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Behind the numbers:
Migrant Living Patterns in Westminster

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Report to Westminster City Council on behaviours, aspirations and movements of recent migrants in Westminster City Council in central London

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This report is based almost exclusively on first hand research conducted during the summer of 2007. For suggested references and a bibliography please write to contactus@esro.co.uk

Westminster Population Research

Executive Summary

Background

Population statistics and surveys provide a static and generalised picture of the migrant population, whose underlying meaning is difficult to interpret. The central goal of this project was to understand the substance of new migrants' everyday lives, aspirations, fears and their uses of city spaces and resources. Knowledge of these complex cultural issues is of vital importance to local government in determining the proper strategies and policies to deal with such inherently mobile populations. In this context Westminster City Council has identified the need to understand more about the behaviours of migrants moving into, and out of the borough, and how migrant cultures and behaviours might impact upon the way in which migrant populations appear in statistical reports or traditional surveys.

Research

Research for this project was carried out with four migrant groups broadly categorised as: Chinese, Australian, Arab and Polish. The research was carried out using mainly ethnographic and other qualitative methods, and over a relatively short time-frame. Field research was largely focused on, but not confined to, Westminster.

Behind the findings summarised here, the full report presents some rich and detailed insights. This is partly a result of the in-depth, qualitative and ethnographic methods used in the research. The full report should provide a valuable resource to those wishing to gain a greater understanding of the issues which lie behind the main findings.

Results

1 Visibility and invisibility in migrant populations

The research uncovered a number of factors which may affect the ways in which migrants living and working in Westminster get covered in statistical and other formal attempts to capture their existence and whereabouts. Many of these factors were common across the different groups selected for study, though some are more salient with one group than another. It would also be true to say that many of the findings may apply to other migrant groups and London boroughs, though some are clearly specific to Westminster. Main findings are presented below.

- **Language** Language barriers prevent people from filling in forms, paying bills and completing registrations directly. Although most respondents were paying bills and taxes, often they were paying cash to another person who took care of the formal administration.
- **Accommodation-sharing** Multiple-occupancy houses and flats are common. Even within single rooms there may be many people sharing a small space. This is most often a way of reducing the personal burden of high Westminster rental costs.
- **Mid-term stays in Westminster** Many migrants arrive in Westminster and begin their lives in the UK there. Initial stays in flat-shares, house-shares etc. often last between 3

and 12 months. These periods are used to find jobs, familiarise with the city and take care of any administration.

- **'Speculative migration'** This is a term researchers came to use, to describe a pattern of migration in which migrants came to Westminster on 'holiday' or for a 'visit' but actually used the time to ascertain opportunities for jobs and more permanent stays. They behaved more like residents despite sometimes staying for only a few months if no opportunities were found.
- **Status** Some migrants fear being identified by authorities, for many different reasons. These migrants often gravitate towards and share spaces with other migrants of a similar cultural background.
- **Visibility in social and economic life** Migrants play an active and highly visible role in the service industry, rental markets, as consumers and in nightlife, for example. Their potential to be statistically invisible does not mean that they are completely invisible.

The above factors often derive from different motivations and aspirations depending on the migrant group. New migrants, for example, have relative freedom to come and go between Poland and London. Australians often use Westminster as a base for further European travels. Chinese migrants use existing connections and employers to find cheap accommodation and Arabs look to stay near centres of Arabic culture. All of these behaviours and motivations, however, commonly result in the residence patterns outlined here.

2 Why Westminster?

There are many reasons why Westminster is a particularly attractive destination point for migrants, including

- **Practical** Migrants physically arrive on coaches and trains in Westminster. For many, the scale of London is unimaginable and so they look for places to stay and work in the vicinity of the place where they arrive.
- **Historical** Previous generations have settled or stayed in Westminster.
- **Economic** An abundance of service industry jobs and a pool of employers sympathetic to and/or aware of migrant labour markets encourage migrants to seek employment in Westminster. It is also important to note the physical and economic links between migrant employment and accommodation. Many migrants stay in dwellings belonging to or in some way connected to employers. Working in Westminster also gives people a desire to live nearby (especially given London travel costs).
- **Cultural** Westminster is the centre of London, which makes it as attractive a place for migrants wanting to experience London life as it does for residents coming in to enjoy its services. Westminster is also home to cultural and community centres such as Chinatown and the Edgware Road.
- **Multi-cultural** Westminster is filled with people from all over the world and therefore seen as congenial to migrants who may be nervous of fitting in elsewhere.
- **Safety** Westminster is seen as safe, not just from crime, but also from the unfamiliarity of unknown London suburbs.

3 A picture of migrant life

Migrant life in Westminster is characterised by diversity, vibrancy, activity and hardship. Experiences range from desperate and unsuccessful attempts to find work or the pain of divided

families to economic success and active involvement in London's cultural and economic life. The research reveals that the lives of recent migrants are dynamic, fluid and industrious. Most migrants, whatever their formal status, are aiming to better their lives and take advantage of the economic and cultural opportunities in Westminster, London and the UK, and are often resourceful and creative in dealing with the hardships, obstacles and openings they find.

1 Westminster Population Research

1.1 Introduction

London is a city shaped by migrants, multi-cultural spaces and environments with different flavours and colours. The changing cultural and ethnic map of the city is reflected in rapidly changing demographics increasingly affected by international in-migrants. Westminster, situated at the heart of this sprawling city is, in many ways, at the centre of this dynamic.

The central goal of this project is to understand the substance of new migrants' everyday lives, aspirations, fears and their uses of city spaces and resources. Knowledge of these complex cultural issues are of vital importance to local government in determining the proper strategies and policies to deal with such populations.

In this context Westminster City Council has identified the need to understand migrants moving into, and out of the borough to find out more about the behaviour and aspirations.

The background to this research lies in the population figures generated by both the Census and the Labour Force Survey. Such reports are unable to capture the individual experiences and motivations of migration and migrants which underlie the numbers. They do not tell us why people come and what experiences they have while here. Where do they work and live, and in what kinds of conditions? What challenges do they face in family, work and social life? Which networks and resources do they make use of, which do they shy away from? What services do they use? What organisations (formal or informal) do they belong to and participate in? Who chooses to remain outside of all organisations? And above all, how might such issues affect responses to the Census and other surveys? Patterns of movement, residency and economic resources, for example, are likely to be particularly affected by such complex social and cultural factors.

1.1.1 Methods

The research model used in this study was developed by ESRO to meet the timescale and scope required by the project. The research involved three integrated and overlapping phases, carried out within each of four different community groups. Although each phase is discussed separately here, the three phases were part of a single research design; themes and leads from one phase of the research were followed up in the other phases.

The research model is robust, with timescale being the main limiting factor. Further research would be valuable, and this report should be seen partly as a guide to further research directions, as well as a source of important and valuable ways of considering diverse populations within a borough or geographic area.

The research is primarily qualitative, with a community-administered quantitative survey being used as a means of gaining deeper insight and promoting community research relationships.

1.1.2 The Community Groups

Four community groups were studied during the research: ‘Arabs’, ‘Australians’, ‘Polish’ and ‘Chinese’. The notion of ‘community’ in this context is often spurious in that it conjures up an image of cohesion and social ties among the individuals studied. In many cases however, they do not form any kind of coherent community group. Several of the respondents, for example, complained precisely of the lack of a cohesive community. On the other hand, we certainly found thriving cultural centres and locations that might be considered as focal points for people with shared cultures, languages and/or needs and problems. Broadly, the term ‘community’ is used in this report to describe people united by language, country of birth and cultural similarity.

For the purposes of this research, a broad and inclusive approach was taken to the community groups under study. This means that in practise the term ‘Arabs’ refers to people coming from different countries within the Arab world. Similarly, whilst the research focused on Australians, some New Zealanders and white South Africans are included amongst the findings along with sundry other travellers who had allied themselves to flat-shares or nightlife. The term ‘Polish’ as a community group simply refers to people who have come from Poland to London. The term ‘Chinese’ refers to people from various countries and places (China, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China) who shared the Chinese language and its various dialects. Important differences within these broad groups were not the focus of this study, whose principal aim was to study general living arrangements, and movements and the motivating factors behind these.

In order to make the reading of this report easier we have kept the terms ‘Arabs’, ‘Australians’, ‘Polish’ and ‘Chinese’, but are aware of the difficulties of referring to groups by such umbrella terms. The term ‘migrant’ is also used consistently through the report to refer to those who have come to the UK from other countries.

1.1.3 The three phases of the research

Focus groups The first stage of the research took the form of traditional focus group research in which participants were invited to share their stories of migration. Community leaders and representatives were also invited to attend such groups. This research however, was essentially aimed at getting beyond traditional approaches and to uncover in greater depth some of the real-life stories and situations of people who have migrated to Westminster.

Ethnographic fieldwork The second stage of the research involved methods informed primarily by anthropological and ethnographic principles. All of the professional researchers involved in the project had an anthropological training and were familiar with using ethnographic research methods and its cross-cultural, bi-lingual implications. Though the timescale for this stage of the research was restrictive it was by no means prohibitive and a great deal of time and energy was spent by the researchers with each of the community groups concerned. The amount of data yielded was, as is the norm when using ethnographic methods, rich and detailed, although the case studies presented in the appendices of this report necessarily focus on particular themes. The stories presented within the main body of this report were gleaned in great part from this ethnographic fieldwork.

Community-led surveys The third stage of the research involved a collaborative research method in which research partners were sought from within each community group to carry out

a small, highly focused, survey project with people from within their own community. In this way we were able to gain insights from people who are traditionally thought of as 'underneath the radar' or beyond the usual scope of this kind of research. This survey is laid out in more detail below.

1.2 Overall Findings

The following section presents the general findings from the data gathered in the different case-studies and from each of the four different migrant groups. For greater detail and contextualisation of each of the findings please refer to the individual reports by migrant group which follow these overall findings.

The general findings concentrate on the issue of population and the implications of the research results for the understanding and monitoring of a migrant population within Westminster.

1.2.1 Visibility and Invisibility

The issue of visibility and invisibility is central to the aims of this research. This report outlines in great detail some of the aspirations, motivations, patterns and behaviours of migrants living and working in Westminster. Extracting the implications of these factors for how we can map and understand these populations is key. The term 'visible' is used to talk about those things which might make migrants visible in terms of their impact on local social life and economy whilst their relative 'invisibility' refers to those factors which might make migrants difficult to include in population maps or statistics.

In terms of migrant visibility the impact of several factors is to some extent obvious. Migrants in Westminster are an important part of the service industry landscape from restaurants in Chinatown to Bayswater's hotels and hostels. Migrants from all the groups studied during this research take part in the economic life of Westminster, from their role as consumers of mobile phones, food and drink, housing and clothes, to the part they play as workers in Westminster's thriving service industry. In social life and public spaces too migrants play an active role. Through Chinese Tai Chi mornings in the courtyard of St Anne's Church in Soho, Australian sports competitions in Hyde Park or shisha-smoking on the Edgware Road, migrants are an integral part of a vibrant and varied social life in Westminster.

And yet, despite the obvious roles that migrants play in the service industry and rental markets, as well as in social and public activities, their presence in Westminster may also go relatively unknown. One fairly obvious example would be the impenetrability of Chinatown. Its bright colours and unique sounds and smells mean that Chinatown is a highly visible migrant community and yet, due to difficulties in linguistic and cultural translation, the mechanisms of work and the lifestyles of its individual residents often go unnoticed by visitors.

Language often presents a formidable wall between migrants and certain aspects of life in the UK. Levels of skill in using English vary between migrants and migrant groups, but there are certain common themes for those living in Westminster who do not have the ability to communicate very well in English. Bills, registrations and rents for example are often taken care of by an informal broker or what we have termed 'node'. These 'nodes' are people who have a greater understanding either of the English language or of the mechanisms of registration and

bill payment in the UK. For example, the aunt of one Polish migrant to whom we spoke acted as a ‘node’ between a landlord and a group of migrants living in the property she rented. In other words, she collected rents from the residents, paid the bills and divided the living space as she wished. The landlord only ever dealt with the aunt in whose name the lease had been signed and in whose name all bills were paid. The number of migrants resident in the flat changed over time but the aunt remained, able to make a small living by managing rents in this way. Other ‘nodes’ include’ Chinese employers in Chinatown who often source or provide accommodation for employees, deducting rents directly from wages. Nearly all Chinese respondents said that they paid bills in cash because they did not understand bills. This almost invariably means that they were paying money to third parties to take care of the bills.

Language can also prevent people from interacting with vital institutions both public and private. The new Chinese migrants, for example, find it difficult to access the healthcare which can take care of their needs. Migrants find that they cannot get the kinds of jobs they want if they can’t speak English. Bureaucracy becomes very intimidating and is often left to others to take care of. Also movements are restricted because migrants prefer and need to stay near people and resources who can help them in a variety of situations. For example, Arabs who had been sent to other parts of the country had often returned to Westminster, saying that there were simply no resources for them elsewhere. Often this referred to social life, an environment with Arabic speakers, as much as anything else.

Accommodation-sharing is another common feature of migrant life in Westminster. High rents, coupled with a desire to remain central, mean that sharing of accommodation is one of the only practical ways of managing life in Westminster, economically. The informal community audit results presented later in this report demonstrate that the number of people in a single dwelling can be very high indeed. There was also evidence of very small flats being informally divided into separate single rooms. This means that when respondents talked of five to eight people sleeping in the same place as themselves the night before, they were sometimes talking about one room. It is important to note that the decision to live in such cramped conditions is often an economic choice rather than a necessity. Some migrants earn enough to live in slightly less cramped conditions but this would eliminate the scope for saving which would negate the value of remaining in London. The choice of shared accommodation may also express a preference for temporary and flexible housing over a commitment to a more permanent home.

Mid-term stays in Westminster are very common and significant. Many migrants arrived in Westminster, found their initial accommodation there, and laid the foundations of their stay in the UK whilst in Westminster. This could mean that they registered with a GP, obtained a National Insurance number, found jobs and familiarised themselves with the city etc. These initial stays often lasted as long as 12 months but usually seemed to last between 3 and 9 months. The desire to move was caused in almost all cases by high rents and/or cramped living conditions, though the main attractions of Westminster remained, such as job opportunities, central living, lack of transport costs etc.

‘Speculative Migration’ looked much like these mid-term stays but was a term developed by researchers during the research to refer to those migrants who had come to London without a fixed long-term plan and were making a relatively low risk commitment to come to London. Evidence of this came from all of the groups studied. Typically a migrant would come on a ‘visit’ or ‘holiday’ and use their time in London to scout for jobs and potential living arrangements for a future long-term stay. Despite calling such stays ‘visits’ or ‘holidays’ these kinds of migrants actually behaved much like their more long-term counterparts, living in the same types of

accommodation and actively seeking jobs and opportunities rather than visiting tourist sites and spending earnings. The difference for these migrants is that they often had security at home if their speculative trip did not work out. They could return to university courses, jobs or other countries if their attempts to find work in London failed. Again, the periods of these stays was often 3 to 12 months with an inevitable rise in the numbers doing this in the summer, when people could take breaks from university courses or holidays from existing employment.

Finally, **status** had very obvious implications for the ways in which migrants would want to be identified by authorities or institutions. For many there was a fear of deportation in the event of being identified by authorities: this meant that 'disappearing' into flat-shares and paying bills and rents informally to others was not only a practical step but a necessary survival tactic. These migrants varied between those who were stoically resigned to the difficulties of living in London and openly talked about wanting to achieve legitimacy (even paying taxes), while others concealed their status from peers, flatmates and colleagues.

1.2.2 Why Westminster?

All of the factors above ought to be read with reference to the fact that Westminster is a particularly attractive place for migrants for several reasons. Furthermore, Westminster is likely to remain an attractive place in the future. Our findings suggest that migrants who move on after initial or short term stays are likely to be replaced by new demand for the spaces they occupied.

Below are some of the reasons, evidenced by respondents' actions and words, for wanting to live in Westminster:

- **Practicality**. Migrants physically arrive on coaches and trains in Westminster. For many, the scale of London is unimaginable and so they look for places to stay and work in the vicinity of the place where they arrive.
- **Historical connections**. Previous generations of migrants have settled or stayed in Westminster. This includes Australians having siblings or parents who have stayed in Westminster before and recommend it, as well as the obvious community centres for Arabs on the Edgware Road and Chinatown.
- **Economic**. An abundance of service industry jobs and a pool of employers sympathetic to and/or aware of migrant labour markets encourage migrants to seek employment in Westminster. It is also important to note the physical and economic links between migrant employment and accommodation. Many migrants stay in dwellings belonging to or in some way connected to employers. Working in Westminster also gives people a desire to live nearby (especially given London travel costs).
- **Cultural**. Westminster is the centre of London, which makes it as attractive a place for migrants wanting to experience London life as for residents coming in to enjoy its services and nightlife.
- **Multi-cultural**. Westminster is filled with people from all over the world and therefore seen as congenial to migrants who may be nervous of fitting in elsewhere.
- **Safety**. Westminster is seen as safe, not just from crime, but also from the unfamiliarity of unknown London suburbs.

1.2.3 Implications for quantitative or population data collection

All of these factors have implications for the ways in which data regarding population size or demographics might be collected.

The most obvious barrier to data collection is the transient nature of the population. Whilst migrants in Westminster are not necessarily permanent residents, neither are they just short-term visitors. Instead, they are often mid-term visitors who stay for several months and then move on, only to be replaced by more of the same. Accurate figures on this mobile but constant level of additional population are hard to get. With regard to identifying a population this length of time is ambiguous. It neither implies permanent, long-term residency nor a tourist population whose needs are met elsewhere. The reality of these migrants lives, as clearly outlined in this research, is often somewhere in between.

Language barriers also present a significant barrier to getting good response rates in population surveys. Many migrants are not able to fill in forms or answer questions at all. And yet, even if others answer on their behalf, survey researchers may find that respondents know little about the long-term intentions of those who stay with them, the exact status of their employment or of their status with regard to their country of origin.

These factors combined with the presence of migrants who actively do not wish to be found and those who find themselves in the care or protection of others will mean that a significant number of migrants simply remain invisible.

We have also identified certain terms basic to population surveys which are particularly difficult to operationalise in relation to migrant populations, for a range of factors. These include:

“Head of Household” ‘Head of household’ tends to be determined by three criteria: male gender, payment of the mortgage and highest income. The concept of a “**Household Reference Person**” has redressed the male bias to some extent but retains the financial criteria. In migrant populations, living arrangements are often characterised by a single person managing bills, rent, accommodation etc. for other migrants (usually an English speaker or longer term resident), but who may well not be seen in surveys as the ‘Head of Household’. Some of these people function as informal ‘nodes’. These are the people who best understand the household compositions. The research found that these people were in many cases women, they may not be earning more than their co-tenants and will often be dealing with a landlord or even a tenant who is not resident, rather than paying mortgages themselves. In other words, they might be excluded from the definition of the ‘head of household’, from whom data might be collected. And yet, these people are often the only ones who will have knowledge of the changing pattern of residence in the places they informally manage.

“1 year residence” For many surveys, being a resident is defined as having lived in a location for more than 1 year. Since migrants living in Westminster often stay for several months but less than one year they may not be counted as residents even though they behave like residents and are often replaced the moment they move on.

“Household” This term is not unproblematic. Indeed we encountered our own problems during surveying with this term. During research we found that people lived in many kinds of ‘household’ including:

- Flats informally subdivided into independent single-room units with individual locks on doors;
- Sublets from one migrant to many and sometimes from one migrant to another migrant to many;
- 'Teams' (Polish migrants referred to this phenomenon) of people living in one room of a larger unit. The 'teams' will behave like families or fraternities, but may not be picked up as independent household units in surveys;
- Two families in one room, or flat, or house;
- Co-workers' residences provided by employers;
- Long-term residents living amongst short-term holidaymakers in hostels.

In other words, it is difficult to define a 'household' either with reference to 'family' or to 'living unit' with a clearly defined 'head' or 'residence' pattern.

1.3 Further Research Questions

Many of the research findings presented within this report were uncovered during a relatively short time period and suggest directions for future research. Potential future research directions which the work indicates might be useful include:

Research with other **migrant groups**: The four groups chosen for research here were picked for their relative visibility in Westminster and in common perceptions of migrants in central London. Other groups who may have differing aspirations and characteristics include: Latin Americans, Africans, other Europeans and Asians. These categories are very broad but all have significant representation in London.

Transnational research: Academics have long noted the transnational nature of migrant culture. That is to say that migrant behaviours and aspirations are not all determined by factors in the country to which they move. Rather many people lead transnational lives, bringing and exporting cultures, moving money and families and moving back and forth between different worlds. Each location influences the other. A full understanding of migrant lives should explore life at all departure and destination points.

Longitudinal Research. One way in which to explore all of the themes identified here in greater depth would be to conduct long-term qualitative research, tracing the trajectories of migrant lives and aspirations over time and space.

Quantitative Research. The trends and patterns identified in this largely qualitative research could be put on a firmer basis through more use of larger-scale quantitative research methods, which took into account the specific statistical and sampling challenges of studying such migrant populations.

2 Findings by migrant group

The following sections provide a summary of the main findings for each migrant group.

2.1 Polish summary

- There is a pattern of sublet and shared accommodation. Notions of 'head of household' are made problematic by the fact that someone acting as a conduit for rent payments and bill payments may not be in any sense the head of the household, but rather the person with the best English.
- Personal contacts and informal networks are central to finding accommodation and work with individuals who act as 'nodes' often providing housing or work for a large number of people.
- There is considerable anecdotal evidence of an increasing number of people in Westminster. For example, one Polish priest reported that this year there had been enough demand for him to hold a ceremony in Polish to bless food as part of the Easter celebrations.
- Westminster is a hub for employment and probably has a higher Polish population during the daytime than at other times.
- Employment possibilities are limited by knowledge of English, with many women working as waitresses and many men 'disappearing' into kitchens and into building work.
- There is a generational distinction in the Polish migrant community between the old generation and the 'new'.
- Use and awareness of services is very low with many still receiving their healthcare in Poland, for example.
- A large number of migrants are students in Poland and come for summer 'working' holidays in order to earn and save money to finance studies back home. Many will return in subsequent years, often with the aspiration to stay for longer.
- Whilst many arrive in Westminster at Victoria coach station, many also leave Westminster as soon as they can after finding living costs too high. Every day, however, will see Polish people sleeping rough in Westminster.

2.2 Arab summary

- Through informal networks, especially kinship, nationality and friendship, Arab migrants find work and accommodation in an Arab-speaking milieu.
- The exact number of tenants in any given residence may not show up in residence-related statistics as registered occupants informally sublet to friends and relatives. Linguistic problems may also prevent people from filling in forms.
- Arab asylum-seekers start off with a legal status and register for council services but become invisible if they decide to stay after their cases are rejected.
- Arab refugees and asylum-seekers choose to return to Westminster from northern cities thus breaking dispersal policies and becoming invisible.

- Arab migration to Westminster is driven by a combination of economic and political motives, but its shifting waves parallel the changes in the political landscape of the Arab region.
- There is a clear distinction between the community of unmarried male migrants comprising the informal labour force in Westminster and the settled Arab community living in London.

2.3 Chinese summary

- The structures of Chinese community mean that migrants of different status live and work together in common units.
- Language barriers are near total for many in the Chinese community. This can lead to a complete lack of participation in any kinds of state institutions and services (even for residents of many years).
- Language barriers and cultural norms both contribute to a system in which people will entrust the payment of bills and any registrations to a friend, landlord or employer without any questions.
- The population of Chinatown has a large transient element. It is a place where people seek work when they arrive in London. They stay in restaurant accommodation belonging to, or in property owned by, friends of business owners and move on after a year or so.
- Chinese cultural norms enable the Chinese community to absorb a lot of the pressure of new migrants into existing social structures. This can include employment, accommodation and many other kinds of help, often without any reference to state institutions.
- A certain insularity to the Chinese community caused by language and cultural barriers means that much will be kept away from the views of 'outsiders'/'foreigners' (the term persists even for these people living away from China).
- Different kinds of migrants come from different parts of China. The current multi-lingual trend amongst Chinese in Westminster (which many say is a product of living and working in Chinatown) attests to the fact that there is a great deal of intermixing between these communities.

