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The meaning of place and space in a probation approved premises

### Original Citation

Reeves, Carla (2016) The meaning of place and space in a probation approved premises. *Howard journal of criminal justice*. ISSN 0265-5527

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## Introduction

Recently the importance of offenders' social space (their social relationships, peer groups, family networks and support services) has been garnering much attention as its influence on offenders' internal narratives of desistance, motivation to change, and offending identity are recognised (*c.f.* Fox 2015; Giordano *et al.* 2003; Paternoster and Bushway 2009; Reeves, 2013b; Weaver and McNeill 2015). The relationship of social space to the meanings attributed to physical space is less well-explored within the criminological literature, but has been, at least, implicitly acknowledged in research such as Kirk (2012), which focuses on recidivism rates for released prisoners moving back to the area they were initially living in, compared to those that moved away. Kirk found that place is wrapped up in the social context of (re)offending and so a new physical space is also a new social space in which the likelihood of desistance is improved.

Following on from such observations, Hunter and Farrall (2015) have recently explored the meaning of routines and places to desistance, and how as an offender moves through a desistance process in which they change their perceptions of themselves and their social networks, so changes the meaning of the places that they and others inhabit. Like Kirk (2012), Hunter and Farrall (2015) found that desisters were more likely to move away or refrain from using places that they associated with their offending pasts. They also noted that desisters go through a process in which places change meaning for them as they desist, but also that the spaces that they go to change as they seek out places with new or different meanings in accordance with their personal internal and social processes of change, and that these places support the offenders' desistance. Thus, people 'make' places through the meanings they attach to them, but places also 'make' people through their social interactions

and relations within those spaces, and how the meanings attributed to those places reflect on the individual's self-concept. It follows, thus, conclude Hunter and Farrall (2015; 964), that:

An understanding of the way in which places can be managed so as to facilitate desistance is therefore crucial to further unpacking the process associated with moving away from offending. Places are not just the locations within which desistance takes place. Understanding what certain places mean underpins efforts to desist.

The limited available criminological literature outlined here on the meaning of space and place to offenders focuses on the public spatial domain: it assumes that offenders can choose their spaces. This is, of course, not the case within criminal justice settings. Settings that are, at least in part, devoted to supporting offenders to desist and move away from their past offending locations, networks and identities. Research on space within carceral settings has tended to focus on either the way the institutional space is used (for example, for control or conformity; Foucault 1977) or the way in which space is experienced. This latter often highlights the nature of the prison environment and prison culture, particularly in terms of prison social relations, the pains of imprisonment, exclusion, violence and aggression (Reeves, 2016). The existent literature on space within criminal justice institutions has, thus, tended to neglect what the emergent literature on space and desistance has highlighted as most significant: the meanings the places have for offenders and their personal narratives and identities, and the interplay between place and identity which can facilitate desistance.

In a previous paper (Reeves, 2013b) I explored how the social life of sex offenders and other residents of a Probation Approved Premises in England and Wales (informally known as a hostel or PAP) was structured by social group identities founded on key gating characteristics such as age and, of course, offence histories. These social groups were of varying permeabilities, with boundaries based on offence (between sex offenders and non-sex

offenders predominantly) being largely static and impermeable, despite some efforts to mask these key characteristics. These social groups were found to be highly significant to how offenders conceptualised themselves and their social identities. That these identities were so enmeshed with their offence category was argued to likely inhibit individuals' desistance processes by hindering their ability to move past their offending label and identity. In exploring this social landscape of the hostel environment I noted that these groups tended to occupy particular spaces within the hostel: making visible the boundaries of the residents' social world. In this paper I develop on these observations of space and place within the hostel; in doing so I explore the role of place in the construction, development, maintenance and physical enactment of social group identities, which are fundamental to how life is lived within these institutions and the potential they have to support desistance, and operate as effective strategies of risk management and public protection [reference to insert after anonymous review]. Consequently, this paper uses a case study of a hostel and its residents to exemplify wider issues relating to the interplay between place and identity, particularly as related to the secretive and constrained environments of criminal justice institutions.

