these processes themselves - and this ‘insider expertise’ becomes an invaluable resource. There were similar examples of groups helping members across all of the associations in this study. There were many instances of members across the groups engaged in public acts using their online forums to lobby MPs and MSPs. They also provided template lobbying letters, circulated information on visiting times in detention centres and contact numbers for detainees. Using their online fora and text messages, they actively encouraged each other to maintain general contact with detainees. But also in private, members would make individual contributions to a collective fund to help with bail, to buy mobile phone credit or a cheap ‘pay-as-you-go’ mobile phone package to give to a detained person. In some associations, members would, with the permission of the person detained, gain access to their flat to remove and store belongings that would otherwise be removed and in most cases dumped by the housing authority. Associations organised regular phone calls for morale and support. Importantly, although the ‘refugeeness’ of the different associations did not always define them, it was never too far away from their day-to-day activities and discussion, and was played out within the associations and across members’ wider associative networks. For example, at one CAMASS meeting, a Cameroonian woman who had been the subject of a relatively high profile anti-destitution and anti-deportation campaign in Glasgow came along to personally thank members for their moral and practical support. Although her campaign was never mentioned during the meetings I attended, I was able to follow members’ efforts through their online messenger group email.

Despite still keeping ‘an eye’ on ‘asylum matters’ and the fact that some members were still asylum seekers, it had become clear to me from observing meetings and drop-ins that, as the majority of members in each of the groups were granted a form of refugee status, asylum issues did indeed feature less prominently. The challenge committee members and leaders faced was how to manage members’ expectations in a way that was inclusive and representative of their needs, and which respected internal diversity. At a CAMASS monthly meeting one of the agenda points related to feedback from a Scottish Refugee Policy Forum (SRPF) meeting that Guy and I had attended. When he mentioned RPF, there were some quizzical looks from some of the members. So Guy explained that “it was

a meeting with lots of asylum seeker groups... usually the meeting is taken up with immigration stuff and anti-deportation campaigns, stuff that doesn't really concern us". (In this statement he was inadvertently revealing how differentiated migrant status finds expression in associational activities, agendas and interactions between members). Although he understood members' questions about its relevance for CAMASS, he went on to say that he attended when he could because some of it was relevant, like this information on changes to the new Immigration Bill (Borders Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009) which had been proposed under New Labour.

At this RPF meeting a few weeks earlier, the new Bill and the effects it would have on asylum support, the asylum process and on applying for citizenship was indeed discussed at length. The proposed new 'path to citizenship' recommended imposing additional periods of temporary leave on 'probationary citizens' (between 5 and 8 years) before they are granted a permanent right to stay. This additional qualifying period of temporary residence could be reduced if applicants undertook voluntary work in the form of 'active citizenship' (Scottish Refugee Council 2011).<sup>42</sup> What was unclear was whether time spent waiting for a positive decision would be taken into account under the 'probationary period'. This was a very confusing issue and its complexity was further exacerbated by the wide ranging immigration status of the members present. Some were still asylum seekers, others refugees, others had received positive decisions through Case Resolution, and others still were migrants in the UK for study or work. It was unclear how this Bill would affect each category of migrant differently.

This agenda point generated much discussion. Some members wanted to hear more; however it was a complex policy change and Guy and I both had to admit we had not fully grasped the detail at the meeting. Other members shouted that this was not of interest to them as they weren't 'giving up' their Cameroonian citizenship. They questioned whether it was in fact an association matter at all. Many members were by now talking over each

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<sup>42</sup> In terms of current government thinking, the New Coalition Government has yet to clearly detail its policy on citizenship. Although when in opposition, the now Immigration Minister, Damian Green described the volunteering aspect of earned citizenship as having an element of compulsion, and therefore described it as "*the ultimate absurdity.*" (Hansard, 2 June 2009, Col 1232). In her first major speech on immigration (5 November 2010) Theresa May, the Home Secretary stated that they would not implement the previous Government's earned citizenship policy, stating that it was "*complicated, bureaucratic and, in the end, ineffective.*" Nevertheless, she also stated that it is "*too easy, at the moment, to move from temporary residence to permanent settlement*", and that "*settling in Britain should be a cherished right.*" (<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/speeches/immigration-speech>). (accessed 2 November 2011)

other, some waving to Guy to get his attention, others asking we move on from the point. Guy shouted over to me asking if I could shed any light on the complexities. I shook my head, and suggested the Refugee Council website for a briefing. This was met with nods of approval, and Guy asked me to do this for the next meeting. One of the members asked me about the current process of becoming a citizen in the UK. And again, I had to acknowledge that I didn't know (I think there was an expectation because they saw me as the 'token' British citizen that I would have such knowledge at my fingertips). Guy then said that whilst for him the new policy was not so important (as a 'migrant worker'), that it was something to put on the agenda for a later meeting and that he too would try to find more information (fieldnotes, CAMASS, 26 July 2008).

I had attended a number of public events regarding this draft bill which had been put out for consultation. From the various discussions I observed, it was becoming clear to me that the question of citizenship was more of an issue for members who were either still asylum seekers or who had their papers and were now refugees. During this discussion at the meeting, Sabine said "As asylum seekers and refugees we have become '*déraciné*' (uprooted/rootless), we need to put our roots down somewhere". Citizenship and getting a British passport were seen as public and tangible symbols of settlement and of belonging to a national society. The members who were not interested in finding out more were the 'general migrant' members, mostly students or in the UK working, some of whom had expressed to me in interviews their plans to return to the Cameroon or move on elsewhere. This discussion on the importance of citizenship is just one of many that illustrate, in my view, shifting foci of these associations, the effects of differentiated and changing migrant status upon accommodating difference within groups and various internal tensions these can create. As Sabine said, putting down roots was important, and, for asylum seekers and refugees, this was particularly the case as they no longer had the option of 're-rooting' in their country of nationality. For asylum seekers, the only possibility to return home to see family would be as a UK citizen. On a separate occasion, Bernadette, another member of CAMASS told me excitedly how she was going home (to Cameroon) on a British passport. She was delighted to be able to see family again, but felt it would be strange: she said she was no longer officially Cameroonian and wondered what her family would make of this change. The above discussion relating to citizenship also illustrates the tensions within groups that arose when leaders tried to meet all members' needs of the group, needs that clearly varied depending on their immigration status. Furthermore, such internal differences reinforce the 'in-between-ness' of asylum seeker members: their lack of

mobility compared to non-asylum seeker members raises their visibility and potentially stigmatises them further.

In addition to issues of representativeness, the background context of shifting immigration status has also had a very visible effect on participation levels at meetings. On the occasion outlined above, turnout was high: members had known in advance that this policy change was to be discussed (the agenda had been posted on the group's website) and this seemed to have encouraged attendance. This also happened with other associations, where participation increased when there were important changes in policy on the agenda, for example relating to Case Resolution or to social benefits and entitlements as refugees. At a Karibu drop-in, a representative from the Job Centre had been invited to advise on up-and-coming changes to be introduced in November 2008 to Income Support for some lone parents.<sup>43</sup> This marked a major shift in welfare provision and was of particular significance to the members present, the majority of whom, if parents, were lone parents. Although this change was not immediately relevant to them as asylum seekers, as they are supported by a separate welfare system (NASS), this was going to directly affect them as refugees when they would have to very quickly enter the mainstream benefits system, in line with the 21-day transition rule as described in Chapter Four (fieldnotes, Karibu drop-in, 23 January 2008). As before, the members had received prior notice of this speaker at the drop-in, which explains the particularly high attendance: this was information that was directly relevant to them. It can be compared with other drop-ins on more general matters, for example, 'safety in the home', which were not as well attended. These examples illustrate connections between varying participation levels, foci and orientation of the association and the changing immigration status of members. The complex interplay of these factors also highlights a particular tension between how groups are externally categorised and how they internally identify themselves.

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<sup>43</sup> This Job Centre representative had explained that, in line with a policy change, entitlement to Income Support may stop when a child reaches a certain age (age 7 as opposed to age 18 and living at home as it had been) and if this claim is based on lone-parent status alone. Instead, in real terms, individuals will have to make a claim for another benefit (for example Job Seekers allowance) and if able, will be encouraged to look for paid work. The key message was that most lone parents will no longer be entitled to Income Support on the sole grounds of being a lone parent.  
[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/BenefitsTaxCreditsAndOtherSupport/On\\_a\\_low\\_income/DG\\_175842](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/BenefitsTaxCreditsAndOtherSupport/On_a_low_income/DG_175842)



## ***The dissonance between external categorisations and internal identifications***

Despite the dominant categorisation of associations featured in this study by state and non-state actors as ‘RCOs’, in practice, as had become increasingly evident through fieldwork, the ‘asylum seeker/refugee’ label held little significance for groups. Even where the association leadership tried to keep this focus (for example within Karibu and Africa Umoja Scotland), the wider membership sought a broader, less limited vocabulary to describe their group. The following fieldnote illustrates this dissonance between external categorisations and internal identifications and how members viewed this as constraining the development of their associations and as limiting their ‘settlement’ and integration.

I had been asked by the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) Community Development Team to help facilitate a consultation event with representatives from different ‘RCOs’ in Glasgow regarding the SRC’s future strategy of working with ‘RCOs’.<sup>44</sup> The main focus of the workshop was to look at what integration meant to the respective associations. From the general workshop discussion, the broad consensus was that integration had ‘happened’ over the years, despite the uncertainty of their immigration status as asylum seekers. Rather than focusing on integration, the workshop participants felt their associations should be focusing on finding employment opportunities and identifying gaps in the communities’ own needs in order to meet those needs. For example, one of the participants, Jeanne (of AFIG) suggested opening an African restaurant or shop or clothes-making business, but said that they needed advice and support to work out how to go about this. Personal and general motivation to keep being involved in the association was discussed as a communal concern. Although various reasons for low participation levels were given, including time commitments and the pressures of family life, the discussion centred mainly around the issue of positive decisions which were having a negative impact on levels of involvement, commitment and participation. The workshop participants recognised that their respective groups had been highly instrumental in helping members adjust to their new life, but that they were also interested in developing a broader understanding of who they were and what they did so that they could “raise the profile of

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<sup>44</sup> I had asked the organisers if I could use the workshop for research work and they agreed. I also asked permission of those present in my workshop if I could use their comments anonymously. As it turned out, the attendees in my group were all members of associations I was researching. They agreed that this was part of ‘association life’ and so I could use their comments.

the African in Glasgow”. The association had to be seen by its members and audiences as a platform to make a mark, to stand out in the ‘host’ community. The members taking part saw themselves as the next generation of people settling in Glasgow with an economic, social, cultural and political contribution to make.

After the workshop discussion, there was some time left for informal chat, and the workshop participants took this as an opportunity to discuss between themselves different internal issues, exchange ideas and share information and expertise. For example, following a discussion about how to go about setting up a café, one participant who was from Karibu suggested to two other participants, who were members of AFIG who needed further information and advice, that they should/could contact Karibu. There was a lot of talk about ‘networks’ and helping to build each other’s organisations. However they also recognised that they were often competing for the same limited resources with varying skills sets and areas of expertise. This made networking more complicated as sharing of information meant also sharing of opportunities. One of the participants, Noelle, then said that in her opinion part of the problem was that they were all chasing the same ‘asylum seeker funds’ and rather than being seen as asylum seekers and refugees, why couldn’t they be seen as ‘new minorities’ settling in Glasgow? Jeanne agreed, saying “we are really just organisations whose members come from different backgrounds, not just asylum”. Noelle added “are we always to be asylum seekers?” The other participants nodded in agreement. She went on to say she was happy to help with this consultation but would also like to be invited to consult on other BME matters, with other non-asylum or refugee organisations. Again this was met with nods of agreement. I asked her if she wanted me to add this to the workshop feedback and she nodded. We stopped at that point and three of the participants broke off; I could see mobile phones coming out and what looked like telephone numbers being exchanged (fieldnotes, SRC ‘RCO’ consultation workshop, 24 January 2009).

The association is a powerful source of individual and social integration. However, it can be exclusive and exclusionary as some of the fieldnotes have highlighted. Moreover, the above discussion about competing for non-asylum seeker funds reveals how associations can also be excluded from the wider BME sector by the labels assigned to them. When categorised as ‘RCOs’, these associations are limited to certain contexts in which individuals interact with similar others thereby fostering the development of ties to similar

others. These contexts could also be seen as reinforcing their representation as vulnerable groups (and certainly the main aim of the workshop was to provide a rationale to funders for the Community Development Team's 3-5 year strategy). It could be argued that it was necessary for them to maintain their exclusive positions of expertise and knowledge of 'refugee community' issues. As Noelle indicates, their groups could be seen as being constrained by the category, which also explains a desire to align themselves with other 'settled' groups who have an established foothold in different social fields, such as a wider 'BME community', as will be addressed in the next chapter.

The consultation also revealed how state and non-state actors provide certain, restricted opportunities for interactions between similarly categorised people, thereby increasing the homogeneity of these networks and limiting the development of diverse networks. There are direct parallels here between this outcome and the 'divide and rule' dimension to state incorporation of migrants and policies for supporting 'minority groups' more generally. In the present study I did not collect data from general BME groups relating to their perspectives on asylum seeker and refugee-led associations competing with them for the same funds and this indicates a potential area for further inquiry. However, it seemed that the groups in this study felt that, as newly settling minorities, they were entitled to and should be able to apply for funds 'ring-fenced' for the general BME sector. Interestingly, Karibu had been successful in this endeavour, receiving Glasgow City Council funds to assist with paying rental on their premises. In their application, they positioned themselves as a women's BME group. In effect, Karibu were able to challenge their imposed 'refugeeness', assert an alternative representation to 'refugeeness' and overturn the homogenising steamroller effect of state categorisation as a distinct migrant other. Chapter Eight continues this discussion by looking at how groups confront categorisation processes.

This point also relates to another pattern that emerged from the research: as immigration status changes for members, solidaristic ties also change. As I discussed in Chapter Six, the association serves different purposes for members as asylum seekers, refugees or general migrants. Questioning the continued relevance of the group, beyond providing social-cultural supports, may go some way to explaining waning participation as suggested by the following discussion which took place at a Karibu drop-in, where numbers regularly attending the drop-in had dwindled quite substantially. I was sitting waiting for members

to arrive, when I got involved in a discussion with two committee members, Heloise and Malika, about the effects of changing immigration status on participation levels. More and more women were receiving positive decisions through Case Resolution and Malika said quite categorically that for her, “once they have their papers, it’s over, that’s it for them”, making a sweeping motion with her hands as if to indicate that their relationship with Karibu had come to an end. She went on to say that integration was not something achieved by a person on her own, and that getting papers didn’t mean integration. She had identified an ‘*esprit de dépendance*’ developing amongst members in their community. Heloise nodded in agreement.