2.4 Australians summary

- The 'community' infrastructure for Australian migrants in Westminster revolves mainly around nightlife, though a growing number of hostels attests to a lively market for accommodation for Australians in and around Westminster.
- Sharing of accommodation to keep rents low is common, with the number of people sleeping in one room often being very high.
- Westminster is seen as an attractive place for its nightlife and centrality, as well as for its perceived safety (though the specific grounds for this belief are not clear).
- Many referred to a lifestyle 'model' of coming to the UK to earn money initially for travel around Europe and the world, returning to London to earn more significant money before going back home. This implies a constant movement in and out of London. Hostels provide excellent accommodation for short notice movements like these.
- 'Temporary accommodation' often becomes long-term stays. Even hostels have semi-permanent residents who have been there for as long as a year. There is a desire amongst this group for more of this type of accommodation in Westminster.

- Lack of accommodation means that each night many people sleep rough, though this is a very short-term state.
- Language enables Australians to find jobs, register for national insurance and use the various government bureaucracies. However, due to the perceived temporary nature of each visit and stay, many do not register with GPs and work for cash in hand.
- Australians often try to extend visas or stay on after working visas have expired

2.5 Polish

2.5.1 Introduction

Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 has resulted in a change in the issues facing new migrants in London. Reports suggest that a larger number of Poles are making the decision to move to the UK in search of economic opportunities. Compared to their predecessors this newest wave of migrants is younger on average and migration is more speculative. Compared to migrants in some of the other groups in this study, it can be said that the stakes of migration for Poles are lower, with return visits to London, or jobs and family at home now possible. Many report that they plan short stays in London to save money in order to finance studies. Some also aim to create capital for new business ventures at home in Poland, whilst also hoping to return to London later for a longer stay. Due to higher wages, the busy service industry and a multicultural setting in which their presence can go unnoticed, Westminster is a hub for the employment of Poland's youngest wave of migrants. However, high rents and the fact that there are communities of Poles in other locations around London, limits Westminster's residential population. Nevertheless, because of a pattern of shared, sublet accommodation, many Poles in Westminster are living in flats, rooms and houses with a large number of other Poles. This is the most simple way for them to lower the high cost of renting.

2.5.2 The Polish 'community'- a brief historical background

The research found a perception that there was a lack of cohesion among migrants and that there were two to three distinct kinds of migrants, separated not by geographical origin (as is sometimes the case with other groups seen by outsiders as constituting a coherent community) but by generational wave of migration and hence, by age. As several respondents themselves observed, a basic understanding of modern history is central to understanding Polish migration in London and the nature of settlement in Westminster and in greater London. In a sense, there are two histories of Polish presence in Westminster; the first one is felt to be deeply related to politics while the second is seen as a product of European economic integration and economic migration. To the dismay of many in the older generation of migrants, many in the younger generation are unaware of the political nature of the history of Polish presence in this country.

A generational divide became apparent during research and was mentioned by many respondents as having an impact on the notion of 'community'. The older generation of Poles arrived in the period from the Polish government being put into exile to the late 1990s. These people, now aged 50 – 80 and their descendents, are a distinct group and distinguish themselves from a new 'younger generation', aged 20 - 30+, who arrived in the period shortly before and then after, the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004. While the older community and their descendents, who might also consider themselves British, are more likely to be found outside London, the newer generation are most represented in places such as Westminster. Poles from both groups frequently talked about differences in attitudes and misunderstandings between the generations. The divide separates people with different values, expectations, experiences and aspirations upon arriving in the UK and with different memories of Poland.

While these two histories account for many of the differences that are spoken of between the first wave of immigrants and the 'new wave', the division should not be exaggerated. Older and newer migrants still share a language, a history and an appreciation for Polish 'traditions'. Many

of those Polish organisations perceived to be highlighting a divide are in fact also working to include older and younger generations, and to find points of encounter between old and new interests. Bridging the gap between the generations is a challenge faced by the Polish community and it affects the experience of migrants in London.

The history of Polish migration into the UK is rooted in the events leading up to the Second World War, and the German occupation of Poland. In turn Westminster is a focal point in the history of Polish presence in the UK, since the Polish government in exile was based in the Rubens Hotel on Buckingham Palace Road. It is widely recognised among the older generation that POSK (Polish Social and Cultural Association) is something of an outgrowth of the Polish government in exile after its official recognition was retracted. Many of those in the older generation also include those who were in the UK when Marshall law was declared in Poland in 1981 and they were given permission to remain as refugees.

Several of the older generation complain that some Poles from the new wave of migrants are damaging the reputation of all Poles in this country, and refer to them as the 'drunks'. There were similar negative stereotypes about builders both in the older and in the newer generations. Some also reported that many in the new generation had different expectations, having either grown up in a communist state or been raised by parents who had grown up in a communist state, and that this affected their ability to adapt to London. In turn many of those in the younger generation complained that older people were unwilling to help them and turned a blind eye to their needs; POSK in particular was sometimes seen as a self-absorbed organisation for "old soldiers", focussing on the welfare of the elderly, rather than the various plights of the new arrivals.

The organisations representing the interests of the older generation include POSK (the Social and Cultural Association), housing two restaurants, a jazz café, exhibition hall, library and bookshop selling books and newspapers from Poland and selling missing pieces of military awards to World War Two veterans. There are also linked organisations such as the Federation of Poles, a membership organisation of businesses, charities and professional organisations, restaurants and other sundry clubs and associations.

The newer waves of Polish migrants are those most represented in this study. These respondents maintained that there was no real Polish community, and they perceived hostility towards the older generation and competition among the newer generation. Many felt this was due to a lack of social organisations. Organisations aimed at their needs are more focussed around employment and accommodation. This reflects the need for practical rather than 'cultural' support. They include online tools (such as Gumtree and the Polish language Londynek) and Polish press (such as the Express, Gazeta, Cooltura and Metropolia). While the idea of "teams" reflects the fact that many do socialise in tight circles, it is also evident that despite respondents' sense of a lack of community cohesion, social networks are key in securing employment, accommodation and support. Such networks are largely informal, with people often unaware of who is acting as a 'node'. There are also shared Polish institutions such as the Saturday Schools, which provide an important family resource for both old and new migrants. These schools, often run by the Educational Society, are indirectly associated with POSK but increasingly staffed by new teachers from Poland. This year has seen the first organisations of new migrants accepted as members of the Federation; these included an association of psychologists and a group of small businesses. In addition the Federation has started publishing a directory of businesses and a very successful guide to living in the UK for new migrants, which contains information about services and legal processes as well as

orientation and survival basics. Clearly there is a desire to create continuity between ‘old’ and ‘new’ migrants.

Focus groups brought old and new migrants together and provided a platform for an encounter that many respondents felt was otherwise lacking. Focus groups also revealed that there is another, third, ‘in-between’ category of migrants, namely those coming in the last decade but before Poland’s accession to the EU. Some of this group are likely to have experienced some form of irregular status in the UK. Those who had arrived before Poland’s accession to the EU felt that the new migrants often did not appreciate their current advantages. They said that before Poland joined the EU, migrants had had “no rights” in this country, whereas now they felt they could, for example, approach the police or obtain legal advice without any fears.

2.5.3 Churches

While the main centre of worship is a dedicated Polish church in Ealing which runs several Polish masses on a Sunday and attracts worshippers from all over London, within the city of Westminster both the Little Brompton Oratory and Westminster Cathedral receive Polish worshippers. At Westminster Cathedral an increasing number of Polish people (especially those working around Victoria Street) find time for worship during the week. The Little Brompton Oratory also holds weekly Polish masses. It was felt by some respondents that churches were an important source of community cohesion and that Westminster’s lack of a dedicated Polish church or even mass reflected its lack of a coherent Polish “community”.

2.5.4 Living Situation

One of the most common living situations revealed during research was a pattern of sublet, shared accommodation. With a few exceptions, new migrant respondents encountered in all phases of research had passed through such sublet shared flats. Most still lived in them. The most common set-up encountered during the research is one in which migrants arrive to stay in a room with a friend from Poland who is already living in London. Often they will not pay rent until they have found a job. Flats are usually let from a tenant who either lives in the property or somewhere else and collects rent from each room or person weekly. Subletters very rarely come in contact with actual landlords, and often the primary tenant was known actively to prevent contact. In this way the landlord will often be unaware of the high rate of occupancy in his/her properties.

Rent is usually paid in a lump sum such that bills remain in the name of the primary tenant. Registrations with the Council and through utility bills also bear the same name. One respondent reported an example of a group of Polish builders who rented a council flat from a British tenant in Westminster, who was subletting. A Polish clergyman also stated with authority that there were groups of Polish migrants renting council flats from British residents.

Rooms in these types of accommodation are often doubly or multiply occupied, even where the room size is meant only for one. The highest reported number of people in a room like this was 4. Household sizes in this type of accommodation were typically reported to be between 6 to10. Research was able to confirm this in several cases.

Short periods of what might be called ‘speculative’ migration partially account for the brevity of stay in this type of accommodation. Typically these ‘speculative’ stays last between 2 months and 1 year. Respondents often referred to these stays as ‘holidays’ in London, as they often

coincided with holidays from work or education in Poland. However, the intention of these stays is certainly more than tourism and encompasses a search for work which, if successful, leads to a longer stay. This fact, together with friends fresh from Poland staying free of charge during their initial weeks in London, generates great fluctuation in the number of people sleeping in a property from one week or month to the next, though the number is likely to remain high.

A Polish priest reported that he was seeing more and more families and couples who were becoming established and renting their own flats within one year. While Westminster is not traditionally the main area of Polish settlement, research revealed that these patterns apply in Westminster. This means that even for a small number of Polish households or individuals registered in Westminster, in can be assumed that 'behind' each 'visible' Pole there might be several other Poles.

It must be noted however, that for some migrants, finding accommodation is a challenge. While the majority seem to arrive with an address of friends or family, many migrants, especially those on their summer university holidays, may arrive without an address or contact. Some find initial accommodation at hostels near Victoria Coach Station, for example, but few are likely to be able to afford this for longer than one or two nights. One newsagent in Hammersmith is famous among migrants for having earned what they refer to as "a fortune" hanging out Polish language signs and adverts for accommodation in his window. The newsagent in question claimed that his services were advertised in newspapers back in Poland and he had even learned some Polish.

There are some charities and facilities such as the homeless unit at Westminster Police who have a link to the Federation of Poles, although the Federation is not always the most appropriate source of information for the needs of new migrants. The Passage, linked to Westminster Cathedral, is another important resource. It was also reported that a Polish homelessness charity had opened a London branch in Westminster, but was staffed only with Polish people and was having initial trouble finding its own feet. A Polish priest felt that the main causes for temporary homelessness were bad preparation, lack of money, lack of English and unrealistically high expectations.

2.5.5 Movements

The daytime population of Polish people in Westminster is likely to be higher than its resident population. This is largely because Westminster is a place that provides migrants with work opportunities in the service industry. It is not the main hub for long-term accommodation for migrants. The main Polish communities can be found in Hammersmith, Ealing, Acton and Fulham. The degree of movement into and out of Westminster is therefore very high both within one day and within the lifecycle of migrants, with a large number of Poles in London likely to be employed in Westminster especially in the initial stages of their time in London.

In general Westminster is seen positively as a pleasant, exciting, diverse and 'important' place. Higher rates of pay attract people to Westminster and respondents were prepared to commute long distances. Nevertheless, many focus group respondents felt that Westminster is not a good place to raise children, and some felt threatened by crime.

2.5.6 Economy

The strength of the British pound and restrictions on migration to more traditional host countries such as Germany, attract Poles to the UK. Easier entry and exit into the UK after Poland's accession to the EU means that people can fit migration into their lives pragmatically. Many respondents reported that they were saving money earned in London in to fund studies or set up small businesses at home in Poland, while some older respondents reported that they were working to top up their pensions back in Poland.

There was a very low awareness of the Worker Registration Scheme among the recent migrants; this is because much of the migration is speculative and of short duration, though it might be repeated. Compared to some of the Arab and Chinese migrants in this study, and other migrant communities facing political or other persecution at home, issues of work permits and legality of residence, the stakes of Polish migration are lower. This makes for migrants who benefit from much greater self-confidence in the management of their day-to-day lives and much less insecurity in the face of difficulties.

Most Polish migrants appear to find work within a month of arriving in London, making use of personal contacts, informal notice boards, newspapers, websites and facilities (restaurants, cultural institutes) to find work. Employment is primarily restricted by language barriers, rather than issues of legality. Many young women find work as waitresses. Many men are employed as kitchen porters with the aspiration of moving up to the level of cooks. While building is often looked down upon as a physically more strenuous job, many men are forced to take up jobs as builders, 'decorators' or handymen. Outside competition is perceived as a threat to such job opportunities, and one respondent who had been in London for over 30 years had been forced to close down his building business because his own workers were bypassing him to sell their labour independently.

There is some indication that it is particularly young men who find work in kitchens and in the building trade, who are usually surrounded by other Poles and Eastern Europeans and who may have fewer opportunities to become competent in English. More research is necessary to document the impact of this exclusion upon young Polish migrants' confidence and their societal integration.

2.5.7 Friends and family

Social networks are essential in migrants' initial orientation in the city. Most new migrants[1] either depend on someone else for their first job, place to stay or they are themselves in the process of helping someone else to come over and find work or accommodation. Some houses or rooms see a number of friends from the same town staying together. One respondent referred to this group as his "team". Several respondents explained systems of mutual support within similar units to this 'team', such as offering to put up friends rent-free in their rooms, putting in a good word with one's boss to get a job for a friend, and even just bringing home sandwiches from work for other team members. It is clear that some migrants, especially ones who have been here for longer, are acting as "nodes", providing or facilitating access to work, accommodation or other support and orientation to others. New migrants might become connected through association with a node or access a node through connections to friends or kin. These 'node' people might be sought out specifically or are individuals who take up the role of a node in specific situations for limit periods of time. In is important to note, however, that

these social networks are extremely informal, flexibly structured and spontaneous, and there are no direct economic returns on nodal activities.

2.5.8 Aspirations

Since Poland's accession to the EU in May 2004 it has become easy for university students to come to London for their summer break and many migrants are currently students in Poland or originally came for what they refer to as "holidays". These holidays are in fact terms of temporary, full-time employment and many hope to save money to help pay for studies at home. Migration is both speculative and pragmatic in economic terms, since most respondents said they would simply return home if they started making any losses. Many saw their first month or two as a trial period and said they would either stay or come back in a year's time for a longer stay. Several respondents mentioned that they had borrowed money for flights and many reported that money saved from earlier stays in London had paid for tickets to come back. Educational qualifications within the respondent group were found to be high: several respondents stated that they planned on either transferring to or beginning new studies in London universities. Others said they felt their English had to improve before taking up formal study. The recent opening of a Polish University's subsidiary branch in a school in Shepherd's Bush illustrates the demand for accessible and flexible further education among migrants.

A question for further research, flagged up by one of our key respondents, is the influence of a migrant's place of origin in Poland (for example, which region or whether a city or village), upon aspirations and expectations in London. It was suggested that someone from Warsaw might have 'less reasons' to move to London: this would probably refer to the push factors of migration rather than the pull factors. Simultaneously a strong undercurrent in the research was that many respondents felt that some migrants were not able to "handle" the diversity of London compared to what was referred to as the 'homogeneity' of Poland. This suggestion came to the fore most negatively in complaints from the older generation about young Poles being both victims and perpetrators of racist incidents in, for example, schools.

2.5.9 Health

The use and awareness of local services is low, but likely to increase as Poles start to establish themselves and extend their stays. Healthcare provides an interesting example. The level of registration with GPs is low, with those resident more than 3 years much more likely to register. Research revealed that many simply hoped or expected not to get sick. There was low awareness of walk-in clinics and Accident & Emergency services. Healthcare was often still obtained in Poland, with people paying to go home for regular checkups and treatments. Many spoke of less trust in UK doctors. One respondent, who was in the late stages of her pregnancy, was using her maternity leave in England to travel back to Poland to give birth. She was surprised and disappointed that in the UK she would be given no medical attention until 3 months into the pregnancy, and as a consequence she has had regular check-ups in Poland.

2.6 Arabs

2.6.1 Introduction

Ethnographer: Why did you choose to stay on the Edgware Road?
Respondent: As the proverb says "*Al-tuyūr `la ashkāliha* taqa`" (Birds fall together according to their own kinds1). All the Arabs live here; we work here, my friends and some relatives are here and we all help each other in this 'ghurba'. (literally 'estrangement'; living abroad)

The majority of Arabs in London, at least up to the 1990s, migrated from countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt and Morocco and have focussed on London, mainly in the central boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea and of Westminster, in the western borough of Ealing, and in the northern borough of Brent (see El-Solh 1992, Nagel 2002, Peach and Rossiter 1996; Storkey, et al. 1997). Indeed the developments in the Arab region since then (conflicts in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Algeria and Sudan) have influenced patterns and waves of migration to the UK and elsewhere.

The research for this study has revealed that there are different kinds of Arab immigrants, who might be drawn into three groups. The first is the majority of Arabs who have settled in London and established their lives on a long-term basis. In general, "Arab immigrants have settled with a relatively secure middle-class status (or at last a high level of education) and have been in a better socio-economic position than many [other] immigrants … Overall, the Arab population is disproportionately represented in higher educational and employment categories and in upper-middle class residential areas" (Nagel 2007, p. 388). The second grouping consists of migrants employed in the catering and service industry in hubs such as the Edgware Road and Bayswater. Unlike the previous category which consists of families, this second group seems to consist of unmarried males either in the process of securing legal status (asylum seekers, students working beyond the allowed 20 hours) or with an unresolved legal standing (individuals who have extended their stay without a visa or refused asylum seekers). The third constitutes Arab tourists, mainly from the Arabian Gulf, who use spaces like the Edgware Road for short periods of time, ranging from days to weeks. The second and third categories seem much more transient. It is the second kind of migrants on which this report will focus since Westminster, and the Edgware Road primarily, represent a major space in their lives.

2.6.2 Movements

The majority of respondents in this study either worked or lived in Westminster, often a combination of both. Edgware Road is a target for migrants because it is a central space for Arabs. To begin with, it is seen as a "business centre" where Arab migrants can find work with relative ease. Aside from being a social and cultural space, linguistically, migrants find it undemanding to communicate with other Arab speakers whereas the language barrier can prevent them from finding jobs elsewhere. One respondent, for example, had done two years of university at home and has several transferable skills, but the language barrier forced him to compromise on his ambitions and settle for working as a waiter in the Arab quarter. "I barely have to speak English in the restaurant. We might get a customer or two [who are English] every once in a while. But it is easier to find work here because no one outside [of Arab

[1] The English equivalent is "birds of a feather flock together".

businesses] will employ me". The respondent also knew the restaurant owners from home, a factor which brings forth obligations towards "close ones" (kin, friends or fellow countrymen) and therefore a sense of security.

It is precisely these factors that drive Arab refugees and asylum seekers to break the government's dispersal policy terms and return to Westminster from northern cities. "Arabs find no support networks in designated areas outside of London. So they find a way to return to Westminster. This is often at the expense of giving up their vouchers and accommodation and becoming invisible. But the need to be among Arabs where support networks exist, especially those that lead to opportunities for income, "pushes Arab migrants towards Westminster" as one Arab community representative said.

This is not to suggest that Arabs do not have links outside of Westminster, as respondents do make trips to different areas, but the majority of movement seems to be within Westminster. Even for Arab respondents who wished to extend their social circles beyond the Arab community and to "experience London as a multicultural city" as another respondent expressed, their movement still revolved around central London and the West End.

2.6.3 Living situation

There are various modes of living arrangements for the group in question. Some businesses provide accommodation as part of work packages for their employees, whom they bring from overseas (the Arab World) on work visas. But the more common arrangement is for employees independently to arrange for their own accommodation. Unmarried men look to share residence with other men of similar status. Often, people cluster together based on common backgrounds: nationality, sub-regions, kinship, religion, ethnicity and age.

A room in a flat can host from one person up to three as the focus groups, community web surveys and ethnographies revealed. Although there was a general agreement that living conditions at home were often "more comfortable", "more luxurious", "more spacious" and "better equipped" in terms of furniture, the image of Arab immigrants' overcrowding in a room was contested by respondents who felt that their living conditions were reasonable within what they perceived to be the common standard of living in London. This is enhanced by the fact that they often live with people with whom they are familiar, an element that reduces conflict or disagreement. Several respondents admitted that upon arrival, fellow Arabs hosted them, some for up to two months, without even charging rent until they sorted their own accommodation.

Migrants who arrived in London as asylum-seekers will probably have at one point been visible in the statistics due to their entitlement to housing benefits. But amongst those who have decided to stay despite the refusal of their case, existence is less visible. They tend to sublet rooms from registered tenants, thus avoiding dealing with landlords. Rent is paid directly to the person providing the sublet and utility bills are split between residents. In this sense, residence-related statistics may not capture a representative figure for the number of Arab tenants because, as this research suggests, even when tenants have been in a residence for longer than one year, they may not have been registered. Formal occupants also informally sublet to friends and relatives.

2.6.4 Economy

In his late twenties, one of the respondents decided to escape his living conditions in South Lebanon prior to the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. His first migration to an African country proved unsuccessful and thus he made it to London as an asylum seeker. “I thought it was going to be a closed country. I had no idea that there was such a density of Arabs. I feared having to look for *halal* meat and thought that I would have had to survive on vegetables (laughs)”. But the city proved to be quite enabling for him especially in terms of the social networks he was able to access. Jobs seemed readily available, despite being often reduced solely to the restaurant industry[2]. The perception of the abundance of jobs in the catering business was a common finding in this research. So too was the feeling that migrants were not using their full potential and skills. Rather, they were compelled to accept jobs requiring lower skills than their educational qualifications. For example, one respondent had to work on a full-time basis as a waiter in a restaurant while he studied for a Masters’ Degree at a renowned British university. “My job pays my bills. But I have to tolerate difficult customers who order us around. I am trying not to give up. I am applying for jobs in my field [Information Technology] but it is so difficult to find jobs here. I am scared that this is my worth, working as a waiter and throwing away all the books that I have read!”

The attitude of respondents involved in this research towards the informal job market is that it is quite regulated, albeit in an informal way. There are clear norms surrounding informal wages and entitlements in the Arab catering industry in Westminster. The pay is generally perceived to be fair and was reported in the research to range between £750 and £1000 a month, excluding tips, for waiters. Usually employees work for 9 hours a day and get one day off per week. In terms of payment, employees with National Insurance numbers receive cheques while those without it receive cash in hand. Some migrants expressed that they are able to save some money or periodically send some home.

Although there is room for exploitation in this industry, in the sense that employees do not have contracts and can be made redundant, especially in low work seasons, the general perception is that restaurant owners treat their employees well and often some owners act like father figures, ready to offer guidance and support.

2.6.5 Aspirations

Literature on migration has long documented the transient state in which migrants live, often aspiring to return home while at the same time assimilating to their new country (see Cohen 1996). This, coupled with the fact that there is a constant flow of ideas, values, beliefs and material culture between the homeland and the host countries, means that migrants live “transnational lives”.

The Arab respondents in this study came to London due to a combination of political and economic factors which inevitably influence each other. As mentioned above, most of the migrants working in the catering business are unmarried males who sought London for specific purposes in the hope of accomplishing goals and moving on; either returning to their homeland or to other countries. The main aspirations from migration to London can be summarised into a

[2] A field he had not intended to master while working hard in his home country towards achieving a university degree in literature.

single general objective: “improving previous lives”. This is sought through one or more of the following:

- Seeking legal status in the UK: seeking asylum, work permits, residencies or ultimately British citizenship. The main value attached to legal status was the mobility it provides which enables migrants to become “citizens of the world” and to move back and forth to their countries freely. More importantly, migrants expressed the desire for individual respect articulated through idioms of “human dignity, human rights, freedom, personal safety”, values perceived to be lacking in some Arab countries, especially ones torn with conflict, wars or occupation.
- Securing employment that will guarantee savings for the purpose of working independently – “opening one’s own business rather than working for others” was a particular value.
- Education: learning English or seeking higher education.