### **The Study**

The case study was the result of nearly two years (21 months) ethnographic fieldwork within a single hostel<sup>1</sup>. The fieldwork involved three inter-related and over-lapping phases:

- Phase 1: overt observations of hostel life on average once a week over 21 months and covering all days of the week and times of day and night, with each period of observation ranging between 1-12 hours, averaging at 3.5 hours. These observations were participatory in that I took part in conversations with participants and was permitted to view documents relating to the operation of the hostel and residents'

cases. In the following paper extracts from observation notes, on occasion, include direct quotations from these conversations with hostel staff or residents. Where this is the case they are quoted within the context of the observation notes extract and are clearly attributed;

- Phase 2: overt, non-participatory observations of MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committees<sup>2</sup>) over 12 months;
- Phase 3: 41 semi-formal or formal semi-structured interviews <sup>3</sup> with staff (17) and residents (24).

The phase 3 interviews included staff from a range of roles in the hostel; they were either trained probation officers or residential services officers (RSOs, including relief RSOs: a pool of temporary staff to cover illness, training or holiday periods). RSOs were not specially trained for the position in the way probation officers were, although on the job training for dealing with issues such as violence was offered occasionally. Probation officers dealt with all offence-based and management work, and normally worked a 9-5pm working week pattern. A senior probation officer managed the whole hostel. RSOs managed the smooth running of the hostel generally: setting appointments, giving out food and medication, dealing with routine resident enquires and demands, general surveillance and security. RSOs provided the second 'on-duty' staff cover during office hours with a probation officer (alongside other hostel administrative and catering staff). During evenings and weekends the hostel was staffed by two RSO with an 'on-call' probation officer if needed.

This interplay of different methods employed within an ethnographic framework allowed for the observation of interactions as well as talk. This facilitates an appreciation of the setting observed that can be understood from not only the conscious perspective of the

participants through their talk with me and other residents or staff, but also in ways that the participants themselves may not be aware of, be unable to articulate, or may not talk about because they do not view them as important enough to discuss. It is these subconscious, unrecognised or un-appreciated interactions and arrangements of people in the spatial and temporal context of the hostel site that the methodologies utilised made observable and form the fundamental basis of the following discussions.

The paper will start by outlining hostels generally, and the case hostel specifically, whilst describing the physical structure of space. This will then lead into an exploration of the socio-cultural meanings and uses of hostel space, the relationship this has to social groups and identity before considering the implications this has for fully understanding the impact of hostel work and residency requirements. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of the observations described, the findings are placed within discussions of concepts and theories from research outside of the criminological field, particularly in the growth areas of psycho-geographies and urban studies. For ease of readability and to ensure confidentiality and anonymity the case study hostel and all participants in the research will be referred to by pseudonyms.

### **Contextualising Hostel Space**

There are currently 101 Probation Approved Premises (hostels) in England and Wales. These provide around 2000 semi-secure residential places for medium - high risk offenders who are being released from prison through a staged re-entry process requiring risk management plans which include intensive levels of surveillance and intervention. A small number of hostel places are used for people on community orders or on bail awaiting sentencing or trial and have a residence requirement condition as, although they are considered not in need of

custodial containment, have no other appropriate accommodation that is secure and safe enough in the community (NAPA nd). Run and managed within the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) they provide enhanced supervision with the aim of not only reducing the likelihood of reoffending through incapacitative techniques, such as curfews, surveillance and room-checks, but also to support engagement with offence-related rehabilitative programmes and resettlement services. Although having a fairly lengthy and somewhat varied past over the last century or so, they are currently approved under the Offender Management Act 2007, although their purpose continues to reflect the guidance issued by NOMS in the 2005 NPS circular:

Approved Premises are a criminal justice facility where offenders reside or the purposes of assessment, supervision and management, in the interests of protecting the public, reducing re-offending and promoting rehabilitation. (NPS 2005).

The regime within hostels varies from premises to premises dependent upon the locational context and resident composition. A small, but significant number of hostels are considered to be located in sites that would place vulnerable people at risk of sex offenders, and so they do not accommodate people with these types of charges or convictions. This means that the rest of the hostel estate tends to have high proportions of sex offender residents, particularly so as they are judged to be one of the offender groups that most benefit from enhanced supervision. Hostels also tend to be located in, or near to, urban centres as this facilitates resettlement and reintegration work as well as making more accessible networks of other organisations which may aid and assist in reducing the risks of the resident offenders. The case hostel (hereafter referred to as 'Rosedene') was similarly situated on the edge of a small urban centre but within walking distance of the main shopping area. As this location was considered relatively low risk the proportion of sex offender residents to non-sex offender

residents was fairly static at around 2.5:1. Sex offender residents are categorised as those people convicted or charged with a sexual offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (or 1997 depending on the date of the offence and conviction). This includes those who have committed contact and non-contact offences relating to children and adult victims in both the real and on-line worlds.