When I asked her to explain she said that it was first dependency on NASS (asylum support) and then now on benefits, and that people had more children to get more money. I felt this was conforming to the worst possible prejudices in the popular press about ‘scrounging asylum seekers’ and did not agree with them at all. However, participation had dwindled and so this increasingly expressed viewpoint had to be taken seriously. I suggested that perhaps it is because they had been waiting for so long, that it was now difficult for people to see beyond living off the state. Heloise and Malika both looked at me and laughed, telling me I was being very ‘diplomatic’. (Heloise was in fact much more sympathetic to this argument in interview. She told me women had been asylum seekers for so long, it was difficult for them to see beyond reliance on the state.) Some people did want to work, they told me, but others just saw their papers as an end prize and that the “other stuff” was just not so important to them. When I asked them what they meant, Heloise said “the group, the community, this (gesturing to the hall) is not so important. It is only important when women don’t have their papers. Then they need Karibu, but when they have their papers you don’t see them or you see them less.” They asked me why I thought this was. I paused and suggested maybe their priorities had changed and they felt pressure to find work. But they laughed again, they said “Teresa, come on, do you really think that the women are out looking for work? No. They are at home. Now they have their papers they don’t feel they need to prove anything anymore”. Again, I did not necessarily agree and suggested it was more complex than that. But I had had similar discussions with other members of the management committee who had reached the same conclusion. One MC member Pascaline had told me she was disappointed that members were participating less now they had their papers. Like Heloise and Malika and others in other associations, she saw a direct link between dwindling numbers and increasing positive decisions. Returning to our discussion, I asked them both how they should

respond to this as a community group? They suggested that perhaps they needed to just stop the drop-in. Both women told me they had plenty of other tasks they could be getting on with, the drop-in was time consuming and with numbers at an all-time low, perhaps the women of Karibu just did not need it any more. If enough members attended on that day they had planned a consultation to poll members' opinions and would take it from there (fieldnotes, Karibu, 23 July 2008).

In my view, a stark contrast emerges between an individual's needs of the group as an asylum seeker and needs as a refugee (a contrast that has been considered at various points in this and previous chapters). It appears that whilst *non-settlement* induced strong needs for group formation (influenced by particularly severe external pressures), the increased number of positive decisions and shift to refugee status has dramatically decreased this need of the association. Or rather the need of the associations as an emotional and psychological safety-net had been replaced by a less urgent social-cultural need. Whereas in their early years, most of the associations in this study (ASSECS being the exception) might have been more clearly defined by the liminal positioning of their members as asylum seekers, it seemed that once the overwhelming threat of instability and uncertainty has been removed, some of the groups now struggled with how to define themselves and with how they were being defined by external actors. In interviews and from observation, (both generally and at the consultation that Heloise and Malika discussed above which then took place); the members argued that the drop-in *must* continue. It was considered as essential to help women get out of the house. It was described as an indispensable social hub that provided them with important information they would not get elsewhere (summarised feedback from a consultation which took place on 23 July 2008). Observation work did in fact confirm these important aspects of the drop-in; however, expectations *had* shifted as members who were now refugees sought different forms of information from the group. This was a pattern that emerged across the associations. The challenge that leaders and committees face is how to meet everyone's needs, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in a way that is both inclusive and representative and which tries to mitigate the effects of differentiated migrant status. This challenge revealed itself in different ways in the associations, but the underlying problem was the same.

During Refugee Week in 2009, ASSECS, which has a mixed membership in terms of immigration status of members, had been planning a collection of writings on the

Cameroon. Different members drafted these pieces which included fables, poetry and traditional stories. The Scottish Refugee Council had provided a £500 grant for this project. As the deadline inched closer, the contributors from the group, the management committee and the broader membership expressed growing concern both in meetings and online (via the group email) about the readiness of the submissions for publication. Some members felt that externally-set deadlines were being prioritised over members' capabilities. One committee member questioned the relevance of the Refugee Week as a platform for the group, given that 'refugees' were a minority in the group. This generated a very heated online debate as to the symbolic meaning and relevance of 'refugee' for ASSECS. Accusations were made about members being excluded followed by counter-accusations of misrepresentation. Eventually, the matter was brought to a close by the following email, sent by the then President of the association to all members:

The Refugee Council is very important strategic partner for us and we have had a long relation with them since the inception of our group. It is vital that we understand the importance of that relationship and how our work or what we do fit into their agenda. All the bigger institutions like parliament right down to small community groups all over Scotland and other parts of U.K. celebrate this very symbolic day (*World Refugee Day, 20 June*) even though very few of them have refugees in their organisations, are we different, I wonder? However, I hope we start leading rather than following (*ASSECS group email exchange*).

A number of aspects are of interest here: there is a desire expressed by some to distance the group from a specific category that was not considered by some members as at all representative of the group. This was despite the fact that this association had a number of asylum seeker and refugee members, some of whom felt very hurt by what they saw as their internal labelling as a minority. For certain ASSECS members, 'refugee' had little meaning, symbolic or otherwise; it was only a very small aspect of the collective identity, but was certainly not the focus. Because the label 'refugee' has taken on such pejorative meanings, this debate exposed some negative expressions of differentiated migrant status within this group. This reveals how the stigma of seeking asylum can come to be reproduced internally within those very communities presumed to be 'stigma-free' areas that are non-judgmental spaces of unity and solidarity: the externally imposed asylum seeker and refugee label threatening unity within a group so labelled. The debate also demonstrates how an assumed 'community' has the power to both include and exclude. It reveals how a fictive corporate unity may be projected externally, or presumed by external audiences whilst internally this unified face is under question.

At the next ASSECS meeting following this event, there was real consternation amongst members about what they saw as a poorly organised and attended event. Michael, the committee member responsible for organising the event said as much, describing it as a “failure” and that that this had “shown them up as unprofessional” to the wider public. One of the ordinary members asked where the entire committee was as some members were notable by their absence. Gilles, the Vice-President, then calmly stood up and said he had chosen not to attend in protest. There were some snorts of derision from some of the members as if they were not taking him seriously. He said he had been disgusted by the debate on refugees that had taken place on email (see above). Gilles was shouted down by some members and told to sit down, but he refused and reiterated his point. He felt that the association had shown it was not an inclusive group. He then formally resigned his position as Vice-President, saying the group was not what he thought (fieldnotes, ASSECS, 4 July 2009). Other younger members told me in interviews that the Refugee Week event ‘stuff’ didn’t really interest them, just the party after, and this suggests to me that internally its relevance was questioned by members. Gilles told me later in an interview that he did not appreciate how some people thought they were better than others because they were not refugees or asylum seekers:

It’s about a status; you know ... about what status you have. So somebody who came here maybe with a 2 or 3 year visa to study and then you have somebody who has been going through the asylum system... and you don’t feel like you are a brother or sister or friend to that person because they have a different status. What you have done is you have basically created, you know, another social class for yourself and you think you are better than everybody else (*Gilles, Cameroonian man, migrant*).

Although he had never claimed asylum, Gilles felt it was still important to keep ‘asylum’ issues on the agenda and appreciated the importance of keeping this focus for existing and new members. Problematising the representativeness of the refugee label can also be conceptualised in other terms and interpreted as an act of agency. By this I mean it is a practice of naming the collective, and subverting or circumventing categorisation by state and non-state actors who set the terms of participation and integration. It is a conscious and active way of taking back control of how the group is defined (cf. Bourdieu 1991). Likewise, the President of ASSECS’ email discussed above acknowledges the strategic need to engage with the category (to a degree) in order to access supports, build networks and assert a collective voice as, in this example, Cameroonians in Scotland. In this regard, ASSECS, and the other associations are no different from voluntary associations more

generally. Within ASSECS, as with other associations in this study, members define themselves as a new 'national group' to Scotland, be that as Cameroonians, Ivorians, Congolese or even as 'Africans'. They also consider external recognition and acceptance as essential to develop and raise their profile as a particular group. This suggests a level of strategising within communities, where they are faced with decisions as to the naming of who they are, and consciously deciding which identification will dominate and yield the greatest symbolic power, dependent upon the social field and the struggle for resources located therein (Bourdieu 1977). How associations respond themselves to funding imperatives and find interesting ways to challenge processes that force them into rigid categories is illustrative of this strategising.

The correlation between waning participation and positive decisions reveals one of the ways in which broader asylum policies affect group formation processes. The impact of dispersal and *non-settlement* on associations' capacities to meet members' needs has already been documented in the growing literature on asylum and dispersal (see for example Griffiths *et al* 2005). However, the present study brings to light the impact of positive decisions on internal identifications and processes of group formation. This can be simply put as follows: rather than strengthening the position and resources of an organisation, increased positive decisions appear to be having a detrimental affect on groups. This has had three main outcomes: firstly, in relation to waning participation and active involvement, as has been discussed in this and the previous two chapters. Secondly, there is the effect of a shift in focus away from 'asylum issues' to wider 'settlement' issues. This wider focus is however being hindered by a lack of resources and capital for associations to then be effective actors in wider 'non-asylum specific' social fields. That associations are ill-equipped is directly related to the constraints they faced when they were focused on asylum issues: there was neither the time, nor energy nor resources to develop this broader orientation. This shift in focus also means that existing and new asylum seeker members will not benefit as predecessors have, their needs at risk of being sidelined within groups, revealing a third outcome: differentiated migrant status can sometimes produce exclusionary effects internally. This last outcome can be directly related to the fixedness of the 'RCO' label and represents a real problem. A very distinct feature of all the associations can be identified in their claims for alternative identities and representations, not as asylum seekers or an 'RCO' but as 'other' types of populations and associations. Indeed, the groups in the present study never really consider their collective identity as an 'either/or' situation, but rather as reflecting a desire to be represented by



different overlapping identities. This is not a rejection of asylum/refugee issues as important to groups, but of 'refugeeness' as the defining 'identity'. The 'RCO' label was not only considered a misrepresentation of who they were, but as a category it has little meaning for the very people being thus categorised. This pattern leads me to the following question: if the 'RCO' label does not 'fit' these associations, then how else can these associations be understood?

## ***Conclusions***

Building on the analyses presented in the previous two chapters, this present chapter argues that associational life is interwoven with solidaristic and conflictual relations which present both opportunities and constraints for association emergence and continuity. This chapter has explored the source of these relations with regards to how they are framed both internally and externally in terms of ethnicity and migrant status. However, a broader range of social differences divides groups and places continuous pressure on shared experiences and practices. The analysis presented has sought to reveal the structural, organisational and historical context of divisions within groups, divisions most often hidden by a focus on 'refugeeness' of the individuals and social relations located within these associations. Nonetheless, the changing asylum and immigration framework presents a significant external pressure that influences associational continuity in some quite specific ways. I have argued in this chapter that positive decisions negatively affect associational practices as evidenced in waning participation, a shift in focus away from 'asylum issues' to wider 'settlement' concerns and in the emergence of sources of internal difference that go beyond issues of ethnicity. This cannot be separated from asylum seeker incorporation regimes that create the long-term conditions of exclusion, meaning groups are ill-equipped to respond to the changing needs of members. These regimes are also founded upon a fractioning of 'refugee status' and this has contributed to stigmatisation of asylum seekers. Finally, and despite the increasingly limited relevance of the 'RCO' label to the groups themselves, the persistent focus on 'refugeeness' constrains groups to a specific category. This then keeps 'refugees' as a very distinct group, separate from other migrant groups who are able to make claims to belonging to a wider 'BME community'. Despite this, groups and members most often collectively identify beyond their migrant status and appropriate alternative categorisations to define who they are, what they do and how they project themselves, group processes that will be addressed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 8 Alignment with other ‘Others’

### *Introduction*

Previous chapters have aimed, in various ways, to move beyond a focus on ‘refugeeness’ in representing the associational lives of African asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Glasgow. I have argued that this necessitates widening conceptualisations of migrant associational practices as they emerge and evolve over time. In Chapter Five, I explored the association as a site and space for subverting *non-settlement*, providing possibilities for members to practice and enact belonging that links home ‘here’ and ‘there’. The association acts as an important buffer between the ‘centre’ (migrants and their associations) and the ‘periphery’ (mainstream civil society and structural institutions that exist beyond the association boundary). In Chapter Six, I then considered internal processes, arguing that studying organisational processes and structures reveals the similarities they share with general migrant groups and other forms of associational practice more generally. This focus also exposes the internal heterogeneity of these associations, in itself revelatory of the various effects of differentiated migrant status on group life. In Chapter Seven, I explored conflict and tension, shifting orientations and foci of groups and the relationship between these aspects of associational life and changing immigration status, a relationship often masked by a reductive focus on ‘refugeeness’. Such a focus forces groups into categories that fail to reflect their changing realities as the associations and the communities they claim to represent evolve and change through time. Consequently, a widened conceptualisation of associations that extends beyond migrant status is required to capture the moving picture of associational life (Whyte [1943]1993).

This chapter explores how such a widened conceptualisation finds expression within associations and amongst members. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first - ‘Challenging labels and practices of ‘ideological convergence’ - considers the problem of the ‘RCO’ label for groups themselves. Adopting Werbner’s conceptual schema (Werbner 1991b), I argue that ‘ideological convergence’ is a helpful frame to explore how groups themselves move beyond the ‘RCO’ label. But I also consider how this convergence might itself be challenged by the sources of social difference detailed in previous chapters. In the second - ‘Alignment with other ‘others’ - I describe and analyse practices of collective

claims-making that can be framed around both particularism and universalism, and consider how such claims reflect distancing from the 'RCO' label. The third - 'Practising alignment with other 'others' and building institutional completeness' - explores how such claims to alignment are enacted in every day life, how associations are used as one pathway to the establishment of institutions to help members adapt to their changing material and physical landscape, and how this landscape has adapted to them. In sum, this final empirical chapter pulls together the threads of the previous three chapters to consider how members and associations themselves confront categorisations, develop alternative representations of 'settlement' and try to move beyond 'refugeeness'. Foreshadowing the arguments in this chapter is the notion of the community life-cycle. Commonly found in studies on migrant communities and associations more generally, but often lacking in relation to asylum seekers and refugees, this notion offers a novel way to frame the associational lives of these groups as a moving picture, to move beyond 'refugeeness' and to conceptualise 'settlement' not as an end point, but as an ongoing process.

### ***Challenging labels and practices of 'ideological convergence'***

Over the course of the fieldwork, it had become increasingly apparent to me that groups sought to distance themselves from the 'RCO' label. This 'distancing' was explicitly expressed in interviews when members told me they considered this label as externally imposed, limiting or as a misrepresentation of who they were and what they did. It also happened during fieldwork, as discussions presented in the previous chapter reveal. Whilst they recognised the value of being involved in the wider 'integration agenda', association members told me how frustrated they felt to be constantly moving in these specific circles. They saw this as limiting, blocking opportunities for them and the people they represented to be perceived as other than asylum seekers and refugees. However, such distancing from the 'RCO' category was also done implicitly through alignments with the experiences of other minorities. I shall firstly address these practices of explicit distancing from the 'RCO' label, before going on to explore practices of alignment with other 'others', and developments towards the building of institutions that can be understood as markers of settled minorities.

When I asked Guy in his interview how well he thought the ‘RCO’ label fitted with what CAMASS stood for, how it was experienced or how members defined the association, he replied:

That’s where this is a bit of a problem... From the beginning, when we set the group up, RCO was perhaps more a reality for the Scottish than for us. When the Cameroonians met up it wasn’t as a refugee group... it was more the Cameroonian way. And there were students, workers, residents and asylum seekers and refugees... Over time these asylum seekers became refugees... so, to place CAMASS as a RCO that was never what it was about for us. More a reality existing in Scotland, a reality that says everything that is new, that is different... because over the years there was a wave of foreigners who arrived. They said all of them who formed groups are refugee groups (*Guy, Cameroonian man, migrant*).