As one respondent said, “Initially, I only wanted to stay here for two years but I have been here for five. I expected to make more money but I couldn’t because it is difficult”. Many like him were under the impression that their mission could be accomplished in a couple of years but found that they needed a longer period of time. Particularly, asylum seekers whose cases have been refused and are either appealing or have chosen to stay nonetheless, find themselves in a vicious circle as they are hesitant to leave the country and feel they have no choice but to stay, but their existence becomes “invisible”. For example, one respondent has been living in Westminster for seven years. His asylum case has been rejected and he feels that he ought not to leave without any achievement. “I have made a good sum of money. My brothers at home are doing well, I could ask for their help and establish my own business here, but I can’t. I feel stuck because I can’t do any other work. No one will employ me outside of the [Arab] restaurant business. I can’t get a university degree. I keep asking myself, what have I done in the last seven years? I have just made money which I can’t invest here. All I want is the citizenship and I can move on.”

For unmarried males without a legal status, this predicament hinders their aspirations of what they ought to accomplish at different stages of their life-cycles. Many, for example, felt that they could not start a family with their status as irregular migrants or if their financial situation was unstable. With the hope to return home, but not without valued accomplishments, Arab male migrants find themselves staying beyond their initial plans.

Women are almost absent from this category of irregular Arab migrants. Arab community and NGO representatives have dealt with cases of female refugees and asylum seekers but in terms of the catering industry on the Edgware Road, for example, it is almost entirely male. Women working in Arab restaurants tend to be from Eastern European countries, not Arab. The women in this study explained that it is acceptable for women to come to London as students, as employees in the city or as wives of migrants. But very few are willing to jeopardise their status (overstaying their visa, seeking asylum on their own) and replicate the perceived hardships of the unmarried males. As one respondent explained, “my parents would have never allowed me to come here on my own, had I not had family here [a sister and her husband]. In general, for the majority of Arab women, it is not appropriate for us to land here, live with 5 or 6 men in one house, like the men do, and just work. What about our families back home?”

2.6.6 Friends, family, "community"

This study has highlighted the importance of social networks in the experience of Arab migrants in Westminster. As one respondent put it, "the Arabs gravitate toward one another". Coming to London, finding accommodation and jobs and settling down was often facilitated by friends, fellow-countrymen, or relatives who knew their way around London. In this sense, respondents expressed a strong sense of "community" among Arabs living in Westminster. As literature on migration has documented, "the fact that people from a particular region share a rich material culture of consumption, both high cultural and popular, and sometimes a dominant religion across a large number of nation-states, creates public arenas and economic channels for cooperation and communal enjoyment, which cut across the national origins or religious beliefs of performers and participants" (Werbner, 2004).

The aim here is not to paint a romantic picture of Arab relations and Arab cohesion. For instance, respondents did discuss how different Arab groups do not necessarily get along well with each other. In fact, some even reiterated stereotypes about different Arab groups. Even with residence, people of a region in a country or a religious sect were more likely to live together than with "outsiders" (other Arabs), under the pretext of familiarity and sameness[3].

As mentioned above, the groups studied were largely comprised of unmarried males, mainly in their twenties and thirties. In this regard, they were hardly connected to, say, second generation Arabs born and living in London or even with Arab families who were settled in the UK. Social life was restricted to a group of people of the same status: other Arab males doing more or less the same jobs. It is here where friendship and colleagueship intersect as one respondent explained, "I mingle with people I see the most and these are my colleagues in the restaurant, or in nearby restaurants. I don't really have a choice". Despite the important support networks created through these relationships, respondents agreed that their lives in Westminster lack the social richness available at home and they especially lack the family support for which even the Edgware Road cannot substitute. One respondent said, "My living conditions are much better here because I can learn and study. The situation in terms of money is much better. But socially I am miserable. There is no social life". Some respondents also mentioned that this lack of social life will now be exacerbated by the *shisha* ban, which will effectively push them inside people's houses, as opposed to cafes, and restrict their opportunities to meet people yet further.

2.6.7 Health

Questions about migrants' access to local services indicated low use and awareness. The reluctance to register with institutions springs from a variety of reasons: fear of appearing on government reports, lack of knowledge about certain services or related bureaucratic measures and not attaching importance to the nature of the services. Questions about registration with a GP were especially telling in this regard, as replies showed that even those with work permits or student visas did not necessarily register with a GP. This reflects a general attitude towards health where, as at home, people tend to visit a doctor if and when they fall ill. If they haven't felt ill enough in the past three years, then they are likely to see no need to register.

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[3] Unsurprisingly, this relates to what Werbner has called "segmented diasporas", where people unite in certain contexts but oppose each other in other contexts. Their members' identities, in other words, are not fixed but situationally determined". Hence, despite stigmas and stereotypes, there was a consensus that Arabs help Arabs in Westminster, regardless of their "internal differences" and they are reliable with each other.

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2.7 Chinese

2.7.1 Introduction

Soho's Chinatown is the most obvious face of the Chinese migrant community in Westminster. Despite its relatively small size[4], Chinatown's sights, sounds and smells give the area an authentically Chinese feel and can certainly be seen as a reasonably 'exotic' space in the centre of London. During the research period it became increasingly clear that the 'Chineseness' of Chinatown was also a major draw for Chinese migrants keen to find familiar faces and, most importantly, a Chinese-speaking environment. Chinatown offers a haven for Chinese migrants who might otherwise find coping in London (without language or knowledge of local culture) impossible.

Paradoxically, Chinatown seems both highly visible and yet impenetrable. The language barrier exists in both directions and many Chinese prefer to deal with problems or community issues internally rather than to make explicit appeals for help to external sources.

2.7.2 Different kinds of Chinese migrants

People leave China and make the move to the UK for a variety of reasons and come from a variety of backgrounds. This diversity of the Chinese migrant population in Westminster is partly reflected in the number of languages spoken. The primary languages are Mandarin and Cantonese but there are also now many people whose first language is Fujian-ese[5] or Hakka, as well as many other local dialects. While most of those who come to the UK are motivated by the perceived potential to make money, the relative need for money varies from person to person.

Despite media portrayals of 'desperate' Chinese workers, the reality is somewhat more mixed[6]. Many migrants from China are now coming with the idea of 'having a little try' at living in the UK or to see another country, a new culture and a new lifestyle. This kind of speculative or semi-tourist migration looks much more like the kinds of patterns of migration seen amongst the Polish or the Australian migrants, at least in terms of aspiration and motivation. However, Chinese 'speculative' migrants may well stay for longer periods (as long as 5 years) in an attempt to make meaningful amounts of money before returning home. Many of these kinds of respondents said they found themselves in a state of constant soul-searching as to whether the financial benefits of being in the UK actually outweigh the difficulties and the drop in living standard required to be here.

There are migrants from China for whom the economic imperative is much more apparent. For some the very act of coming to the UK itself may have created a debt which necessitates taking any work that is available. For others, the opportunity to come to London and earn wages which, even at the lowest levels, are significantly higher than in China[7], is too great a chance to miss. The economic 'need' often refers to a greater unit than just an individual. Whole families in

[4] When compared with other Chinatowns in cities like New York or San Francisco.
[5] This is a direct translation from the Chinese term 'Fu Jian hua'.
[6] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4871760.stm
[7] Finding work in rural China can also be very difficult in the current economic climate.

China may be dependent on the wages that are sent home. As a general rule, those for whom the economic need is greater than any other consideration are most likely to have come from rural China and be less skilled and less educated.

2.7.3 Living Situation

Depending on a migrant's economic state and the length of time they have been in the UK, living situation can vary from the lines of bunk-beds filling tiny rooms, to families who have managed to save enough to lay deposits on their own houses.

In Westminster the resident population of Chinese migrants tend to be those who have arrived more recently. Residency in Westminster is usually tied to work. This is especially the case in Chinatown where accommodation is often filled with those who work in the restaurants and their families. Employers will typically provide the accommodation as part of the work package, taking rents directly out of salaries and pay. This system is very common in China and, given the difficulty with sourcing accommodation themselves, is a system with which, in principle, most respondents appeared happy. Less pleasing is the quality of the accommodation. Many respondents indicated that their living conditions in Westminster are, or had been, very cramped. Respondents described conditions in which individual rooms accommodated two families, as well as rooms which served as dormitories for chefs and waiting staff. The rooms themselves are small and huddle around steep staircases which add to a sense of claustrophobia. "No one would want to stay in Chinatown for very long!" one said, "We stayed for one year and I think that is a long time!". Other respondents also reported staying in Chinatown for most of their first year in London but moving out after that, especially when family members began to join them from China, either to visit or to stay. Despite wanting to move out to better accommodation, migrants can still be dependent on their initial accommodation in Westminster until they can find help to make a move. Chinatown remains a *relatively* cheap base[8] in central London, close to work-places and social resources.

Chinatown's residency might be described as *transient but continuous, high-density living*. That is to say that there may be few 'permanent' or 'long term' residents but accommodation is always densely packed with migrants usually still within the first year of their time in London.

Outside of Chinatown, Westminster's Chinese population is more scattered with some historical links perhaps, to Bayswater. In nearly all of the cases encountered during research, these dwellings belong to, or are sourced and arranged by employers. High-density living is still the norm outside Chinatown as a means of reducing rents but also as a practical measure since demand for central accommodation, near to work places and resources, is high. The difference with the living situation in Chinatown however, is that those who have moved out tend to have a greater control over whom they live with. One respondent had moved away from Chinatown into a similar sized accommodation and still shared with two families, but the new arrangement involved two families who shared blood ties and could share resources more comfortably. These sharing decisions can be based on family links, language, connections from home or shared resources and needs (such as childcare).

For those migrants with irregular or unresolved legal status, living conditions were observably worse and even more crowded. In one case encountered during the research period, an ex-

[8] Especially given the lack of need for travel.

council flat in Westminster had been divided into three separate, single-room, dwellings (each with its own lock on the door). In each room as many as 8 beds were packed against the walls. Rent was paid to one member of the household, who in turn, dealt solely with the landlord. The landlord himself was never aware of, or turned a blind eye to, the people living in the space. Respondents described these conditions as fairly normal for migrants in a similar situation to themselves.

2.7.4 Family and Friends

Family and friends are often instrumental in the reasons for a migrant to have come from China in the first place. They may also be the means of migration and the means of support upon arrival. These factors are dealt with in more detail below (see section entitled 'Connections').

In many cases families get divided by the migration itself. Migrants must often detach themselves from large family structures in China in order to move to the UK. The cost of travelling between the two countries is prohibitive and, coupled with the difficulty of obtaining visas in China, this can mean that families must stay divided for many years.

Migrants are also often separated from spouses and young children for at least the initial period of migration. In many cases encountered during fieldwork, it was men who had made the initial trip to the UK. One year later, wives had joined them in order to reunite the family. For some, initial plans to bring children to be educated in the UK had been revised after experiencing life in London. Cramped living conditions in Chinatown and elsewhere, the lack of Chinese support networks and a perception that British schools for young children were not in fact any better than Chinese schools meant that in several cases, young children had been left in or sent back to China, to grow up within Chinese culture. Such children would be looked after by grandparents or other family members. In other cases, older children had been brought to the UK to be put through British education. Active debate over whether schools for older children were better than in China and whether it was worth staying in order to receive a British university education was common.

Grandparents and parents were also often part of the migration story. Over time, migrants saw increasing numbers of visits from parents and grandparents. Such visits could be short-term but were also often long-term. One migrant's parents often stayed for up to 6 months of the year to help with housework and child care. Some parents had also come to look after their children who are in universities in the UK. These visits lead to a kind of semi-residence in the UK for half of the year. These people were reported to be very unconnected to English life, spending most of their time indoors and using only basic amenities. Their primary life remained in China.

For all, long-term isolation from families and/or children can lead to a feeling of isolation and loneliness. Families in China provide the primary means of social care and support. Networks can be large and the imperative to help family members is strong. Being cut off from such networks can compound the hardships of life in the UK.

This isolation is made even more apparent by the lack of opportunities to make new friends and find peers. The Chinese population in London is relatively small. Migrants come from many different backgrounds and speak many languages. As such, many of the respondents said that finding people with similar interests or outlooks is difficult. Long working hours and cramped living conditions also make life tiring, and looking for friends can become just another potential source of anxiety.

Of course there are also large numbers of younger, single men especially amongst those who had come to the UK via irregular means or routes. For those without formal permissions to live and work in the UK, the picture is even more bleak. Choices about where to live are reduced, they are nearly always lone, single men and are forced, by economics and immediate needs, to live in situations which require them to trust people they often did not know very well. This leaves them vulnerable to exploitative employers or mentors. Isolation from family members could be total, with no hope of a return home and no hope of family being able to visit the UK.

2.7.5 Economy

Higher wages and the current strength of the pound against Chinese currency mean that there is an economic draw to London and Chinatown. Prior misconceptions of the western lifestyle mean that many Chinese are surprised at the poor living conditions in London, and especially Chinatown. This does not negate the value of the significant economic reasons for staying. Money that is sent back to China has a magnified value and even small amounts of English pounds can have a significant impact on lifestyles back in China. This is especially true for those with families who live in rural China.

Wages in London cannot provide luxurious lifestyles in the UK for Chinese migrants, but they do often allow for adequate, or at least bearable, living for most whilst providing extra income to families back in China. In most of the families explored during research, both men and women worked to provide a dual income. Childcare was not paid for but provided through grandparents or friends. If these were not available, then mothers would work only part-time in order to look after children.

In most cases, the economy of London provided a motivation to stay but not necessarily an imperative. For most there was a significant debate over whether the economic benefits outweighed the social disadvantages.

For those without working visas and irregular legal status the picture was different. Often the cost of coming to the country itself has left them in debt[9]. Such debts could realistically only be paid by earning British wages: the periods of time needed to clear the debt could be many years. This situation often means that such people were forced to take work when it came along. More than one respondent expressed dismay at the plight of those who did not have the right paperwork. They feared for their safety, lamented the fact that they could not protect themselves against exploitative employers (usually Chinese) and wondered why such people had ever come in the first place. For all this, and despite media reports, research revealed little evidence of violence or intimidation. Chief fears were of exploitation and deportation rather than of physical safety. Migrants working on the streets (perhaps selling DVDs) were most at risk. They talked of random violence although no one could point to specific incidents. This is not to say that violence and intimidation of unprotected workers is non-existent, simply that it did not get reported during fieldwork for this project.

The presence of workers who would work for such low wages has other less clear impacts. Other migrant workers expressed a kind of ambivalence towards them. On the one hand they threatened jobs; on the other they allowed business to continue in the face of increasing rents.

[9] The amount cited during research was some 60,000 RMB. This money had been paid in China. This equates to about £4000.

Though most respondents initially denied any contact with Chinese migrants who did not have correct visas, fieldwork showed that the two kinds of migrants were often forced together by circumstance. Survey partners stated their surprise that their own acquaintances did not have the same visas or documents as themselves. People rarely reveal their status to each other, but the fact that many migrants have learned to speak various Chinese dialects in London, as more than one respondent indicated, is one observable manifestation of the mixing of migrants which occurs.

2.7.6 Movements

Taking a long-range view of Chinese migration, the move to London may be just one step in a process. Many of the respondents talked of having families in the Chinese countryside who worked on farms. Few had come directly from these farms to the UK. Instead they had already made an internal migration from the countryside to China's increasingly wealthy cities where that they had found the opportunity to come to the UK. Others had come directly from these cities with work opportunities. There appeared evidence for the rumours that certain kinds of migrants come from certain areas. Certainly the more educated and skilled migrants appeared to have come from cities like Shenzhen and Guangzhou in Southern China. Those who took the greatest risks to get to the UK lacking skills, education and possibly the correct paperwork, seemed to come mainly from rural areas and in recent times, especially from Fujian province. Routes to the UK depended on the status of the travel. For many it was a simple flight into London, for others the route involved stops in other European countries.

Movements within the UK and London have been explored above.

2.7.7 Aspirations

Many suggested that hopes and expectations about the UK whilst in China centred on wealth and the opportunity to make money and live a 'western' lifestyle. But when asked about individual reasons, respondents replied in surprisingly practical terms: "To see another country"; "To earn money. That's it"; "It was an opportunity too good to miss[10]". Whether expectations were revised downwards upon arrival is difficult to say, but most migrants do not talk in idealistic terms of making a fortune or of becoming hugely wealthy and powerful upon returning home to China. All respondents were asked to give an idealised scenario but few deviated from very practical expectations, and expressed realistic and accurate evaluations of the amount of money they might make and their likelihood of ever reaching the point of British citizenship.

All but one respondent clearly expressed a long-term desire to return home to China. Some said that they would ideally like to have both Chinese and British citizenship and be able to enjoy the benefits of living in both countries. A rise in living standards in the UK, however, seemed to have led to a possible second revision of aspirations, namely a possibility of staying permanently in the UK. This hope seemed to be linked to two factors: the possibility of attaining citizenship and the realistic evaluation of the likelihood of being able to get a step on the UK property ladder.

These kinds of hopes contrasted strongly with those for whom there was no possibility of attaining citizenship or indeed the kind of legal status needed to work and live securely and without fear. For these people, there was no concrete aspiration to improve living standards in

[10] This refers to the relative good fortune of being able to obtain a visa to travel out of China.

the UK. Instead the need was to try and locate conditions which were simply liveable. Any spare cash went to repaying debts and/or to family back in China. One respondent put it simply: “This time is hard. But I have no choice. I am doing it for my family and for the future. How I feel right now is not important.”

Education also plays some part in the motivations of some migrants, especially those with children. In China, a European university degree is highly valued and many migrants have the aspiration to bring children to the UK and raise them through the British education system. In several cases however, children had been sent back to China to Chinese schools and there is a shared discourse among some Chinese migrants that British schools are not as good as expected. However, the value of a British university education is still generally upheld, and for those migrant families with older children, the prospect of being able to stay long enough to see them through a British university remains an important consideration when considering the possible length of stay in the UK.

2.7.8 Connections

In China the concept of ‘connections’ (*guanxi*[11]) is one of the key drivers of all social and economic life. It permeates everyday life such that the activity of improving and maintaining one’s connections is a daily concern and constant source of anxiety for all strata of Chinese society. In London too a migrant’s connections greatly determines prospects and quality of life. One respondent, who was himself without a working or residence visa, said of the Chinese cockle-pickers[12] who died at Morecambe bay in 2004: “It is not their lack of money as such that was their problem, it was that they did not have the right connections. They probably didn’t have any connections at all.” He went on to note that he himself arrived with as little money as they did and that he too would have had to take the first work offered to him, but he had a place to start (a friend who already had a permanent job with a building company) and was able to build his connections from there.

Having connections can sometimes just mean having friends but it can also mean having friends who in turn have other friends or connections, or knowing people with connections to certain parts of China, or family relations (distant or close) and myriad other ways in which two people can be connected. The important thing is that when a connection is sufficiently close, Chinese migrants are able to draw on it to help themselves. Often such relationships may be characterised by the giving of gifts and the return of favours, and are quite explicitly instrumental, though such exchanges are designed to build trust.

Research found that chefs for example, were often recruited in China on the recommendation of their Chinese boss to a UK-based restaurateur with whom the Chinese boss had a connection. In turn, what mattered in terms of gaining the opportunity to come to London was the strength of the chef’s own connection with his boss in China. A common answer to the researcher’s questions about the resources migrants would use in the event of crises or emergencies also boiled down to answers like, “the people I have the strongest connections with”, “people from my village”, “people who speak the same [local] dialect as me.” Respondents felt that when push came to shove, people felt that their Chinese connections would be more helpful than police or hospitals in the UK. These responses came especially from those without proper documents and permissions to live and work in the UK.

[11] The term can also be translated as ‘relationships’ and can potentially refer to a very broad set of human interactions.
[12] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/lancashire/3464203.stm

In general the relative ease or difficulty of life in London and Chinatown seemed to be determined directly by a migrant's tangible connections to other Chinese who could ease their passage. For example, one woman who had been very successful in creating connections with a number of Chinese-speaking professionals, had managed to achieve things that even locals might find difficult. A young male acquaintance from Hong Kong, for example, who worked as a mobile phone shop manager, was apparently able to help her get the best mobile phone deals. In fact, he also read her bills and handled all of her forms and documents (which she could not understand). She finally used two mobile phone companies, had a very 'hi-spec' phone and managed two phone numbers in order to maximise the cheap call time. In return her acquaintance asked her to bring him more custom from amongst her friends. She joked that this acquaintance had helped to 'upgrade' her life. Such deals and relationships are commonplace in China and the system merely seems to have transplanted to London.

Perhaps most importantly, connections determine the likelihood of getting reasonable work. For those who arrive in London with no connections or no useful connections, finding work is tough. Without any kind of relationship to any employers migrants have to accept low pay and hard work. They do not get the best accommodation, opportunities etc. On the other hand, migrants who come with connections, no matter their legal status, have better chances. One respondent for example, arrived in the UK with nothing but a phone number of a distant cousin whom he had not met. He was able to take news from China to the cousin and in turn the cousin welcomed him into his home and found him a job in a restaurant. Such connections are often welcomed on both sides, since it is a reciprocal relationship of trust. The cousin in this instance is able confidently to recommend the new migrant for a job, since he knows there are connections that will ultimately hold the migrant accountable with his own family back in China.

Without language and knowledge of the bureaucracies, entitlements, and various social, cultural and state institutions in the UK, Chinese migrants are particularly reliant on other Chinese-speaking friends, connections and leaders (usually bosses) to help them navigate their journey through life in the UK. However, cultivating connections in London can be difficult. The number of Chinese speakers is small, the connections are fewer (because people come from all over China) and people do not have the time or the spare cash to indulge in the meals, drinking sessions or gifts which characterise the business of building connections in China.

A number of respondents said that for those without connections (also very often those without the correct visas and working permits) life could be hard. One or two respondents referred to 'Big Ears', people who had their ears to the ground and were ready to move in on those who had no one to help or protect them. Often these 'Big Ears' were no more than loan sharks but it also refers to those people who know they can use desperate or illegal migrants as a cheap source of labour.

For these reasons, Chinatown itself is a very important resource indeed for many Chinese migrants. Chinatown is a place in which migrants can communicate with other Chinese. They can sit in restaurants and listen for familiar accents. They can look for friends and peers, hear about formal or organised resources such as community centres, churches[13] or job opportunities and they can try to make new connections. As one Chinese proverb states "duo yi ge pengyou, duo yi tiao lu" ('with a new friend comes a new road'). To see Chinatown as simply

[13] Chinese church groups may attract migrants as much as a resource or pool of Chinese people as with religion. In fact, new Chinese migrants from the mainland tend not to be very religious at all.

a shopping centre or tourist attraction would be to greatly underestimate its role as a forum for people to find these all important connections.

It is also worth noting that connections can sometimes be as much a burden as a blessing. One example of this might be the obligation to an employer. One respondent, a chef in a restaurant in Chinatown, noted that his contract with his employer was for three years and that his visa was dependent on his boss's sponsorship. Because his boss had provided him with the opportunity to come to the UK, he thus felt obligated to fulfil the contract even at the expense of networking with other potential employers. For those without legal status to work, employers can exploit this sense of obligation by providing work and using the migrant's sense of indebtedness, as well as fear of being reported if a relationship turned sour, to maintain a status quo involving low wages and few prospects.

2.7.9 Needs, language and health

The language barrier for many Chinese can be a serious problem. The sense of social isolation has already been mentioned but there are wider implications. For many Chinese migrants the language barrier proves simply too difficult to bridge even over many years. This is due in part to the difficulty in moving from an East Asian language to a European one, and is combined with the realities of working long hours and having little free time to study. Some second generation, British-born Chinese encountered during fieldwork said that for some, the language barrier is never bridged at all, even with permanent residence. They describe their parents as still staying very closely within the Chinese community and finding it difficult to communicate independently with people outside it. Furthermore, this barrier is often two-way, causing problems of interaction for Chinese people and those officers and others whose services they need.

