the recovery myth

the plans and situated realities of post-disaster response

Lucy Easthope

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This book is dedicated to the people of Toll Bar,
Doncaster, United Kingdom
Without you there would be no study; no stories to tell.
I am indebted to you for your time and generosity.
You also taught me how to listen.

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Elizabeth and Mabel Easthope: This is for you and your arrivals are entangled in this story too. Remember, my amazing little warriors, you can do *anything* and never forget the power of a good story.

Contents

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The book begins in the summer of 2007, when parts of the UK experienced exceptionally high rainfall and were devastated by floodwater. It is firstly the account of a longitudinal, ethnographic study of the residents and responders in one flooded village: of the relationships that are formed, the houses that are rebuilt, the personal items that are missed or thrown away and the places that are lost or compacted. It is also a reflection on the changing role of the researcher as an *insider* in governmental emergency recovery planning who became entangled in the life of the village. The two aspects combined allow the analysis of myths that are stubbornly reinforced throughout the aftermath of disaster.

The health and social consequences of flooding, and more specifically the loss of home, a sense of security, space and possessions, have been documented in a number of studies. *Some* of these consequences have also become the focus of UK government attention. How well people *recover* from emergencies is seen to have a direct bearing on individual, community and economic well-being. A plethora of instruments such as checklists, templates and guidance documents have been produced by government planners to *effect* this *recovery*. I define these as *technologies of recovery* within a wider context of emergency planning which has at its core the aim of *bringing order* to complex and messy times. *Technologies of recovery* endeavour to place a framework over a complex process where much is uncertain, reactive and dependent on individual and ad hoc social relations. Like many other areas of health and social policy, while such protocols are not necessarily unwelcome,

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they carry many assumptions. I demonstrate that these are built on *official narratives* where much has been left unseen or unsaid. The final product is distilled and compromised, blind to the situated practices that remain hidden.

Drawing on literature from science and technology studies, human geography and disaster research, this study shows how *technologies of recovery* are transformed in localised practice, enabling actions to happen that are entwined with a community's own existing strength and resilience. The contribution of this book is to show, through a case study that makes visible the practices that are often hidden, how localised emergency responders find ways to collaborate with residents. In an informal network, they do *different* with the instruments to co-produce regeneration and survivance within a community.

Introduction

This book traces the path that the aftermath of floodwaters took in the village of Toll Bar, Doncaster, and is an ethnographic account of the everyday experiences of people rebuilding their lives after these floods between 2007 and 2012. It also interweaves a simultaneous observation of the work of a London-based 'National Recovery Working Group', part of the Government's Cabinet Office, as they designed tools to assist emergency planners with a time after floods and other emergencies that they defined as 'recovery'.

It is structured in three parts: The first, **Technologies of Recovery and Their Role in the Recovery Myth**, examines these tools, the forms that they take, and roles that they play in a *phase* that has been called 'recovery' after a disaster. I define and explore these tools that I have termed *technologies of recovery* and their attempts to bring order to a messy and complex time. This part also examines the concept of a 'recovery phase' after disaster and the way in which tools and technologies have been imbued with such importance in the field of emergency planning. In the final chapter of this part, I discuss a particularly potent example of the way in which the situated realities of life after flooding *deviate* from the instruments that aim to *manage* it.

Part II of the book, **Plans and Situated Realities**, examines aspects of life in the village of Toll Bar, the role that recovery tools provided

by actors located at a distance played in this life and specifically the way in which residents and responders worked with these tools, and with each other, to *co-produce* what happened next in Toll Bar. These aspects became visible to me, only by watching closely the situated realities, and I use them here to make visible much of what may be hidden during 'flood recovery'.

The third part, **Reflections on the Recovery Myths**, draws together concluding themes from the study and also outlines the contribution made by this work. I then go on to highlight a number of practice-based recommendations. I conclude that this is a story of omissions and oversights and the way in which technologies created elsewhere, imbued with assumptions, were re-imagined by local planners when faced with the loss of homes and places and things. The study is also a challenge to a *phased* approach to writing about/planning for/acting upon disasters where there is claimed to be a clear beginning, middle and end and an emphasis on the *technical* management of an emergency.