Guy highlights here the administrative disposition of state and non-state actors to define individuals into groups, and then groups into specific migrant-types, despite, in his opinion, what would appear to be a misrepresentation of the reality. The politics of delegation and representation, discussed at length in Chapter Two, are revealed here through the categorisation of groups by external actors. (Guy, as did many others, clearly saw asylum seekers as a minority group within the association and was frustrated by this focus on ‘refugeeness’.) His comments draw attention to the uncritical use of bureaucratic categories of practice by state and non-state actors including community development teams, NGOs and voluntary sector support agencies, and to the way categorisations then shape practice. His reply also reflects the newness of certain migrants to a country like Scotland and to a city like Glasgow, and the overwhelming sense that ‘they’ need to be ‘managed’ in some way. Later in the interview, Guy compared his experience of living in Glasgow and Edinburgh:

In Edinburgh, the problem (*of misrepresentation*) doesn’t appear in this negative way, not like it has been since 2000 (*in Glasgow*). When you saw an African in Edinburgh, you knew that he was either a student or worked in the hospital or in an old folks home...you see a different side to things. But in Glasgow, Africans were asylum seekers (*Guy, Cameroonian man, migrant*).

With very little history of an established African community in Glasgow, it would seem that the combined effects of the ‘racialisation’ of migrants generally and asylum seekers specifically with the stigmatisation of the asylum seeker label has resulted in Africans in Glasgow being by and large perceived as ‘asylum seekers’. Given Glasgow is the only

dispersal site in Scotland, his words are telling of the equally stigmatising effects of the dispersal process. This point was also made in Chapter Four by Adegoke, who spoke of how much he hated getting the bus to Sighthill (in North Glasgow, the most densely populated dispersal neighbourhood in the city). Recalling his comments, he told me when he took the bus home, he felt everyone automatically thought he was an asylum seeker (he wasn't) because he was a 'black African' and he lived in a dispersal area. Bernadette of CAMASS experienced something similar: whilst travelling on a bus as it passed through a dispersal neighbourhood in the Southside of Glasgow, she was publicly and aggressively questioned by a complete stranger as to why she wasn't getting off the bus. The implication of the stranger's words was that surely this dispersal area had to be her end destination, by extension questioning her 'entitlement' to live beyond the boundaries of the socioeconomically depressed dispersal area. These examples of everyday experiences of being 'racialised' highlight the sense of newness of certain migrants in a city like Glasgow as well as tendencies to immediately categorise them with certain classed identities and to racialise them as certain types of migrants. These tendencies are direct products of external processes, such as asylum seeker incorporation and anti-immigration ideologies which permeate political, media and public discourse on belonging and entitlement.

Such experiences raise interesting questions about locality and context and the ways in which racism and racialisation processes come to be coded in language and interactions. Simon told me during an interview that when he was studying at university, he was "just like the other international students", and in that 'everyday context' he was not labelled an asylum seeker by his peers or by teaching staff. He had managed, with the help and support of his association (Africa Umoja Scotland) to negotiate access to university, despite his undecided immigration status. This was something of a milestone given that, at the time when Simon had been applying to university, asylum seekers were not entitled to study higher education courses beyond ESOL or basic IT.<sup>45</sup> Within the 'cosmopolitan' context of the university locality, he could distance himself from the asylum seeker label. In spite of his migrant status, he could 'belong' differently. Other (most often refugee)

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<sup>45</sup> Unlike in England and Wales, changes have been made to extend the support young unaccompanied asylum seekers and children of asylum seekers can receive from January 2008 onwards to access higher and further education in Scotland. Individual asylum seekers satisfying criteria relating to length of residency in Scotland (minimum 3 years); age (under 25 years); and age at time of asylum application (must have been under 18) are now considered eligible for tuition fee support to study full and part-time Higher and Further Education courses in Scotland. Asylum seekers are also now eligible to apply for support from their college or university's Discretionary Fund for help with travel and study costs. (Scottish Government), <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/07/08154202/1>. (accessed 20 November 2011).

members who were studying at university echoed these sentiments - university let them 'just get on with life' - whilst asylum seekers at college (invariably studying ESOL courses) never talked in this way. Their social status was firmly 'locked in' by their migrant status - they studied alongside other asylum seekers, whereas at university, members could move more freely between social categories - they studied alongside other students. The different localities and contexts presented here expose how racist ideologies reveal themselves through interactions and social relations with a variety of publics. These experiences capture the explicit and subtle ways in which migrant status comes to be not only racialised but also classed in different spaces and how, as a result, the individual has to learn to negotiate these spaces, his or her presence in itself a confrontation with these processes of racialisation and social difference (Miles and Brown 2003). By comparison, the SRC workshop context described in Chapter Seven was directly framed by the 'refugeeness' of participants. This revealed an administrative disposition of state and non-state actors to define groups by migrant status, and in some instances to use this to assume an exclusive position of expertise and knowledge vis-à-vis asylum seekers and refugees predicaments. To repeat the point made by Noelle and Jeanne at the workshop, the 'RCO' label kept them circulating in homologous networks, constraining them from moving beyond 'refugeeness', whilst at the same time contributing to the racialisation of asylum seekers and refugees by limiting their access to wider narratives of belonging.

These illustrations relate directly to arguments woven throughout the thesis around the structural construction of asylum seekers as a specific migrant other, and how this then penetrates and permeates multiple localities and contexts where individuals and groups interact with each other, external actors and mainstream society. Although locality tends to be used to designate a city (as in the case above of Glasgow and Edinburgh), the experiences detailed above indicate that it can be used to refer to a neighbourhood or region, an institution, an association and even a social network. What the above data also show is that *within* cities significant differences can exist between different localities and contexts and their impact on migrants' perception of incorporation and identification. These are intricately connected to wider historical and contemporary structural processes: the postcolonial administration of migrants in the metropole; ideologies of nationalism and racism driving migrant incorporation regimes and informing policy; the shift in terminology from refugee to asylum seeker, which designates a shift from universally assumed need of protection to one where claims are presumed unfounded unless proven otherwise; the implementation of dispersal as a central mechanism of asylum seeker

incorporation in the UK; the designation of Glasgow as a dispersal city and the identification of dispersal neighbourhoods within the city; the segregation and exclusion of asylum seekers from mainstream institutions of integration such as education, housing and so forth. Underpinning all of which are questions of deservedness, entitlement and belonging and how they relate to different migrant populations.

The apparent inappropriateness of the 'RCO' label for members of CAMASS can, on one level, be explained by the very mixed membership within this association in terms of the migrant status of members. However, even within groups whose members were mainly asylum seekers and refugees, this label was still seen as limiting and a misrepresentation:

When they speak of RCO, maybe they see it as them that give, that's how I see it. They don't think Karibu gives as well. We're here to give and receive, because if we don't tell them our problems and if we don't give them solutions that seem right to us, then how will they know? [...] I think Karibu is a bit different. RCO is like a category that is imposed... it's fixed. We would define ourselves as a space where there is exchange and interaction that is about integration. When you don't know the person who is your neighbour, it's difficult to accept them. Karibu wants to change that (*Heloise, Congolese woman, refugee*).

Heloise explicitly sees the 'RCO' label' as imposed in an unreflective and uncritical way. She argues that the very existence of Karibu is founded upon agency, itself the foundation of multidirectional and mutually beneficial relationships. Heloise, Guy and others perceive the 'RCO' label as instrumental in constructing them as a passive group that is 'in need' rather than one that has a contribution to make. This reflects a particular institutionalised expectation of helplessness as a crucial refugee characteristic (see Malkki 1995, 1996; Turton 2003; Rainbird 2011). Heloise's is a critique of categorisation processes that not only impose fictive unity upon groups, but result in 'one-size fits all' solutions to the issues members face. She questions whether, without Karibu (and other associations), state and non-state actors could be aware of the real problems that members face. But actually, the question is this: without groups like Karibu, would certain external actors be able to justify their existence? Associations have to engage with external actors, but on whose terms? This is further complicated by this tendency to 'fix' groups and associational practices with a static label which fails to reflect the changing personal histories, hopes, aspirations and trajectories of the individuals involved. This tendency also obscures the changing

structural context from which these associations emerge, mobilise, continue and sometimes disappear.

The rejection of the ‘RCO’ label can be seen as an extension of a rejection of the label ‘asylum seeker’ or ‘refugee’. At a conference I attended, Namutebi, a former Karibu committee member asked a panel of academics who were discussing ‘refugee integration’, “Will I always be a refugee? When will I just be seen as a member of Scottish society?”<sup>46</sup> A similar question was raised at another conference I attended, again on the topic of ‘integration’, where Heloise asked the conference “Why do you keep calling us a refugee community organisation? It is not enough. It is not who we are, we are an African women’s organisation, and we represent the new African communities in Glasgow.”<sup>47</sup> This echoed her interview comments above; she does not in any way disassociate Karibu from ‘asylum issues’, but from the label that fixes groups and imposes an externally defined identity. Asylum seeking and ‘refugeeness’, whilst important, do not define groups.

This distancing from the ‘refugee’ label without doubt results from what has become a social and political stigma associated to asylum seeking. Differentiated migrant status can have negative internal effects on individual involvement and subsequently on associational continuity, as was highlighted in Chapters Six and Seven. For example, during an interview with Robert, a member of ASSECS, he refused to accept the ‘RCO’ label as a fair description of ASSECS, and when I broached questions about asylum issues, he was dismissive and felt they were irrelevant. “*After all*”, he told me, laughing, “*I’ve never been a refugee... nor do I want to be one.*” The way he responded suggested to me it was almost ridiculous to call the group he was an active member of a ‘refugee community organisation’. He was almost impatient that I was talking about ‘refugeeness’, he could not relate to this at all. This was consistent with the strong sense in most of the groups that external agencies persisted with a label that meant nothing to them. On the other hand, as discussed in Chapter Seven, in order to access funding, ASSECS and other groups also make strategic decisions to adopt this label (although I would argue that in many cases they have been forced to do so).

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<sup>46</sup> GARA conference, Glasgow, May 2009.

<sup>47</sup> IAS conference, Strathclyde University, February 2009.



In my view, a more useful way to consider this is to see ‘refugeeness’ as one aspect of associational life rather than as defining associational life, which seems to be where this term comes to be contested. Associations explicitly say, ‘no we are not a refugee group’, however, as I have discussed at length in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, leaders, management committees and many ordinary members do recognise the continued relevance of refugee and asylum issues to their association. Even so, as I have also detailed, leaders and management committees really struggle to find the balance in representing all members’ interests, and sometimes this results in some members feeling excluded because of their asylum seeker status. When I was presenting some of my findings at an academic conference in April 2011, a member of the audience - who introduced himself as a member of an Angolan group - told me his group, like other voluntary groups, has to adapt who they say they are to get best access to funding and other supports.<sup>48</sup> This, he told me, made them no different from any other association. I was sympathetic to this view and I had hoped to be making this very point in my paper. Yet, there seems some reluctance from state and non-state actors to see groups the way they see themselves, that is, beyond migrant status and beyond distinctiveness as ‘refugee’ groups. This generates conflicts between external actors’ administrative disposition to define groups in terms of their ‘refugeeness’ and as a corporate unity, and group definitions of themselves in terms of their own internal diversity, their difference from the Scottish majority, but also in terms of shared universalist values with other ‘others’.

In Chapter Two, I argued that the emergence of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations finds interesting parallels with Werbner’s three critical stages that set urban protest movements in motion: localised associative empowerment, ideological convergence and finally mobilisation (Werbner 1991a:15). To briefly reiterate the argument: associational emergence has various dimensions, often resulting from some form of struggle or battle for autonomy, power and/or resources; ideological convergence is a product of the formulation of common discourses and a set of objectives in relation to the state and the contemporary condition of the group within the wider society; mobilisation usually occurs when there is an issue or event threatening community autonomy or solidarity. In my view, this staged process provides an interesting way to consider how associations seek to confront being labelled as an ‘RCO’ and move beyond ‘refugeeness’, (although not always successfully, as will be discussed below), by using a different set of discourses that go beyond migrant

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<sup>48</sup> GRAMNet Postgraduate Colloquium, University of Glasgow, April 2011.

status and which make claims to other sources of unity, commonality and cooperation. This discussion also questions the linear nature of Werbner's framework, where features of the different stages may well be co-present.

Glasgow is home to an 'umbrella network' called the African and Caribbean Network (A&CN).<sup>49</sup> This network covers a federation of associations and is discursively united in its drive to establish institutions that will increase its relative autonomy vis-à-vis the wider society, ultimately building an 'institutional completeness' (Breton 1964). (The first two stages of a nascent movement would seem to be in immediate evidence: localised associative empowerment and ideological convergence). Whether the A&CN has achieved its unifying goal remains to be seen, as the following explores in greater detail. I had been invited to attend an 'emergency meeting' that had been called between Karibu and the A&CN. The meeting was taking place in the social hub of Glasgow Caledonian University's city centre campus. Renée, a committee member of Karibu who was also attending, told me it had been chosen because it was "central, public and neutral", suggesting that some form of confrontation awaited us. In fact, I had an idea what this was about. I had received an email a few days earlier on the CAMASS yahoo messenger group. This had been forwarded to CAMASS by the A&CN group (who had also forwarded it to a number of other recipients which was evident as I scrolled down the email). It outlined a "serious breakdown in communications" between the A&CN and Karibu, stating that Karibu had "reneged on its commitment to a social enterprise initiative they had been planning together". The A&CN accused Karibu of "pulling out of this agreement without any prior notice" and made reference to the "crisis" the A&CN now found itself in, having committed to premises. It was a very strongly worded and accusatory email and had become the subject of some 'community gossip'. It had already been raised to me in a telephone conversation with Mani from Africa Umoja Scotland. Apparently the A&CN had asked them to 'step into the talks' to try to mediate, but they had refused. Mani told me he didn't want to show any allegiance and that they had to protect their own reputation as an independent organisation.

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<sup>49</sup> The African Caribbean Network (A&CN) was set up in 2005, and has a broad remit as a voluntary sector umbrella organisation and coordination body. According to its website (<http://acnglasgow.org/default.aspx>), it aims to provide surgery, advice and support services in housing, anti-poverty work, employment, group capacity building and community development for 40+ African and Caribbean community groups representing 10,000 people in Glasgow and the surrounding region. It is also working towards the establishment of an African Caribbean Centre for Cultural Heritage, Integration and Social Enterprise. Karibu has been a member of the network since its inception.

When I met Heloise and Renée from Karibu before the meeting, they updated me on the situation. Basically it was as I had thought. They explained that they had had a meeting at possible premises for a joint venture project with the A&CN. The then chair of the A&CN (DM) was present as was a representative from Glasgow City Council, CEMVO and members of Karibu.<sup>50</sup> The A&CN had made a joint application with Karibu to rent premises that would be used as a community space for the broad A&CN membership, for example, to rent affordable and subsidised office space. This was important to associations, given very few had the resources to rent office space. Karibu was planning to use part of the premises to set up and run a social enterprise African Café. Apparently DM had become very frustrated with the representative from CEMVO about some matter and had been very rude to her in front of the Karibu members and the Glasgow City Council representative. The Karibu women had felt very offended and embarrassed. In their view, DM had behaved “as if he was their boss” and was trying to take control of the meeting. They felt this confirmed some of their anxieties about working with another organisation rather than keeping all operations in-house. Then DM had sent this email, under the auspices of the A&CN, and as Renée told me, “this was the last straw”. This meeting was to mediate between the two groups and so other members of the A&CN board were also present.