Like most hostels, Rosedene accommodated at any one time around 25-30 residents in one, two or three bed rooms (some rooms had capacity to be converted to higher occupancy). Residents were subject to a range of standard security measures including: curfews, random and targeted room-checks, alcohol and drug-testing, double-cover staff shifts, CCTV, and perimeter alarms. However, within these constraints residents had, relatively, large degrees of freedom and normalcy. Outside of curfew times residents were permitted to leave the hostel as they wished, although hostel residence rules often prohibit individuals or all residents from entering certain locales or establishments. In Rosedene this included local 'criminogenic' areas (those that are associated with increases in the risk of offending, comprising either high value properties or criminal social networks), as well as pubs, clubs and school areas. Extended leave from the premises could be exceptionally granted for residents who had approved working commitments, necessary appointments or for family visits.

Within Rosedene there were some spaces which are designated staff only: probation offices, kitchen, staff bedroom (for those on sleeping shifts) and administration office. The rest of the hostel was devoted to the residents. Upstairs contained the resident bedrooms and washing areas. These were considered private and staff only rarely entered this space to conduct searches or to check on a resident, although they had the freedom to access this floor

and the rooms as and when they felt appropriate. Downstairs comprised the communal living space, including the dining area (which contained some basic cooking implements such as a toaster and microwave), two lounges, games room, foyer and garden, also in the garden was a semi-permanent IT room housing computers, although there was no internet access. This was where residents lived out most of their time whilst in the hostel. Staff could observe the space by CCTV, 'walk-throughs', and engaging in conversations and the occasional pool game with residents, however, this was considered resident space predominantly, despite being within the overall context of the criminal justice institution.

### **Who 'Owns' The Hostel?**

Both residents and staff expressed a sense of ownership over the hostel complex, or particular spaces within it. Avey *et al.* (2009) note that it is a human condition that people seek a sense of 'belonging' which is constructed through attachments to physical spaces and places as well as social relationships and roles. Such attachments tend to reflect time spent in a place as well as emotional connections to what that space represents. Related to self-identity, this sense of belongingness is reflected through psychological ownership, use and occupation of these places: serving as outward descriptors of social identities. Psychological ownership (as opposed to financial ownership) is the feeling of owning and having personal responsibility and investment in the 'owned' something (Avey *et al.* 2009). Thus, places are not simply objective, neutral geographic spaces, largely notable only for their environmental and/or human utility, but rather they are cognitive-affective constructs founded on interactions between people and their environment (Stedman 2002; Stokowski 2002) that "becomes so deeply rooted within people's self-identity that they can become viewed as an extension of the self" (Avey *et al.* 2009: 175).

On a surface level staff 'own' the hostel. Formal and financial ownership of hostels is situated within state (or public) control, therefore staff (in their devolved role of state representatives and public servants) not only felt ownership over the hostel, but they could exert this ownership through their structural positions of power and control. However, as can be understood from the above description of hostel space, there are significant tensions between how it is experienced as private or public space. Of course, as a public sector institution the space is public in that it is state-owned, but it is also very private in that it is closed to everyone but residents, staff and authorised visitors. Furthermore, the boundaries of the site are the most controlled in order to keep people out as well as in. Even during non-curfew hours the perimeters are continually observed by CCTV, the single point of access and exit into the building is monitored physically by staff, and residents are required to register their destination when they leave and enter (known as 'booking in' and 'booking out'). The most significant observation here is who controls this space through managing the permeability of the boundaries, and how reflective this is of power relations between the populations who work and live in Rosedene:

[Hostel manager] says the hostel [Rosedene] is too full because are booked up and have planned arrivals for next few months and he [prisoner planning for release] has no connections here, there is no reason why they should accept him [...]. (Observation notes MARAC 9).

Thus, acceptance in to the hostel can be seen to be not only a formal, structural management decision, but one exemplifying how staff members' psychologically own the hostel and express this through exerting their control. This is illustrated in how their professional social identity is revealed as wrapped up in the hostel place, as this account of the talk of the manager of Rosedene (a Senior Probation Officer) shows; he referred to Rosedene being full and then later used language that indicates that the staff and hostel are one and the same (my

second-person tense writing of 'they' reflects his use of the word 'we' to refer to himself and his staff team). This inter-relationship between hostels and staff identity was regularly and continually expressed through such language: "Hostels are not secure units; we do not have tracking systems [...]" (manager of a sister hostel to Rosedene, observation notes MARAC 5).