These kinds of language barriers mean that many Chinese migrants will not interact in any way with forms or bureaucracy. The only time this is possible is when other, perhaps bi-lingual, people are available to help, as in the case of the Chinese manager of the mobile phone shop. This lack of interaction with state institutions or British cultural institutions exacerbates the problems of cultural integration and communication. For those without the correct legal status to live and work in the UK, the issue becomes doubly difficult. Even if they could communicate with state or cultural institutions, they would be afraid to make themselves known.

Such factors play a part in why so many respondents cited friends, fellow language speakers and Chinese community centres like the Chinese National Healthy Living Centre, the bishop Ho Ming Wah centre and the Chinatown Chinese Community Centre, as their first points of contact in emergency or need, rather than, for example, the Police. Another example was a respondent who wondered whether her doctor was prejudiced against Chinese. When asked why she thought this, she complained that the doctor refused to spend longer than ten minutes examining her when she had pains in her foot, and that he did not prescribe anything to help her. Her expectation of being treated by a doctor was that she would be able to spend time discussing her problems and that she would receive a treatment, both normal Chinese expectations of healthcare[14]. The doctor in turn had been unable to explain the rationale for his

[14] Health and wellbeing in China are very social matters. Illness is often discussed at great length by families and friends. Trips to doctors are often made with family or friends and a patient expects a doctor to take into account their social and psychological state as well as their physical ailments. There is also a general perception that a doctor should prescribe something at the end of a consultation as part of the service they provide. These holistic expectations of diagnosis and treatment are firmly rooted in Chinese cultural understandings of health and well-being.

decisions. In a situation like this, neither doctor nor patient can articulate their needs to the other.

Healthcare was one area of life that seemd to cause many of the respondents anguish. For many, the initial period of living in Chinatown had allowed them to register with a Chinese doctor in Soho, and some had come into contact with the Chinese Healthy Living Centre which plays a vital role in directing people to the available health services. For those who had moved away however, doctors who understood Chinese or who had access to translation services were considered few and far between, and many people had simply not bothered to re-register. For those who worried about registering for legal reasons, access to healthcare seemed virtually non-existent. Chinese doctors offering Traditional Chinese Medicine are considered too expensive for most recent migrants and the NHS was an impenetrable institution for most. During research, one respondent revealed that his entire forearm had been burnt during an accident involving a wok of hot oil. Despite the burn being serious enough to leave a permanent, disfiguring scar over the entire lower part of his right arm, he had apparently not once visited a doctor or hospital. Instead he said: “When you are a migrant like me, you just don’t get sick.”

2.8 Australians

2.8.1 Introduction

Most of the Australians encountered during the research in Westminster were relatively young: between the ages of 20 and 30 years old. They came to the UK mainly on two-year working holiday visas. They largely intend to use the UK as a base from which to earn money to finance further travels and sometimes to save money for use in Australia to buy property, start businesses or finance their university education. It is a first choice destination because the working visa programme allows them to come to the UK for work and holiday for up to two years, and does not involve learning another language. This, coupled with the strong currency, make up the primary motivations behind choosing to make the UK their work base.

The Austrialian migrant group seems to consist of roughly equal numbers of males and females who travel alone, or sometimes with a travel partner, a boyfriend, girlfriend or, more occasionally, a spouse. Some have family or friends in the UK, but may still end up staying in a hostel or temporary accommodation for a period of time.

2.8.2 Living situations

Australians would like to live and work permanently in Westminster but many find the rent too expensive in the long term. One respondent said that there used to be “stacks of Australians living in Westminster about 5 or 10 years ago”, but that now Australians can’t afford even a flat-share. Those who work more permanently in the hostels where so many of the Australians stay say that after the events of 9/11 a downturn in visitors to the UK meant that some temporary accommodation in and around central London closed, leaving a shortage in comparison with current demand. While there is demand for new hostel space it is likely that new hostels will be created.

In Westminster there seem to be two main ways of tackling the issue of high rent. The first is to use the hostels as a semi-permanent base with some Australians living in hostels for as long as a year, even as other European and global travellers come and go around them. The second option is flat-shares, in which a very large number of people will share a flat or room and divide the rent. Anecdotal evidence points to the fact that in many cases landlords are unaware of how many people stay in their property and are sometimes angry when they find out.

2.8.3 Hostels

Hostels have certain advantages over finding a room or a flat. They offer an inexpensive way to stay in Central London and save travel money. The hostels are usually found online through ‘Google searches’. Some even find work in the hostels in exchange for accommodation. They can work a few hours a week doing odd jobs around the hostel or hostel chain.

One advantage to living out of a hostel, and a main reason for choosing this type of accommodation, is that guests can stay for a short while and then choose to travel for extended periods before returning to London without owing any retainer rent for a room or flat. Essentially it is the very transience of the hostel living situation which, possibly paradoxically, makes them such good places to stay for extended (three months and more) periods of time.

The hostels also provide a centralized place for the exchange of information and fulfil an essential function by providing a first residential address, which allows migrants to open bank accounts, get mobile phones, have an address for employment applications and access services that require an address. The hostel workers frequently write letters of residency for people staying there. In this way the hostel address in Westminster can remain their permanent address until they feel they are in a stable long-term living situation.

2.8.4 Flats and flat/house shares

Very few of the Australians in the research could afford to live alone or with a partner in a flat in Westminster, and usually found a flat-/house-share with up to 8 other people (though our informal surveys suggest that sometimes there can be even more than this); usually with other travellers. Another option, advertised as “couchsurfing”, sees people sleeping on makeshift beds, sofabeds or cots in flatshares for low daily rents. They may also stay with friends or relatives in the UK, sleeping on sofas and floors until they find work and/or other accommodation. Sometimes work and accommodation are difficult to find and they can even end up sleeping rough during parts of the year when hostels are hard to book or while they are looking for work. Whilst sleeping rough is a temporary hardship and not seen as a potential long-term problem, Australians will number themselves among those who pitch a sleeping bag in green spaces around Westminster during the summer months.

As with the hostels it is the very temporary nature of these kinds of living arrangements which provide the attraction for a longer-term stay, as well as providing a way of living centrally without having to pay central London rents. If they can avoid the costs and binding agreements associated with becoming a permanent resident (e.g. deposit, letting contracts, council taxes etc.) then they will.

2.8.5 Movements

Most of the Australian respondents talked on arrival of an initial stay in Westminster, Camden, Kensington or Fulham. There is a shared knowledge of these places back in Australia, coming either from older family members who have travelled the same paths or from friends sending news back home. Rarely do new arrivals venture outside of these areas. After a while (the length of time varies) they learn about flat-shares or house-shares in other areas, and may move there to find less expensive housing. Before actually moving out of the central boroughs, they may attend a party or club in the other boroughs as a way of gauging the atmosphere, but as one respondent put it, “I didn’t know where I was, I just went there with some other people, not sure how I got home or how far it was from anything”. That statement sums up the attitude of new arrivals to the rest of London. A general impression derived from the ethnographic work and from the lack of London knowledge demonstrated in focus groups (even by long-term London residents) suggests that many are unaware of the true scale of the city and ‘London’ is still seen as being the central London boroughs and areas.

This point was brought home by the reliance on tube maps as a guide to the geography of London. One female respondent had a small folded tube map and a map of central London and confines herself to Westminster and zone one for example. She does not have an A-Z. She has heard people talking about it, but is not sure what it is and does not feel she needs one yet, because she stays in Central London and her map covers that area. Like this respondent, many migrants take time before feeling the need to buy an A-Z or other London maps, and beginning

to distinguish distances from central London to other areas and the spatial relationships between the boroughs. They usually seemed to purchase A-Zs only when looking for work beyond central London or when seeking accommodation outside the central areas.

Hyde Park is a favourite place for Australians to gather and 'escape the concrete'. The focus group respondents said that many of the organized leisure activities and sporting events take place in Hyde Park. It is also close to many of the hostels located in Bayswater, so new arrivals become aware of the park immediately. One respondent said he chose his hostel because Hyde Park was the only landmark he recognized from the hostel's website.

In general however, the Australian migrant group demonstrated a unique trend which was not quite like the other groups studied. Despite the numbers involved, there are relatively few 'Australian' shops or cafes. This lack of an 'Australian' *daytime* infrastructure reflects perhaps the relative cultural 'closeness' of Australian to local people and the lack of language barriers. However, there is a well-established night-life or *nighttime* infrastructure in Westminster which is devoted to the partying lifestyles of the Australians in London. Perhaps the most high profile example of this is the 'Walkabout' chain of bars. Westminster is home to three of these bars alone and there are many more pubs, clubs and bars which cater to an Australian clientele. With so many Australians working in this very industry and the concentration of nightspots in Westminster, there is an influx of Australians into the borough at night, both for work and play.

Many respondents agreed that there was a model for living in London in the longer term, and into which Westminster fitted. Initial arrival is marked by a period of transience during which migrants will stay in central London (in Westminster's hostels or flat-shares for example). This period is used to earn money for further travel to other countries, using London as a base. The strength of the pound and the ease of finding temporary, cash-in-hand jobs, makes this much easier than using a different location. During this period they could be in London, in temporary accommodation (like the Westminster hostels) for several months. After this period of travelling a more concerted effort to earn money will follow. This is usually marked by a longer-term stay and search for a more permanent job in London. This is the point at which Australians are likely to start looking for accommodation outside of the centre. Of course, not all will follow this model exactly and for different people it will work in different ways. Not everyone finds the work they need and not everyone can afford to spend as long travelling as others for example.

2.8.6 Economy

Traditionally the main source of work for Australians in Westminster has been in the hospitality industry and bar work. More recently this has begun to change because of changes to the visa on which most are travelling. The restriction which prevented Australians from working in a field related to their career during their 'working holiday' stay was lifted in 2003, and the age-limit on the visa itself has changed from 28 to 30. It was reported in the research that as a results of these changes, increasing numbers of Australians are looking for 'serious' jobs in keeping with their training. Australians now talk of an increase in people coming over with plans to work in their chosen fields rather than the traditional area of hospitality.

Either way however, London is being used as a base and a destination precisely because of its economic potential. Whilst many respondents will initially talk of 'travel' and 'partying', it is not difficult to find that underlying motivations, and the specific preference for central London, are often financial. The strength of the pound makes travel more possible and the ability to save pounds for later conversion to Australian Dollars is a major motivation behind the working

patterns. This, combined with the fact that Australians do not face a language barrier in the UK and that they have a well established access into employment opportunities, means that there is not likely to be any change in the pattern of Australians arriving in central London in the near future.

In comparison with the other groups in the study, the Australians did not express concern about their living situations. Transience was *desired* rather than being seen as precarious, and the 'worst' outcome envisaged was having to go home again without fulfilling expectations. There were no serious implications for their lives, and this is also reflected in a confidence that outstaying visas, working for cash etc. would not have any 'serious' consequences.

2.8.7 Friends and family

The hostels are primary places for new arrivals without friends or family in London or the UK. The respondents felt that some of the hostels provided a feeling of family and security. Even the respondents with family members in London or other parts of the UK did not instantly seek the family out in the same way as some other groups. One respondent, who had been in a London hostel for over a year and had relatives in London and Scotland, had yet to contact them. He said he felt guilty about this and was planning to visit them in the next few months. This was a common theme among the respondents. It was comforting knowing they [family members] were there, but they were often only contacted after migrants had been in the UK for some considerable time. Another respondent said she had relatives in London and had contacted her for advice and moral support, but was reluctant to trouble her for more. If money runs out the respondent might ask to stay with them, but otherwise the travelling experience is seen as much as a way of escaping family as finding it.

Friends were another matter. The respondents were happy to contact friends immediately upon arrival and hoped for assistance with housing, jobs and general information to help them get settled. Most respondents were happy to help fellow nationals get settled and said that is why sometimes you have "50 people in one house sleeping everywhere until they get on their feet." There is an expectation of assistance from friends and friends of friends which is also often given.

Many of the respondents reported that it was difficult to make friends with British people. They felt that young British people weren't interested in meeting other people. It was felt to be especially true in London, but a little easier in places outside London.

2.8.8 Aspirations

Most of the Australians and New Zealanders came to London to make money to support their travels and then return home to pursue university study or serious careers. London was considered an easy place to find work and save for further travel or to do things back home. But in most cases there had been a realization that it was difficult to find *well-paid* work and save money, whilst living in London. Some have decided that the best they can do is save for travel and maybe a little for the return home. Accommodation and leisure activities are more expensive than they had originally expected.

Many respondents expressed the idea that as the immigration laws concerning Australians and New Zealanders change, more Australians are coming to the UK to work in better-paid jobs and earn 'real' money. Many are staying and settling down in the UK for extended periods of time or

considering the UK to be their permanent home. Two respondents had come to Westminster after graduating from university with law degrees. They had made previous visits, but were planning on making a long-term life in London by working for much higher wages than they could expect at home. In these situations they are looking to companies to sponsor their permanent moves.

For many, however, the experience of first coming to London results in a general revision of expectations downwards. To some extent this is an inevitable consequence of the idealism of youth and the excitement of travelling the world. Living and working anywhere would have the same effect of bringing people back down to earth.

2.8.9 Needs

Visa and immigration concerns topped the list of issues for Australians who have been here for more than a year. Many wanted to stay another year and were not sure how to extend their legal stay. Some said they would just stay anyway even if their visas ran out. The general impression is that there many Australians here who stay beyond their visa period.

Medical care was a concern for a few people who had tried to get on a GP list. Most of them were healthy and had not needed any serious care, but they find it hard to get on lists in Westminster and getting appointments within a day or two was difficult.

Accommodation: For those wishing to stay in Westminster, housing is a challenge because it is expensive. The hostels in Bayswater are an exception and offer financial and social advantages such that many remain in the hostels and therefore consider Westminster their home. Information about council services is usually absent in what is, by nature, a temporary accommodation.

Safety was also a concern of which many spoke. Whilst many respondents talked of wanting to meet Londoners and get out of the zones which were dominated by Australians, in practice London’s suburbs are spoken of with a certain trepidation and fear. Names of places like Hackney, Brixton and Peckham tend to be used as synonyms for dangerous living, and the perception is that central London and especially Westminster, is the safest place to be. Many feel that they do not know a lot about the different areas in London and so perhaps it would be better not to take a risk with it.

3 Community Audit

Surveying unknown populations, such as those who are the subject of this survey, is extremely challenging, and has to start with 'on-the-ground' approaches to establish the characteristics of those to be studied. As part of the methodology used in this project, a simple 'audit' was designed to be carried out by local residents amongst their friends, acquaintances and other members within their own community. The purpose of this was threefold. First, and most important, this approach creates what might be termed 'expert respondents'. This is to say that those participants who carry out the surveys become experts on the very topic we wish to ask them about. We hold feedback sessions in which they describe their experience during their own fieldwork, the people they encountered and the stories they heard. Second, the survey process helps to create a connection between the research team and the community with which they are working by raising awareness and trust. Thirdly the mixture of open and closed questions, though brief, often provides indicators of or support for the trends and ideas expressed in other parts of the study.

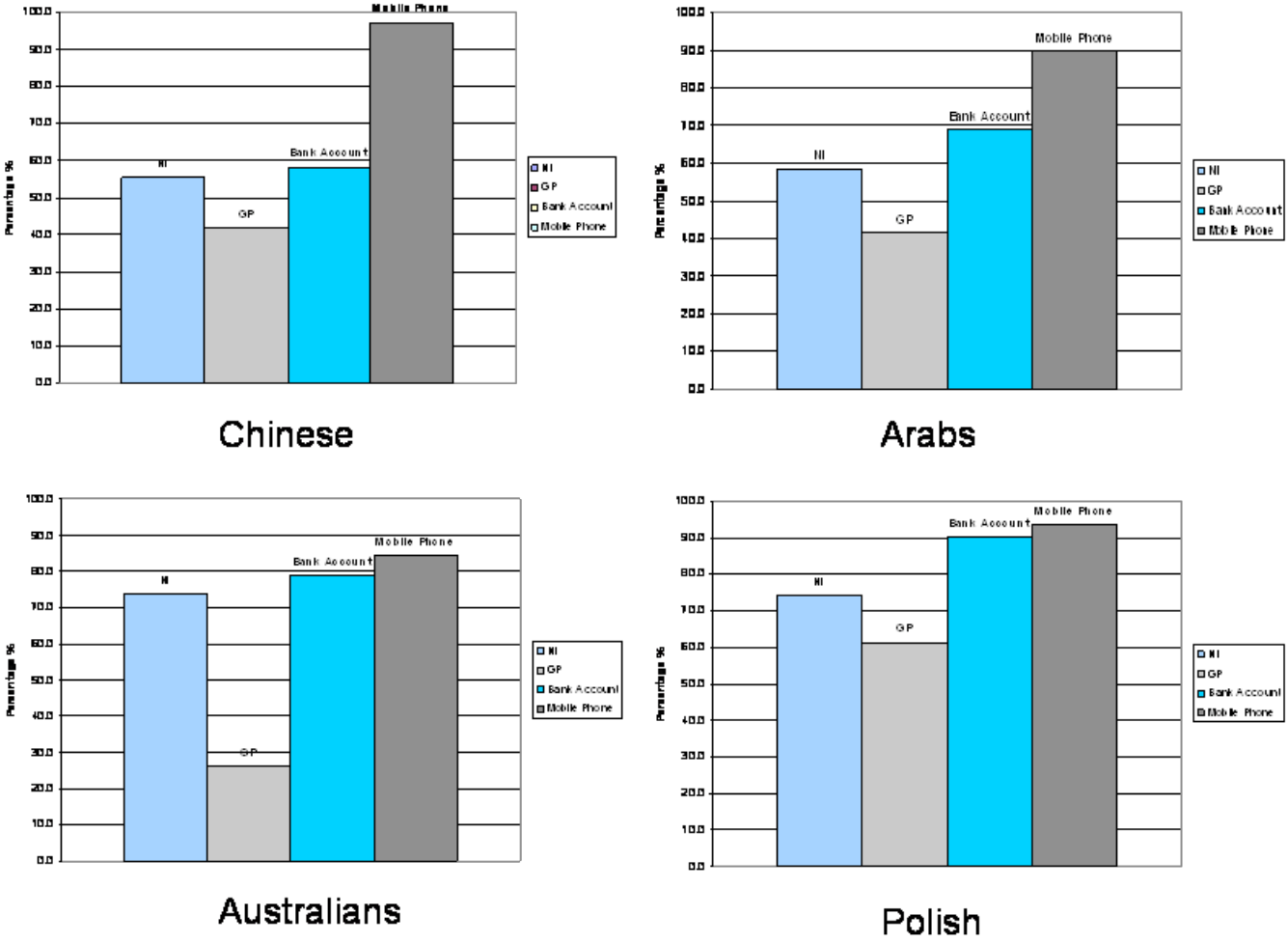
During this study the return rate for the surveys and the quality of the data returned were both good. We received at least 30 survey returns from each of the Chinese, Arab and Polish communities and 18 from the Australians. Each of these groups was explored by three survey partners (men and women) to try and gain access to results from a wider variety of people. These survey partners were not established community leaders but were people encountered during the course of fieldwork. The sample therefore includes people who are traditionally thought of as 'hard to reach' (such as those who might be termed 'irregular migrants', for example). However, the results reported here should be seen as a simple on-the-ground audit and not a formal survey. There was no formal sampling and the number of people involved is relatively small, consisting mainly of those people with whom the surveyors had contact. We know that some surveyors chose specific locations (like a certain street or café), but there was no control over whom they chose to speak to beyond the basic criteria of being someone identifiably belonged to the same 'community' [15]as themselves and who had fairly recently (within the last three years) arrived in Westminster.

Quotes and data from the open-ended questions in the survey have been included within the main body of this report along with the other qualitative findings gleaned from focus groups and ethnographic fieldwork. Below, we present some of the more interesting patterns revealed in the survey data. It is important to be aware when evaluating the results that they should be taken as indicators of potential trends only. Larger-scale research which took into account statistical and sampling challenges would be needed to place these findings on a firmer basis. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the quantitative survey findings are very consistent with ideas and patterns expressed elsewhere in the report, contributing to a coherent picture of the groups under study, and that they point to possible ways in which questions might be improved in future research.

[15] The surveys were translated into , Arabic and Chinese so the limitation on those surveyed was that they belonged at least to the same language group.

3.1 Audit Findings

The tables below show the percentage of respondents who had registered for National Insurance Numbers, with a local GP, for a British bank account and/or with a British mobile phone company. The survey asked respondents to also say whether they had other types of registrations, but, with the sole exception of a high number of the Arab respondents indicating that they had registered with utilities companies[16], these four categories were the most common registrations:



Tables showing percentage of survey respondents who had registered with/for NI numbers, a GP, a bank account and/or a mobile phone company.

It is worth noting that a proportion of the respondents from the Chinese and Arab communities were living in the UK, and in Westminster, without formal visas or work permits and were reluctant to be registered anywhere at all, a context which makes their particular chosen registrations particularly interesting and meaningful in relation to people's priorities for survival. In each community, respondents were more often registered with private banks and mobile phone companies than with a GP or with a jobcentre to get an NI number. In the case of the Arab and Chinese communities the figures suggest that almost twice the number of people

[16] Interviews with the survey partners indicate that this may have been a misinterpretation of the question. Respondents were not suggesting that they, personally, had their names on utility bills – rather that they contributed to paying them.

register for mobile phones as register for NI numbers or with a GP. We are not here suggesting that the percentages are a precise reflection of the communities as a whole, but we can make a tentative suggestion that there are a significant number of people who will not be registered with any 'official' body but may well be registered with banks and mobile phone companies. This suggests that population estimations using, for example, GP registrations may well be undercounting. It is also worth pointing out that the figures above show those items with which the highest proportions of people registered. All other categories fell well under 50%. These included registrations with: schools, council tax, electoral roll, HMRC, benefits, housing associations, DVLA, supermarket loyalty cards and utilities companies.

These findings also show that, although we have made much reference in this report to the 'invisibility' of many in terms of population figures and counting methods, nonetheless such migrants are an active part of the society and the economy in which they live.

Another interesting set of findings came from a survey question on the number of people who slept in the same place as the respondent in the previous night. We asked this question because we wanted to capture the number of people who may be only temporary visitors, sleeping on floors, as well as what might be considered the more 'permanent' residents among the migrant populations. The reason for this has been clearly outlined in earlier parts of this report. The notion of 'temporary' visitors is problematic since we have found that so many such visitors actually come with both work and permanence in mind. They do not behave like tourists, but come with a very definite plan of testing the waters of possible employment and a longer term stay. An intended brief stay on someone's floor may turn into stays of several months.

Our surveys found the following figures:

Community Group	Average number of people sleeping in the place where the respondent slept the previous night.
Chinese and Chinese Speaking	4.5
Arab	3
Australian	6
Polish	3.5

Several of the surveyors expressed a problem with the structure of the question, in that some respondents were indicating the number of people who slept in the same room while others gave the number of people sleeping in a whole living unit.

The figures for the Australians may be a slight over-estimate because many of them were using hostels as semi-permanent residences, sharing large rooms with many temporary visitors. Overall however, the figures tend to be an underestimate,[17] given that some respondents were answering with reference to a whole flat (or house) whilst others were only counting a single room within a flat (or house).

All of the ethnographers and fieldworkers reported seeing and hearing about very cramped living conditions which attested to very large numbers of people living in very small spaces. To some extent the surveys give reality to the stereotypes of 'Aussies', 'Kiwis' and 'Saffas'[18] packed into rows of sleeping bags along the floors of flats in London and of migrants packed in huge numbers in to tiny rooms with wall-to-wall bunk beds. Both of these images were also confirmed during ethnographic fieldwork.

[17] If treated as an indicator of 'household' size.
[18] Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans (usually white South Africans).

Less reliable figures in the survey are those concerning the type and ownership of the living unit in which people stayed. Here there was some confusion over the actual ownership of the properties. This confirms the ethnographic findings above, that many were not involved directly in the paying of bills or with meeting the landlords in whose accommodation they were staying.