Eventually everyone arrived at the hall and following introductions around the table, the meeting began with DM setting out his position. He realised the email he had sent was inappropriate, apologised for this and the fact that it had then been forwarded to other networks. Whilst he was talking, Heloise was staring straight ahead, not engaging with him whilst the rest of us were either looking at him or at the ground. There was a general awkwardness and tension. The other A&CN members sought clarification from Heloise and Renée about their ‘special relationship’ with the network. One of the board members, who introduced himself as the chair of the organisation Darfurians in Scotland, said that as he understood things, the A&CN would be “employing Karibu” to run the restaurant, but that it was an A&CN initiative, as the umbrella organisation for all the African groups in Glasgow. Renée looked aghast and interrupted him. Leaning forward from her chair, she shook her head and finger, “No, no, no!” She said the A&CN called itself an ‘umbrella organisation’, but that was not actually the case. She then said that Karibu stood alone and although a network partner, “Karibu was her own boss”. The other members seemed

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<sup>50</sup> Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations in Scotland

surprised by the forcefulness of her interruption. Heloise then turned to me and said “I want to speak in French because I am so upset and angry; I want to be sure I can really express what I want to say. I am completely dissatisfied with this discussion. Karibu does not and never have needed A&CN. You need us, we can get our own premises and in fact that is what we are going to do. We will run our own social enterprise for our members and for the African community, but we will do it without you. We want to pull out of this arrangement with A&CN. Karibu has no choice but to cut all ties with the A&CN. That is all I want to say and now I am going to leave”. By the time she got to the end of this statement, tears were rolling down her cheeks, although she remained calm.

Heloise then got up to go, but Renée, addressing her as “*Maman*”, asked her to stay, as did the others. Another member asked for clarification whether Karibu, as their (A&CN) ‘employee’, could just ‘pull out’? This infuriated Heloise, and in a raised voice she said, “It is out of the question that you employ Karibu. Without us the restaurant won’t happen at all”. She got up to leave and those of us left behind sat looking at each other. Renée said she thought it best to let her go and reconvene when things were a bit calmer. DM shrugged. I grabbed my things and headed off after Heloise. She had moved to another sofa and Renée and I tried to calm her down. Malik from the Darfurians in Scotland joined us, whilst the others waited, nervously looking over. He told us that he had not been a member of the A&CN for long, but he knew that Karibu was an important partner. Renée suggested that perhaps this was a big decision and they needed to think about this some more. But Heloise refused. She said she will not accept to work with A&CN any more and that “this is why Africa is in the mess it is in today”. She said she was furious with the men in the A&CN “who do nothing” (according to her) and then say they will employ her? Referring to DM she stated that “He’ll employ his wife, but not me and not Karibu!”

By this point, Heloise and Renée were both standing firm that the relationship with the A&CN was over. They returned to the group who were sitting in silence. Heloise turned to me and said in French “I have nothing more to add, I am leaving”. DM asked her to reconsider. One of the other members then asked (in a panicky tone) “if Karibu pulls out, will we need to resubmit our proposal for the space and for funding”? Another member said they would need to look into this. They agreed it was better at this stage to close the meeting and reconvene on this matter with the full A&CN board. Heloise had already left the seating area and was making her way to the exit. Renée and I hurried our goodbyes

and left. On the way home, Heloise and Renée described the evening's events as "typical of the African way of doing things, where the men think they can take control and the glory and the women do all the hard work". Heloise said she felt extremely undervalued and taken advantage of by the A&CN. She told us "I grew this organisation from nothing, I won't just give it away" (fieldnotes, Karibu, 10 February 2009).

This rupture in a supposedly unified 'community' should not detract from the practices of solidarity that equally occurred throughout the fieldwork both within and across groups. Nonetheless, it does reveal how interactions between groups and associations are decidedly more complex than is often assumed and this presents as an obstacle to emerging as a movement. Heloise's interpretation of events was shaped by her life experience pre-dating her flight for refuge. This had less to do with immigration status than it had with gendered identities and asymmetrical power relations. The A&CN, a 'partner', had in fact tried to assume the dominant role. Rather than be dominated, Karibu resisted this manoeuvre, refusing to have these internal politics and plays for power sanitised in the name of a transcendental unity as 'Africans'. These interactions also expose the very real competition over limited resources and status that 'minority' groups experience. This raises an interesting issue in that both groups are competing on the same platform as BME groups, not related to immigration status, but to their 'African identity' and 'ethnicised' minority status. In my view this highlights the dialectical nature of solidarity and conflict, and the reality of 'difference within unity' which, although have been considered in detail in relation to BME communities and associations (see for example the contributions to Werbner and Anwar 1991), are often lacking in studies of 'RCOs'.

This rupture reveals the nature of some of the very complex social relations within newly establishing communities. It is a potent example of the problems of fictive unity in migrant politics and the fixed nature of collective identities. Both groups involved saw themselves as evolving and gaining independence from each other, as such their needs of each other were also decreasing in importance. On the whole, each of the associations in this study was more concerned with establishing itself as a settled minority and aspired to be seen as such. Given associations reject the 'RCO' label, surely a question to explore is how they themselves 'move beyond labels'. This will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

## ***Alignment with other ‘others’***

The discussion thus far has considered explicit acts of distancing from the ‘RCO’ label. Such distancing was also done implicitly, in my view, through alternative representations that the associations themselves made to other ‘groups’, either through interactions or expressions. This emerged as a common theme around practices of alignment with other ‘BME’ groups and communities. Werbner (1991a) states that a primary aim of immigrant associations is to ensure autonomy of the specific immigrant community and to establish the basis of its future cultural continuity and reproduction (1991a:28). She argues there is a dual orientation: in emphasising their autonomy, immigrant associations are laying foundations for cultural continuity; and in emphasising particularistic cultural symbols which exclude others they are defining group boundaries. At the same time associations also draw attention to universalistic inclusive symbols with a wider community or group (that is beyond the boundaries of the association) and it is on this basis that they assert a place in the wider society alongside others, demanding equal rights and seeking a foothold in social fields (economic, politics, education) to that point beyond their reach (Werbner 1991b:116). This is also a form of ideological convergence where different groups promoted their association-specific interests, whilst identifying both their shared experiences of overcoming difference and the structural obstacles they face and their place or role in a wider movement to ‘raise the profile of Africans in Scotland’, as detailed in the above fieldnote. They then take this a stage further in distancing themselves from the refugee label and asserting common discourses and struggles (ideologically converging) with other BME communities who have also had to fight for resources, and mobilised around their ‘ethnicised’ identities. In my opinion, such practices suggest ways in which associations use different discourses in relation to different audiences and for different ends. It also highlights that associative empowerment and ideological convergence can in fact be co-present.

Each of the associations studied accentuated their particularistic cultural symbols as a way to define their group-specific boundaries. However, at the same time, they also emphasised what they perceived as universalistic values and symbols that they identified with other ‘racialised minorities’, interchangeably signified as ‘Asian Muslims’, ‘Pakistanis’ or ‘Asians’ rather than with the wider (and ‘whiter’) Scottish community, as the following excerpts illustrate. At the Glasgow Congo Brazzaville Association’s 2008

AGM, as was customary, the President delivered a speech giving a review of the year's activities and highlighting ways forward for the group. On this occasion, the President focused on the 'community' and how it extended across the rivers (Brazzaville and Kinshasa), thus uniting the people from the People's Republic of Congo and its neighbour the Democratic Republic of Congo (and thus unifying different populations as 'Africans'). He asked members to be actors, not spectators in the development of 'the community' and the organisation. He noted that the new Scottish Government was more open and positive regarding asylum seekers and refugees and that "79% of 'Congo Brazza community' had received a positive decision through Case Resolution". This was met with cheers of approval and applause from members. However, he warned them, although they had come a long way, they were not at the end of the road and there was still a lot of work to be done. He then quoted John F. Kennedy, asking members to remember "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country... Well, Scotland is your country now". The members again applauded and cheered.

The President wanted to honour one member in particular for her hard work and commitment to the community. He asked Heloise to stand, which she did (seeming a little embarrassed), and he then asked her to say a few words. (As well as being a member of the Glasgow Congo Brazzaville Association, she was also President of Karibu and a high profile figure who had campaigned on many asylum seeker and refugee issues.) She began to speak very passionately. She reminded members that they had to be proactive, they had to take action, and they could not wait for things to happen but had to make it happen for themselves. She compared the African community to the Pakistani community and the Chinese community, saying that they had worked hard and built their community and their place in Glasgow, but that they too had begun with very little. They had become political players, they were economically independent, and they looked after their own. But, she said, the African community still had much work to do, to make its mark, to make its contribution. She made reference to the need in Glasgow for shops selling specialist goods, clothes, music and so on. The spirit of this speech was very much in keeping with the earlier JFK quote: what can you do for your country, your 'community' (fieldnotes, GCBA AGM, 17 November 2008).

On another occasion, I was attending a CAMASS monthly meeting. I was the first to arrive and about one hour later, Guy turned up with a number of foldable chairs. He

apologised to me for being late, but he had had to collect the chairs from a flat in the other side of town, hence the delay. Still no-one else arrived and so Guy and I got chatting about the association. He was telling me how difficult it was to get people to commit their time, to arrive on time and so on. He told me the association wasn't really about the adults, but about the next generation "our children, we are building something for them, all this is about them, it's not really about us". I asked how they were doing that and he explained, pointing at the chairs, "You see Thérèse, these are not just chairs, they are our assets. We have to build our assets... that makes us independent... We've also got a PA system so when we have our parties, we don't need to bother renting out, we have our own.<sup>51</sup> We are also thinking now about renting it out to other organisations but that becomes a bit of a problem... You know people want to rent it, but then don't pay the deposit. Tonight the Ghanaians have it". I asked how they paid for the chairs and the PA system. He explained: "at our last party, we charged people at the door. Each member had one extra ticket and the rest was paying, but that let us raise some funds, so we could buy the music system... But what we really need is a '*maison d'afrique*', you know somewhere we can all use the hall for our parties and meetings and get-togethers, national days... Somewhere open till late, because you know our parties start late and end late too! You see the Muslim community, they seemed to work with the (Glasgow City) Council to develop halls and stuff next to their mosques. That is what we need - our own space". Paul whose flat we were in had joined us by now and was nodding in agreement (fieldnotes, CAMASS, 26 November 2007, paraphrased exchange).

Guy suggests small ways in which CAMASS are trying to be autonomous through building assets. He also suggests that a tangible concrete expression of their community would enhance their visibility and standing. His perception of the 'Asian Muslim community' as successfully established and as a role model - in the absence of an established 'African community' - was typical of discussions about the future of associations and the 'community' as members saw it and echoes Heloise's comments at the Glasgow Congo Brazzaville Association AGM. It also frames associational life within a community-life cycle perspective.

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<sup>51</sup> This was an electronic amplification system with a mixer, amplifier and loudspeakers that would be used at bigger events such as AGMs, National Day celebrations and Christmas Parties.



On another occasion I was attending an event in Motherwell which had been organised by North Lanarkshire Council and Motherwell Community Forum, to celebrate the arrival and settlement of the twenty Congolese families who had been resettled in Motherwell as part of the Gateway programme.<sup>52</sup> The event was being held in a community hall which had been decorated in Scottish St Andrews's flags and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) flags. Smaller laminated flags that bore the St Andrews saltire on one side and the DRC flag on the other decorated the tables. There was also a large banner set up over a small stage to the rear of the hall, saying 'Welcome/Karibu' (Swahili for welcome). This was primarily a social event and after the evening's entertainment, (Scottish dancing, Gaelic music, a local choir and a ceilidh), a buffet was served and it was a chance for guests to mingle. I had gone with two members of Africa Umoja Scotland and as we sat to eat, more people joined us at our table.

Mani introduced me to two men whom he described as "*les sages de la communauté*", community elders who introduced themselves as Papa Jean and Papa Baz. He explained to them that I was the newest member of Africa Umoja Scotland and doing a study with the group. Papa Baz recalled Mani talking to him about this. They were keen to give me their idea of integration, which they described as "something that means fitting in but not giving anything up." Baz said, "Look at the Asians...that is how we want to be, have our own businesses, restaurants and shops...like them, it is about maintaining our culture but being part of Scotland". Jean then added that he felt this was particularly important for the younger generation, some of whom were there today. Baz said to me "look at these children (pointing to the Congolese children running around the hall); they will call themselves Scottish even though they are Congolese. They represent what I call a '*symbiose*'... We are here today to show integration, to talk about integration, and this means taking the best of Congolese culture, traditions and values and meshing these with the best of Scottish culture, traditions and values." Mani had joined us again and was nodding in agreement; he added "we are creating something new. We don't know what form it will take, but it will be important and interesting" (fieldnotes, Africa Umoja Scotland, Motherwell event, 22 August 2008).

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<sup>52</sup> See List of Abbreviations (page 7) for a fuller explanation of the Gateway programme.

What these excerpts show is that whilst their respective ‘African identities’ were central to each groups’ collective identities, these were not seen as a key political resource, yet. That is, members and associations would articulate their ‘ethnicity’ as a resource still to be used to its full potential. This was most strongly expressed in the comparisons members and associations drew between ‘Africans’ and other racialised minorities they considered as being ‘established’. These comparisons were also made by external ‘others’ interacting with the groups. For example, at the CAMASS National Day event in May 2009, the association had organised an evening of music, traditional dance, a fashion show and food. The event was attended by about fifty Cameroonians, some were members, and some were extended family, as well other friends and sympathisers. The group had also invited Glasgow SNP Councillor Jahangir Hanif as a special guest. The evening’s entertainment included a fashion show, showcasing clothes from the different regions of Cameroon, music and traditional dance performed by men and women. A group of children sang a Cameroonian folk song, followed by a modern dance routine to popular music by the daughter of one of the members. The entertainment programme was followed by a buffet of traditional Cameroonian food. After the entertainment, Councillor Hanif made a speech making direct references to comparisons with the ‘African’ and ‘Asian community’. He drew parallels between the two groups which highlighted the dual orientation of associations like CAMASS: the emphasis of particularistic exclusive cultural symbols and values and universalistic inclusive symbols and values. He spoke about a similar work ethic, belief in family values, and about how their respective ‘ethnicities’ can be mobilised as a political, economic and cultural resource. He addressed this group as the “next generation of immigrants settling who could bring their expertise and make their mark on Glasgow and Scottish society” (fieldnotes, CAMASS, 23 May 2009).

These references reflected commonly expressed perceptions of the ‘Asian community’ held by the different associations: its relative agency and confidence in using its ethnicity as a resource; its numerical strength; its strong sense of common identity; maintenance of culture and tradition; protecting its own interests; unity; visible presence and achievements; and its success at mobilising to acquire mosques/community spaces. Whilst these are stereotypes of ‘the Asian community’, they would be routinely evoked by members, and often contrasted with what internally was felt to be a problem of disarray and lack of unity within the ‘African community’, (a problem illustrated by the rupture between Karibu and the A&CN). In such instances, internal conflict was seen as reflective of a wider ‘African problem’, that would often be mentioned to me during fieldwork and at

wider community meetings and events. For example, when I came across individuals I knew who did not participate in the associations, (and whom I had known for a while), I would ask them why they were not involved in the group 'representing their nationality'. They invariably answered that they didn't 'trust' others from their country, or that they didn't want to mix with people from home because of the problems they had had. They knew others had had similar immigration-related problems, but they didn't want to be the source of 'community gossip', nor did they want others to 'know their business'. This problem was explicitly raised by the Master of Ceremonies at the 2008 Glasgow Congo Brazzaville Association AGM, who had stood to say a few words after the President's address. He asked members to be united not divided, hinting at conversations, internal conflicts and gossip that risked destroying what they had worked for, and that what was discussed at the committee meetings should stay within the committee meetings. He told members that it was not appropriate for discussions to continue by phone or email after the fact. He did not go into the detail but this suggested a degree of internal disagreements and differences, which some members of the committee saw as detrimental to the future of the organisation. He emphasised this point by saying that his own surname meant 'family' in Lingala and that this is what they were, a family, that they had to respect each other and act like a family, with each other not against each other (fieldnotes, GCBA AGM, 17 November 2008).