Within the hostel itself this ownership of hostel space by staff was evidenced in multitudes of daily behaviours and regulations that exerted this ownership, as this conversation between myself, Jason and Lee (both convicted of child sexual offences) illustrates:

Jason refers to the hostel as a prison. Lee says it is not:

Jason: It is. You can't just walk out can you?

Lee: Yes, I can. If I want to I can leave when I want.

Jason: No, you can't, only at the management's discretion.

Lee: What do you mean? I can go for a walk now if I want.

Jason: Yes, but you have to book out [with staff on duty when exiting the hostel].

Lee: Yes, but then I can go out.

Jason: What happens if they say 'no'?

Lee: I'll be in shit!

(Observation notes 17.10)

That residents recognised ultimate ownership of the hostel as being with staff was both explicitly and tacitly acknowledged in their behaviour and talk. In the case where a long-term resident informally directed the activities of other residents regarding their use of hostel space this conflated his psychological ownership of that space with staff, impacting on his identity as resident or staff:

Jason, Lee and Mike all said that when they first came to the hostel they thought Fred was a staff member because he treats the garden as his own, and tells people what to do, and tells them off if they haven't done something as he wants it. He even tells people off for walking on the grass sometimes. (Observation notes 12.9, all convicted of child sexual offences)

This extract exemplifies the cues to social identity that acting out place ownership has for third-parties as well as how inter-related the attributed meanings of place are to social identity. In this example, the way in which Fred was encroaching on staff social group identity through his psychological ownership and control of the hostel garden space (and product stemming from this use of space) was noted, and both resented and resisted by the staff group:

Sam [relief RSO] comments that Fred thinks he is going to [come back and] work in the garden when he has left here [Rosedene]. Sam: 'Will he be paid or what? He thinks he's quasi-staff now, what will he think with this?' [Sam] Wonders if he will want or eat with the residents or the staff, because 'you're either staff or a resident'. (Observation notes 22.8)

Sam: 'He'll want to be seen as something other than a resident [...] he can have 'nonce' on his jumper! ... sorry, 'reformed nonce'!' (Observation notes 17.10, in conversation with Sam)

Talking about Fred. Some members of staff are starting to say that he is getting 'above himself' because he is saying things like 'first come, first served' in relation to his plants. Some staff say it is not his position to say who gets plants or not. (Observation notes 6.6, in conversation with relief RSO Julie)

Despite that staff control and 'own' the entirety of hostel space, there are multiple layers of psychological ownership resulting from differing understandings of what meanings the place has, which can lead to places becoming "significant and contested arenas of collective being and belonging" (Dixon and Durrheim 2000:30), as indicated in the above case of Fred. These layers of hostel ownership are most evident in the meanings attributed to Rosedene in respect to being 'a sex offender hostel', this was due to the secretive nature of the hostel and the high proportion of sex offenders in it (though by means not all residents). This led to considerations of who Rosedene was 'for' primarily, with sex offender residents noting their dominance and the relationship this has to the identity of the hostel:

He [Jason, convicted of child sex offences] thinks that [Rosdene] may become a sex offender hostel as there are so many there already and it is in a good position because it is out of the town and away from housing estates. (Observation notes 31.10)

Furthermore, this view of Rosdene as being predominantly for sex offenders had entered local community consciousness:

Liam [was] attacked in town because the attackers believed that he was a sex offender simply because he was at the hostel. (He is not). He knows the reason for the attack. (Observation notes 24.4)

[Rosdene manager] told me this was because police felt there might be a leak as another police officer who often comes to the MARACs stopped someone speeding a while ago and they said that instead of catching people speeding he should be at the hostel keeping an eye on all the paedophiles. (Observation notes 9.11)

### **Who 'Owns' Internal Hostel Space?**

Internal hostel space was also psychologically owned, but this space was rather more complex in the meanings attributed to it and was also founded in social power relations, which reflected group identities within the resident population. The internal space that was generally psychologically owned by residents (rather than staff) were those places that were devoted to residents' living quarters: bedrooms, washing areas, laundry room, dining space, lounges, games room, foyer and garden. However, not all residents felt equally about all of these spaces and not all residents equally occupied them. These divisions within the resident population reflected social groupings mentioned before, based primarily on distinctions in index offence (sex offender or 'others') and age (those below 35-40 and those above). In discussing the tendency of residents to form and maintain these social group identities, staff also noted the strong ties these groups had to particular spaces within the hostel, with these

social groups becoming possessive of their ownership and belonging in that place. Such feelings can lead to territoriality whereby those spaces become imbued with meaning and adopted as places that belong exclusively to groups (Avey *et al.* 2009; Devine-Wright 2009), as this extract illustrates:

