

The Folds of Home: the experience of the Janus-faced home amongst formerly homeless young people in Scotland

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Literatures of home

Meaning of home (Mallett 2004; Saunders & Williams 1988), emotions (Soaita 2015), scales and geographies of home (Blunt & Dowling 2006; Blunt & Varley 2004), home and harm (Gurney 2020), material objects (Jacobs & Malpas 2013), psychosocial (Clark & Kearns 2012), affordances (Coolen 2006), embodied (Clapham 2011), home-assemblages (Soaita and McKee: 2019)

Clapham (2005: 37) “necessary to go through the front-door” and shift to relational approaches

The fold as contributing through exploring the multiple social positions of the individual.

Individual / Structure

- Conceptual repertoire attuned for explaining group differences – difficulty in explaining individual differences within groups
- Theoretical accounting practices – tendency to see as ‘individual’, ‘agency’, or ‘choice’ the remainder left after accounting for ‘the social’
- Hierarchical dividing lines – allocation of factors as individual/structural within causal explanations of housing pathways and tenancy sustainment

The Fold

Deleuze (1993; 2006) in texts on Foucault and Leibniz

Outside of philosophy, largely taken up within studies of materiality, science, and technology – folds as making new associations, bringing human and non-human together, as well as time and space

However, also clear social dimension. Governance of others is folded back as governance of self – the inside (relation to self) is the a fold of the outside (relation to others).

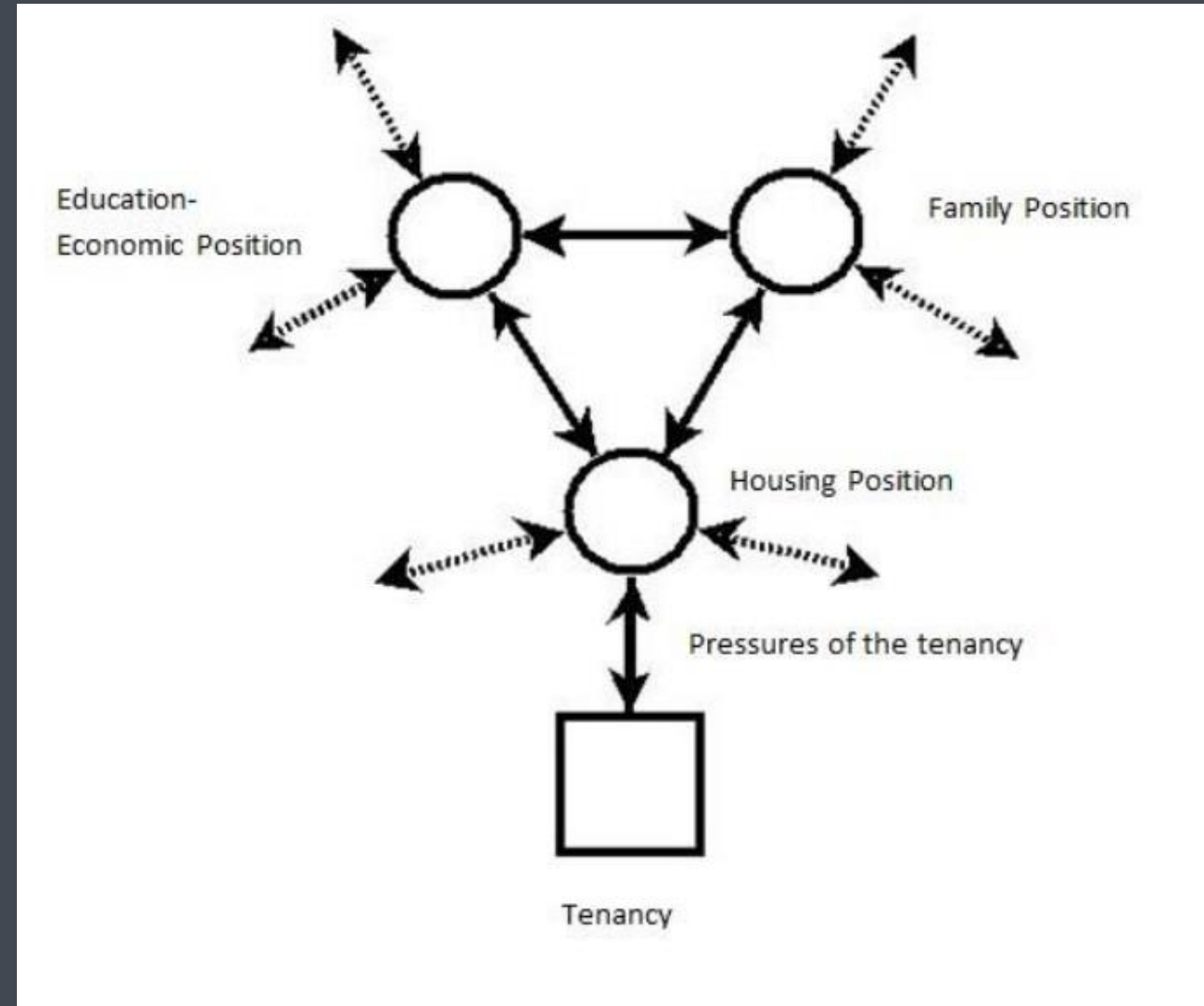
Taken up and developed by Lahire (2011)...