In contrast to the stereotypical perceptions of the 'Asian community', I would often hear members stereotype the 'African community' as numerically weak; outnumbered by other BME groups; lacking confidence; failing to adapt; deskilled and suppressed by structural obstacles; cliquy and gossipy; with few if any role models. The 'African community' was also considered by members as lacking visibility and history in Glasgow: they had no concrete expressions like a mosque, businesses, or as Guy put it, a '*maison d'afrique*', and several times members of different groups asked me 'where was the older generation of African migrants who had come before them?' Members regularly raised these weaknesses and saw them as contributory factors to 'Africans' not being taken seriously (by external publics). Again the rupture between Karibu and A&CN, and in some ways between the two Cameroonian associations and the splintered Congolese groups can be seen as tangible evidence of this, but only from the perspective of an imposed fictive unity. On the other hand, if this perspective is rejected, as I have advocated, then assumptions that groups will automatically 'get along' because their members hail from the same

continent should also be rejected, or at the very least, considered through a critical lens and treated as problematic.

Acts of alignment with other groups and pronouncements of similarity and difference raise a number of interesting analytical points. Firstly these assertions would be made both privately (within association meetings) and publicly (at AGMs, cultural events and so on). In this way they can be understood as ‘statements of intent’ to settle, despite the uncertainty of immigration status of many members of these ‘communities’. Secondly, they also indicate a historical awareness of ‘others’ ‘settlement’ experiences, an awareness highlighted by the lack of an established ‘African community’ which in itself reinforces the relative newness of the African population in Glasgow. This newness and impatience for a settled presence fuels their sense of urgency to form groups and communities and use these as a resource and source of capital. Thirdly, although the formal establishment of the associations in this study is relatively recent (from 2004 onwards), there are communal concerns that the next generation will lose some of their cultural identity or that this will become diluted. Associations are seen as a way to maintain cultural traditions and national identity, and again the perceived ‘settlement’ of other racialised minorities that is seen as both separate and integrated, is most often used as an example of what this could look like. Finally, the ‘institutional completeness’ (Breton 1964) of the ‘Asian community’ was regularly evoked as evidence of ‘ethnic communities’ managing to ‘settle and integrate’ *and* maintain cultural diversity, an explicit aim of many associations both in this study and others beyond the sample presented here. But groups did more than talk about alignment with other ethnicised groups, they also practiced alignment in interesting ways.

### ***Practising alignment with other ‘others’ and building institutional completeness***

As I have discussed, the ‘Asian community’ was seen by many members of associations, and many other non-members, as a model for a distinct and particularly successful kind of ‘settlement’. Breton (1964) argues that ‘institutional completeness’, the degree to which ethnic communities can provide all of the services required by its members (1964:194), is a key factor in minority boundary maintenance, and is used as a measure of the degree of structural change that results from established settled minorities. The institutional

completeness achieved by the South Asian population in Britain is indeed quite remarkable and represents what Werbner describes as a thrust towards cultural autonomy (Werbner 1991b, see also Ballard 1994). In the case of the 'South Asian community', there are both commercial and state-sponsored services which are supplemented by communal voluntary activities, for example, cultural, religious, political activities which cater to special interests of smaller groups within groups. The apparent autonomy of the 'Asian community' - specialist food shops, fabric and clothes shops, beauty shops, restaurants and sweet shops, DVD stores, book shops, mosques, banks, insurance companies and travel agents - is understood by the associations in this study as reflecting an enterprising spirit and a market available for these goods and services. This autonomy is also seen as a measure of integration, of retaining cultural continuity and adapting to a new environment. Of course this self-autonomy can also serve to mask continued marginalisation, emerging as it has as a response to a harsh reality of exclusion, which is also something with a very real relevance and meaning for asylum seekers. For associations, whose membership base has been predominantly asylum seekers, seeing themselves as an untapped resource has to be contextualised within the wider structural context, one which is characterised by compulsory dispersal on a no-choice basis and restrictions relating to labour market participation and to access to education and other institutions of integration. Without doubt, these constraints represent serious challenges to self-autonomy for the different African groups settling Glasgow, and identifying ways to overcome these limitations goes some way to explaining this alignment with other 'ethnic communities'.

In the absence of an established autonomous 'African population' supported by a range of commercial, religious and political activities, members often discussed in material terms how they aligned themselves with the 'Asian community' in their everyday actions. Karibu's decision to run its monthly drop-in in the Southside of Glasgow reflects some of these practices of alignment. Although Karibu had city centre offices in Glasgow, which had space to accommodate the numbers who regularly attended its drop-in, it continued to host these in the Govanhill Free Church of Scotland church hall in the Southside of the city. I asked Heloise how they had come to have this space. She explained to me that the free use of this site had been negotiated directly between Karibu and the church minister. Karibu is a member of the local integration network, the Govanhill and Pollokshields Integration Network, as was the church. At one of the network meetings, Karibu had raised the issue of lack of appropriate space for a drop-in and the church offered its hall on a monthly basis. Given that Karibu's membership draws from across the city, and that it

now had an office space in the East End, I was curious as to why and how they had come to be a member of this Southside-based integration network. Heloise explained to me that they had been keen to link to an integration network as this was the best route into funding. To this end, they had been advised by a contact within the Oxfam Scotland that, at that time, there was more funding available in this particular network compared to other networks, and so it was a strategic decision to become members and build these alliances.

The free offer of the church hall and the need to be visible in a local integration network were two important factors influencing the location of the drop-in, but they were not the only factors. Its location was also a key issue and provides additional insights into the processes that link the ‘settlement’ of new African migrants to that of other ‘ethnic communities’. Firstly, the church hall is very easy to access via public transport links; this was important for members who came to the drop-in from across Glasgow. Secondly, and more importantly for this analysis, the church hall is located in the heart of Govanhill, in the Southside of Glasgow (see Map 1). Govanhill is a traditional working-class area which has been largely by-passed by regeneration. Its local population is ethnically mixed and it currently has the biggest concentration of Slovak Roma families in Scotland (Poole and Adamson 2008). It is also within walking distance of another distinct neighbourhood, namely, East Pollokshields, with probably the most concentrated South Asian population in Scotland.



Map 1: East Pollokshields (Albert Drive) and Govanhill (Alison Street)

Source: [www.streetmap.co.uk](http://www.streetmap.co.uk)

The broader area of the Southside covering both Govanhill and East Pollokshields is a popular destination in Glasgow for its local ‘ethnic’ shops; meeting the needs of a densely populated black and minority ethnic community (see Map 1). Malika explained that often after the drop-in, if members had time before going to collect children from school, they would do their food shopping from the local shops in the heart of East Pollokshields neighbourhood (Albert Drive) or Govanhill (Allison Street). Both streets combine tenement flats with grocery stores, halal butchers, banks, lawyers’ offices, travel agents, telecommunications businesses and material shops, all services tailored to the specific needs of the majority South Asian population. When I asked Malika whether Congolese cooking (in her case) used the same ingredients as South Asian cooking, she told me that people initially shopped there for spices and herbs. But over time, these grocers had begun to stock manioc flour, cassava root, plantains and yams, and one could buy large bags of rice and maize meal, all staples in much African cooking. She also told me members bought international phone cards in these shops (although many other newsagent-type stores also sold these in other parts of Glasgow). And some used Western Union services on offer in many shops in these neighbourhoods for sending remittances to families in countries left behind. The main through road taking passengers from Glasgow city centre to the Southside is Pollokshaws Road (see Map 1). Leaving the city centre, the route passes through East Pollokshields, parallel to Victoria Road (Govanhill) and then onwards. Since 2007, two African shops and an African café have all opened on Pollokshaws Road as it approaches Albert Drive (see Photo 11).



Photo 11: African café, Pollokshaws Road

Such developments are not unique to the Southside; in other dispersal areas in Glasgow similar types of shops and services have appeared. What is interesting is that both new

shops and established food markets have become landmarks across the city, often used to help people navigate unfamiliar neighbourhoods. Many people I have met over the years talk about neighbourhoods in terms of these shops or which bus to take to get from A to B in relation to the shops on that route. The location of the growing number of ‘African’ shops and services in the Southside gives a distinct impression that they are providing a small taste of what is to come, namely the larger variety of more established ‘South Asian’ shops within walking distance. As one travels from the city centre to the Southside, it is as if the established ‘South Asian’ businesses represent the end result their developing ‘African’ counterparts hope to follow. And when one travels in the opposite direction, from the Southside to the city centre, there is a similar effect: one is leaving behind an area with a strong sense of institutional completeness that is paving the way for more recently settling minorities attempting to build their own autonomous institutions. The notions of a community life-cycle, moving at different paces for different settled and settling groups, and of a changing social and cultural landscape visibly materialises in these neighbourhoods and on these routes.

Victoria Road, the main road passing through the heart of Govanhill is also changing. Since the fieldwork began in 2007, a number of new ‘African’ stores have emerged. There are two ‘African shops’ selling foodstuffs, beauty products, music, DVDs and videos and an African butcher who also sells dry goods (see Flyer 4). Two ‘international barbers’(see Flyer 5) and one ‘African’ beautician/hairdresser, are all within walking distance of Victoria Road, each advertising posters and photos in their windows reflecting products used and styles favoured by their ‘Asian’ and ‘African’ clientele.





Flyer 4: African butcher, Govanhill



Flyer 5: International barber, Govanhill

These examples highlight a new and interesting development to Glasgow, which is a marker not only of ‘settlement’, but of how newly settling African migrants adapt to their changing physical and material landscape, and how this landscape adapts to them. By this I mean the ways in which the newly settling African population attempts to build institutional completeness, and in which a small handful of shops are adapting their businesses to extend this opportunity of institutional completeness to others. Two other ‘Asian stores’ on Victoria Road in the Govanhill area have ‘rebranded’, and their signage reads ‘Asian, Arabic and European food’. This, I would suggest, is not just about settlement but finding a cultural home within the established ‘South Asian communities’ and how these established populations also adapt to changes in the cultural landscape. People cross the city of Glasgow to go to these shops. There is a sense of sanctuary and safety through the familiarity they offer. That shops are adapting sends a message that this extended clientele is also welcome through their doors. They provide a place to feel safe in a ‘new place’, experiences of which were otherwise marked by the sense of hostility and racism towards asylum seekers and refugees. Indeed, it is along way from the bleak rubbish-strewn welcome to Glasgow many faced when they first arrived in the high-rise flats.

In contrast to Breton, who finds institutional completeness a main factor in minority boundary maintenance, these examples demonstrate how ethnic minorities are crossing boundaries that exist between them, for example as 'African' and 'Asian', but whilst remaining distinct 'minorities'. Despite the fact that associations stress ethnic boundaries, this movement is suggestive of small ways in which individuals align themselves with others and cross some boundaries, whilst maintaining others. It is also an indication of the ways in which these other 'others' provide a template (of sorts) for associations in terms of what settlement (and institutional completeness) might look like. According to Werbner (1991b) cultural reproduction of indigenous institutions represents the value placed on reconstruction, consolidation and self-reliance. In itself, it is a muted implicit protest, where cultural independence is stressed. Importantly, and in contrast to Breton, institutional completeness is not necessarily a permanent barrier to participation in the outside world. Furthermore, for these newly settling African populations, the lack of institutions forces their participation in the wider external society. Perhaps more significantly, access to these others' institutions constitutes a protection from stigma and external domination. In some way this explains why alignment with other 'others' actually occurs, individuals feel safer shopping there, not in the sense of a physical threat, but a cultural safety net, where they feel more at ease. But there is also a sense of converging histories: as minorities the 'Asian population' has had to find its own picture of settlement and the individuals and groups in this study feel they can relate strongly to this experience.

Tangible examples of alignment occurred during the fieldwork not just in terms of material consumption of goods and services, but also in relation to the setting up of cultural institutions and accessing social supports. For example, during one of AFIG's monthly meetings, the discussion was focused on the association's development plan for the up and coming year. Someone suggested doing awareness raising work around giving blood within the African community, perhaps in conjunction with the NHS/Radio Awaz. Radio Awaz is a community radio station that serves the 'Asian' population, and increasingly the African population, in Glasgow. It broadcasts in English, Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Pahari and Swahili. It is something of an institution within the 'Asian community' and delivers entertainment, news and local and national information. It also covers particular faiths, including Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. Many community organisations and individuals use the station as a platform to highlight their work and services. Since 2008, Radio Awaz has featured two African DJs, one Cameroonian and one Zimbabwean amongst its team of twenty-nine 'Asian' presenters. The shows run by the African DJs

play African music, post local information and promote events organised by different groups in Glasgow, transmitting podcasts and interviews. They provide another way of keeping communities connected, and seem to have blended well into the ‘Asian’ radio network. One of the members of ASSECS was a well known DJ on Awaz and has gone on to found a dedicated African radio station: Radio Kilimanjaro. When I caught up with him in November 2010 at a demonstration in Glasgow city centre against changes to housing provision to NASS supported asylum seekers, he told me about this move. He said that he had built up a lot of experience and contacts from his time on Awaz, but that the timing was right to set up a specific African radio station. He told me “it was time that *they* were self-reliant”. His experience had helped him develop his business model, as well as given him ideas about what he wanted to do differently. As with the previous examples of emerging ‘African shops and adapting ‘Asian’ shops, the development of Radio Kilimanjaro illustrates how alignment with other ‘others’ provides templates for the development of different types of services.

I introduced the above example of Radio Awaz in the context of AFIG’s development plans. That AFIG considered Radio Awaz as a suitable platform for reaching a wider BME community is an example of associations aligning themselves with and extending out to broader BME communities. That is, these are examples of groups themselves moving beyond ‘refugeeness’ and migrant status in developing a broad range of social supports and building networks. Karibu drop-ins would also regularly feature guest speakers from ‘BME sector’ groups, such as Amina Muslim Women’s Resource Centre<sup>53</sup> and Reach Community Health Project<sup>54</sup>, especially in matters of women’s health, sexual health, personal safety and domestic and sexual violence. Each of the associations was supported to varying degrees by organisations dedicated to supporting BME populations and groups such as CEMVO and BEMIS.<sup>55</sup> This is another clear indication that groups themselves are accessing institutions that support wider BME communities, building their own networks and contacts. It also shows that these agencies are providing levels of support to a wider asylum seeker and refugee population, identifying them as part of an extended BME population. New solidaristic ties are emerging that provide benefits and opportunities but

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<sup>53</sup> Amina MWRC was founded in 1997 as a community initiative developed by women from the Scottish Muslim community who felt mainstream services were not reaching, or adequately meeting Muslim women’s needs.

<sup>54</sup> REACH Community Health Project is a national third sector organisation founded in 2000, with a key strategic role in improving the health, wellbeing and health care provision of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in Scotland.