It is noticeable that they are all sex offenders and are often out there [the hostel foyer] together (if not the same individuals, the same characters). Jack [RSO] comments that this has been a running joke, that it once got the name of the 'gentleman's club, though they are not so gentlemanly!'. He says that the non-smoking lounge<sup>4</sup> also did; it was called the 'nonce smoking lounge'. (Observation notes 19.9)

These observations also reveal a process of 'emplacement' (Kim *et al.* 2013) whereby not only does the place become associated with the presence of a social group, but the place itself takes on symbolic attributes of meaning which were tied to the identity of that social group whilst, conversely, the group identity also embedded meanings associated with the places that they psychologically owned (place-identity) (Devine-Wright 2009). Places are, thus, spaces which come to be understood as embodying cultural, social and political meaning, which reflect and are reflected in the identity of groups that identify with these places. Thus, group identities are constructed in temporal and spatial socio-cultural frameworks, where:

Identities and boundaries are two sides of the same coin: collective identities are typically constructed in the relations of one social grouping to another. (Paasi, 2000: 92)

The construction of place-identity can be envisaged as a primarily individual internal cognitive construct built around individuals' personal beliefs about their place, self-identity, their roles and position within social groups. However, these beliefs may also be viewed as constructed through social interaction, especially (in) action and dialogue whereby social groups collectively adopt and adapt their place-identities in relation to their personal sense of

self, beliefs about their position to others (and their social identities), physical, socio-political and cultural attributes of the place (Dixon and Durrheim 2000). This results in place-meanings being fluid and subject to change as these interactions construct and reconstruct these meanings, with individuals or groups understanding the place differently simultaneously (Stokowski 2002). As can be readily understood from the colloquial terms to describe the places used by the sex offender resident groups (see above), central to the construction of place-meaning is language and the images, terms, metaphors and similes used to describe and refer to these places which create place-narratives that enter collective cultural 'knowing' of the place and its relationship to social groups (Stokowski 2002).

This 'knowing' of place-identities typically excludes and includes: defining in- and out-group membership, particularly where those in relative positions of power are able to regulate and control space through defining legitimate and illegitimate uses and occupation (Dixon and Durrheim 2000: Paasi 2000). Again, constructed through interaction and the meanings given to those places, these boundaries establish "geographies of power" (Malone 2002: 158), wherein places and the techniques used to protect place boundaries are reflections of power relations between groups. Thus, even 'public spaces' are often closed areas in which powerless groups are excluded or marginalised (Malone 2002: Paasi 2000), whilst other places become associated with 'belonging' to those who are powerless (Dixon and Durrheim 2000). This marginalisation of places associated with excluded social groups was illustrated in how some residents would avoid particular places in the hostel which were associated with other social groups:

Pat<sup>5</sup> [convicted of non-sexual murder] was talking about her like for gardening in prison. I asked her if she did not want to keep it up in here, she said no 'not here, I'd have to go down the bottom of the garden with the sex

offenders.’ Rick [her friend, convicted of drug-related offences]: ‘It wouldn’t be safe for you anyway.’ Pat just nodded. (Observation notes 8.5)

Tom [convicted of threats to kill: plea negotiated from the original charge of attempted murder] completely shunned sex offenders saying to Chris (RSO) that he wouldn’t do work in the garden because he ‘did not wish to mix with that type of offender, the ones that do the garden here’. (Observation notes 1.6-2.6)

In Rosedene observing the use and meaning of place exemplified the power relations between groups: as above, non-sex offender residents actively marginalised sex offender residents and places associated with them through a stigmatisation process. However, sex offenders tended to voluntarily remain in ‘their’ places through a sense of protective defensiveness whereby they reacted to marginalisation by “othering the others” (Young 2007: 165), a situation in which they endeavoured to resist stigmatisation and social exclusion. Defensive othering was part of their construct of themselves and the narrative they developed as a group and is evident within sex offenders’ negative talk of ‘other’ residents in which they frequently claim to dislike “smackheads” (Kev, convicted of child sex offences, observation notes 14.12): a term used to denote all non-sex offender residents. They would also claim to dislike the hostel because of “the mix of people, for example, the older ones with the younger ones, drug addicts with non-drug addicts.” (Observation notes 4.1, in conversation with Jack and Bill, convicted of child sexual offences). All sex offender residents routinely, in public, referred to the fundamental resident groupings as “those on drugs and the others. You know what I mean.” (Jason and Lee, both convicted of child sexual offences). In private this grouping reflected the language used by non-sex offender residents and staff: whereby the non-drug-addicts were sex offenders and the drug addicts were everyone else, referred to in terms of their higher out-group status as ‘others’ (primarily they were drug-related offenders, but not all). Notably, all but one resident over the age of 35 in the 21 month fieldwork phase was