The floods of June and July 2007 were happening *as* the *technologies* were still in development back in Whitehall so this is not a story of cause and effect and of how a set of checklists and flow charts were applied universally. It is rather a story of watching a community taking the tools that were available, either from the National Recovery Guidance or other emergency planning tools, and *transforming* them into something that was localised to place and circumstances. It is also a story of how recovery happens anyway or happens differently and has always occurred. As Parts I and II of the book develop, they particularly chronicle the changing and developing relationships between the residents within the village and the responders placed into the village to support them.

All of these chapters are built around the field notes, transcripts and artefacts that are the result of five years of ethnographic research in Toll Bar between 2007 and 2012. I am describing this as ethnographic because it is an account of my lived observations and actions over five years in this village. In addition to my own observations, I also conducted interviews and discussion groups and took over 2000 photographs of the landscape and the places. I have woven a small sample of these within the text to illustrate aspects of the discussion. Those who participated in the study also provided photographs, letters, diary extracts and poetry. I have also drawn upon a book of experiences that

the residents published with a local college and a number of internal reports that the local council provided me with.[1,2]

Locating the Study

Inextricably linked with my time in Toll Bar is my practice during the same time, as senior government adviser in emergency planning and an emergency planning lecturer, with a specialist focus on 'recovery work' and the development of the very tools that I critique. This entanglement between my work in emergency planning practice and my time as a research student allowed me to produce something unusual amongst disaster narratives. As both an *insider* in the development of protocols and plans and an observer of the lived realities after a flood, I have been able to explore not only what local emergency planners were doing but the ways in which this practice was different, specifically, the way in which residents and local responders collaborated to do something other than the *official* practice. This ethnography has allowed me to explore assumptions and deviations from the perspectives of residents, local responders and also the national planners.[3] Reflections on how I placed myself within the study have been discussed in footnotes throughout the book, and further information on my experiences in disaster is included on next page.

[1] In 2007, the Northern College supported the Toll Bar residents to publish a book, which they chose to name '*Toll Bar on Sea*' after they gathered the experiences of many of the villagers. When extracts are used in the text, they are referenced as ACL (2008).

[2] These included a report produced by the Neighbourhood Management Team in the summer of 2008, which asked team members, residents, other local responders and primary school teachers to reflect on their experiences in the year after the floods. Within this text, this is referenced as DMBC (2008).

[3] I also provide this explanation into my work to shed light on some of the conflicts that I encountered in this study and also to allow exploration of my own experiences as the ethnography continued. As I will go on to show, what the researcher brings with them into the field, and what happens while they are there, will have effects and will influence the way in which the study participants respond. Gender and ethnicity are just two examples of these factors that have been explored in literature that examines ethnographic method (see Fortier 1998: 49). This may mean that ethnographers are excluded from certain aspects of a study, e.g. a male researcher may find it more problematic to observe aspects of childbirth. Anne-Marie Fortier's work discusses the way in which ethnographers are *caught up in a web of demands that come from different directions at once: academia, personal…and the interests of the subjects* (Fortier 1998: 55).

My field of study before 2007 was the unwieldy and disparate bodies of knowledge that forms '*disaster studies*'. This included studies on the '*psychosocial aspects*' of disaster, the *management* of disaster by official bodies, risk, risk communication and the legal process which all informed my studies in Risk, Crisis and Disaster Management.

My practice and research has gained much insight from the aspects of human geography that relate to meanings of space and place and also house and home. Disaster studies and human geography frameworks combine in the work of Ian Convery on the aftermath of flooding and Foot and Mouth Disease, and Tracy Coates' work on case studies of flooding and I draw on both throughout the book. I describe the way in which a number of observational accounts of disaster have also influenced my work.