<sup>55</sup> Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations and Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland

which also challenge 'ethnicised' boundaries of difference. Such patterns are evidence that there are significant comparisons and overlaps in the needs of asylum seekers and refugees with those found in the settled BME communities, as well as general and European migrant worker communities. However it must also be clearly stated that, within each of these population groups - BME, asylum seekers and refugees, and general migrants or migrant workers - there are additional needs which must be considered. This relates directly to the context of *non-settlement* asylum seekers face given their newness to a city like Glasgow, the precariousness of their immigrant status and their exclusion from institutions of integration. Subsequently, specific needs arise from the unequal impact of factors associated with immigration status, the operation of the asylum system and differentiated migrant incorporation regimes.

In the first section of this chapter I restated Werbner's three critical stages that set urban protest movements in motion: localised associative empowerment, ideological convergence and finally mobilisation (Werbner 1991a). I will now briefly return to these in concluding this chapter. I have already explored and analysed instances of associative empowerment and ideological convergence across the associations in this study. In my view, the data presented in this chapter provide clear examples of ideological convergence with other non-African, non-asylum seeker BME communities, in particular with the 'South Asian' population in Glasgow. This convergence, which results from processes of alignment with other 'others', can take many forms and is multidimensional: either through material consumption; through statements of sharing universalistic values; or through modelling new institutions drawing from the institutional completeness of an established 'BME community'. It can also co-exist with associative empowerment: associations equally work very hard to maintain particularistic goals. It would seem the benefits to associations in aligning themselves with 'Asian communities' are manifold, constituting a proactive distancing from immigration status; a form of migrant praxis, driven by choices and actions; a statement of intent to settle; and a template of sorts for how associations and individuals imagine the 'African communities' of Glasgow might look in the future. These associations also have to justify their distinctive cultural and political discourse within the broader BME discourses. And whilst clear statements are articulated in relation to what makes these groups distinct, underpinning the formulation of common discourses and objectives are the notions of continuity and change. These notions are central to adopting a community-life cycle perspective that provides a more effective way of 'moving beyond refugeeness', of adapting services to changing needs, of recognising internal diversity and

of integrating micro-level processes with macro-level constraints and opportunities. The reach and extent of such convergence remains to be seen and is indicative of areas for further social inquiry.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has sought to demonstrate the various ways in which the associations that are the focus of this study themselves move beyond migrant status and ‘refugeeness’. Deploying explicit and nuanced strategies, individuals and groups distance themselves from the ‘asylum seeker/refugee’ and ‘RCO’ labels in various ways, ranging from assertions of particularistic national identities, to asserting a shared ‘African identity’, to claims of universalism with other BME populations. Adopting Werbner’s conceptual schema (Werbner 1991a), I argued in this chapter that such actions of alignment and engagement with other communities can be understood as an extended form of ideological convergence that occurs across boundaries of difference relating to ethnicity or migrant status, but which occur alongside the continued development of association-specific development.. Crucially, these efforts of alignment are best understood within the context of migrant incorporation regimes generally. They constitute a rejection of the fixedness of ‘refugeeness’ and assumed fictive unity on association relations.

This chapter explored and analysed the dynamic nature of solidaristic ties which evolve and develop over time and which, like associations, can also sometimes disappear. Whilst imposed fictive unity may produce assumed solidaristic ties which in practice are weak, it may also mask other articulations of solidarity with other communities beyond the boundary of ‘RCOs’ or the ‘refugee community’. The groups and individuals in this study search for ‘settlement’ in a limiting environment, and alignment with other ‘others’ is perhaps the most powerful symbol of this search, as groups and individuals use this to define what settlement should, and hopefully will, look like for them. By focusing on the role, function and meaning of the associations for their members through various stages of transition in this and the last three chapters, I have emphasised how meanings of associational life and the life of the association change and evolve over time. To conceive of these groups as fixed in time and space paints only a very partial and reductive picture of a very complex reality.

## Chapter 9 Conclusion

### **Overview**

This thesis has explored the nature of associational practices as they emerge and develop over time amongst dispersed African asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow. Drawing on a twenty-six month period of extensive participant observation, the thesis has situated members' understandings, experiences and definitions of 'settlement' and belonging in the context of the wider structural factors shaping their lives, specifically as these relate to asylum and immigration legislation. The thesis has analysed how associations have provided an alternative context of reception in the UK, where the capacity of individuals to come together to reshape how life is to be lived and experienced in the place of exile takes centre stage. Alongside agency, underpinning this study have been the notions of continuity and changing social relations, both between members within groups, between associations, and between associations and external actors. This has emphasised how agency, change and continuity are constantly influenced by a complex interplay of internal processes and structural forces. As such, I have presented a study of associational forms that integrates micro and macro level analyses: offering a fine-grained ethnographic account of associations as they evolve over time. In this way, the thesis has analysed the complex and differentiated ways associations are experienced by members, from their emergence as a way to confront and survive *non-settlement* on their own terms, through their internal structures, conflicts and struggles and across their trajectories, as they develop into social entities with intersecting identities which extend beyond 'refugeeness'.

In so doing, the thesis has sought to challenge notions of fixedness of migrant status, and of homogeneity of individuals and social relations that are often attributed to associations whose membership may be drawn largely from asylum seeker and refugee populations. It has also sought to question the notion of fictive unity imposed on these social relations and individuals by revealing different sources of social difference which relate to changing and differentiated migrant status. This illustrates ways in which social relations are shaped by structural forces. These social divisions affect the nature of internal relations, and resonate with political and ideological debates of who and what constitutes a migrant in terms of desirability and deservedness. The thesis has sought to question the different ways in

which immigration status matters to group formation and continuity. That is, it matters not only as an organising principle for the emergence of groups, but also as a source of difference and conflict within groups, thus revealing that it matters to group continuity, but in ways that tend to be obscured by the constructions of 'RCOs' as a place of idealised solidarity. Finally it matters to external actors (state and non-state) who, driven by their own imperatives and the need to sustain their own existence, focus on 'refugeeness' in such way that it constrains groups to the 'RCO' category. Through an analysis of internal structures and processes, internal challenges and tensions, and claims to representation beyond 'refugeeness', I have argued that such static and problematic notions should be replaced by alternative ones of change and fluidity, diversity and difference, similarity and unity, and of solidarity and struggle which better capture the moving picture of the collective social relations of newly settling migrant populations. In sum, against representations of associational practices as a homogenised collective form, distinct to a specific migrant group, this thesis has argued for the need to move beyond a focus on 'refugeeness' as a defining social identity, and for an understanding of associational life that is sensitive to the fluidity, contradictions and tensions found in all forms of social relations.

To support these arguments, I have presented evidence which demonstrates that although groups emerged from the context of *non-settlement*, where uncertain migrant status may have been an organising principle, 'refugeeness' is not an enduring feature of associational life. I have argued that fixing attention on 'refugeeness' illustrates how migrant status has become an all too convenient touchstone for state and non-state actors for framing the associational practices of newly settling minority populations, as they 'adapt' to the new society of 'settlement'. However, this is not an accurate reflection of the lived experience of associational life, as individuals and groups grapple with the challenges they face in having their self-representations as other than 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker' heard, recognised and valued. An important strategy to challenging this is to align themselves with other 'others', revealing the ways in which they identify beyond 'refugeeness', and assert alternative narratives of what 'settlement' can look like and how it is lived. Understanding these processes of alignment provides a further way forward for questioning the notion of fictive unity imposed on these social relations and individuals by revealing different sources of and changing solidaristic ties over time.

A key argument of this thesis has been against the kind of homogenising steamroller effect of tendencies to categorise groups as a distinct migrant type and associational practices as typical of that migrant group. There are two main corollaries of this tendency with direct implications for theoretical refinement as advocated in this study. Firstly, the effects of changing and differentiated migrant status upon group dynamics are generally overlooked. The thesis has presented strong evidence that immigration status positively *and* negatively influences relationships between members, and individuals' relationships to the group. Following on from this point, a second consequence is that possibilities for groups to self-identify as other types of 'other' are missing, pointing to significant omissions in conceptualising migrant associational forms and practices as they evolve over time. Although groups recognise the importance of migrant status as asylum seekers to their emergence, its centrality to their continuity is highly questionable. I have argued that when asylum seeker and refugee-led associations remain labelled as 'RCOs' by state and non-state actors, this serves to perpetuate their presumed vulnerability, maintains their 'unsettled' status and excludes these groups from accessing alternative discourses of difference and sameness.

This thesis contends that, by framing refugees and asylum seekers' associational practices as separate from other migrants, social divisions are created and maintained, inequalities are reproduced, and commonalities with other migrants' experiences in relation to 'settlement experiences' are overlooked. It may therefore be more helpful if the study of contemporary forced migrants was situated more centrally within the study of migrants generally. The continued study of refugees and asylum seekers as a group separate from other migrants - of which this study is also one, but in which I hope to have argued how research may move beyond this impasse - may inadvertently and unnecessarily contribute to the negative image of forced migrants as particularly needy, vulnerable and passive. This thesis seeks to provide an alternative lens through which settlement experiences may be understood from the perspectives of individuals and groups themselves. I have argued that exploring associational practice using conceptual schema developed from the literature on migrant communities and social movements can offer one such pathway to moving beyond the 'refugeeness' of groups to refocusing on agency. In the following section, I revisit the aims of the thesis and the arguments in the chapters in light of these conclusions.



## ***Restating the aims of the thesis and revisiting the chapters***

The general aim of this thesis was to present a theoretically and empirically grounded account of the changing nature of asylum seeker and refugee-led associational life in Scotland. More specifically, I sought to gain an understanding of the meanings, understandings and experiences that asylum seekers and refugees attach to associational practices. Secondly, I wanted to understand how these experiences intersect with the fluid and changing social and political context of the life of associations. Thirdly, I sought to sharpen the focus on how external factors shape and influence internal relations and interactions, not only in terms of associational emergence but also continuity. Finally, I wanted to understand the extent to which associational practices and continuity are outcomes of internal struggles and external domination. The thesis set out to answer a number of research questions (see Chapter One, pages 22-23) which sought to establish a framework for exploring African asylum seekers and refugees' understandings and experiences of associational life in Glasgow, and the different chapters addressed these questions in order, although there was also overlap throughout.

As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, it may be more helpful if the study of contemporary forced migrants was situated more centrally within the study of migrants generally. Chapter Two set out the theoretical framework through which I sought to achieve this by identifying the limits of dominant 'race relations' thinking on immigrant associations (Banton 1967; Rex 1973; Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex *et al* 1987), and combining this with more radical approaches to understanding association practice, from which develops a conceptual language and framework around solidarity, group formation and mobilisation and social movement processes (Sivanandan 1985, 1990; Werbner 1991a, 1991b; Werbner and Anwar 1991; Lichterman 1996, 2002; Barker *et al* 2001). I then identified and evaluated the field of 'RCO' studies (Salinas *et al* 1987; gold 1992; Wahlbeck 1997, 1998; Kelly 2003; Griffiths *et al* 2005), presenting important contributions but also limitations. Specifically, these limitations related to understandings of 'settlement'; a focus on factionalism, and a lack of attention to internal processes and life cycle approaches to understanding change within associations. I argued that this sub-field imposes an enduring quality of 'refugeeness' upon asylum seeker and refugee-led associations that is problematic. The theoretical approach adopted did not seek in any way to underestimate the distinguishing features of asylum seekers and refugees' experiences.

Nonetheless, in drawing from these strands of social theory, I sought theoretical refinement through developing a broader framework for moving beyond 'refugeeness' and challenging dominant solidarity-focused models of associational practice. This widened perspective allowed for the role of continuity and change - as influenced by a combination of internal and external factors - to become central to making sense of associational practices over time. I sought to bring together conceptual schema from these different and often separate areas of social inquiry, and in so doing to present new perspectives for studying solidarity and struggle in the lives of asylum seeker and refugee-led groups. Integrating perspectives in this way contributes a novel conceptualisation of associational practices to the migrant studies literature, clearing a theoretical and empirical path to moving beyond 'refugeeness'. To re-emphasise, this is not to reject the argument that asylum seekers and refugees face specific vulnerabilities and obstacles. Rather it is to argue that continuously defining them in these terms contributes to their construction and representation as vulnerable, passive and perpetually 'unsettled' populations.

Chapter Three outlined the methodologies, methods, and orientations through which the questions were operationalised. In seeking to analyse the micro context of associational practices against a backdrop of structural change, the research methodology integrated a micro-level focus typical of Chicago School interactionism, with a macro-level social, historical and political contextualisation characteristic of Manchester School social anthropology and the extended case method, and specifically with Burawoy's development of this method. Rather than seeing these as competing epistemologies, I developed an integrated methodological approach, combining both perspectives within a constant comparative framework, underpinned by the aim of theoretical refinement, as set out in Chapter Two. The comparative framework functioned at multiple levels: empirically, within groups, between members and between groups; theoretically, between these groups and other national and international studies of 'RCOs' and immigrant and minority associations; and methodologically between groups themselves. I spent twenty-six months observing at close hand the meetings and interactions of the different groups, adopting various roles of sympathiser, volunteer and official member. In one association I was nominated onto the management committee, in another I was nominated as a Trustee onto their Board of Directors. I carried out forty-six in-depth interviews, and alongside the many informal group discussions I was part of, I organised three formal discussions. I was also a member of two online fora. I had access to association documentation such as rules and regulations, constitutions, minutes, planning documents and so forth. Although the

groups and their members were the focus of the study, I also sought to incorporate alternative perspectives from other bystanders and observers, service providers and state and non-state actors into the thesis narrative. In sum, I was very closely involved in, and part of both the public and private face of the groups, and in this way I sought myself to move beyond 'refugeeness' in both method and approach.

In Chapter Four, I detailed the various similarities between migration management generally and the handling of asylum seekers specifically. The seemingly endless succession of changes made to asylum and immigration legislation that constantly reset the parameters of 'settlement' bear all the hallmarks of a long history of UK immigration policy that is focused on control, compliance and conditionality of stay as applied to (certain) migrants more generally. However I also identified particular policy measures that seek to specifically make claiming asylum in the UK increasingly difficult. These have gone further than previous measures in constructing the asylum seeker as a particularly undesirable migrant type, thus increasing popular suspicions about individuals' motivation for claiming refuge in the UK. The implementation of compulsory dispersal as a central plank of asylum and immigration legislation since the late 1990s has been fundamental to feeding these political and public discourses, and constructing a context of *non-settlement*. Although a UK-wide policy, I argued that the comparatively pro-immigrant political agenda in Scotland provides a different context from existing studies into asylum seeker and refugee-led associations. The experience of dispersal has been the backdrop for the development of the research questions which seek to grapple with broader questions of agency, belonging, social relations and changing personal circumstances in the city of Glasgow, taking the associational form as a lens through which to analyse these questions. I argued that the emergence of groups can be understood as a grassroots response to confronting and surviving *non-settlement*, with dispersal as a catalyst for action. I identified associational emergence as critically providing an alternative, person-centric context of reception to state incorporation, on the terms of and as defined by the needs and expectations of individuals. In exploring the effects of continuing policy changes, this thesis has demonstrated the value of a longitudinal study which adopts a more rounded community life-cycle perspective as it evolves over time, providing key insights into the internal and external mechanisms that represent both constraints and opportunities for groups.