It is also worth noting the level of education and skills that respondents reported having when they arrived in the UK, and comparing this with the number collecting benefits of any kind:

Community Group	Qualifications and Skills (%)			Claiming benefits – including child benefits (%)
	High School	University	Work or Professional Skills	
Chinese	69.4	2.8	11.1	8.3
Arabs	24.1	55.2	14	10.3
Australians	52.6	47.4	21	0
Polish	51.6	45.2	38.7	0

These figures could be misleading in a number of ways. For example, they include a number of people who are currently studying and have not yet had a chance to enter the job market or receive qualifications. Another issue is that to some extent the survey respondents consisted of the peers of the surveyors, which will have skewed the results in favour of similarity with the background of the surveyors. Such issues would be worth further exploration in larger-scale research.

The tendency found in the survey that people came to Westminster to work and earn is reflected in the very low rate of benefits claimants. For the most part, working and earning money in the UK is a primary (and sometimes sole) motivator for being in the country. Without work, many migrants would simply leave.

It is important to reiterate here that these survey results merely point to trends and indicators which demand greater quantitative validation. They highlight potential patterns and difficulties with population-counting in the kinds of population we worked with, but should not be taken as authoritative trends in the populations under study. The full results of the survey can be found in the appendices of this report.

Appendix A. Case Studies

Note

All personal and some place names have been changed to protect the identities of participants in the research. ESRO observes the ethical guidelines of the Association of Social Anthropologists which are to “endeavour to protect the physical, social and psychological well-being of those whom they study and to respect their rights, interests, sensitivities and privacy”. The guidelines are available for reference at http://www.theasa.org/ethics/ethics_guidelines.htm

It is important to note also that the case studies were collected and written by different researchers using unstructured ethnographic techniques. This means that the respondents were not directed to respond in any one particular way. The structure we have used to divide the information in the reports is purely for the benefit of the reader.

Polish Case Studies

Marek

Age: 22
Sex: Male
Time in London: 2 weeks

Pen Portrait

Marek is 22 years old and grew up in a town near Lublin. Since he never studied English at school his skills are very basic which is severely limiting his possibilities of finding work in Westminster. Having arrived in London just 2 weeks ago he has dedicated every day to walking the streets looking for jobs as a kitchen porter in every restaurant he can find. So far he hasn't been lucky and Marek admits that finding a job is a lot harder than he had imagined before coming, he says he is going to give himself another 6 weeks to find employment before he gives up and goes back to Poland. Marek hasn't lost hope though; he is adamant that this is only a holiday job and he says he will return to Warsaw in 3 months time to continue his studies as a fitness instructor and nutritional specialist. These plans may change of course if he manages to find a job with decent pay in London.

[After the formal research period we have learned that Marek has found work on a construction site in Heathrow and had turned down a job offer from a restaurant in Covent Garden which would have earned £120 per week]

Living Situation

At the time of the reserach there were 8 people living in 4 rooms in the flat where Marek lived. A week later there were 12 people living there. At any time, he explained, there may be 2 or 3 additional guests when friends stay over. All of the residents are Polish and ages range between 21 and 45 with most in their early 20s. Wojtek and Pavel, Marek's rent-paying roommates, each pay £50 per week. The flat is rented from another Polish man who Marek calls Gandalf. Marek knows that Gandalf doesn't own the flat himself and that Gandalf organises three other sublets in the same way mainly to Polish people. Marek doesn't know whether Gandalf knows that some people are staying in the flat without paying rent but he says Gandalf doesn't care, he just turns up every Friday to collect the total rent. None of them have ever met the owner of the flat.

Friends and Family

Marek doesn't have any family in the UK having left behind his parents and two older brothers in Poland. Marek's roommates in London are Wojtek and Pavel, both college friends from Poland. They have taken the place of his family for the time of his stay here and he refers to them as his

“team”. Support within the team is essential to Marek’s survival in London since his friends are letting him share their room rent free until he finds a job. In addition, Wojtek, whose English is much better than Marek’s, had promised to find him a job in the pub where he had found work. The ‘team’ had also just expanded to include Anna, another mutual college friend who had just arrived from Poland and who was now sharing the room rent free until *she* found a job. Marek feels that he may now be in a position to help new arrivals find work.

Marek doesn’t socialise much outside the “team” and he says he doesn’t trust the other Polish people living in the flat. Although he looks down on people who are builders (he says they drink a lot), Marek was himself forced to take up work as a “decorator” after his search for catering work failed. Respondents often used the term “decorator” as a euphemism for building work. This is to distinguish work as handymen, painters, carpenters or plumbers from construction work, which was classed as ‘lower’. Occasionally the team buy beers to drink at the flat, taking money out of the “drinking money” jar where the team put spare coins.

Movements

Marek had been looking for work in Westminster restaurants and cafes because that is where Wojtek works. Also, he knows that salaries are likely to be higher in Central London. However, where he ultimately finds work seems to be a matter of chance. He is as happy to look for an interview at a fast-food restaurant in Peckham as for a car washing service in Arsenal.

Economy

Marek first came to London in the summer of 2006 to harvest lettuce near Cambridge for a Russian employer. He worked alongside other Russian, Bulgarian and Latvian workers. Marek says he earned well at £7-8/hour. The hostel was also paid for by the employer and he had managed to save £2000, enough for his university tuition with some money left over to buy his ticket to London in 2007. But he also admits that the work was very hard, especially for someone not accustomed to manual labour, and he decided against harvesting this summer. Wojtek now earns £5.35/hour in a pub and this is the kind of money Marek is aiming for. Marek’s poor English limits his employment possibilities in catering or building. But Marek knows from his flatmates who work in construction that building is very strenuous and can mean exploitation by Polish employers who, it is said, sometimes refuse, or are unable, to pay salaries for several weeks at a time. Marek has therefore decided to concentrate on the catering business, but since he has no previous experience he has had to invent some for his CV.

While he isn’t currently paying any rent, the idea is that Marek will bring the rent down for the whole team once he finds a job. Anna who is also living in the room rent free contributes by bringing home sandwiches from the café she is working in, which often saves them from having to buy food.

Aspirations

Working in London is a means to a specific end for Marek. His goal is to save £1500, enough for his tuition next year. Marek had moved to Warsaw in order to study to become a fitness instructor and his plans are to finish enough certificates to get a job with a reputable employer and one day to open his own fitness studio. Marek sees his stay in London and his time working in Westminster as a step along the way to achieving this goal. Marek is giving himself another 6 weeks to find a job after which he will return to Poland

Needs

Marek's main obstacle to finding himself a job in Westminster is his poor English and he never goes job hunting without his dictionary. Opportunities to practice are limited since he lives with other Polish people and he doesn't socialise outside the team. Nevertheless, Marek studies English when he can, using the internet. He cannot afford to take English classes. Sometimes Wojtek teaches him some English in the evenings, Wojtek has also helped him write a CV and to post an advert on Gumtree. In addition to Gumtree, Marek makes use of the Polish newspapers and magazines to job-hunt. His main source of information is the Polish website londynek.net. Some of the things Marek likes about London are the cars, the river, the diversity of people ("Warsaw" he says, is "boring"). Some of the things he dislikes are 'some' Polish people, Polish employers who treat Polish people badly.

Robert

Age: 21
Sex: Male
Time in London: 2 months

Pen Portrait

Robert is a 21 year-old rickshaw driver in the West End. He came to London with his wife from a village near Lublin in Poland. He enjoys his job for the flexibility and freedom it allows him in planning his day, and the excitement of meeting new people in central London. It can also earn him good money which he is saving in order to pay for his and his wife's studies when they return home after the summer. Robert plans to return to London after finishing his studies but would look for different work. Rickshaw driving is dangerous, the income is volatile and he is fed up with his Polish employer. Robert and his wife live with eleven others in a 5 bedroom house just outside of central London. They sublet from another Polish migrant; a young woman. Robert feels frustrated and hostile to many Polish who 'have some power', after having had bad experiences in different jobs and in his housing. At the same time, he seems himself as a pillar of support for his "team" and his household, largely because he speaks such good English.

Living Situation

Robert lives in a 5 bedroom house which is shared by eleven[19] others who are all connected either by kinship or friendship. These kinds of webs of connections demonstrate that Polish migrants will often mobilise *all* contacts in order to find jobs or accommodation. Robert had been promised a job by an elderly friend of Robert's mother in law, for example. This man has been a builder and decorator in London for the past 3 years. This man in turn brought his daughter, her husband and a middle-aged cousin with him to London. Another couple are friends of the middle-aged cousin's daughter. The main tenant (from the point of view of the landlord) in the apartment is a woman in her early twenties who actually only sometimes stays in the house with her boyfriend but collects all the rents, once a week. Robert recalled that when the boiler had broken down, this young woman had called the landlord to come over and had told everyone to stay in their rooms and not come out, even to use the bathroom. Robert expressed extreme frustration with this and felt a sense of powerlessness at the fact that he "didn't even know who he was really renting from". Moreover, he said he knew that the sub-letter's parents were renting and letting out two other properties in the same way, with a family member living in each one. Robert felt hostile towards the family because he felt they were earning easy money from his labours.

Within the house, Robert, because of his good knowledge of English, can be an important source of support. He had found jobs for both his wife and his friend before they came over, for example. Robert is often asked to translate letters from the bank and to advise with other pieces

[19] 2 of these are itinerant workers who are sometimes present and sometimes not.

of general of information about the UK in his house. But anyone with any local knowledge can be a resource. Everyone there also seems to have bank accounts with the same bank, for example. The simple reason for this, Robert says, is that there are “some nice Polish boys” an older Polish woman had told him about, working at one particular branch.

Friends and Family

Robert shares his room with his wife who is also 21 and studies medicine when in Poland. Robert’s wife is working as a waitress in North London. Because she works during the day time while he works at night, they often go several days without seeing each other at all. Robert’s closest friend who also lives in the house, comes from the same village as Robert and together with Robert’s wife, they form a “team” of mutual support and care. In their free time Robert and his wife catch up with each other by talking into the early morning hours. They also enjoy going to the major museums where admission is free. At the moment Robert is trying to find a place where they can go ballroom dancing, an activity they used to enjoy in Poland, for ballroom dancing, he says, he would even skip rickshaw driving for an afternoon.

Movements

Robert first came to London one year ago to stay for 3 months in the previous summer. At that time he found work as a decorator through the same friend who had promised him work and accommodation this year. Then he went back to Poland. He returned this year to earn more money to help with his studies. These are like working holidays.

Robert clearly enjoys working in Westminster, it is a fun job and he and his friend race their bikes to Covent Garden. They say they feel sentimental about this place because this is where they first started driving. Covent Garden, they say, is now without exception their first port of call to pick up customers. It seems that they have invented for themselves a shared ritual which tempers the chaos of the streets. Rickshaw driving is a dangerous business because of traffic, hostility between drivers and because night time work means they often feel exposed to the threat of crime and drunken violence. Robert’s wife often fears for his safety and they keep in touch through numerous mobile phone calls throughout the night.

Economy

In order to come to London, Robert and his wife borrowed around £300 each from their parents, Robert also had kept some money from what he saved from his first stay in London.
Robert makes careful notes of his and his wife’s earnings and spending every day in a small notebook. He and his wife have agreed that while her earnings will pay for their spending, his salary which is much higher but also more fluctuating, will be set aside as savings for their studies. Robert and his wife pay £120 for rent together per week, and between £15 and £50 per week for travel. They share food together with Robert’s friend and buy most things in bulk keeping their spending on food down to £30 per week for all three of them. Robert has an exact goal of how much money he wants to earn each week, £360. Heavy rains however has meant that he is behind recently and he will have to work on several weekends to try and keep up to this ideal amount. During the research, he was getting ready to stay out for the whole weekend driving his rickshaw armed with a bag full of water, sandwiches and mars bars.

Comparing his job driving a rickshaw to his first job as a decorator Robert enjoys the freedom of being his own boss now and the flexibility of his working hours as well as the fact that he can

earn a lot more money (up to £600 per week). Robert rents the rickshaw for £100 per week from a Polish man who himself used to be a rickshaw driver. Robert keeps all his earnings himself. The disadvantage to rickshaw driving is the volatility in his earnings: “it’s a lottery”. All the other rickshaw drivers in the company are Polish and they complain about competition from drivers from North and South America who often steal customers away from them, by offering lower fares to customers about to board a Polish rickshaw. But Robert is also aware of growing competition from other Polish people and Eastern Europeans with many more rickshaws around now than just one year ago.

During the research period Robert’s friend had been fired from one of his 3 jobs (cleaning, work in a warehouse and rickshaw driving) after turning up late for a second time. Robert made this a ground for some ridicule and joking. He was not, however, worried about finding a new job. For this friend the whole experience in the UK was just a bit of an adventure, his economic situation was not bad. He could easily fall back on rickshaw driving or simply go back home.

Aspirations

Robert wants to come back perhaps in one year to stay for a longer amount of time. He and his wife are considering moving their studies here. The main attraction is a degree which is more widely recognised internationally. Robert’s wife in particular is attracted also by the fact that obtaining a degree in the UK takes less time than in Poland. Robert, who is studying Humanities, is planning on going into a stock exchange or turning his hobby of building websites into a profession.

Dorota

Age: 45
Sex: Female
Time in London: 15 years (Dorota might be considered a 'node')

Pen Portrait

Dorota, together with her English husband, runs several small businesses from the city of Westminster, among them a café and a Polish restaurant. While she has been in the UK for over 15 years she is very much in touch with the new generation of migrants as large numbers of them pass through her restaurant and cafe as staff and as customers. Dorota tries to support them whenever she can, although she is adamant that she has nothing really to do with the Polish community here. Dorota's aspiration is to open a Polish delicatessen in Westminster both to cater for her restaurant and because she feels there is a market for one here.

Living Situation

Dorota shares a privately rented flat in Westminster with her husband, son and now her nephew. She has been living here in Westminster for the past 15 years. Her husband is an Englishman whom she met after coming to the UK.

Family and Friends

Dorota lives in Westminster with her English husband and business partner, her 16-year-old son and her nephew who is 21. Dorota says of her son that he is a "100% English boy", although he himself says that he feels English in England and Polish in Poland. When Dorota first opened her Polish restaurant in Westminster she had been desperate for help, so she phoned her sister and asked her to send over her son to help out. Dorota says her nephew is a hard working boy and that it is a good opportunity for him to live in London. She also thinks he is having a good influence on her son, who has grown up as an only child. Her son and her nephew are now doing "boys things" together, she says, like playing video games, surfing the web and working out at the gym and she clearly feels that her nephew is putting her son in touch with Polish culture.

Movements

Dorota has always lived in Westminster and she enjoys the ease of getting from her house to her café and restaurant by bus. The office she shares with her husband is also located in Westminster so Dorota spends most of her day moving between these four points. Once a week she does a weekly shop for Polish goods for her restaurant by car together with her husband. Dorota perceives of this as a pain and she wishes there were somewhere closer by to purchase

Polish foods, in addition she feels that the Polish food wholesalers are ignorant about English standards of customer service.

Economy

Dorota brought the chef for the Polish restaurant over from Poland and pays him £250 per week. Most of her waitresses earn £200. Clearly many of the non-material resources like support networks and knowledge of bureaucratic procedures etc. are shared between her and her husbands' businesses. Similarly Dorota helps in staff matters in her husband's building business.

Although Dorota is not a business partner in these, she often ends up helping out in the hiring process utilising londynk.net and personal contacts such that most of his employees are Polish too. She also steps in when there are disputes with the staff since many of them do not speak any English and feel more comfortable speaking to Dorota in Polish. While her husband hasn't yet learned Polish, he is feeling more and more pressure to do so and a Polish phrasebook is handy on his desk.

Dorota's own economic situation is complicated but it is important to recognise the role she plays in the economic lives of many other Polish migrants. Her restaurant and café both employ a large number of young migrants or speculative migrants as kitchen and waiting staff. She acts as a mentor, finding them work, advising on housing and in some ways acting as a mother to the many young people removed from their homes in Poland. In a very real way she provides the very mechanism by which people find living in London possible. She provides jobs, information, orientation and not unimportantly, a familiar space with a familiar cuisine, for scores of migrants. We have suggested that someone like Dorota provides a kind of informal 'node'. She is a centre around which others can congregate that is quite apart from the traditional community centres and community leaders. Her role is informal and supported entirely by her own entrepreneurialism.

Aspirations

Dorota's story in the UK is one of success. She came here with an infant son without knowing anyone. She worked her way up from being a waitress to running and then owning a Café. When she closed down a Turkish café she had been running as franchise in order to set up her own restaurant, she took all of her staff with her and opened her own concern. Dorota can't imagine stopping working anytime soon, she says she would just get bored. Her next big project is to open a Polish Delicatessen, probably in Westminster, which would also cater for her restaurant. Dorota feels that there is demand for this both from regular non-Polish customers who often ask where she buys her cakes, bread and even potatoes and from the increasing number of Polish customers who find their way to the restaurant.

When she does retire, she says, it is likely to be somewhere outside London or even as far as Spain or Portugal. Dorota's husband also runs an importing and a building business.

Needs

Dorota has lived in 4 different places in Westminster. She enjoys the ease of getting from home to work with a quick bus journey. The only annoyance she felt about living in Westminster was

the degree of refurbishment going on in the area but she feels she understands the need for Westminster to look good given what she described as the historical importance of the borough and number of listed buildings. When asked why she thought there was a relative scarcity of Poles living in Westminster Dorota suggested that the scarcity of accommodation available as well as premium prices for location were a main factor.

She says that for 15 years she knew no Poles then when she opened the restaurant she met everyone. People come to her for work but it is also a popular lunch venue for Poles who work in nearby restaurants. Some of her most regular customers are a group of eight chefs who work in the same restaurant and live in the same house in Fulham.

One of Dorota's main resources is londynk.net, the on-line Polish community website for the UK. Dorota uses the site to hire staff, to find suppliers for her restaurant such as Polish pastry-makers and to find a Polish mechanic for her broken down car. It seems that in an emergency- a broken car, faults in the supply chain of desserts, a broken down oven and an uncooked duck- Dorota always turns first to her Polish network of contacts where she knows she will always find someone who can do the job quickly, understands her needs and is easy to deal with, even though she still claims she isn't really connected to any Polish migrant 'community'.

While Dorota feels that Westminster council have been "on her side" in what she feels were unreasonable disputes with residential neighbours over noise coming from the restaurant, she also doesn't expect much from the council since "all they really want is your money anyway". Dorota's awareness of the council and its services is very high compared to others; this is because she is in contact with the council as a long term resident but especially as a business owner. As Polish migrants become more established and since many respondents report setting up a business as an aspiration for the future, contact to the council via small businesses is likely to increase.

Tomasz

Age: 31
Sex: Male
Time in London: 2 years

Pen Portrait

Tomasz is a web developer in his early 30s; he lives in the Westminster with his wife and 8 year-old daughter. Tomasz's story of migration is a success story. He came 2 years ago after he had had to close down his company in Poland due to financial difficulties. Like many other Poles he first came two years ago without a job, to stay in an overcrowded flat share with friends from Poland. Tomasz is a very pragmatic thinker and knows exactly what he wants, however. Unlike many others in his position, he has never strayed away from his career path and has turned down work as a decorator. Tomasz worked his way up the salary scale and saved until he knew he had enough money to bring his family over. Now they are living in their own 2 bedroom flat and lead a life like many other young families in London and have started planning for another child. Tomasz's ambition is to set up a company based in the UK and outsource work to Poland. Tomasz's motto is "every man for himself" - a principle he applies to his life in Westminster, his politics, to his business and to raising his daughter.

Living Situation

When Tomasz first arrived in this country he lived in a large Polish flat share in Northfields with 5 others in 3 bedrooms, all of his flatmates were friends and from the same town. Tomasz didn't pay rent for the first month which was the time he was giving himself to find a job. After 2 months, some people in the flat moved to a new property in Ealing where the ration became 4 people in 3 rooms. The most complicated thing about living in the flat share was putting together the rent and shopping collectively for food, Tomasz is still planning on using his skills as a software programmer to facilitate the household economy. For a short time when his wife and daughter first arrived they lived together in one room here until they moved into their own place.

Now Tomasz and his family are renting a 2 bedroom flat with a lounge. Tomasz often works from home, which is especially useful when a deadline is approaching and he wants to work at night. Tomasz chose the area for his family to live in for the local school which his daughter now goes to. The school was recommended to him by another Polish friend with school age children. While he enjoys the diversity of the neighbourhood he can't imagine staying here forever. Tomasz thinks it will be dangerous once his daughter starts becoming more independent. After she finishes primary school the family has plans to move to another country such as Spain or Portugal, for his daughter to learn another language and for them to experience a new culture. Tomasz feels that he can work anywhere once he runs his own business.

Family and Friends

Tomasz brought his wife and daughter after 9 months living in London alone. He says he calculated exactly the costs of having them here and compared them to Poland saying he would not bring them over until their standard of life was better here than in Poland. Tomasz's wife worked as a teacher and art therapist for children with special needs in Poland and is trained in psychology. She is currently on sabbatical from her job, and though they don't intend for her to return, the option is still there. Working in a Polish bookstore part time is clearly not challenging her At the moment her life is clearly focussed on Eva, her daughter, and she sorely misses Poland.

Tomasz's parents are unlikely to ever visit him since they have never left the country, however the family living room often serves as a guest room for visiting friends. Telecommunications facilitate keeping in touch with family and friends especially for Anna. Tomasz set up VOIP for her so that they have a local Polish number which family can call cheaply and she spends hours on the phone every day.

Tomasz and his family don't have many Polish friends. Most Polish people wouldn't choose to live in this area, he says "because of the diversity". Clearly Tomasz is referring to the racial prejudices that Polish accuse other Polish of keeping. Most of his friends are English and and many are parents of his daughter's classmates. Weekends are spent visiting local parks or London Museums, Eva and Anna (his wife) go to the Polish Saturday school while Tomasz works from home or plays video games. The family also frequently go to church and visit different temples of worship including Anglican churches, Hindu and Buddhist temples and once a Baptist church.

Movements

Tomasz is the exception to the general rule of people finding their initial base in Westminster and then moving out. Rather he began outside of Westminster in flat shares and has found is way towards the centre which he likes for its diversity and liveliness. For him, living centrally is something of a sign that he has succeeded and that he does not have to love far out to very cheap accommodation.

Tomasz rides his bike everywhere; this gives him a sense of freedom and is continuous with his desire to be his own boss. Now his wife and he are debating whether to buy a car.

Economy

The decision to come to London was based on economic factors, says Tomasz. Having a small business is almost impossible in Poland, while in the UK there are many benefits. He likes the market economy in the UK, believing in its meritocracy and working hard to move up the pay scales in his profession.

His own economic situation has steadily improved to his current situation in which his family is being supported and he has his own accommodation. In some senses he feels that his efforts have set him apart from the less aspirational, more immediate economic goals of his compatriots, especially the more recent arrivals.

Aspirations

Although he was young at the time, Tomasz still remembers communist Poland vividly, especially scarcity and ration cards. Communist Poland is still his reference point for his views and aspirations. Many of these comparisons are centred on the experience of being self employed in Poland and in the UK. There are less controls here, he says, and lower taxes. Tomasz has been very pragmatic about his jobs and before coming to the UK he had looked at job ads and compared salaries and opportunities, and "friendliness" to small businesses in the UK and Germany in order to decide where to relocate to. When he had two job offers he played the salaries up against each other until he was offered a salary on which he know he could bring his family over. While he is currently self-employed he will soon be working for his company as an employee with shares in the company. In the long term, Tomasz's plan is to set up his own company and complete a number of software projects he has been working on. He plans on outsourcing most of the software developing to Poland or Bulgaria while keeping the creative and management parts of the business in London or wherever he will be living then.

Needs

Tomasz's main sources of information when he first arrived were his friends who explained about services such as the job centre and had warned him not to use direct debit. Among his group of friends he was the first to receive a National Insurance number and his friends who had collected rubbish cash-in-hand for a subcontractor for the council followed his example.