However, a body of knowledge that has also been most revealing to me has been Science and Technology Studies (STS) and particularly those aspects relating to the use of health technologies and health practices. In this book, I have used STS in a number of ways; I have used John Law's approach when discussing *order* and *ordering* and his work with Wiebe Bijker on the way that technologies and the social world can be understood together. For the way that knowledges are compromised and subjugated, I drew on insights from Donna Haraway and Anni Dugdale. To help and understand the assumptions that lie beneath plans and the way that humans interact with them, I have used the work of Lucy Suchman, and to define and explain the concept of *technologies,* I have drawn on the work of Pinch, Ashmore and Mulkay. As I found all of these works to be applicable throughout my discussions, rather than one literature review chapter, I have chosen instead to draw on these texts and others throughout the submission.

Disaster

This book problematises the definitions that *officials* and specifically emergency planning officials place over complex situations that arise after terrible events. This therefore creates a challenge within an introduction that ideally needs a neat explanation of my use of the terms *disaster* and *emergency* in this book. The vast majority of definitions of disaster are framed around a hierarchy of worsening consequences, for example a disaster occurs when local resources are overwhelmed and additional assistance is required. Disasters, which can happen in so many different ways,

rip away existing functionalities and infrastructures and displace people and resources. They involve discussions of impacts, of a loss of community, a loss of lives and of damage to property and environment.

Crucially, as I will explore in this book, a key aspect of definitions is often that disasters are something that require the *activation* of special responses and special measures and special personnel. E. L. Quarantelli has influenced scholarly debate on this area for many years and has edited two works posing the question 'What is a Disaster?' as well as numerous journal articles (See Perry and Quarantelli 2005; Quarantelli 1998). One constant theme throughout these is how problematic it is to find one acceptable definition of disaster, with debates about whether events can be categorised into 'social' or '*technical*' or '*natural*' or '*human-made*'. Scholars and practitioners alike have angrily critiqued the terminology of a 'natural' disaster in the last four decades; Lee Clarke has starkly challenged this label and makes visible the institutional failings that put people in harm's way after the Hurricane Katrina disaster (Clarke, L. in Brusma et al. 2007: 236). Convery et al. (2008) have also discussed the problems that occur when defining '*natural*' and the '*human-made*': A natural event may act as a trigger but that is then mixed with social, political and economic factors.

In the UK, the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease epidemic tested definitions of disasters as it did not meet *official* criteria around very visible loss of infrastructure or the deaths of humans. It was represented *officially* as a livestock problem. Convery et al.'s work 'Animal Disease and Human Trauma' (2008) makes clear how this epidemic became a traumatic and devastating experience with international implications.

The tools that have been engineered by the UK government to *effect* emergency planning, which are discussed at length in this book, do not use the term disaster, only emergency. This is defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 as

> *an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK, the environment of a place in the UK, or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK.* (HM Government 2004)

Sir Michael Pitt's review into the flooding of 2007 across the UK (Pitt 2008) used the term 'disaster' on a number of occasions when providing international context for the events of 2007 but describes the '*events*'

themselves as '*extreme*', '*exceptional*' and '*serious*' but not as a disaster. This would appear to be a discussion where context is everything. What happened in Toll Bar began as one of these extreme, exceptional, serious events. The flooding in this village started as a mingling of environmental frailties and human-made neglect ravaged by severe and unprecedented rainfall. What happened next was highly situated within cultural and emotional and social specificities. It was a highly significant event, possibly *the most* significant event, in people's lives in Toll Bar but if it is placed within an analysis of other events that occurred in 2007 may appear much *less* significant. The temporality of disaster is problematic too—when was the disaster in Toll Bar? Was it that night in June 2007 when the rain began to fall or was it the two weeks after when the water stayed at over a metre in depth? Was it the eleven weeks that families stayed in council-run evacuation centres or the year that it took to rebuild their homes? And did it stop being a *disaster* when the residents made obvious to the outside world that they would not be defined by these events and that they would make visible a resilience that had always been there?

The flooding of the River Don was not an *event* but part of an ongoing and chronic cycle enmeshed with local lives.