In describing the various literatures, theories and methodologies which framed the thesis, the subsequent four chapters sought to answer the research questions empirically. Chapter Five began with an introduction to the six associations - AFIG, Africa Umoja Scotland, CAMASS, ASSECS, Karibu and the Glasgow Congo Brazza Association - whose experiences were the focus of the study. Whilst this introduction focused mainly on mapping their development from friendship groups to formalised associations, and highlighted the similarities and differences in their objectives and trajectories, the dominant themes of change and continuity emerged. These foreshadowed the notions of associations in transition and of the community life-cycle developed in this and subsequent chapters. Chapter Five then focused attention at the micro-level of associational life, exploring and analysing how this is developed and enacted by members from three different perspectives. The first looked at the dominant association setting of the 'home space'; the second considered associational life from the perspective of the content of the meeting and the third from the perspective of the social life of the group. I argued that, in spite of the non-integrative norm of dispersal policy, associational life, how it is enacted and the practices defining it can be conceptualised as a way for asylum seekers and refugees to survive *non-settlement*, subvert liminality, produce a sense of familiarity and stability and of common experience and social condition.

Ultimately the association provides a way to belong. Individuals and groups used the sense of belonging and 'sameness' that emerged from enacting group life to stabilise their experiences in the new environment. I also argued that the opportunity for a social life which the association provides has particular significance, not only in fostering a sense of belonging, but also in providing a safe and certain place for cultural reproduction of 'home' practices, and in producing a levelling effect to counter the many social differences that are part of all social relations and interactions. Nonetheless, associations exist within a broader structural context that dictates and determines levels and types of participation and involvement, revealing social differences within groups that find expression in different forms of action and expression. Although *non-settlement* means the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees are distinct from other migrants, in broader terms, the association provides a space for readjustment in the new place of 'settlement', serving as an important buffer for 'centre'/'periphery' relations. In this way, members use and experience the associations in ways similar to other migrants more generally.

Chapter Six developed this focus on the enactment of associational life into an analysis of the internal processes which shape associational emergence and continuity, and which are themselves heavily influenced by external forces. Explicating the intricacies of group processes emphasised the dynamic changing nature of groups and the ways that different members have different needs and expectations of the group. I argued that group processes also need to be connected to the hierarchical framework within groups at ordinary member, committee member and leadership level. This chapter developed the study of general associational experience presented in the previous chapter by focusing the analysis on internal processes structured around committee-level involvement, leadership, representativeness and participation, and funding. Studying internal processes revealed the extensive heterogeneity within groups and the diverse ways in which this finds expression along a number of social cleavages, including changing and differentiated migrant status, an important source of social difference often neglected in studies of migrant associations. This chapter also revealed the effects of external pressures on internal relations, particularly in relation to state and non-state actors' administrative disposition to define groups in terms of their 'refugeeness'. I argued this produces the following effects: constraining their transition into a 'settled population'; imposing a fictive unity that is highly problematic for groups'; and neglecting important commonalities with other migrant populations. I also argued this has detrimental effects on association continuity. Challenging this dominant perspective provided an important step towards moving beyond migrant status and 'refugeeness', and thinking about these groups in more general associational terms.

Chapter Seven developed the focus on divisions further, arguing that associational life is interwoven with solidaristic and conflictual relations that present both opportunities and constraints, not only for association emergence but also continuity. This chapter explored the source of these relations in relation to how they are framed both internally and externally in terms of ethnicity and migrant status. However, a wider range of social differences were highlighted as dividing groups and placing continuous pressure on shared experiences and practices. The analysis presented in this chapter revealed the structural, organisational and historical context of divisions within groups and their multiplex social relations, divisions most often hidden by a focus on 'refugeeness' of the individuals. Nonetheless, the context of *non-settlement* which provides a constant backdrop to associational life influences continuity in quite specific ways: waning participation levels, shifting foci and objectives and effects of differentiated migrant status on internal relations

that increasingly find expression in interactions and actions. Groups are challenged with managing ever evolving and differentiated needs and expectations of members, and this chapter explored how outcomes for associations are constantly mediated by the complex interplay of internal struggles and external domination. I identified that differentiated migrant status can produce exclusionary effects, which reveal themselves internally but can come to be hidden from external relations, specifically through state and non-state actors' persistent focus on 'refugeeness'. A significant effect is that asylum seekers and refugees are maintained as a very distinct group by organisations who assume a position of expertise and knowledge of asylum seekers predicaments. Consequently, they are ideologically and politically constructed as separate from other migrant groups who are able to make claims to belonging to a wider BME population.

In Chapter Eight, I drew together the concepts, ideas and arguments in the previous three chapters to explore how groups themselves respond to these processes of categorisation as a distinct migrant other. I described and analysed how associations reject the 'RCO' label in explicit but also nuanced ways. Specifically, I identified firstly practices of ideological convergence with a wider 'African identity politics' and secondly practices of alignments and claims to convergence with the long established South Asian population in Glasgow. Such patterns revealed that solidaristic ties change and evolve over time and exposed the dynamic and often-times ephemeral nature of social relations in different social contexts. Claims to convergence with other BME populations can be understood as an act of challenging 'refugeeness' and the non-integrative aim of dispersal which was to disrupt possibilities of 'settlement' through blocking access to pre-existing social networks. These patterns of claims-making and alignment and the emergence of multidirectional solidarities can then be understood as a response to *non-settlement* and as a way for groups and individuals within groups to actively move beyond 'refugeeness' in presenting their own ideas of what 'settlement' could look like. Woven into such claims are also the lived experiences which reveal that any 'transcendental unity' or ideological convergence is nonetheless riven with constraints as it is opportunities. This chapter, building upon the previous chapters, emphasised the notion of a community life-cycle, so often lacking in studies of 'RCOs' or associations relating to asylum seekers and refugees. I argued that adopting such an approach offered a far greater range of insights into associational forms, and how they connect to stories of belonging, 'settlement' and integration, than the 'snapshot analyses' that tend to pre-dominate academic and policy-related literature. In sum, this concluding empirical chapter drew together the argument that the focus on the

‘refugeeness’ of these associations has resulted in both a myopic, reductive and short-term way of framing how ‘settlement’ should look - and which overlooks the broader macro context shaping individuals lives - rather than how associations experience it for themselves and perceive how it could look for their members and their children.

From this review of the chapters, the thesis argued the following core points. Firstly, the context of *non-settlement* better captures the lived experience of asylum seekers as they are incorporated in the UK. However, *non-settlement* is not an enduring or defining aspect to their life experiences. Associations are a manifestation of individuals actively challenging this context and creating an alternative way of existing collectively. That is, associations provide a person-centred approach to coping with *non-settlement*, and constitute a starting point for re-defining the experiences of ‘settlement’ from the point of view of newly establishing migrants themselves.

Secondly, dominant categorisations of groups as ‘RCOs’ construct them as a fixed and static entity, thus homogenising the experiences of individuals and the social relations located therein. This thesis has argued instead for an understanding of associational practices which is fluid and context-specific, and which should be understood within the wider context of intersecting identities and social divisions revolving around class, education, age, and gender alongside differentiated migrant status. These different social divisions matter to association continuity in important ways that are often neglected by the focus on ‘refugeeness’ which constructs ‘RCOs’ as the benchmark associational form and source of an idealised solidarity. Rather, association practices are best understood within an integrated analysis of both internal struggles and external domination. This approach provides a framework to study association emergence and continuity beyond the narrow focus on migrant status alone, and draw upon insights from other studies of group formation processes that aim to affect some form of social change.

Thirdly, although groups have emerged from the conditions of dispersal, notions of groupness are tightly bound up by the politics of social relations, by multiple social identities and divisions, allegiances and solidarities, conflicts and unity. Social relations within groups are also continuously shaped by both internal processes and external forces, in particular the broader asylum and immigration legislation framework. This necessitates

an approach that foregrounds both the social and structural context. Such an approach reveals the varied forms of social differences that exist within groups, a phenomenon often neglected in studies of asylum seekers and refugees, but which have direct effects on associational continuity, and on feelings of collective identity and belonging that reveal the problematic groupness so often assumed of such associations.

Finally, the construction of 'RCOs' as places of idealised solidarity, and the categorisation of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations in this way, has a wider homogenising steamroller effect which has implications for maintaining tight social and political boundaries around groups. This not only inhibits their development beyond 'refugeeness', but also their access to wider networks that could profitably assist them to achieve a more successful, long-term 'settlement' and sense of belonging on their own terms. In this way, state and non-state actors set the terms of 'settlement' that are reductive and inhibitive, and (either knowingly or unwittingly) contribute to the 'unsettled' status of these populations. By consistently considering refugees and asylum seekers as separate from other migrants, new divisions and differences are created, inequalities are reinforced, and potentially important and interesting commonalities with other migrants' experiences in relation to 'settlement experiences' are overlooked. It may therefore be more helpful if the study of contemporary forced migrants was situated more centrally within the study of migrants generally. This would provide one way out of the impasse of 'refugeeness'.

### ***Contribution of thesis***

The ultimate goal of the theoretical and methodological approach adopted in this thesis is one of theory refinement. The arguments presented in the present study and the data underpinning them contribute to existing theoretical perspectives and academic knowledge in a number of ways through developing, bringing together and challenging a range of ideas and theories within the academic literature on migrant associations generally and on 'RCOs' specifically. In this section, I outline the specific contribution to the literature this thesis seeks to make.

Firstly, against representations of asylum seeker and refugee-led associations as a fixed, static and alien other, the thesis contributes an understanding of such associations that is fluid, temporal and rooted in the experience of establishing minorities of migrants.



Shifting the focus onto internal structures highlights the similarities between such associations and migrant groups and 'ethnic' associations more generally. This study contributes to the critical seam of research into different aspects of immigrant and minority associations (Werbner and Anwar 1991; Sivanandan 1990), which breaks with the dominant functionalist paradigm by questioning the centrality of 'ethnicity' and co-nationality to the growth of associations, indicating that communities rally around issues and causes, and not just around abstract invocations of ethnicity. Demonstrating practices of associative empowerment and ideological convergence, this thesis adds the voices and experiences of asylum seeker and refugee associations to critical debates and contributes a novel perspective to existing studies of migrant associations.

Secondly, in contrast to accounts of associations which seek to universalise and categorise, the thesis contributes a critical, grounded approach to studying associational lives of asylum seekers and refugees that eschews generalised definitions and challenges the perpetuation of categories by state and non-state actors which are, in the end, of limited analytical use (cf. Griffiths *et al* 2005; Zetter and Pearl 2000; Zetter *et al* 2005). This thesis aims to contribute to a transformation of how the associational lives and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees are studied in two ways: firstly through highlighting the experiences of association members as individuals that exist beyond their imposed asylum seeker or refugee label, with identities, histories, cultures, social relations, personal lives and emotions; and secondly through methodological refinement, integrating micro and macro-level analyses within an ethnography that provides a fine-grained account of associational life as a moving picture.

Thirdly much of the literature on asylum seeker and refugee-led groups fails to capture the notion of changing and differentiated migrant status, the complexities of internal diversity and how these affect group formation and sustainability (Rex *et al* 1987; Zetter and Pearl 2000; Griffiths *et al* 2005). I argue that the broader asylum and immigration policy framework and differentiated immigration status of members has direct consequences on shaping associational life over time. This thesis then foregrounds the positive and negative effects of changing migrant status to understandings of associational practices, experiences and trajectories, and seeks to contribute to theoretical debates on the associational practices of migrants through adding a transitional perspective that carefully balances internal struggles with external domination (Werbner and Anwar 1991).

Fourthly, the thesis brings together insights from critical studies of immigrant associations (for example, see Sivanandan 1982, 1985, 1990; Werbner 1991a, 1991b), with literature on ‘RCOs’ (Salinas *et al* 1987; Gold 1992; Wahlbeck 1997; Kelly 2003; Griffiths 2005) and urban protest and social movements (Werbner 1991b; Lichterman 1996, 2002; Barker *et al* 2001). In so doing this thesis makes new connections between and integrates often separate fields of research and social theory for conceptualising associational life amongst newly establishing migrant communities. This theoretical refinement reveals different ways in which researchers and groups themselves may ‘move beyond labels’.

Finally, whilst the thesis makes a contribution mainly to academic knowledge and theory, there are direct implications for both policy and practice. I have argued that research must move beyond the impasse of ‘refugeeness’ in order to recognise the complex nature of associational practices of newly settling migrant populations. Following the community-life cycle approach, associations and the communities they claim to represent evolve and change through time, sometimes they survive longer-term and, as this thesis has also demonstrated, sometimes they disappear. Whilst the context of *non-settlement* and ‘refugeeness’ may have been a central organising principle, I argue it is not an enduring aspect of any collective identity. Constantly framing asylum seekers and refugees on these terms contributes to their representation as a vulnerable, passive and perpetually ‘unsettled’ population. The thesis makes a strong case for policy-makers and practitioners to move beyond ‘refugeeness’ in approaching broader questions of ‘settlement’, integration, belonging and social cohesion.

### ***Implications of thesis for further research and elaboration***

The arguments presented in this chapter and the contributions outlined above have raised a number of questions, which although not the focus of inquiry in the present thesis, suggest areas for further research. First, this study has focused on the experiences of six different African associations in Glasgow. However, Glasgow is also home to a wider range of groups representing a number of migrant populations and nationalities, none of which have necessarily a long history of ‘settlement’ in the city, or indeed in Scotland. Alongside asylum seeker and refugee populations, there are also a growing number of Slovak Roma migrants settling in the city (Poole and Adamson 2008), as there are worker migrants from

A8 accession countries. In light of this constantly changing migration dynamic, further research could explore the associational practices (or absence thereof) of these different migrant groups, and of different types of group (e.g. political, religious). An interesting comparative framework would allow for questions to be explored around the degree to which the context of *non-settlement*, or simply the newness of migrant populations, enables or inhibits associational emergence and continuity. It could also assess the motivations, expectations and needs of new settling populations, and study how agency reveals itself from the multiple perspectives of different migrant groups, either through their associational forms or the development of other institutions (religious, cultural, business and so forth). This would have immediate implications for policy makers and practitioners in developing 'settlement' strategies and supporting and understanding 'settlement' experiences.

Second, I have argued that previous studies of 'RCOs' are theoretically and methodologically limited: they provide a snapshot analysis of the 'RCO' in the immediate years post dispersal; and they rely on qualitative techniques that do not capture the more 'everyday' and banal experiences and problems of associational life. This would suggest scope for further inquiry through revisiting previous studies within a broader comparative framework based upon the arguments presented in this study, drawing upon existing data sets and previous qualitative studies conducted elsewhere in the UK to evaluate the factors affecting group sustainability and continuity. Adopting the ethnographic approach advocated in this thesis - which brings together a micro and macro perspective and foregrounds change and continuity - could offer fresh insights and a new approach to evaluating associational practices across a number of sites in the UK.

Third, this study has presented alignments made between the different 'African' associations with a wider BME, and specifically, South Asian population in Glasgow. It has not been within the remit of this study to explore associational practices of the South Asian population in Glasgow. Whether associations similar to the ones studied in the present thesis even exist within this population is a matter of further inquiry. Has the 'institutional completeness' of other BME populations replaced any need for such associations? If this is the case, then is it conceivable to suggest this might be the path that the associations who have informed this study will also follow? A historical study of the settlement, in widest possible terms, of established BME populations could provide useful

insights into the longer-term trajectories of new settling populations, and the extent to which their experiences and paths of the latter are indeed similar to a more general migrant experience. This would also provide a framework to assess the extent and reach of any ideological convergence between and across different BME populations.