convicted of sexual offences, and so, again, age became a euphemistic offence and social group descriptor.

Defensive othering observable in sex offender group members' talk, manifested in their use of "defensive exclusion" (Young 1999: 18); whereby they exclude themselves from public spaces either for personal security reasons or as part of their defensive othering. This was evident in their deliberate avoidance of spaces used by the 'other' non-sex offender group as well as their active choice to associate predominantly in sex offender group space and with other sex offender residents. These favoured spaces were the 'bottom' of the garden (where polytunnels, the shed – with tea-making facilities - and vegetable patch were located), non-smoking lounge and foyer, whilst they almost completely avoided the smoking lounge and front areas of the garden (associated with younger, non-sex offender residents).

### **Contesting Space**

Space is not always easily claimed by social groups. Tensions between group identities and claims of territorial ownership can result in place-protective behaviours (Avey *et al.* 2009; Stedman 2002). These tensions could be observed playing out at the level of the whole hostel, as well as around space internal to Rosedene. At hostel level, many residents (from both the sex offender and non-sex offender group) complained about sharing the hostel with each other and argued for offence-based segregation:

Pat: "You know paedophiles and that. And the thing is who will replace him here? One leaves and another comes, there seems to be more of them coming all the time. I don't like them, I speak to them but I don't want anything to with them. I just put up with it in here [...] I do because I have to." (Observation notes 8.8., Pat, convicted of non-sexual murder)

[New resident] Also said that he did not see why he had to share the hostel with 'R43s'<sup>6</sup> when in prison they had been segregated, 'why can't they have

their own hostel?' (Observation notes 25.4)

Within the internal space of Rosedene most places were tacitly agreed to be 'owned' by particular social groups. Of this space, only the foyer, possibly due to its open and very public position in the entrance to Rosedene, was likely to be also used by other residents, although mainly by the numerically dominant sex offender resident group. Other residents tended to only use the space for short periods either waiting for staff or to leave Rosedene (if meeting someone). They tended to dislike using the space for longer periods of time as it was directly observable by staff from their general office and so allowed less privacy, as well as because sex offenders were often already occupying it. Many sex offenders courted staff attention and so actually found this quality of the foyer attractive. It was more likely to be used by other residents in adverse weather when they were hindered from using the garden and were less likely to choose to leave Rosedene outside of curfew hours.

Although they [the sex offenders] are not just defined by offence, but also age (they tend to be middle-age or over), younger sex offenders are welcomed, but usually briefly (e.g. Paul today). Other residents tend to only pass through, often not speaking to the people sat there. If these residents come out to sit down, they turn around and leave again [if sex offenders are there]. I do not believe that this is just because it is full as new sex offenders will stand and talk. (Observation notes 19.9)

Just four other areas of Rosedene were, thus, not primarily associated with a particular social group and could be considered 'neutral'. The IT room, laundry and dining areas were very functional spaces which no group claimed ownership over (with the IT room being locked unless specifically in use), leaving just the games room. The games room was a square room with access at one end into the corridor to the staff general office and the smoking lounge before leading to the foyer. At the other end was access to the corridor to the kitchen and dining area before leading to the non-smoking lounge. Notably, the smoking and non-

smoking lounges: the internal places most identified with different resident groups, were at opposite sides of Rosedene and as far from each other as could be. A corridor also runs parallel to the games room (with toilet access) so that people do not have to go through this room to get around the hostel. In the games room was a small, wall-mounted TV, a pool table, a darts board (but no darts) and a wide window-seat overlooking the rear garden. Residents used this space by normally playing pool or watching others play and talking to each other. This could be at any time of day, but most often during evenings and weekends.