The river will flood again. As I go on to show, within a discussion of what happened in Toll Bar is an acknowledgement of both the past and the future.[4]

Communities and Disaster

Anthropological research shows that community-type organisation is a feature of all human societies and studies of humans and other higher primates suggest that we share an inherent sociability, a willingness to connect and to cooperate…Nevertheless community has proved notoriously difficult to define and to study
(Gilchrist 2004: 1)

[4]On many occasions that I visited the village, I have noted the impact of a threatened storm on the residents: *He said: "It'll rain again, won't it…its rain"* (Field notes, June 2008). *She said: "I don't want to be in a caravan for this rain"* (Field notes, December 2007). *Tonight it rained heavily and I remembered what the residents said today about being nervous* (Field notes, December 2007).

Definitions of 'community' after disaster have often focussed on the binding factor of geographical boundaries. Twigg writes in 2007 "*In conventional emergency management, communities are viewed in spatial terms: groups of people living in the same area or close to the same risk*". In a similar vein, they are defined as "*where people have something in common and develop feelings of belonging and attachment for people and places*" by Guarnacci in 2016.

However, in recent years, there has been a move by those working in community cohesion and tensions support to ensure that much wider and non-exclusionary definitions are sought. These have included defining communities that may be drawn from across an international pool but are unified through a common interest and supported by a mechanism such as an Internet platform.

Ethnography and Disaster

I work in an area of practice variously described as '*emergency management*' or '*emergency planning*' or '*disaster management*'. I work all over the UK but lived in Doncaster for a number of years, and in 2007, I lived five miles away from Toll Bar. My own home was not flooded but I was very aware of the floodwater all around me.

For many years, as a responder to the aftermath of emergencies, I have struggled with making my own observations of the messy, blurred, devastating effects of disaster fit with the linear, prescriptive and technical accounts of disaster that dominate the professional work that I do.[5] In Toll Bar, one of my earliest observations was that construction of a dominant, operational *Flood Narrative* by the national emergency planners that I work alongside. I describe this in Chapter 3. It was apparent that this was a different story to the one being *lived in* by both local emergency planners and other local responders and also the residents of Toll Bar. This dominant narrative maintains a focus on statistics and

[5] I have held a number of academic positions specialising in emergency planning and am a Senior Fellow of the UK Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College. I also work on projects with UK government departments, emergency services, health bodies and international corporations such as holiday companies and airlines. I have been involved in the response to a number of emergencies with a specific focus on the identification of the deceased and their repatriation to families and the preservation and return of personal effects.

physical geography and technical findings. It also does not always allow for multiple voices and multiple narratives; the stories of those caught up in the process of survival are frequently overlooked. As Convery et al. (2008) highlight in their account of the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease disaster, survivors of disaster and those around them seldom get the opportunity to tell their stories. People who have lost everything and have limited access to resources to communicate are traumatised and marginalised and have little chance to articulate their experiences. Additionally in those early days after disaster, hearing narratives and experiences may be given a low priority by other responders (as I discuss in Chapter 3).

However, ethnographies of disaster are arguably becoming recognised as an important way to understand these fragile accounts. In some countries such as the United States of America, there has been support for initiatives such as the '*Quick Response Disaster Research*' projects at the Natural Hazards Center in Boulder, Colorado, where researchers deploy alongside other first responders.[6]

In the UK too, a number of studies that have used ethnographic and associated qualitative methods (such as the analysis of diaries or photographs) have added much to our understanding of the way that people experience disasters. These studies break new ground, placing those situated within the disaster at the heart of the study and producing reports and findings and archives in forms such as reports and websites and PDFs (downloadable documents) that can be heard nationally and internationally.[7]

These studies, and mine, have often been influenced by Kai Erikson's work '*Everything in Its Path*' about the Buffalo Creek Floods, USA. It is a powerful account of the effect of this flood on the Appalachian Mountains in 1972. Water burst through a dam into the mining hamlets of Buffalo Creek killing 125 people and destroying a community (Erikson 1976: 40). Erikson collected testimonies for a law firm and in doing so reflected the harrowing aftermath of these events. He uses his

[6] See http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/research/qr/qrpubs.html for a full list of Quick Response studies as at 10 April 2012.