Tomasz claims he is "not the person to get sick" and that he doesn't believe in doctors. The reason he registered with his GP, is that when he thought he had broken a rib he simply wanted confirmation that the rib was indeed broken. Polish do not "use the doctor just because it is free", he says emphatically. Tomasz and his family still get private healthcare, especially dentistry, in Poland.

One very important resource for Tomasz's family is the Polish Saturday school in Angel. While Eva receives classes in Polish language, geography and history there and went to religious classes in preparation for her first communion, Eva teaches art at the school. Having Eva at the same level as her peers in Poland is very important to her parents. TV is forbidden in the house and

Tomasz claims that the only time he has made use of benefits was accidental, when he first arrived in London and walked into his local Jobcentre he thought he was applying for a job when he later discovered the meaning of the word "benefit" he had already been approved jobseekers allowance. Tomasz would like to be able to vote in local elections and is planning to find how to get on to the electoral role.

Arab Case Studies

Ali

Age: 32
Sex: Male
Time in London: 7 years

Pen Portrait

Ali is a Lebanese male in his early 30s who arrived in London seven years ago as an asylum seeker. His case was under consideration for one year but his claim was rejected. He considered an appeal but was advised by lawyers that his case was not strong enough. He decided to stay in Westminster and to continue working in the restaurant industry. While he is doing very well financially, his main objective is to secure status through acquiring British citizenship or residency. Since his case has been refused, he finds himself in the predicament of waiting for laws to change or to complete a period of 14 years in the UK.

Living Situation

When he first arrived, Ali stayed with family friends from home for two months. As soon as he had found work on the Edgware Road, he decided to rent with Lebanese migrants, mainly due to familiarity of backgrounds, the fact that Lebanese “are helpful to each other” and because he needed to be with Arab speakers since he didn’t speak English. Three of them shared one bedroom in Northwest London. One of them paid the landlord the deposit, rent and utilities and the other two paid their friend their share. Over the course of three years, one of the roommates married and left and the other, who was also an asylum seeker, decided to leave when his case was rejected. Ali then found a man who shared a flat with his brother and was looking for a flatmate. Ali rented from him and has been living in this flat on the Edgware Road for the past three years, sharing a room with one man. He is quite comfortable with the living arrangement and explained that “the image of crowding among [Arab] immigrants is false. Single men have to share and live comfortably but it is different for married couples because they have to live on their own”.

Ali feels that living arrangements in London are quite different than the experience at home where his family owned a spacious family house, a garden, a car, a bicycle and orchards around the house. In London, however, he is living with non-kin which means that no matter how close he is to his flatmates, the relationships remains “formal”. As for expenses, accommodation in London is quite expensive compared to Lebanon, particularly when he first arrived and he earned a lower salary.

Friends and Family

In general, Ali feels that there is a very supportive Arab, especially Lebanese, community in Westminster and London in general. But by no means do those compare to the richness of social life at home. He distinguished between two types of relationships: “friendship” and “colleagueship”. His life in London has made him develop the latter instead of the former. Long hours of work mean that he spends so much time around people at work that they develop ties. But those remain formal to an extent. In contrast, “friendships are based on reliability, transparency, trust and the ability to share secrets. The nature of our work has not enabled us to develop such relationships”. As he described his notion of “friendship” Ali’s eyes welled up with tears and he expressed his nostalgia for his family and friends back home who he hasn’t seen in seven years: “I miss my neighbours and chatting to elderly people in the village. I miss walking by farmers and helping them. Sometimes I call my family and an old neighbour sends his regards and I feel that… if only I were there. Life here is about a routine that can be painful. Life is just faster and people are busy with their own lives. Sometimes I just wonder how the last seven years passed”.

As for starting a family, he has no plans and has decided to “leave it up to fate”. But Ali feels that he will need to secure a house and status in order to build a family. Once that happens, he is open to staying and establishing a business here or leaving to do it somewhere else.

Movements

Ali’s life is currently focused on Westminster. He works long hours in a restaurant on the Edgware Road usually from 5 pm to 2 am which means that he gets up quite late, has a meal and then goes to work. He only has one day off a week and it is on this day that he meets friends and goes out to socialise. When they go out, he and his friends go to Piccadilly Circus to places like the Trocadero or to Whiteleys in Bayswater. Most of the time, they go to cafes on the Edgware Road where they eat and smoke *shisha* (before the ban). Alternatively, they visit each other at each other’s houses, have a meal and play cards. On religious occasions, he goes to a mosque in Kilburn to attend prayers or lectures, but apart from that, he stays within the boundaries of Westminster.

For about two years, Ali registered in an English College but found it very difficult to balance the time required to attend classes with his demanding work schedule.

To Ali, the Edgware Road is a very important space because of the general feeling of familiarity: “It has an Arab atmosphere; you can watch Arabic films in the cinemas, get Arabic food and go to Arabic cafes”. But he is disappointed with the “lack of culture” as he would have liked to access more Arabic book shops or even cultural clubs, particularly because he enjoys reading Arabic literature. The street, in this sense, he feels, lacks the intellect. Moreover, he says: [it is] “a popular street. It is not like Knightsbridge or Mayfair. People who come to the Edgware Road come for food, nightclubs, *shisha.* It is mainly Gulf Arab tourists who come to the street and they are usually from the middle class.”

Ali felt that the Edgware Road, because it is a popular street, has been ignored by the government. It has poor infrastructure and recently the number of beggars on the street has increased, a phenomenon that is not found on other streets of Westminster.

Economy

During the time when Ali's case was under consideration, he received income support from the government but then his benefits stopped as soon as his case was rejected. He found it quite easy to find work, but only in the restaurant industry. He first started as a kitchen porter and cleaner and that was enough to secure his daily expenses but it was still difficult for him since he spent half of this money on rent and barely made ends meet by the end of each month. This pushed him to work in two restaurants at the same time for a few months until he moved to being a waiter and started earning £750 a month, excluding tips. He worked at six different restaurants between the Edgware Road and Kensington. Although he worked for some of the best restaurants in Mayfair, he decided to accept a job offer in a restaurant on the Edgware Road. The position is a good one, his salary is much higher than what he earned when he arrived and his employees treat him very well. Since he has a National Insurance number, his employer gives him a cheque every month which he puts in his bank account. He explained that for employees who do not have NI numbers, they get cash in hand.

Ali went on to explain that there are fixed rates across Lebanese restaurants and even if an employee is new, he would get the same treatment (£750 to £850 per month excluding tips). Employees work for 9 hours a day, get one day off per week and can eat freely. In other words, they are not only allowed a limited number of meals per duty but can eat whenever they feel hungry. He specifically stressed that his employer on several occasions has offered to help him rectify his status but his lawyers advised him to leave and return, a solution which seemed too risky for him. From his personal experience, as result, Ali feels that "the Lebanese do stick together and are supportive of each other".

Despite having good relations at work with his employers and colleagues and a general perception that there is minimal exploitation by Arab restaurant owners, Ali still believes that there are disadvantages to his status – not having a work permit – as it is possible for owners to send employees home during the low season. Employees might only get salary raises every three years. Moreover, employees cannot ask for holidays and generally have minimal rights which, in case of breaches, cannot be sorted through formal channels such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. The well being of employees seems to depend on the personalities of the business owners and on oral contracts rather than established rights.

Aspirations

Ali's said that his main objectives when leaving were political as he wished to escape the South Lebanon Army (SLA), a militia supported by the Israeli state, which ruled the South of Lebanon prior to the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. London was not his first destination. Rather, he went to Nigeria hoping to build a life there but soon realised that he was unhappy and life was too difficult. He arranged to come to London through an agent and claimed asylum upon arrival to the airport. He knew some Lebanese who lived in London but had different expectations of the city: "I thought it was going to be a closed country. I had no idea that there was such a density of Arabs. I feared having to look for *halal* meat and thought that I had to survive on vegetables (laughs)".

His initial vision was that his stay in London would be temporary with the specific objective of gaining status through winning the asylum case. With that, he wished to continue his university education and make enough money to open his own business, either back in Lebanon, when the political situation calmed down, or in the United States, where he knows that a lot of Lebanese have been quite successful. "I have the impression that it is easier to make a life in the United States. People seem friendly, I know from the customers I serve. The Americans are

generally personable and they remember you. I have friends there who opened their businesses and the taxes are much less than here". Ali even considered opening a coffee shop in London. His brothers at home are doing very well financially and he himself has saved a good sum of money that will enable him to launch a business but this plan seems impossible without a secure legal status. "Now I am stuck. The labour market in Lebanon is not doing well. I can't open my business here, I can't work anywhere else because of my Language [he barely speaks English] so I have to work among Arabs and the restaurant business seems the only way".

After seven years, Ali still finds himself having the same aspirations. But his disappointment comes from the fact that his irregular status has paralysed him and he cannot conceive of wasting seven years of his life "without making something", i.e. without achieving what he came here for. "I wish the government could grant us a status based on humanitarian grounds, especially for war-stricken countries. I just want a work permit. All I want is to be able to develop".

Needs

Ali is registered with a GP, although he's never had to use this service, and has a National Insurance number. His main barriers to integrating in London have been primarily his status as a refused asylum seeker and second his poor language skills.

Ali's main fear is deportation. He fears that all his sacrifice in the last seven years would go to waste. "I never had any problems here. I've never even visited a police station. I didn't even want to marry a British woman just to get the citizenship. I have made some money, but not huge sums. They [government] know my case and I can be stopped and I am always afraid of that." Despite his fear, he feels that the government is not oppressive, and that individuals are respected in this country. For example, he has never been stopped despite his status, but it is always a fear for him.

In relation to his status, he feels that it has affected his personal and career development. For example, when his case was under study, he tried to register in a university to complete his education but he could not pay home fees and by no means could he afford international fees. As a result, he has been bound by working in restaurants despite the fact that he would have liked to develop other skills. "If I had a university degree, things would have been different. I feel guilty that I haven't accomplished much in the last seven years. I want to become skilled but that can only happen my status is sorted".

Rami

Age: 29
Sex: Male
Time in London: 3 years

Pen Portrait

Rami is a Syrian male in his late twenties. He first came to London for 20 days as a tourist, three years ago. He had a stable job in Syria and worked as a salesman for a respectable company. As he progressed in his career, he realised the importance of learning English and decided to come to London to do a course with the intention of returning home after accomplishing this. But in order to afford life in London, he has had to work on a full-time basis in a food shop on the Edgware Road.

Living Situation

Rami lodges with an English family; a couple and their three children. He pays a weekly rent of £85 which includes utility bills. He has been living with this family for two years now. The location is convenient for him as his College is a 15 minutes walk away from his residence. Rami is very comfortable with this arrangement. All the family members leave for work and school in the morning which gives him time on his own in the house when he comes back from his 4 hour course during the academic year. In the summer, since the College is closed, he has even more time on his own in the house.

When he first arrived in London, he lived with two of his Arab friends for two months but then his College helped him find accommodation with an English family. Despite his friends wanting him to stay, he preferred to move out. Living with this family has enabled him to practise his English, since outside of his College he spends most of his time with Arabs and thus rarely gets to use English.

The experience of living on his own has been remarkably different to his home life in Syria where he and his three unmarried brothers lived with their parents, as unmarried men generally do, in a spacious house. Household chores were taken care of by his mother. Since he has moved to London, he has had to learn to be independent in this regard and to get used to living with people who are not relatives.

Friends and Family

During term time, Rami tries to spend a lot of time with international students learning English in his college. In the last year, they have organised trips outside of London and often meet up and spent time together. Rami values these friendships as they give him the opportunity to learn about different people and cultures and to practise English. But these friends often go away as

soon as term ends and he is left with his Arab, mainly Syrian friends. These (Arab) friendships are extremely important because they replicate relationships that Rami has back home. He feels that he has a good support network and *'ishra* (close bonds created by having shared experience).

Despite these close relationships, Rami feels quite disappointed with Arabs in London. Some of his close friends from back home seem to have changed and become more self-centred and distant. It is as if people's personal interests overwhelm other relationships and people lose important values surrounding social life which remain important at home. Related to this is Rami's apprehension about starting a family in London.

It is very important for Rami to marry an Arab and particularly a Syrian woman who comes from a similar background to his. His experience has taught him that Arab women and their families have different expectations in London. The first is that they evaluate a suitor based on his material (financial) accomplishments and the second is his status, whether or not he has a work permit or prospects for citizenship. Rami finds these criteria denigrating and the sense of humiliation is proliferated by the general refusal of Arab women raised in London to return to Syria with him in the case of marriage. Moreover, stories about divorce among Arabs, and the readiness of kin to use the law to separate fathers from their children seems intolerable to him. Rami, as a result, feels that since starting a family is an essential social expectation for him, he will have to return home as soon as he has achieved his goals.

Movements

Rami spends a considerable amount of time in Westminster, mainly the Edgware Road. He described a daily routine of movement. During the academic year, he goes to his college every morning until after lunchtime when he returns home, rests, studies and then heads to the Edgware Road where he works in a shop from 5 o'clock in the evening until about midnight. His closest friends in London work on the Edgware Road. Often, they have a late dinner together after work. When he is off work, he socialises with his Arab friends, also on the Edgware Road. They either go to cafes where they can have *shisha* or gather in someone's house. On Fridays, he often goes to different mosques (inside and outside of Westminster) to attend the Friday Prayers and sermon. When his friends are busy, he likes to spend time in Knightsbridge, particularly Harrods, since he believes it is tidier and calmer than the Edgware Road. Rami is particularly impressed with Hammersmith's campaign to clean up the streets and wished that the same could be done for the Edgware Road but he had no information about the institutions or representatives he could contact for that purpose.

Rami's economic and social lives revolve around the Edgware Road mainly because of the Arab connection, his friends, food, outings and general cultural familiarity. But despite his usage of this space, he and his friends agree that in the past few years, the nature of the street has changed. It has become "less safe" with a remarkable increase in threats of violence related mainly to consumption of cannabis and other crime. Rami felt that particularly the availability of *shisha* on the street has invited "outsiders", i.e. teenage groups who end up creating trouble.

While Westminster, in general, has a reputation for cultural activities, Rami felt disappointed that the Edgware Road seems to offer a social but not cultural (in its artistic and literary sense) life. Many pamphlets are distributed around the street, but only to promote particular aspects of recreation, namely belly dancers and food in general. There are no bookshops on the street or

any other cultural centre which could provide a forum for young people to engage in cultural activities.

Economy

Rami's parents were willing to help him upon his arrival to study in the UK. He decided to find a job when his father's business had declined in Syria resulting in stress-related illnesses. At first, he worked for 20 hours a week at a restaurant (the maximum number of hours allowed for a student) which was managed by an Arab but staffed by English speakers. The branch, however, was shut down and Rami was moved to another one, also in Westminster. The latter restaurant had a majority of Egyptian employees and Rami felt that he was no longer gaining the language skills which were essential for him. Meanwhile, a friend of his was opening a business on the Edgware Road and offered him work on a full-time basis. Rami is very pleased with his relationship with his current employer who treats him as a friend and is quite generous with his weekly pay, which is cash in hand. He works 7 to 8 hours a day and gets one day off a week, just like his colleagues and the owner himself. With this work, Rami has been living comfortably and has been able to afford his fees, his expenses and even to put some money aside. Rami has contemplated applying for part-time sales jobs, since he has good experience in this field but two aspects hindered his attempts, language and time restriction. The current job is much more feasible than working 20 hours a week since he can make more money.

Aspirations

Rami's main aim for coming to London was education. His primary objective is to learn English. Once he 'perfects' that, he wishes to return home, which is where he foresees his future. While London, particularly Westminster, has offered him a "second home", it remains quite different from home and lacks the cultural values that he would like to live by. Although he does value the political system, that individuals are respected and have economic opportunities in Westminster, he prefers to return home because he cannot conceive of starting and raising a family in London and because he wishes to live near his family.

Needs

In terms of available services in London, Rami feels that most of them are well-provided for at home by the Syrian state (most importantly education and health services). He is registered with a GP and, as a student, is exempt from other taxes. But what is more valuable is the freedom available in Westminster in terms of choices of business and the clarity of the law, as opposed to governmental bureaucracies at home.

The main need for Rami is language training as it is the only barrier hindering him from getting better jobs in Westminster and finding a way to learn more about British society.

Tariq

Age: 28
Sex: Male
Time in London: 1 year

Pen Portrait

Tariq is a Palestinian male student in his late twenties. He finished his first degree in Egypt and then returned to Gaza but found life extremely difficult with Hamas' reign over the city. He has brothers in London who had invited their parents to stay until the situation calmed down at home. They asked him to join the family when the situation became unbearable for him. He has now been in London for a year and is currently studying English in a College in Westminster until he enrols in a postgraduate programme in the coming academic year. Meanwhile, he helps his family, who own a café.

Living Situation

Tariq now lives with his family outside of Westminster. Two of Tariq's brothers finished their postgraduate degrees and found jobs in London. One of them brought his wife to London where she has found a job as well. Throughout the past three years, the parents have been coming for visits. But their last visit coincided with the last Israeli invasion of Gaza, which meant that the parents had to extend their visas. While they were here, they helped their sons set up a café which is now run by family members and Tariq himself.

The family has furnished two rooms in the lower floor of the café. One brother has bought a flat for himself in Brent and Tariq lives in a small room in the back of the café. He does not pay rent or taxes as those are taken care of by the family. The room is not comfortable and he feels that he does not have his own personal space as the house feels like "a business place, not a home".

In comparison to his house in Palestine, Tariq finds this arrangement uncomfortable. "Back home there is more luxury, we have a huge villa and I have a whole ward to myself. I own a car and money is not a problem. But the problem at home is there is no freedom. In this case, I would rather live in a room with 10 people but enjoy the freedom that I can get in London".

Friends and Family

Tariq spends most of his time with his family in the café. But he also has many friends of different nationalities from his college: Japanese, Colombian, French and other Arabs. He values these friendships because they enable him to practise the language and to learn about different cultures from around the world.

Movements

Tariq comes into Westminster on a daily basis for everything from work to education and socialising. He spends four hours, from 8am to 12pm, in his college and then he heads to the café where he serves and does the accounting until about 8pm when the café closes. After that, he usually heads back to the centre, mainly Oxford Street and Piccadilly where he meets his friends and goes out to clubs, pubs or cinemas. He also goes shopping in these areas. He and his friends also go to places such as the river, Canary Wharf, Kings Cross and Upper Street.

Although Tariq is aware that the Edgware Road is a central meeting point for Arabs, he does not like spending time on that street. He finds it untidy.

Economy

Tariq works in his family's café from 12pm to 8pm every day and all day long on weekends. Since his brothers are around, if he needs a day off or needs to be away, it is possible. He does not get paid a monthly wage but asks for money from his parents whenever he needs it. Moreover, his parents put amounts of money in his bank account periodically. Therefore, financially, he feels he is doing quite well. He does not really enjoy the work itself, but feels obliged to do it for his parents' sake. Also, "because London is expensive, I will have had to work anyway and since my English is still very weak, I could have only worked in an Arab café or restaurant. So in this sense, I would rather work for my family".

The disadvantage for Tariq is that most of the customers in his café are Arabs so he feels that working has not given him the opportunity to improve his English. If he had a choice, he would have liked to work in another place, perhaps a café or restaurant, in which he could speak English.

Aspirations

The main objective behind coming to London is education. Tariq has a clear objective of attaining an MSc degree which will enable him to move on. His ultimate dream is to move to Geneva and work for an international organisation. Alternatively, he would like to move to Dubai where he anticipates a good job, once he gets his degree. In comparison to London, he feels that the standard of living in Dubai is higher, as are salaries. London, he feels, is suitable for people who are either establishing businesses or who are there for education. He has no desire to run a business so after receiving his masters, he will leave.

In the past year, Tariq has realised that life in London is very tough and it is "like a race against time, if you waste one minute you will miss out on a lot". But it is "a refined country, where people are respected and there is freedom". Thinking about young men he knows who have sought asylum, Tariq feels that it should never be an option because it is humiliating and dehumanising. "I have a degree and I can go to other Arab countries since we know that the situation will not calm down in Palestine. I would never put myself through the threat of living illegally or having to go through the hassle of bureaucracies". For Tariq, the expectation is that the experience in London will empower him with skills so that he can "go strong" to whichever country he moves to.

Needs

Tariq is registered with a GP. He is exempt from other taxes (such as Council Tax).

The most important need for Tariq is learning English, partly for his long-term plans to move to Geneva or Dubai for better job opportunities and partly for his short-term plans for staying in London and finding better part-time jobs. If his language was better, he would have wanted to use his degree and work part-time for a bank.

Fatima

Age: 35
Sex: Female
Time in London: 5 years

Pen Portrait

Fatima is a Lebanese female in her mid-thirties. She came to London in 2002 in order to follow postgraduate studies. She married her partner in London two years after they arrived. They have lived in different areas in London, the last two years of which have been in Westminster, close to their respective universities. Currently they are both close to finishing their degrees and are planning their future lives. They foresee a career and a life in London and would like to stay within central London.

Living Situation

Fatima lives in a university hall, a ten-minute walk to her university. Currently, she and her husband share a double bedroom comprising a double bed, two desks and a fridge. They have access to a private bathroom and a common kitchen. The couple moved to central London in August (2006) when Fatima got the job as a sub-warden which offers her free accommodation but requires a number of hours' work per month. Her husband, also a student, however, still has to pay his share of rent.

Since their arrival to London, the couple first lived in a university hall near Euston station for a year, then moved to a small one-bed room flat in Camden and then to a more spacious one bed-room flat in the same area.

Compared to their previous living arrangements at home, Fatima said that there was a huge difference in terms of size, price and the concept of space. Houses in London are much smaller and more expensive. Moreover, there was a difference in quality. While she admired that houses in London are preserved and that there are "listed buildings" which enhance an architectural heritage, accommodation tends to be old with "a low standard of construction". This means that one has to either compromise on living quality and space, if one wishes to stay in the centre, or is forced to move to the periphery. Also, Fatima observed that in London, the understanding of location differs as people move on in their life cycles. Young couples, like herself, prefer to stay in the centre. As soon as they have children however, they opt to move out of the centre in search of a better quality of life, cheaper estates, and better schools for children.

Despite the fact that their current accommodation is smaller than their previous flat, they are satisfied with the lower rent, the location which spares them transportation expenses, and the fact that it enables them to access the cultural and social venues available in the centre. Should

they both get jobs after they graduate, they would rather stay in Westminster if they could afford it.

Friends and Family

Fatima has no family in the UK but “starting a family” for her is an issue tied to having children. She and her husband have already defied traditional cultural expectations by starting a new life in London as students in their mid thirties. One of her concerns is that they need financial stability to have a child and that can only come after they have secured jobs once they graduate. Another is the temptation to “enjoy life” with her husband for a few more years before conceiving, since the last few years were marked by hard work and financial instability to afford their international student fees and costs of living in London.

Fatima voiced some concerns that are not yet resolved for her and her husband, should they have children. They would like to stay in Westminster but have to consider affordability of houses and schools for children. A major concern is whether to put children in Arabic schools or whether to teach them the language at home. She believes that British schools are preferable to mainstream Arabic schools. This includes my fear of intrusion from schools that might impose their own cultural values…which I may not agree with”.

While she feels this characterises “Arab culture” in a negative way which she does not wish to do, she also voiced some concerns over the Lebanese community in London. “What bothers me about the Lebanese back home also bothers me about the Lebanese here. It is mainly their political conservatism and sectarian values, that their identity is based on the primacy of the sect.” While Fatima does have Arab and Lebanese friends, she does not necessarily seek them out. Her closest friends are the ones she has made in her university and these come from different nationalities, Greek, Armenian, Egyptian, Lebanese, Bangladeshi, Spanish, Mexican and English. They meet quite regularly and most of their meetings are at the university pub.

Movements

Fatima’s social life is concentrated mainly in Westminster, especially the West End. She makes some routine trips to shopping malls (Canada Water and Hammersmith), food shopping (Mediterranean market in Camden), visiting friends in South London, and occasionally to her embassy (Kensington).