Will [non-sex offender resident] commented on the boredoms and frustrations of the place [Rosedene], how this made you feel restless and made you disruptive. Pool's a very popular way of passing the time. (Observation notes 14.12)

There's nothing good about this place. The only decent things are the IT room and the pool table. (Gavin, convicted of child sex offences, in interview)

It was thus a very relaxed and informal space but it was also the downstairs space that the different groups of residents were most likely to use and conflict over because it was the only indoor communal activity space other than watching TV. This conflict was rarely overt and usually took the form of pointed remarks and by non-sex offenders walking out of the room when sex offenders came in (significantly sex offenders rarely left when the converse happened, wanting to be included in the general resident population whilst the others wanted to exclude them). Of course all of these behaviours were complicated by residents ostensibly not knowing what each other have been convicted for, with some residents actively hiding their sex offender status and others sometimes portraying themselves as more dangerous than they were assessed as. However, it was generally common knowledge what category of offence people had committed: sex offence (adult/child victims), drug or drug-related, and violence.

Pat: “They were all in the pool room last night, I went in there and just walked out again. I thought: it’s like the paedophiles’ night out!” (She laughs a lot at this). (Observation notes 31.7, in conversation with Pat, convicted of non-sexual murder)

There were only two incidents of resident-on-resident violence in Rosedene whilst I was doing the fieldwork, notably both of which took place, or the conflict was started, in one of these more contested spaces. One took place in a bedroom (most likely chosen for its privacy from staff), but was initiated in the foyer, and the other was in the games room, with a pool cue. Also, the reason there were no darts anymore was because they had been used as weapons prior to the fieldwork in a resident attack. All of these assaults had been motivated by tensions between the sex offender and non-sex offender group with the victim being the sex offender, and these tensions had been able to manifest in assault behaviours because the social groups they belonged to both ‘owned’ and so occupied the space they were in.

Lee was beaten up badly (hospitalised) within the hostel. Claims it was Pete and Dan. Pete walked into the foyer earlier and called him a nonce saying “you have raped little girls” (Lee is a bail case, claims not guilty though police found him with 2 girls in his house and Lee thinks that showing them hard-core porn is OK [Lee returned to Rosedene after his prison sentence later in the fieldwork]). People know what he is charged with because he has told everyone. Later when Lee is in his room reading 2 people come in the room and turn the light off (therefore only thinks they are Pete and Dan). They dragged him off the bed, kicked and punched him. No charges were brought for lack of evidence though Pete and Dan were arrested and then released. (Observation notes 9.6)

These tensions between groups as played out in these contested spaces were notably lessened when Rosedene relaxed rules to permit residents to have TVs and game consoles in their rooms, and were allowed to stay in their rooms for more time during the day. Immediately the games room was no longer such a prized space for leisure activity and residents were able to

be more diffused in their spatial occupations, now using their rooms to separate themselves and gain privacy from others:

Not many residents around. Not many out as [it's] very rainy, majority are in their rooms. This is very common now they are allowed TVs, radios and some game stations in their rooms. Staff like it because it keeps them quiet and out of trouble, and out of the staff's way. (Observation notes 25.7)

In reference to such allowances in prison cells, TVs have become commonly known as 'baby-sitters' in keeping inmates quiet, contented and orderly, and also as effective control mechanisms when used as part of a reward and punishment system, amongst other more socio-cultural impacts (Knight 2005). TVs performed similar order and control roles within Rosedene and as such, although residents were more diffused and less observable in the hostel space as a result of these regime changes, which staff were initially suspicious of, the air of relative peacefulness that became the norm was greatly appreciated and valued. Thus, the change in this rule reinforces the points made earlier that the meanings attributed to places within the hostel, the place-identity of groups and the territories they occupy are socially constructed and negotiated realities that change as the social context around that place and social group evolves.

### **Conclusions**

This exploration of the spaces and places within Rosedene, how they were used, attributed meaning and conferred meaning on those who used the space, exemplifies the interplay between place and social identity, and how this manifests as social group ownership of 'territories'. Resident territoriality served many purposes, varying for the different groups in the institution. First and foremost was the establishment of a sense of belongingness and

place-identity, whereby residents settled into the hostel and became an accepted member of the already existing social group. These places, thus, took on the meanings that the group as a whole attributed to them and were also markers for in- and out-group boundaries whereby places, and people who psychologically owned those places, were marginalised and excluded; whether that be through stigmatisation (in the case of the 'other' resident group towards the sex offender residents) or defensive othering and exclusion (by sex offender residents to 'others'). Consequentially, these places became associated with particular social groups, but also the groups became associated with those places; engendering protective place behaviours. Thus a new (unknown) resident who settled into using space associated with one group or another, in the absence of other social cues, would be associated with the group that owned that place. If information was uncovered that undermined this social group identity then he would be shunned from the group and the place. Social group places, thus took on another vital role for the members of that group: they were places that symbolised a measure of safety and security. It was because of this quality that more vulnerable residents chose, ostensibly voluntarily, to remain in 'their' places. In looking back over my observation notes I can find no records of a sex offender resident using the smoking lounge, and extremely rarely did a non-sex offender use the non-smoking lounge - usually only when empty.