[7] June 2007 also saw devastating floods in Hull and here, colleagues at Lancaster University, were undertaking qualitative research at the same time as my field study in Toll Bar. Their methods included observational research, discussion groups, interviews and a detailed diary study (see Whittle et al. 2010).

observations and the survivors' own words to detail the tensions that arise, and that were there before, after a devastating flood.

Erikson placed emphasis on the unleashing of a sense of '*a chronic disaster*': What went before in the community has great bearing on the aftermath. Erikson emphasises the way in which Buffalo Creek is formed of large linkages of family and community, and people have a great sense of '*real territory*' to which they are attached. When they talk of '*home*', they mean not just a house but the place that they come from (1976: 129).

I was also influenced greatly, in my fieldwork, by a collection of photographs taken by Robert Polidori (2006) and the film by Spike Lee (2006) '*When the Levees Broke: A* ***Requiem*** *in Four Acts*'. Both of these use visual methods to examine, in painful detail, the aftermath of the breaching of the levees in New Orleans, after it was hit by Hurricane Katrina, August 2005. Lee's work contains hours of footage gathered from sources such as news organisations, home videos and the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the USA. Retrospective interviews with residents, responders and planning officials are interwoven with images and videos of the collapsing infrastructure and water-spoiled homes, the thousands of people who sought safety at the 'Superbowl' stadium and the bodies of some of the estimated 3000 people who died in the subsequent days. Watching this in the earliest stages of my ethnography provided an impetus to my work, a reminder of the importance of chronicling an aftermath. It also provided many useful methodological approaches such as the focus in Lee's filming on the destruction of personal property and symbolic places such as a bedroom. I was able to develop this further by reviewing Robert Polidori's photographic collection of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina '*After the Flood*' which has a focus on spaces such as doorways and also places great emphasis on the patina left behind by the floodwater and the watermarks on walls and doors. Some of the images that I took in the field reflect this approach, and in fact, this had such a profound influence that I suggested we feature watermarks and residents' commentary on them as a central feature in the Doncaster exhibition of 2009.[8]

[8] Unless another source is acknowledged, all photographs used in this book were taken by me during the fieldwork between 2007 and 2011.

The Setting: Toll Bar, Doncaster

Toll Bar is a village in the north of Doncaster and is described as a '*semi-rural community*' (Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council 2012). At the time of the floods in 2007, there were 440 properties and 164 were council owned. There was a population of 1084 residents (Rech 2008). In total, 272 properties, mainly residential but some commercial, were damaged in Toll Bar and 120 of these were the council-managed residential properties.

At the time of the study there were 88 boroughs in Doncaster, and Toll Bar was described as one of the most deprived (Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council 2012). At its heart, there is a primary school. There are a number of streets of houses, a large housing estate, a rugby club, a community club and several businesses and shops. Some families originate from the travelling community, and the area was affected by the pit closures in the 1980s in nearby Bentley.[9]

In June 2007, parts of the UK experienced devastating and unseasonal storms and rainfall. South Yorkshire was one of the many areas that experienced severe flooding, and 48 areas of the large borough of Doncaster were affected. In the borough, 3286 homes were flooded, with 2275 suffering "major damage" as defined by the local council. 283 businesses were also affected (Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council 2011).

This places Toll Bar within a wider context of the flooding which occurred across the UK and although it is not the focus of this study to make comparisons with other areas, there was an opportunity to draw on studies undertaken in places like Hull and Carlisle. Reflections on similarities or differences with studies of other areas are placed within footnotes.

[9]Writing about *external* measures of deprivation has caused me concern in this study as there may be a danger that it prematurely defines Toll Bar and the way that its residents responded to the floods. However, I do understand that it is relevant when discussing aspects such as the previous history of the area. Both responders and residents discussed the miners' strikes and the pit closures as "a disaster for Toll Bar". It also relevant that Toll Bar was rated as significantly more deprived on a government scale for deprivation than many other areas of the UK affected at the same time by the floods. Indices of deprivation are explored in a 2004 government report available at http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/communities/indicesdeprivation as at 1 February 2011.