Fourth, the groups whose experiences have informed the present research have all emerged directly from the implementation of dispersal and the urgency for new social networks to form and develop in order to cope with *non-settlement*. Dispersal as a process has tended to be evaluated in relation to onward migration and/or immobility. The findings of this thesis suggest that a wider range of factors could be usefully employed to measure its effectiveness. This might include the appropriateness and availability of structures and processes, whether developed top-down (NASS, GASSP) or bottom up (asylum seeker and refugee-led associations). Does the existence of such structures and processes influence decisions to stay in the place of initial dispersal or to move on upon positive refugee status determination? This would also have direct implications for policy makers and practitioners interested in questions of ‘settlement’, integration and the broader ‘community cohesion’ agenda, and in developing aspects of migrant reception policies.

Fifth, as discussed in Chapter Eight, one of the groups in this study, Africa Umoja Scotland, worked closely with local authorities outside of Glasgow in the initial stages of the implementation of the Gateway programme that was set up for the resettlement of refugees with secure status. This ‘secure status’ can be directly contrasted with the ‘uncertain status’ that is characteristic of the context of *non-settlement* facing dispersed asylum seekers and refugees. Of interest for further research would be a comparative study of Gateway and dispersed asylum seekers in exploring not only how ‘refugeeness’ in its different forms is experienced, but also how this different context of reception might shape or influence the emergence of associational forms and practices in non-dispersal areas or contexts.

Sixth, the individuals who took part in this study represent a ‘first generation’ ‘settling’ in Glasgow and for many of them, associations filled an important void left by compulsory dispersal away from potential social networks in other parts of the UK. But what has been, and what will be, the experiences of their children, for many of whom, life in the UK will be all they actually know? This suggests a further research agenda that is centred on the children of asylum seekers and refugees, on what might be the generational effects of the

fixedness of 'refugeeness', and the differences between subsequent generations of migrants in terms of associational forms and practices, needs and expectations. Such a research programme could bring an interesting historical perspective, comparing the practices of other migrants groups in Scotland (and elsewhere in the UK) and generational effects on how associational practices evolve (or disappear) over time. This could also extend to studying the use of different technologies in building and maintaining transnational connections. The use of online technologies featured in these associations, but only on a small scale. It is not too great an assumption to suggest that the generation following current members will have access to and an even greater knowledge of an increasingly sophisticated range of technological developments that will continue to change how we communicate on a global scale. Such a research agenda would be in line with previous arguments to situate the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees more centrally within the study of migrants generally.

Finally, the analysis of associational lives as presented in this study has been firmly located in the Scottish experience and within the UK policy agenda. Increasingly punishing migrant incorporation regimes are now *de rigueur* across a number of European states, and, as the thesis has argued, there are significant parallels between the experiences presented here and those of other 'precarious migrants, particularly in France. This would suggest the possibility for further national and international collaborations between migrant scholars on the effects of asylum and immigration legislation on questions of 'settlement', integration, belonging and indeed citizenship of migrants generally. Of particular interest is how migrants in these different contexts and localities might themselves develop similar or different associational practices, that adapt to increasingly punishing incorporation regimes by providing alternative contexts of reception, and which attempt to shape 'settlement' on their own terms.

## Appendices

### **Appendix One: Changes to UK Asylum and Immigration Legislation**

Table 1: Changes to UK Asylum and Immigration Legislation

<b>Act</b>	<b>Amendments pertaining specifically to asylum seekers</b>
Asylum & Immigration Appeals Act Convention 1993	Incorporated the 1951 Refugee into domestic law; embedded the ‘safe third country’ removal process; restrictions on those who could apply for asylum in the UK; restricted access and entitlement to local authority housing.
Asylum & Immigration Act 1996	Introduced sanctions on employers who gave work to unauthorised asylum seekers; imposed severe restrictions on welfare entitlements; reduced access to social services for certain asylum seekers; restricted access to social housing and welfare benefits, and removed entitlement to benefits for in-country asylum applicants (i.e. applicants who claim asylum after entry as opposed to port applicants who claim asylum on entry).
Immigration and Asylum Act 1999	This law removes all remaining mainstream welfare benefit entitlement from all asylum applicants (maintenance to be at 70% of standard benefit levels), and replaced cash benefits with a voucher system for all asylum seekers. This Act paved the way for centralisation of support services via the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to provide basic support and accommodation to destitute asylum applicants on the basis of a no choice dispersal policy; support can be removed if destitution is deemed to have ceased; implementation of dispersal for ‘destitute’ asylum seekers; introduced voucher system; imposed duties on registrars to report ‘suspicious’ marriages; strengthened powers of immigration officers; one-stop appeals; replaced 1987 Immigration (Carriers’ Liability) Act and extended liability to the carriage of clandestine entrants in any vehicle, ship or aircraft.
Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002	This Act provides for the creation of a new network of induction centres and accommodation centres to house destitute asylum seekers, as well as plans for reporting and ‘removal’ (previously ‘detention’) centres. It also removes in-country appeal rights for asylum seekers whose asylum applications are certified as ‘clearly unfounded’; withdrawal of ‘in-country’ support; introduced Gateway Resettlement programme for quota refugees; introduced Application Registration Card (ARC) with photograph, details and fingerprint of individual; repealed provision for automatic bail hearings; extended statutory provision for voluntary assisted returns programme; requires employers to ensure that employees are entitled to work; Section 55 allows the state to deny any support in the form of housing or state benefits to asylum seekers who are deemed to have lodged their claim for asylum ‘late’ (more than 72 hours after arrival).
Asylum & Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc ) Act 2004	This Act introduced a new single-tier appeals process, abolished back-dated support payments; replaced with integration loan; new offences for undocumented migrants and for non-cooperation with removal; arrival in the UK without a passport or valid identity document made a criminal offence; tightening of credibility boundaries; withdrawal of basic support for families if voluntary return to country of origin not undertaken; community activities for ‘hard cases’; ‘local connection’ to local authority

<b>Act</b>	<b>Amendments pertaining specifically to asylum seekers</b>
	area required if housing required; 'safe third countries' list expanded; electronic monitoring introduced; allows termination of basic support to families unsuccessful in their asylum application.
Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006	This Act prohibits the provision of cash to asylum seekers receiving Section 4 support and extends the use of vouchers; introduction of an integration loan to replace integration grant for recognised refugees; tightens restrictions on appeals over deportation, increases powers of police, customs and immigration officials to obtain and exchange biometric and other information, and gives the Home Secretary the right to repeal British citizenship of any refugee whose actions are judged prejudicial to UK interests.
UK Borders Act 2007	This Act established a consolidated border and immigration inspectorate, provides for biometric immigration documents and gave powers to allow reporting and residence requirements as a condition of leave to enter or remain.
Immigration and Citizenship Bill 2008 (Simplification Project)	June 2007: the Government began a project to overhaul and simplify UK immigration law; introduced changes to asylum support.
Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009	Became an Act on 21 July 2009; specifically affecting asylum seekers and refugees are Part 2: changes to British nationality law (from July 2011); reintroduction of Section 55: duty on UKBA and its private contractors to safeguard the welfare of children (from Oct 2009).

Sources: Kushner and Knox 1999; JCWI 2002; Morris 2002; Sales 2002; Wren 2004; Bloch and Schuster 2005; Kerrigan 2005; Schuster 2005; Hynes 2006; Refugee Council; Scottish Refugee Council.

## Appendix Two: Voluntary Association Legal Structures

Table 2: Voluntary Association Legal Structures

Legal structure	Benefits	Disadvantages
<p><i>Unincorporated voluntary association</i></p>	<p>No formal registration requirements to create a voluntary association and little or nothing in the way of set up costs involved.</p> <p>No requirement to notify any public register of changes in the people serving on the management committee, nor anything to file with a public register.</p> <p>No detailed statutory procedures to be followed in relation to members' meetings etc. Subject to some very general rules laid down by case law, the procedures for AGMs are contained in the constitution itself without need for recourse to wider legal requirements.</p> <p>A much less intimidating structure for those considering whether to join as members or stand for election to the management committee.</p> <p>The law relating to voluntary associations is not particularly clear or consistent on liability and whether members may be held personally liable for debts. This introduces an element of risk for MC &amp; members.</p>	<p>For most legal purposes, a voluntary association is not regarded by law as having any legal existence separate from its members. In practical terms, this means that leases and other formal contracts have to be entered into in the names of (normally) the main office bearers which can become problematic where there is turnover of committee members.</p> <p>Similarly, legal proceedings cannot be taken by the organisation but only by individuals representing it.</p> <p>A significant risk is that members of the management committee could be personally liable for debts if the organisation were unable to meet its debts and liabilities out of its own resources.</p> <p>Because it is a more informal structure, may be seen as "less professional" in the eyes of potential funding bodies.</p>
<p><i>Charity</i></p>	<p>The ability to tap funding sources (e.g. charitable foundations) which can only give financial support to charitable bodies.</p> <p>Donations can be received from other charities, individuals and companies which can claim tax relief under the Gift Aid scheme for gifts of money to charities.</p> <p>Some Tax benefits (e.g. VAT, Income Tax, Capital Gains Tax, Corporation Tax and Inheritance Tax).</p> <p>Rates relief from local authorities in relation to premises occupied by the charity.</p> <p>Public image: people are more likely to offer time, energy or money to a registered charity.</p>	<p>A charity must not engage in party-political activities, and any other campaigning activity would have to be justifiable as being directly relevant to the pursuit of the charity's objectives.</p> <p>Adherence exclusively to the stated and approved Charitable Purposes, demonstrating that its activities provide Public Benefit. A duty to provide information on organisation activities on request to OSCR.</p> <p>No return is permitted to members and restrictions on employees serving on the management committee.</p> <p>A duty to provide members of the public on request with a copy of the charity's constitution and its last statement of accounts. Adherence to accounting requirements in terms of the</p>



Legal structure	Benefits	Disadvantages
		<p>Accounting Regulations and Statements of Recommended Practice.</p> <p>Organisations may not become involved in trading activities which fall outside of the charities tax exemption.</p> <p>Compliance with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and supervision and potential investigation there under by OSCR.</p> <p>The need to create a separate trading subsidiary, if there is to be any non-charitable work, with additional costs involved.</p>
<p><i>Company limited by guarantee</i></p>	<p>Limited liability: in terms of a clause contained in the company's constitution, each of the members "guarantees" to pay up to a nominal sum (normally £1) towards the company's debts if it goes into liquidation. The members' liability is therefore limited to the sum which they guarantee to pay, hence the name "company limited by guarantee".</p> <p>The company is a clear legal entity, separate from the people involved in it. It can therefore hold property, enter into leases and other contracts, employ people, etc. in its own name. That, in turn, introduces an important element of continuity since none of these would be affected when a management committee changes.</p> <p>Public image: a company is generally regarded by funding bodies and public agencies as a more "stable" structure than a voluntary association.</p>	<p>Formal registration procedures must be followed in relation to creating a company.</p> <p>Ongoing requirements to notify a change in directors, company secretary, or in the registered office, to a public register (Companies House). Similarly, annual accounts and annual returns have to be filed with Companies House.</p> <p>Various statutory requirements &amp; principles of company law must be followed in relation to members' meetings etc which could in certain circumstances have an impact on the company (e.g. where a member wants to challenge a particular procedure or where a particular proposal in relation to changes to the articles could not be carried through because they would be inconsistent with Companies Acts provisions).</p> <p>A company structure is more intimidating for those considering whether to join as members or put themselves forward for election to the board of directors.</p> <p>Set-up costs can be higher than for a voluntary association or trust; and annual costs are higher, particularly if there is an external company secretary and/or if a formal audit is required.</p>

Sources: various including SCVO; OSCR; Charity News Scotland [www.charitynewsscotland.com](http://www.charitynewsscotland.com); Council for Voluntary Services Fife [www.cvsfife.org](http://www.cvsfife.org); The Charity Commission; UK Government website: [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk). I am grateful to Elaine Donnelly of the Scottish Refugee Council for useful insights.

## **Appendix Three: Summary of Research Study**

My name is Teresa Piacentini and I am a Doctoral student at Glasgow University in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Applied Social Sciences.

In October 2007, I began my research project. The subject is as follows:

*To explore and understand the social, practical and emotional experiences of organisations of asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow, with special focus on examining the development of social networks within your organisation and across other organisations and communities. One of my main objectives is to understand these experiences from the perspective of your members. In order to achieve this, I propose conducting research with different asylum seeker and refugee organisations across Glasgow.*

This study is interested in the following questions:

- How do individuals organise themselves into organisations, when dispersed to Glasgow?
- What are the organisation's objectives and how have these developed over time?
- What are the members' experiences and group experiences of the organisation?
- What the group means for members and how this might develop over time?
- How your group helps you (your members) to develop your community locally, nationally and even internationally?
- What are the challenges for the development of your organisation and your community in Glasgow?

The study is planned in the following stages:

- Stage 1: getting to know your organisation better through observation and participation, for example, taking part in your committee meetings, members meeting, becoming more involved in your organisation (this would be ongoing)
- Stage 2: exploring the experiences of individuals, for example through one-to-one interviews
- Stage 3: exploring the experiences of members, for example through group interviews

This project is supervised by 2 senior members of staff in the department, and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council until October 2010. Therefore I see this as an ongoing involvement with your organisation. This is a summary of my research project, and I believe it would be really helpful to meet your group or executive committee in order to explain the research in more detail and answer any questions.

In anticipation of your response

Kind regards

**Teresa Piacentini**

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## ***Appendix Four: Interview Schedule***

**Introduction:** Thanks, purpose of interview, confidentiality, tape recoding and note taking, questions before starting?

### **PERSONAL TRAJECTORY (NATIONALITY, AGE)**

When arrived in UK/Migratory trajectory: AS/family reunion/student/business/other?

If AS, outcome of claim: + or – decision/legacy/NAM?

When joined ASSOC? Personal motivation (gap between arrival and joining?) [prev exp of assoc life back home?]

### **'ASSOCIATION'**

Reason for ASSOC (in your words, common attributes?) what it represents? **[is it an 'RCO'??]**

What's it like to be part of ASSOC? Why be a member? (feelings about the group/**gains/practical-emotional**)

Importance of being with people from home? – **knowing origins**

If not member, how might things be/have been different for you? [examples] – **integration/settlement?**

Relationships/links in ASSOC? (kinship, friends, family, internal/external?) – **disclosing? Avoidance?/difference?**

### **IMMIGRATION STATUS & ASSOC** (commonality/categorisation)

Importance of/relationship between immigration status to emergence/foundation of ASSOC? [past/present/future – ongoing needs of members?]

**Coping mechanism with uncertainty** – did group help? How is life different now?

Importance of immigration status to decision to become member? (waiting for decision...) [if not how is your exp of ASSOC different from AS members?]

(in light of +ve or -ve decision) Importance of Immigration status *now* to involvement in ASSOC/what you need from ASSOC? **Sensitivity to other in same situ? AS a common link?**

**Legacy of AS status** – on life gen/post + decision/impacts/impact of group?

### **ASSOC AS NETWORK?** (relational connectedness)

General Orientation of ASSOC activities/objectives? (local/national/transnational)

Personal orientation and links to 'home' – what, what type, frequency – via other intermediaries, why important? (**ASSOC as link to home?**)

ASSOC as bridge across to other networks? [examples/other African orgs – has ASSOC helped you do this?] – **overtures/direct link to ASSOC?**

### **THE FUTURE?**

How do you envisage the future of the ASSOC? [objectives? Key issues/challenges? Who ASSOC is for?]

What will be important for the ASSOC to continue to exist? What needs to be happening? [Image of African in Scotland – can ASSOC change/influence/promote this?]

**Bring interview to a close** – reconfirm confidentiality, thanks, indicate follow up, what will happen next, set time for next meeting (if apt).

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