The importance of understanding space and place within such social and criminal justice contexts can hardly be over-stated. To fully appreciate place is to understand the social world of the residents as it necessitates recognition of places as manifestations of social identities and peer associations; indicators of individuals' sense of self and place-identity; challenges to social order and power relations. Knowing meanings associated with place can elucidate the contexts in which mundane daily behaviours and interactions within

space and place have greater significance to the residents involved and may be indicative of desistance-related factors, such as risk and offending attitudes, behaviours, and pro-criminal relationships. Thus, it is a lens through which the desistance-focussed and rehabilitative work of the hostel, and the context of that work, can be understood from the perspective of those people living within the hostel. The work of the hostel is bounded within the meanings of the place, and thus, it is necessary to appreciate this context before the impacts of hostel work and hostel residency can be fully understood.

### **Limitations of the study**

Whilst, as noted earlier in this paper, the ethnographic techniques employed allowed for the uncovering of aspects of residents' hostel life that would otherwise go unexplored or unrecognised, the method has limitations that ought to be noted. Most importantly, it is focussed on the detailed internal world of a single case study hostel. There was nothing about this hostel to suggest that its internal environment is likely to be different from other Probation Approved Premises or, indeed, from other criminal justice settings which accommodate these offender types. But it is, of course, acknowledged that different places may have different meanings, as this paper has already illustrated, perhaps due to variations in working and resident cultures, different institutional histories, social settings and contexts, staff and resident compositions and so forth. From this study I argue that the conclusions regarding the importance and interplay of meaning, social and physical place can be confidently applied as they are rooted in a wide literature regarding human social nature. By the time you are reading this, the hostel I studied will have changed if only as a result of staff and resident turnover, and policy and practice developments. However, this was continually the case during the lengthy fieldwork period too and these place-meanings and the relationship to offender group identities remained a constant. This ability to research change

and the impact of change is one strength of such ethnographic work. Further work is, however, needed to fully consider how changes in context, meaning and so on may be managed and operationalised to better facilitate the achievement of institutional aims.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the Hostel Manager for their support for this project and help to negotiate access to undertake the fieldwork. I would also like to extend my thanks to Bangor University, which was my home institution when planning and undertaking the fieldwork.

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<sup>1</sup> The location and time period that this fieldwork was undertaken in is withheld in compliance with the access agreements negotiated.

<sup>2</sup> MARACs were the local name for MAPPP (Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels) which are part of the statutory MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) between probation, prison and police services. These were monthly meetings of relevant agencies to share information about medium-high risk offenders (level 2 and 3 MAPPA cases) in their area or about to be released from prison. Ad hoc meetings were arranged for individual cases if they needed quicker and more intensive consideration. For more information on this aspect of the research see Reeves (2013a)

<sup>3</sup> Formal interviews are defined as those taking place in an office-setting, normally tape-recorded and pre-planned with the respondent. Informal interviews are those that were more fluid stemming from conversations as part of phase 1 observations. These were more likely to take place in resident areas of the hostel and be more opportunistic in nature. They were often not recorded, though notes were taken at the time where possible. For more discussion on the methods utilised in this study see Reeves (2010).

<sup>4</sup> The two lounges were uniformly known as the smoking and non-smoking lounge, although since the smoking ban came into force in 2007 through the Health Act 2006 smoking has not been allowed in any indoor part of the hostel.

<sup>5</sup> Pat was the last woman to be accommodated in the hostel (it is now male only). She associated with other residents during the day, but at night had a room in the two-room 'female-wing' which was slightly separate from the rest of the bedrooms via an alarmed corridor. It was not locked for fire and safety concerns.

<sup>6</sup> R43 refers to Prison Rule 43 which makes provision to hold some prisoners in 'segregation' from the general prison population for either their own safety or the good order and discipline

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of the prison. Rule 43 is commonly, but not always, used for sex offenders, especially those against children. It is now rule 45 although rule 43 remains in prison slang.

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