Before she and her husband first arrived in London, they were advised to stay on the Edgware Road by Lebanese friends at home. Fatima stated that the Edgware Road is “the default destination for Arabs, particularly those who are not rich enough to live in Kensington”. But she and her husband decided that they did not want to stay within an Arab community because “it is so absorbing. It is like living in one’s own country and we wanted to experience London like Londoners do. There are two types of migrants: those who choose to immerse themselves in their own local community [Arab] and those who detach themselves, almost totally by marrying foreigners, changing their names, etc.. We wanted to be in-between, to live in London as a multicultural city and to stay connected with Arab communities and their cultural and political [contexts]”.

Particularly in the first year, however, the couple found themselves going frequently to the Edgware Road, mainly for shopping and for food but soon realised that the same products are sold by other communities and for a much cheaper price. Also, Fatima felt that “the area does

not have a local feel". She distinguished between a "local feel" and an "ethnic feel". She felt that the Edgware road had an Arab "ethnic feel" because of its shops and restaurants. It is "a commercial, consumerist, tourist space. While the economy is based on working class Arabs, the consumers are visitors from the Gulf or different areas in London, but not residents of the Edgware Road." She also expressed that the "local feel" is hindered by the fact that it was difficult for her to find Arab cultural centres, despite the fact that she is sure they exist but are not visible. This means that tourism, estate agencies, and hotels are what dominate the Edgware Road and hence give it that "feeling of property" [commercial and touristic activities].

Instead, for social and cultural purposes, Fatima spends much more time in the West End which she believes offers a wider exposure to different cultures than the Edgware Road does. She listed what she values most: pubs, clubs, diversity of food, markets, and culture, including museums, concerts, and theatre; all available on a daily basis.

Economy

Fatima and her husband have survived practically by doing several part-time jobs simultaneously in order to pay their international student fees. During term time, she had to divide her time between teaching jobs at the university, research projects and her duty as a sub-warden in the halls of residence. The pay for these jobs, she believes, is relatively high, but it means that she and her husband have needed to diversify, sometimes at the expense of their study programme.

In terms of bill settlement, at their current accommodation, utility bills are included in the rent. But when they lived in a private accommodation, in comparison to her home, she felt that "the system is friendly because it allows instalments, as long as you keep the authorities informed, they will accommodate [you]." Also for students, concessions really help especially with transport cards and accessibility to general cultural forums. She also mentioned public spaces such as parks and the importance of these as recreational venues compared to the overriding privatisation of space at home.

Aspirations

For Fatima and her husband, "coming to London was a long-term project undertaken with the intention of starting a new life". It was a career change from being practitioners (both had worked in the development/NGO sector back home) to academics. They saw London as an opportunity for "better life chances, career prospects, financial stability and national security". Fatima felt that although Lebanon was safe prior to 2002 when she came to London, she always had a feeling that the situation was not stable. In addition, she felt that she had exhausted her experience of Beirut which "gradually became claustrophobic socially, politically, culturally and intellectually".

In the last few years, she believes that her and her husband's aspirations have gradually started to meet. At the beginning, there was a clear divergence in their approaches to their lives. Her husband's expectations centred on a pragmatic idea of the purpose of his stay in London. He saw his experience as a transitional one, with the aim of finishing a degree as efficiently as possible, building his capacity and then returning home. In contrast, Fatima had hoped to "experience what qualifies as a Londoner's experience" which meant that "returning home" was not as solid an objective as it was for her husband. But in the last three years, her husband's views started shifting for a variety of reasons. At a professional level, he had the opportunity to

work on a few projects in Lebanon and within Europe over the summer breaks and thus was able to compare the quality of the professional experience. These jobs made him understand that he could realise his potentials much more in the UK than elsewhere. At another level, the political situation in Lebanon and the region became increasingly tense. The war on Lebanon in July 2006, especially, made him realise the uncertainties attached to returning home. Finally, at a social level, the couple realised that they favour the personal space and the luxury of having their own schedules and plans in London, over the more demanding family and social life in their own country.

Despite the fact that both were successful socially and professionally at home, the decision to start anew seemed sound after having lived in London for a few years. “Sometimes we felt that the experience was isolating because you have to start from scratch. Here [in London], you start as a nobody. You have a number and not a name. There is the opportunity but you have to build a history. You have to work twice as hard, but, in a way, you can do that without any constraints.

“We were overwhelmed with what London can offer: civil and political rights, economic stability… just the system that exists. But now we just whinge like the rest of the Londoners (laughs)”. What she meant is that she now takes these novelties for granted, but as she explained would still choose to have them and would chose to live in London.

Fatima described her predicament now, as a Lebanese living in London, as one filled with complexity. This is due to the fact that although she “feels like a Londoner”, she will always be an outsider to Londoners. Unlike mainstream Arab migrants, she feels that she has got to “know the city well, especially non-tourist places, (and) learnt a lot about the political system and how it works, followed British policies on the Arab World…issues which I’m not sure all other migrants follow-up on…. Following the cultural scene, music, art, theatre, in other words entering British sub-culture”. But from her experience, Londoners do not experience “the novelty aspect” that migrants do and therefore they do not need to build a new social life. They have no urge to bring in new people and this means that “despite that they are very tolerant, especially as work colleagues, they see you as an outsider, as someone who is exotic” and their social life has “specific cultural manifestations such as drinking in the pub, listening to British pop music, sports”. She described her fear of eventually “not being integrated neither here nor back home”.

Needs

In a discussion with Fatima about her access to services, she felt that “the system” offers many valuable services. She herself has sought NHS services, including a GP and others such as the stop-smoking support sessions, the Home Office, legal services offered at the university for students, the local council for issues pertaining to tax, marriage procedures, residence, recycling and the Office of Fair Trading.

But despite these services, she has had a bad experience with the NHS where, she says, her file was lost and she was not diagnosed and this has created some fear for the future.

As for her future in London, she feels that migrants are to a large extent welcome in London and Westminster. But she also feels the change with the anti-terrorism ‘campaign’ which, she feels, has led to discrimination against and stigma upon Arabs and other communities. Particularly the recent Glasgow terrorist acts have had an impact on her future plans of applying for the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme as the mainstream impression is that “highly skilled migrants can

also be terrorists and there is now a moral tag on migrants who seem to be accused [by default]". She fears that this might influence her chances for applying to become a citizen in the long term.

She believes that her student status is insignificant because they are not seen as residents, hence are not a voting power for MPs. Also, she feels that it is assumed that international students are able to afford fees. While she understands that this is a policy towards deterring "fake students" in London, she believes that many like her suffer.

One difficulty that she stressed was opening a bank account for international students as banks require a large sum upfront, again confirming the assumption that international students are well off. This also relates to 'internationals' who wish to buy houses as they need to secure a high income and build a mortgage history which forces migrants to rent for a while instead of buying property immediately if they can.

Australian Case Studies

Malcolm

Age: 24
Sex: Male
Time in London: 1 year

Pen Portrait

Malcolm is a 24 year old, single male from Australia. He has been in London for one year. He has spent the last two years travelling around South East Asia and parts of Western Europe. He came to London on a British passport based upon his father's Scottish heritage. He plans to stay in London for another year or two interspersed with travel to the US and Scandinavia and eventually return home to New Zealand. He is a very sociable person who enjoys going out to drink with friends.

Living Situation

Malcolm lives in a hostel in Westminster, but has recently found a shared flat near Westbourne Grove. He has not lived outside of Central London because he loves going out drinking and socialising and likes being so near the bars, pubs and clubs. In the new flat, he will share with four women, also from Australia. He says the rent is "ridiculous". It costs £180 per week for a small bedroom (though he thinks he could divide this rent whenever he needed to by sharing the room. He could look for a place farther from the centre, but says "it's worth it to be so close to things I enjoy".

So far, he feels he has been very lucky with accommodation. He has survived the first year in London by meeting women (he boasts), mostly from Scandinavia, and staying rent free at their flats and also, by using his painting and decorating skills at the hostels to cover his rent. He works for one of the big hostel chains and moves between Westminster and the edge of Camden near the British Museum. He says this is the first week he has had to pay rent anywhere in London. He was staying in the hostel in Westminster until the 1st August when he moved into his flat. He is excited about having his own room at last, even if the rent is more than two thirds of his earnings.

During his first few days in London, he was attacked with a broken bottle in a pub in Hackney in an area he was later told was "the murder mile". He said the attack was totally unprovoked and he had not spoken one word to the man who attacked him. He required over 50 stitches in his face, chest and arms. He took it all in stride and is just happy he was not blinded. He said it has not put him off living in other areas; he just likes the excitement and convenience of living close to so many bars and pubs. In practise however, like many of the respondents, he speaks of London's suburbs with a certain trepidation and fear.

Friends and Family

He has a cousin in London and other relatives from his father's side of the family, which he has not met, in Dundee, Scotland. He feels a little guilty about not visiting them during the year he's been in England and is planning to visit them in the next few months.
He is very close to his father and he receives a lot of moral support for his travels.

He broke up with his Scandinavian girlfriend, because she was getting too serious and he wants to be free to date other people and not be tied to one person. He said he is not ready for any commitments and is just looking to enjoy life.

He seems to have lots of friends in London, most of which he met through hanging out at the hostels and going out drinking. He describes himself as 'a bit of a legend' and everyone knows him and thinks he is wild, but fun; "a bit of a character".

Movements

Malcolm's movements are confined to Westminster, Camden and Kensington. He works for hostels in Westminster and Camden and travels to Portobello Market and the surrounding Notting Hill area for recreation when he wants a change of scene.

He rarely goes to the Earls Court area, even though he knows there are lots of fellow '*Kiwis and Aussies'*. He prefers the West End and since he works in the hostels, and he always meets other travellers anyway. In fact he says he knows very few British people. Even when he goes out to English Pubs, he ends up meeting Aussies, Kiwis, Canadians and other travellers. He is not sure why this is, but says it is a common story among his friends.

Economy

He earns his income working in the hostels and sometimes gets referrals to do other painting and decorating work. He spends his money freely on nights out drinking and does not worry about budgeting. He thinks this will change when he moves into the flat and has to pay rent. He says "maybe it will make me more responsible about money and responsibility". Before getting this flat he either lived with girlfriends for free or exchanged his labour for accommodation.

Aspirations

He does not have long term plans. He wants to get settled in his flat, earn some money and travel between London and trips around Europe and maybe New York. He is not sure what he wants to do after leaving London, but he does not expect to stay beyond another year or two, even though he has the option of staying as long as he likes on his British Passport.

He is primarily interested in earning money, travelling and having a good time while he is here. He thinks he may start thinking of saving money just before he moves on to another place or returns home to New Zealand.

Needs

So far he has not had any need to access regular services in Westminster. He went to an Accident and Emergency in Hackney after the bottle attack and has been fine and not sought medical care since then. He is not registered with a GP. His needs, he says, are few.

He has a British Passport and is not concerned with visa or other legal issues related to living and working in the UK.

Scott

Age: 20
Sex: Male
Time in London: 3 months

Pen Portrait

Scott is a 20 year old male from New Zealand. He has been in the UK for three months. Like many of his peers there is a certain youthful exuberance which drives his experience of the UK. It is clear that although work and money are salient issues, he is also here to have a good time at a time in his life in which he has few responsibilities. He came to London to see more of the world and earn some money to travel and eventually return home to begin university. He is staying in a hostel in Southwark, but has recently obtained a room in exchange a bit of work at a hostel in Bayswater. He expects to stay for a year or two and then either return home or go on to Australia.

Living Situation

He met an Australian woman on the plane ride to London. He had not made any arrangements for accommodation and she suggested he checkout the hostel she had booked online in 'Central London'. When he arrived, the hostel was booked up, so he took off to find another down the street. "It was awful [the living conditions] and I knew I would only stay the night and look for another one the next day." When he packed up and prepared to move to the other hostel he realized that he was missing a few T-Shirts and shorts. He did manage to find a space at the first hostel he had had recommended and stayed there a couple of nights. The room had six bunk beds and slept 12 people. It was crowded, but better than the hostel he had moved away from. He had the impression that the first hostel was for the homeless who were awaiting council accommodation. He said that explains why no one responded to his "Hi Guys" when he came down for breakfast.

After walking around in the area [Southwark] for an afternoon they both realized it wasn't as central as they had wanted to be. After contacting a cousin living in a hostel in Westminster he decided to move there. He has since agreed to work 16 hours a week cleaning and doing jobs in the hostel in exchange for his rent and so has set up in the hostel permanently. He said, "I must find that girl and show her what 'central' means." One of the things that immediately impressed him about the hostel was its proximity to Hydepark. It was the size of Hyde Park and the fact that he could get away from the suffocation of the city when he wanted some space, that he loved.

Friends and Family

He has contacted his cousin, who is 4 years older than him and already living in Westminster to find a central London living space but not since. He has other family he has not met in Ireland and Scotland, but he has not contacted them.

He is outgoing and sociable and expects to meet lots of people. His social life however, continues to revolve around the hostel with other travellers.

Movements

Now, he has walked around Southwark, Hyde Park and around the West End a bit, but that is the extent of his travels in London. For him 'central' London simply is London.

During the research he went to get a Pay-As-You-Go mobile phone from Vodafone, because that is his network back home and he thinks he can put his old SIM from home in the phone to transfer numbers. He also picked up an A-Z, because all he had was a map he had picked up the hostel which covered a small bit of Central London. The map was not very detailed and he said he would need to know more when looking for work.

Economy

Originally he had moved from NZ to Australia with a friend to work and save money for his next move to London. He expected to save a lot of money because the pay is better in Australia than in New Zealand, but he ended up having a 'great time', not saving much money. His friend stayed in Australia to work and make more money before travelling. Scott came with what he had left; about £500.

He wants to find work driving heavy machinery which was what he was doing in Australia. He does not want to work in hospitality for too long, but he will do it, if that is all he can find. He mentions that he might look for work in Ireland and Scotland because he has family there though at the moment this remains a vague plan. London remains the main attraction because it is 'where everything happens'.

Aspirations

He wants to earn money and continue travelling before going back to New Zealand. The main aspiration is travel and experience rather than long term financial planning but he does recognize that earning in London is the way to achieve his goals. He is not sure what he will do when he returns home, but he feels like he is young and has time to make up his mind. He has a girlfriend in Berlin and plans to visit her every so often while living in London.

Originally he had wanted to get a UK ancestry passport, but he needed too much paperwork like birth certificates and other documents, so he decided to apply for a two year working holiday visa instead. This visa allows him to do most of the things he wants to do at the moment and he is not overly worried about any particular legal status preventing him from what he wants to do. He is not worried about money either and expects to find work easily in the medium term.

Needs

He has asked people for advice about opening a bank account and so far has not decided on any particular bank. He knows very little about the UK and is relying on people he meets to fill him in on what he needs to know. He fulfils his needs as they arrive and has no plans in terms of how to deal with healthcare or finding a more permanent residence. Again, this minute-to-minute existence is not a cause for worry but rather a luxury he can still afford. He made very

little preparation for his trip to London and has arrived expecting to work things out as he goes along. This kind of confidence is not unusual for these travellers who know they are traversing a very well trodden trail.

This also means that he has not yet obtained an NI number or registered with a GP though this is for no other reason other than that the need has not yet arised.

Peta

Age: 23
Sex: Female
Time in London: 3 months

Pen Portrait

Peta is a 23 year old Australian from Melbourne. She has a British passport based on her father's ancestry. She arrived in London in May 2007. She came to London to "get away from home and family and see a bit of the world". She lives in a Bayswater hostel. She came to London for the first time in May and then travelled to Italy and France before coming back to look for work. She would like to stay in London for a year or two before returning home and starting university.

Living Situation

She lives in a small room with six other people at the in Westminster. The rooms are fitted with bunk beds and she sleeps in a bottom bunk. She complains that the rooms are crowded and lack privacy. She gets dressed in the bathroom and tries to spend as much time as possible outside of the room. She has changed room almost once every five days since she arrived several months ago. She pays £100 per week for the room which is a little bit cheaper than the £20 a night for shorter stays. In her opinion the weekly rented rooms are not as well cared for as the daily rooms.

She likes Westminster because there are so many green spaces and she can walk to most of the cultural venues.

Friends and Family

Peta has a relative in London and has contacted her for advice and moral support. But she was warned by her family not to bother her too much because she has her own life. Therefore, she has visited her a few times, but has not asked to stay with her because they have other friends staying with them and there is no room for her. If her money runs out she may call again and ask to stay with them.

She is not extrovert and has not made many friends since arriving in London. Even though the hostel has lots of people from everywhere staying in it, she tends to keep to herself. She does go out occasionally, but finds it very hard to meet non-travellers. She thinks Londoners are not interested in new people and are not that friendly or easy to meet. Most of the people she has met are other Aussies, Kiwis, Brazilians, Canadians, Polish and other Eastern Europeans.

She likes the fact that London is so multi-cultural, but has not had a chance to meet many people or experience the restaurants and other things the city's diversity offers

Movements

She has a small folded tube map and a map of central London and confines herself to Westminster and zone one. She usually walks to Regent Street near Oxford Circus to a small basement internet café to check her email and look for work through online agencies and other sites like Gumtree and TNT online. She used to take the Underground everywhere, but it is expensive and now that she knows how close everything is, she prefers to walk.

She usually eats at a Subway restaurant and has the 'sub of the day', because it only costs £2 and she needs to save money. During research she went on a trip to the internet café, lunch at Subway and a walk down Oxford Street. After lunch she went to the British Museum for about an hour. She likes to go to the free museums like the British Museum and the National Gallery because "otherwise I would be bored all the time". She has not visited the Tate or the Tate Modern because she has not crossed the Thames yet. She was unaware of South Bank or anything south of the river. At the moment her story represents the downside to the model that many of the Australians present. She also came with few plans, following the same trail as so many others and hoped to have a similar experience. In practice she has found finding work very difficult. Her skills and experience in Sports venues have not afforded her any opportunities for work in London and she is a little aimless.

She likes going to Covent Garden and walking around Hyde Park. On the days she does not go 'into town' she sits in Hyde Park and reads a novel. She stood in a queue during the launch of the new Harry Potter book. She occasionally goes around the corner to the international travellers' pub in the basement of one of the other hostels. It's the only bar in the area open until 3pm and the beer is cheap at £1.90 a pint.

Economy

She arrived with £2,000 and has spent most of that since arriving in May. She travelled around Italy and France for a while spending her money quite freely. She said "I really enjoyed myself, but now I have to be very careful until I find a job".

She confines her job search to online sites. She has been told by other Australians at the hostel to take her CV around, but she has not done that yet. She is starting to get depressed and is beginning to think she may have to return home sooner than expected. She is giving herself another 4 to 6 weeks to find work before deciding what to do. She does not want to work in a bar, though she has been told that that is the easiest work to get.

While walking around, she saw a 'worker wanted' sign in a sports shop in Covent Garden. She went in to get more information and left with a contact number for another store in Westminster. She said she will call them 'tomorrow'.

Aspirations

At the moment she is focused on looking for work. If she finds work, she plans to stay in the UK for about two years to make some money to travel around Europe and see more of the world before deciding on a course of study and returning to Melbourne. She said that her family is "crazy" and she is in no rush to go home. She left Australia in part to get away from them.

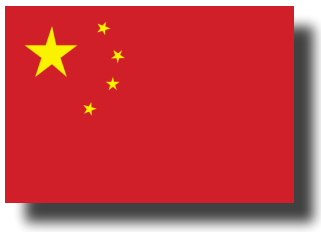
Her aspirations are rapidly changing with her lack of luck in London. Pounding the streets day after day is not making her feel good and London is proving to be tougher than she had thought. Like many others she is revising her expectations downwards.

Needs

At the moment she has not had a chance to focus on her life in the UK because she is preoccupied with finding work. Everything has become dependent on that. To some extent her story proves the rule that the partying, nightlife, travel, and experience which so defines the discourse of the Australians in London is also dependent on the economic factors which allow them to happen.

Chinese Case Studies

Li



Age: 35
Sex: Male
Time in London: 3 years

Pen Portrait

Li Xiao Long is 35, he lives with his wife in an ex-council flat on a housing estate in Westminster. He is a senior dim sum chef at a Chinese restaurant in Chinatown. He brings the unique skills of a dim sum chef directly from a dim sum restaurant in China where he held the position of head chef. Originally from South China (Guangdong province), he came to London with mixed intentions and aspirations all of which have been somewhat tempered by the realities of living in London.

His opportunity to come to London was presented by an associate of the owner of the restaurant he worked for in Shenzhen city. This associate came from London to China looking for a skilled chef to invite back to London. As such, Mr. Li's a work permit arranged by the sponsoring business in Chinatown. In the time between being invited by the restaurant owner and the completion of the restaurant, Mr Li had got married and had a son. Initially he came to London alone and a year later his wife came over too. His son has stayed with grandparents in China.

Living Situation

The first accommodation hat Mr. Li stayed in was very cramped and very poorly maintained. He lived above the restaurant with other Chinese workers in cramped and dirty conditions. During this time he lived without his wife and child. The owner of the restaurant had not intended for the living conditions to be so bad and quickly (6 months afterwards) arranged for better accommodation for his employees in Tottenham. The house in Tottenham was an average semi-detached house into which all the workers could fit more comfortably. The owner of the restaurant took care of all bills and dealings with the landlord and each resident paid an individually arranged amount to him.

The advantage of the restaurant accommodation and the care of the owner of the restaurant was that when Mr. Li initially arrived in London he was able to use the restaurant as a permanent address which enabled him to register with a doctor and receive mail. Although he now receives mail from banks and mobile phone companies at his address in Westminster, his permanent address when dealing with anything else is the restaurant in Chinatown. This is largely a matter of practicality. For one, the doctor in Soho is Chinese and for another, his lack of language skills means that he needs other people to take care of most other correspondence he receives.

His current living situation is perhaps the most comfortable of his time in London. He now occupies a flat belonging to a friend who has two children. His wife has come over from China to stay with him. The two of them can live comfortably in the split level council flat which used to house a family.

Friends and Family

Unusually for Chinese business relationships, Mr. Li did not have a strong connection with the man who arranged for his travel to the UK. The connection was second hand, via his boss in China. His relationship with his former boss in Shenzhen remains very important however as, when and if he goes back to China, this former boss is likely to be the main possibility of him regaining employment at his former level.

Mr. Li lives with his wife and works with many other Chinese people in the restaurant in Chinatown. He does not see any other family and his circle of friends in London is small and exclusively Chinese. Indeed language limitations make it very difficult for him to engage in much of a social life outside of the Chinese connections he has. Given the dispersed nature of the Chinese 'community' in London, he also has few peers and will try to use his days off to travel and socialise with friends as much as possible. Unfortunately, his interests are very much associated with food and dining and his peers either do not earn as much as him or prefer other social activities.

Without reservation, and despite having lived in London for 3 years, Mr. Li expresses a sense of loneliness. It is clear that long working hours, spending days off without his wife, the absence of his son and the lack of social peers make for a life which revolves around work and affords very little pleasure or social life.

In China, some measure of a person's success can be obtained by a look at how many people they can count among their friends and so the situation in which a circle of friends is small can be demeaning. Mr. Li had been a head chef in Shenxhen with as many as 40 staff to run his kitchen. He eagerly shows photographs of himself in his chef's uniform standing outside the restaurant in Shenzhen. Clearly he has taken quite a drop in status in coming to London. Now he only has 6 staff.

A further problem for him with regard to social life is that Mr. Li cannot find many people who share his interests. He considers himself something of a gourmet and enjoys sampling food from all over the world and eating out. He says that his colleagues are mainly from a different background to him and prefer cards, gambling and drinking on their days off. He lacks access to a network of peers.

Of his family, only his wife is in London. She is not entirely happy with the situation. She misses the status and the social life of China and clearly longs to return. They both miss their son terribly. He can talk to him over the internet but finds the separation very difficult and is visibly moved by talking about it.

Movements

Mr. Li was born in a rural part of the southern Chinese province of Gunagdong. Like so many in the last decade, he migrated from rural to China to the newly blossoming cities to find work. He

found himself in Shenzhen, one of China's flagship new cities based primarily on a market economy.