Constellation of relations

Metaphor of the social as sheet of paper – individual as folded sheet of paper (Lahire 2011)

“each individual as an intersection point [a folding] of all the past and present relationships” (Lahire, 2020b: 57)

“this sociology of the individual scale [...] reveals the traces of social life in the most intimate folds and recesses of psychic activity” (Lahire, 2020b: 303)



Managing a Tenancy

Two waves of interviews with formerly homeless young people across Scotland

- 17-24 age range
- Across 10 local authority areas
- 6 left tenancy during fieldwork, 6 had previous tenancies prior to first interview
- 12 had council house, 12 housing association, and 1 private sector lease

1st Wave

25 Participants

2nd Wave

18 Participants

Unfolding the home

“a home is where you can actually call this is where I belong [...] the house that relates to you kinda thing” David

“When you walk in and [...] you’ve got your ane wee things like sitting about and your ane like lamps and ornaments and your rug. Just everything pulls it together to just make it your home.” Vicky

“You’ve got yer furniture and ye pay the bills and ye buy food and stuff an jist makes it feel like home” Sarah

“[I feel a lot more relaxed in my tenancy] I don’t feel quite as alone now ‘cause my relationship with mum is getting a lot better, and my other family as well, it’s kind of all coming together a bit more, so I can focus more on how it feels [having my own place] in a positive way.” Robert

Techniques as weaving

Pressures felt through having an independent tenancy – need to secure an income, budget money, furnish and decorate, cook, clean, etc

Techniques of home

“I would’ve wanted, like, in the first couple o months for it tae be aw done but it’s like ye cannae dae

Support services were crucial:

Techniques with others -

“I was a lousy cooker, cause I’m a microwave person. So [my support worker] started getting me intae cooking proper stuff.” Michael

Over time development of practical mastery –

“so used to it [that] it’s nothing” David, “really hard [at first], never done it before [...] now it’s really easy” Brian

Techniques take part in the re-alignment, weaving, and folding of relations

To twist a phrase of Bourdieu’s we can thus say “the same history [comes] to inhabit both [tenant and tenancy, whereby] history in a sense communicates with itself, [... it becomes] reflected in its own image” (Bourdieu, 1981: 206)

Budgeting a low- income

“I didn’t know what money was really, I would jist spend it on anything, literally” David

‘junk’, ‘rubbish’, ‘crap’ / ‘stuff [they] had to get’

Economy of needs over wants during hard times

“sense of limits” (Bourdieu 1985: 728) – but what is internalised is not ‘objective structures of the field’

Freedom of action

Fortnightly routine:

“I do my shopping then cause that's the day my benefits go through, and I know if I do it on a Monday after I've had my benefits through and after the weekend, I won't have any money left.” **Ryan**

“[It] sounds weird but.. A dinnae have a budget plan, it just works out, it's like programmed into ma head” **Robert**

Manging multiple incomings and outgoings:

“I prefer to pay them like monthly rather than weekly 'cause like I get my money every fortnight, erm, and that's usually just for food, then [my son's] Child Benefit goes in every week and that pays for his nursery and his nappies, and like his Child Tax Credits go in at the end of the month and that's like for the big bills, like the TV licence, the phone and like the gas and electricity, that sort of stuff.” **Lucy**

Discourses of maturity / control

Change in the 'outside' relations folded into changes 'inside' the self -

“I was much more happier, I mean, I was much more in control of ma life kinda thing, whereas I used tae jist kinda have everything done for me.” David

Taking on more independent positions (independent tenancy, parent) and embodying the pressures led to feelings of responsibility / maturity / grown up that were extensive, modifying the intensities of other desires -

“I'd say I've grown up a bit more [... so now when looking at a low-paid part-time job I'll think] it'll not cover my house for me, it'll not cover my house for me, it'll not cover food and things so obviously I'm thinking about things like that more and more.” John

“I wasn't taking any drugs [...] so I was quite happy and I gave up smoking and everything just so I could gie the bairn a good life.” Eric

However, the ability to achieve these desires – ‘get a job and get on with life’, ‘provide the best life for my child that I can’ – were not always possible...

The Janus-faced home

“to be honest... well it’s quite boring” Alan

Despite the relative success of making tenancy a home, the precarious economic position folds back onto the home – creating a dissonance.

Own space / bored and lonely

Furnished and decorated / nothing to do but watch TV

Room for child to stay / unable to afford anything when they visit

The constellation of relations operated as a prism through which wider social processes, the uneven development of actually existing neoliberalism across policy areas, are condensed and embodied as social suffering.

Singular folds

“After unfolding the social, it may sometimes be useful to re-fold it through an analysis of individuals in their relative singularity.” (Lahire, 2020: 56)

- Absent others and disruption of home
- Intermediaries preventing sense of home
- Home away from home
- Home for now
- Home at a distance

Conclusions

Constellation of relations and its configuration, weaving, and folding through techniques to create sense of home

Re-configurations of the constellation of relations can disrupt sense of home, making unhomely what was previously homely

Janus-faced home as the dissonance between social positions, that can be traced to the uneven development of actually existing neoliberalism

Move from individual/structure to the singular folds of the social fabric

No place like home, but home is the only place...

Lock-down as producing new folds and tensions –
dwelling as home AND office AND school AND ...

‘I love my husband - **but** I might kill him’

‘My children are my world - **but** I’m ready to throw
them out the window’

‘I entered lockdown planning to learn a new language
- **but** just doomscrolled Twitter and binged Tiger King’