He has lived in three places in his time in London. The first place he lived was in Chinatown – where he stayed for six months. This was accommodation above the restaurant. Unfortunately, the accommodation had not been as properly finished as the restaurant itself and so the boss of the restaurant sought better living accommodation and he moved with other restaurant employees into a house in Tottenham. The house in Tottenham was fairly comfortable but had a higher rent. Recently (within the last 6 months) he has had an opportunity to move back to Westminster, closer to his place of work, into a friend's flat – where he can stay rent free. This is where he now stays with his wife.

The owners of the flat, who take care of all the bills, council tax etc. are in America attempting to migrate there. They themselves had come to England and found the living conditions hard but had managed to secure permanent residency after many years. Using London as a base they were now looking at a move to the US.

Economy

Mr. Li's economy defines his existence in London and also his experience. He earns reasonably well, he says (between £300 and £400 per week) and feels that his boss is fairly generous. On top of this he currently is not having to pay rent and pays a small contribution to the owners of the house he is staying in. His wife also works in the restaurant 6 days a week and between them they have started to be able to save some money. In real terms, the money he is now earning in London is higher than his wages in China.

There are however, problems with his current arrangement. He is tied to a three year contract with his current employer and his UK work permit is dependent on this contract. This means that to some extent he feels that he lacks freedom. Since working hours are long and his access to his usual social networks (which are very much tied to economic opportunities in Chinese society) is limited, Mr. Li feels a little trapped in his current situation. He says that the nature of his visa and his working hours also means that he cannot move freely between China and the UK to see his son.

Mr. Li works hard and does not supplement his income in any way. He pays taxes and wishes to become a permanent, independent resident. He has some fear of losing his job to one of the irregular migrants who are arriving from China but he also knows that he has a measure of protection by the skilled nature of his job. In fact he does say that because irregular migrants will work for such low wages they do in fact keep many of the Chinese restaurants in business and paradoxically also give him a modicum of financial security by allowing the businesses to stay open.

Aspirations

Mr. Li's original aspiration was to come to London and make a lot of money. He also had a great desire to raise children in Britain and put them through the British education system which, in China, is lauded as being one of the best in the world. When his wife eventually arrived they both decided that early years education in the UK was actually no better than in China. Mr. Li still maintains that the advantages of receiving a full education in the UK, right the way through

to university level, would greatly improve the life chances of his son but as of right now this aspiration has been greatly revised.

To some extent, the move to London has been a harsh reality check. Mr. Li has lost a significant amount of weight through working long hours, living initially on low wages and, he says, feeling stressed a lot of the time. His wife and increasingly, his boss in China, do not think the sacrifices he has made in terms of status were worth the move to the UK. But. Mr Li feels he still has something to prove.

Although he moved to the UK supposedly in speculation, and he could return to China at any time, there was clearly an element of taking an opportunity which few others have. Mr. Li is proud to have been able to travel to a country like the UK and wants to make the best of it. He sees himself as, to some extent, having to pass a baptism of fire in order to return back to China. The hard work itself is just a part of this.

Ideally he would like to be able to setup his own restaurant in the UK along a different business model to those that exist already: serving a more wealthy clientele. He would like to buy a house and be able to live a life of dual citizenship, enjoying the best of both China and the UK. To some extent he feels he had peaked in China and that coming to the UK was a move to the next level. The reality has proved tougher than the dream.

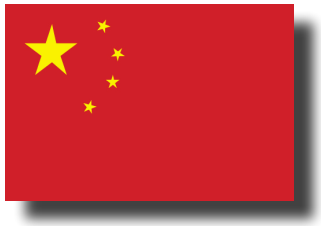
He would also like to have more children but here he is battling his wife who does not want to subject new children to the hardships they face in the UK. The tensions between family and the mission to succeed are becoming ever more pressing.

Needs

The most pressing problem for Mr. Li is his lack of the ability to communicate in English. The limits his opportunities in the UK, he feels. With his ability to improve his life chances using Chinese methods severely curtailed in the UK, his lack of English skills make this worse. It limits his social life and puts paid to any immediate goals of running a business. Although he does attend English classes, his long hours of work make learning English a practical difficulty.

In general then, his most pressing concerns revolve around the ability to make the most of his talents and be able to network and effect some social mobility on the one hand, and the tensions within his family on the other. Both of these factors are multiplied by his dependence on his boss in the UK for his visa and for all his communications with British life and his lack of freedom of movement.

Cheng



Age: 33
Sex: Male
Time in London: 3 years

Pen Portrait

Cheng Long ('Cheng'[20] hereafter) is a 33 year old man from the province of Fujian in China. Like so many from Fujian he came to London along an established route for those who are not able to get the correct visas in China. He has been in the UK for 3 years now and has got used to the lifestyle of being an irregular migrant in London. He doesn't so much live in 'fear' as in 'resignation' both to the hardships of his existence and the potential precariousness of his position. In comparison with many others he has encountered, he sees himself has being in a somewhat fortunate position financially and is beginning to see light at the end of what has been a long and arduous tunnel. There is no doubt that for the last three years, Cheng has lived through hardship and risk but says: "happiness is a bit irrelevant". His goals are long term.

Friends and Family

Cheng came to England using a network of contacts built in China along a route which required a level of trust amongst associates. Often these routes are portrayed in the UK media as being 'gangs' but his perhaps misrepresents what is actually going on which is a service that is being paid for. These kinds of relationships are not strictly 'friends' relationships but they are one of mutual trust, obligation and exchange. He says that there are many ways to come to the UK. One's connections and resources will determine how it is done.

Most importantly, Cheng came to England with somewhere to go. A friend of his, who was in a shared flat in South London allowed him to set himself up when he arrived, with the basic needs: a mobile phone and a place to sleep. He chose the UK precisely because he already had some contacts here. There is no special reason, he says, for coming to the UK as opposed to any other European country, other than the existing relationships. These kinds of existing relationships allowed Cheng to meet potential bosses (all Chinese speaking), find his way to potential work sites etc.

Cheng is married. His wife and a young daughter live in China. They have no way to come and join him and he has no way to go back to visit them. He is totally isolated from his family, though they all have a stake in his being here. A large family raised the money together to be able to fund his travel to England and many have a stake in his financial success.

On his days off, Cheng spends a large proportion of his time on the internet, chatting to his wife and daughter which, though detrimental to his social life, nonetheless affords him a little peace

[20] 'Cheng' is a surname but is being used a s first name here.

of mind. His greatest pain is expressed through the detachment from his family as he says: “I have not seen my daughter since she was 6 months old. She doesn’t really know who I am.”

Movements

Cheng started off in rural China before moving to a city. It was in the city that he heard of the method of coming to the UK. He then moved to mainland Europe where it was arranged for him to get some documents which enable him entry into the UK. He arrived at Heathrow with these documents and was able to enter.

He first lived in Lewisham, staying in a crowded room with several other Chinese people. At the time he could not speak the same language as them and so did not know a lot about their own experience. He had one friend there living with him. Conditions in this place were cramped and uncomfortable. There were a constant flow of people in and out of the house (all Chinese) as people sought work in different parts of the country.

Later he was able, with the aid of restaurant owner whom he worked with to find a flat in Westminster. Now he lives in one room of a three room ex-council flat. The other two rooms have at least 6 people living in them. This means there is as many as 13 people sleeping in the small flat at any one time. Each room in the flat has an individual lock and effectively the house is treated as three separate abodes. Cheng, having lived in London for 3 years now, and earning a little more than his fellow irregular migrants has taken on a role of responsibility of care for the others. He is also able to live alone in one of the rooms.

The house was initially found by the restaurant owner and was being let by a sympathetic Indian landlord. Cheng and the other housemates paid money directly to the restaurant owner who in turn dealt with the bills and the landlord. Now, Cheng himself deals with the rent and the landlord. He manages the different payments from the different rooms and even has his name on the utilities bills, despite being here with an ambiguous status.

He says that the people in the rooms change constantly because the people staying in them must take any work they can get, which may mean moving very quickly, but he himself now remains steady. In keeping the house going, Cheng is playing a very important role. He can see his own situation of three years previous in the lives of the other residents and is now one of the types of people who new arrivals in a similar position would want to know.

His social life is limited and language problems mean that he says he spends his entire time in the company of other Chinese people. He also spends a lot of time on the internet talking to his wife and daughter. In order to preserve money he rents Chinese DVD’s (from a shop in Chinatown) and watches these on his computer.

Economy

Economic needs were the main reason for Cheng coming to the UK and his economic situation continues to define his being here. In China his own family were obligated, by social pressures, and a system of ‘bride-price’ to pay more than they were able to to his wife’s family when they got maried. This left his family in debt. The debt though not crippling led to the idea that he would be able to make money overseas and send it home. The family saved and raised enough money to pay for the means to come to the UK. His family and Cheng himself chose to pay for a

more expensive option which was safer than other methods[21]. This left his family a further 60,000 Yuan (About £4000) in debt.

When Cheng arrived in London the harsh reality that wages were not going to be as high as hoped, especially given his status, came as a shock. His ability to pay back this debt after rent and food meant that for two years he was unable to do anything but work and sleep. Today he says he has finally repaid this debt and that he is now freer than he was. This is one reason for his being able to afford to live in a single room.

Another reason for optimism was that he has been able to build a very good relationship, through hard work and diligence, with his boss who, he says, treats him very well. He now earns more than £300 / week (of which £100 must go to rent and bills) which is a lot more than he ever used to earn and finally he is able to send a surplus back to his family.

He is still unable to enjoy much of his own money but he can now have his own room and watch DVD's. All the rest he sends back to his family in China. He says his wife is the one who manages the saving (a fairly typical Chinese arrangement) and he sends it back as soon as he gets it so as not to spend it.

As he says: "My situation here is unknown. Maybe I will be sent home tomorrow. I must make as much as I can and send it home while I still can. It would be different if I had a legal status."

Aspirations

Cheng's aspirations were clear. They were not just his own aspirations but the aspirations of a large family in China. The desire was to make enough money to provide a measure of security for his whole family as well as a step up for his wife and daughter.

The weight of these expectations and the hopes which have been pinned to his time in the UK have taken their toll as well as providing daily motivation to carry on. He does not want to lose 'face'[22] and return home without having achieved something and this means that he is in a sense, indentured by his own fear of failure.

He never thought it would be easy in the UK, but he was surprised by how many people in the UK live in conditions not so much better than China. He says, because the media in China portrayed the UK as wealthy, but he never thought he was coming to a life of luxury. He sees this period of his life as one of labour and work for long-term benefits.

Needs

The main need for Cheng is a more secure status. He has reached a point of resignation to his position and simply tries to earn as much as he can. He has got himself a National Insurance number and utility bills and even pays council tax. When asked why he chooses to pay income tax and council tax he says, "I want to be here legally. I want to work and I want to pay taxes. I just want to be free to earn money. I know I am probably wrong but why would people come looking for me if I pay taxes? Surely they would want to find me more if I did not." There is a sense of stoic acceptance of fate in this.

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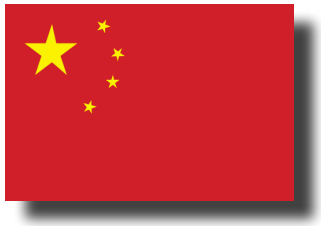
[21] Horror stories continue of the 'less safe methods': http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/803143.stm (August 2007)
[22] The concept of 'face' in China has rather deeper implications than the simple 'embarrassment' implied by the term in English.

Cheng also faces huge problems through a language barrier. One of the main problems was health care. Cheng has a scar which covers his forearm. A wok full of hot oil was knocked over and the oil spilled across his arm burning him very badly. He never went to hospital and never saw a doctor. His scar is extensive and covers his entire forearm. It is unimaginable to think of the pain he must have suffered. He says that he didn't go to the doctor for two reasons: the fear of being caught and because he could not understand how to go into a hospital or how to communicate with a doctor.

Zhang



Age: 35
Sex: Female
Time in London: 4 years

Pen Portrait

Zhang Zi Yi ('Zhang'[23] hereafter) has been in the UK for 4 years. She has lived with her husband and her ten year old daughter in a flat near Chinatown for all of this time. Just recently they have finally managed to save enough money to lay down a small deposit on a house in Southgate in North London. After what she describes as '4 years of hell' they have come somewhere near achieving their goal. Zhang has benefited from being very gregarious. She has developed strong friendships, found herself more interesting work and become highly involved in her daughter's life which means visiting schools and meeting other parents. Whilst she still struggles with the English language, Zhang has been able to create a positive outlook and some real opportunities for a long-term stable life in the UK.

Friends and Family

Zhang's husband and daughter live together. They have no other family in the UK. Unlike many of the others involved in this research project, Zhang does not pine for family in China. She has returned to China many times to visit family and they have also come to visit her. She says that, now they have the house in Southgate, they will be able to invite family members for longer term stays.

Zhang's strength in London derives from her affable nature and her ability to make friends. Often, for Chinese people making friends and associates has an instrumental purpose. It is a way of advancing oneself economically through business connections and a system of gifts and favours. In the UK this system is less pronounced and less opportunities arise for people to use this method of rising socially or economically. Zhang has been able to use her social skills not as a way of rising per se, but as a way of enhancing her social life and building a stronger support network for herself and her daughter. She knows that, because her daughter is going to complete an English education, that she is here in the long term and so partly her desire to meet people and find out what is going on is a way of providing the best opportunities for her daughter.

Movements and living situation

Zhang, very unusually, has not moved since coming to London. She has lived in the same flat near Chinatown for all 4 years and only very recently bought the house in Southgate. She says that staying for so long in Chinatown is very unusual because living conditions in these flats are

[23] 'Zhang' is a surname but is here used as a first name for ease of reading.

so poor. They stayed primarily because their daughter had enrolled in schools in Westminster and they wanted to stay close by.

Conditions in this flat were very cramped. Essentially the three of them were staying in a single room provided by the restaurant owner but being charged a greater rent for having more people. They pretty much kept themselves to themselves but say that there were many families crammed in the rooms around them. They did not like the noise or the close quarter living. She was ashamed at having to bring up her daughter in these conditions.

Economy

Zhang says that she enjoyed good living standards in China. Her husband was well respected and they enjoyed a good social status. They have taken a huge step downwards in coming to the UK. Having said this, she urges, the wages in the UK are five times the wages they received in China and so by saving money here they are securing a good life for themselves when they return.

As part of the terms of her husband's travel to the UK, Zhang had to pay for her own part of the accommodation. This meant that the migration to the UK happened in stages. First her husband came for one year. He returned to China to warn against making a permanent move due to the harsh living conditions but Zhang says that pressure from peers and family at home made her decide to take the risk. But the lack of provision for her own living costs meant that practically they could not bring their daughter out with them at first and indeed she spent 6 months as a Dim Sum waitress[24] earning and saving enough money to bring her daughter over.

She worked as a waitress in a number of restaurants before finding a more permanent position working as a cook in a community centre. This work allows a lot more flexible hours which enable her to collect her daughter form school and play a role in a daughter's life. Her husband now has a secure job in a restaurant and earns higher wages; enough to enable her some flexibility in the number of hours she works herself.

Aspirations

Zhang's aspirations were largely determined by peer pressure at home. Stories of the wealth to be made in the West and the opportunity which had been granted to her to see the world were seen by friends as unmissable. She herself had had a measure of scepticism brought about by stories of hardship from her husband.

When she arrived she quickly realised that despite her own misgivings, life in London was going to be even more difficult than she had imagined. She describes the 4 years of living in the flat near Chinatown as four years of hell in which she had to work the whole time, had very little social life, could not communicate easily with the outside world and had very cramped living conditions. But during this time she was also able to build a network of people who would support her, enrol her daughter in school and eventually save enough to buy a house. She says now that her heart is 'gladder'.

With things beginning to look up she is re-evaluating her long term aims. She now talks of staying for perhaps as long as ten years, putting her daughter through university in the UK. She

[24] She laughs as she remembers this because she says she didn't know anything about Dim Sum. The idea of wheeling trolleys around pontificating about the virtues of the food amused her.

would like to be able to earn the right to gain citizenship and then begin travelling back and forth between China and the UK enjoying the benefits of both.

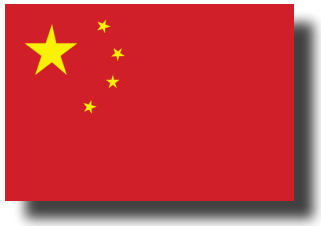
Needs

As with many of the people studied here, Zhang's main concern was with her lack of language skills. She had managed to enrol her daughter in schools and move her when they didn't want to continue there but she finds it hard to find medical care, hard to find out what help might be available to her and in general finds the city intimidating.

However, Zhang has been able to find many ways of bypassing the need for language. She has some close friends and together they brave the more difficult factors in London (travel, shopping etc.) and in doing so learn how to find out about, for example the sales when shopping and the places where there are Chinese speakers who can make things easier for them. These kinds of social networks are a key facet of life in China and Zhang has been able to recreate them to some extent in the UK. One good example seen during research was when she went to a mobile phone shop to get an upgrade of her existing mobile phone handset. She and a friend travelled a long way from Chinatown to do this and at first it was not clear why. On arriving at a specific mobile phone company's shop they were ushered by staff into a back room where a Chinese man (whom they referred to as, 'Mr. Handsome') who worked in the shop immediately took over her case and that of her friend too. The man, who was a manager at the company took from them: letters, bills and details, and diligently filled in the necessary forms on their behalf. In this way both women ended up with a combination of two mobile phone contracts (so as to make cheap calls all day) and two brand new phones, all without having to deal with any English at all.

It is in these kinds of ways that Zhang and many other Chinese in London are able to cope in an environment which is so unfamiliar.

Yang



Age: 29
Sex: Female
Time in London: 3 years

Pen Portrait

Yang Zi Qiong ('Yang'[25] hereafter) came to London with to follow her husband, who had made the move a year earlier. Her husband had come after being invited as a chef. Such opportunities are rare in China and she suggested that he went to London for one year to see how it was and if it would allow them further opportunities. After this year he had returned to China and told Yang that life in London would be very hard and that they may not be able to make too much of it. Yang however, strong willed and open-minded, decided that since she was young (27) and without children, she should take the opportunity to see the world. A chance which can be all too rare for many Chinese. She is now 29, has been in London for three years and has two children, both of whom were born in the UK.

Friends and Family

Upon meeting, one of the first things that Yang expresses without prompting is: "So you want to know about my lifestyle? Well I am luckier than many Chinese here but I have few friends and relatives. I am very alone." She came with her husband and will stay with him, but the loneliness and isolation upsets her. She is planning to go home when possible. Her husband is also no longer under any illusion of making a life in the UK but rather wants to stay to make some money to take back to China.

The second of Yang's two children has just gone to join the first in China where they live with their paternal grandparents and this separation brings heartache on a daily basis. The decision was made by both Yang and her husband that London, and the living conditions they have, were not suitable places to bring up children. They also wanted their children to be brought up as Chinese children with Chinese culture and language. The price, she says, is that the children are now more attached to her mother-in-law than they are to her. And although she gets on well with her mother-in-law it is nonetheless a source of perpetual grief. For Yang, the hardships endured by coming to London are simply not worth it on a personal level. She cannot understand why those who come illegally come at all since they have even less than she does.

Yang also comes from a large family and is one of four siblings. Yang came from a family of farmers/peasants in rural China. Her family ran a small business selling preserved meat as a sideline which had also allowed them to buy more farmland and eventually allowed enough money to enable Yang to move to the city where she met her husband[26].In China her sister and

[25] 'Yang' is a surname but is here used as a first name for ease of reading.
[26] Moving to a city from the countryside tends to mark a step up the social ladder in the sense of being able to earn higher wages and experience some of China's burgeoning economic wealth.

two brothers offer a large support network both financially and emotionally and she misses them greatly. Her lack of anyone to turn to in hard times is draining.

Her one source of support is her mother in law who came frequently to the UK when her children were born and stayed for almost six months of the year in their various houses to help look after the children in their early months and years. The mother-in-law also has very little social life in the UK and, Yang says, is only a very small drain on their financial resources. She lived quietly and mostly at home with the children. Her lack of English and lack of familiarity with how to live in the UK meant that she left the house very little.

Movements and Living Situation

Recently, Yang and her husband have found a flat in Hackney. They had a friend who had been in the UK for a long time and had bought a house for her family. This friend had been able to put Yang in touch with an estate agent who deals with Chinese speakers who had found them a flat with reasonable rent. Yang says that this move is very important as it now means that her and her husband can live in their own space and control their living conditions a little better.

When Yang had first arrived she was moved into the single room which had been provided by the restaurant where her husband had worked. The living conditions here provided one of the main sources for her current disillusionment with living standards in London. Here her husband and another couple had crowded into one room. She stayed there for 1 year. She says this is much longer than she had desired and most people try to move out of this kind of accommodation. The narrow staircases of this first accommodation in central Westminster had four rooms on each floor and Yang says that each room may contain this many people.

It was during this stay that Yang became pregnant with her first child. When the child was born this arrangement became untenable and she and her husband moved in with her husband's brother's family into a flat in near Kingsway. In some ways this new accommodation was even more crowded but the sharing was at least with kin. Her brother in law had two school-aged children, she a new born child and her mother in law also came to visit. She says that although there were 8 people in the small flat[27] it was at least easier in that she did not need to worry about being private and the mother in law was able to help both sets of parents and allow them to work.

Economy

Yang's family in China is not as poor as many Chinese peasant families. Her husband too had a good job in a restaurant in a large Chinese city. There was certainly a financial motive to coming to the UK but it was also a speculative move in the sense that money provided a motivation, but not an imperative.

Here, making enough money to live on means working very hard. Yang herself works 6 days a week from 11am until midnight. She says these are common working hours. Fortunately, she and her husband are often given the same day off so that they can spend time together. Their combined wages do allow them to send some money to China and they have now been able to move into their new flat.

[27] The flat has a living room (converted into a bedroom), a kitchen, one bedroom and a bathroom.

Financially they feel secure but not as well off as they had hoped that the visit to London would make them. Overall, the economic benefits of living in London are measured harshly against the hardships and the division of the family.

Aspirations

The language Yang chooses to describe the reasons for coming to England is very clear. It was seen by both her and her husband as an 'opportunity' which they were lucky to have. This opportunity is not available to everyone. They were able to legally travel to the UK and get the experience of living in a different part of the world with the hope of being able to raise some extra money for their future. When she left, she feels that she was wide-eyed and non-committal.

What changed upon arrival was the fact of making a choice to make things longer term. She stopped being a young single person and became a mother with bills to pay and rent to cover. This meant an end to the idealistic notions of travel and wonder and the start of a tough life of work and cramped living conditions. Even now, the topic of whether to return home is brought up frequently and she and her husband are acutely aware of the benefits of leaving the UK. For now though, they have made the decision to stay and try and make something work in the long term.

Their hope of raising children in the UK was certainly dampened by the reality that neither of them can speak English very well. This meant that they felt excluded by institutions and from opportunities. Without knowing exactly what it is their children might be in for in the UK, they decided they wanted them to be raised in China. They still have a long term ideal of being able to stay and build a life in the UK perhaps with dual citizenship but all of these plans are determined by how much money they make in the future.

Needs

Yang's greatest fear living in the UK is with her health. Like many Yang worries greatly about how she can be taken care of in the event of illness. She has tried visiting doctors in Hackney and Soho but she could not get on a list to see a Chinese doctor and found herself totally unable to communicate with English doctors. She had interpreted her experience with two doctors in particular as 'racism' which she says was characterised by the doctor not wanting to spend time examining her or listening to what she was saying. The experience she describes sounds much like the kind of experience anyone in the UK would encounter when visiting a GP but for her the level of care was unacceptable[28]

This lack of English language skills manifests itself most greatly in Yang's refusal to deal with English doctors but also contributes to her general sense of isolation from English life and her lack of a social life or network of support.

[28] Much of the literature on Chinese ideas of health and medicine describe a feeling that a doctor should prescribe something for a complaint. Indeed traditional Chinese medicine would have a 'cure' of sorts for any presented symptom. These are complex issues which are beyond the scope of this research but help to explain Yang's anxieties.

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