Toll Bar was very *visibly* flooded. Geographically, it sits in a bowl so the floodwater did not flow straight through but stayed and prevented access to homes and roads for over two weeks. The water stayed within structures and dissipated slowly, causing even more damage. Much of the media attention on South Yorkshire was focussed on Toll Bar with potent images of people being evacuated by boats and later moving into a large caravan park that was specially built by the council (as I will discuss in Chapter 6).

An obvious question is what realistically can be learned from this one small place for the wider international disaster community. Every disaster, anywhere in the world, has many differences but it also has many commonalities. It is hoped that the stories told here will resonate well beyond the village that first provided them.

The Ethnography

After the floods in the last week of June 2007, many Toll Bar residents spent weeks sleeping in nearby leisure centres, re-imagined as 'rest centres', making homes in places like squash courts. Then, residents of the council-managed housing asked to be kept together rather than being dispersed to temporary accommodation across the county. To facilitate this, the council created and managed a large park of 50 mobile homes and a laundry area built on a farmer's field. This allowed residents to *stay local* which went on to prove critical to the way in which people were able to build and rebuild their networks after the floods. I go on to discuss this in depth in Part II.

The caravan park was adjacent to the majority of damaged homes and opposite the primary school. Also next to this site was a temporary structure provided by the council as a 'Neighbourhood Support Centre'. Local residents formed a '*One O'Clock Club*' that met at the primary school (on a Monday, in the school and at One O'Clock) and arranged social activities at the nearby community club and rugby club. These *all* formed part of a multi-sited ethnography which I conducted between 2007 and 2012.[10]

My methods included observations in all of these settings, numerous interviews and four discussion groups as well as attendance at events

[10]Ethics approval for the interviews and discussion groups was granted by Lancaster University in February 2008.

such as a commemorative carnival, a 'healthy eating roadshow' and the staging of a play about the floods. Throughout this time, I have also taken photographs, been given photographs and collected artefacts such as leaflets produced by the council and diaries and poems kept by residents. A number of residents also agreed to take pictures for me with disposable cameras when they first returned to their refurbished homes in 2008.

Physically, geographically, this was a multi-sited ethnography but there was a strong sense that the different locations were all part of the *lifescapes* that I will explore in more detail in Part II of the book. Sometimes I would wander the roads of the estate encompassing the Neighbourhood Support Centre and the '*Caravan Park*'. Other times I would spend a few hours helping out at or just sitting inside the Support Centre which was two cabins,[11] one on top of the other. I would visit the school, the tiny community room, the Red Cross meeting, a bingo game, the summer carnival and public meetings. Other times I would visit a local woman's front room, a family living in a caravan, a family in their new home, a number of the empty caravans and the staging of a play. A visual representation of these places is included in Chapter 6 when I represent these as part of the *lifescapes* of Toll Bar.

Over time, through my presence in the village, I also got to know the members of the local *Neighbourhood Management Team*. These were Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council officers who were temporarily situated in the Support Centre, at the heart of the village. As I will discuss in the study, the Neighbourhood Team Manager, Pat Hagan, was keen to facilitate researchers and I was given opportunities to get involved in village life. I would sit at the back of the '*Builders Surgery*' organised by the building contractor, a chance for residents to find out information about their home and its restoration. The Neighbourhood Management Team themselves participated in a recorded discussion group. They gave me unlimited access to the centre, and many days of the ethnography were spent with the team and residents there. I also got to know the local emergency planners who were based in nearby council offices but spent many days in Toll Bar. These are the *local responders* that I refer to throughout the study.

[11] They are depicted in images later in the book.

In the spring of 2009, local council emergency planning team and I discussed that we might be able to use my research to form part of an exhibition to remember and commemorate the floods. Thanks to the enthusiasm of the '*One O'Clock Club*' members and the unbounded energy of the local responders, grant money was obtained and the local museum agreed to give us space for one month in the summer. I became part of a team made up of museum staff and local council and community representatives, and together we staged an exhibition of poems, photographs, quotations, film, audio recordings and artwork at the local museum. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Throughout the ethnography, I was also working in emergency planning and this brought me into regular contact with local and national emergency planners. In June 2007, I was invited to attend a series of consultation events run by the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat, which had the aim of producing a set of tools for planners called the 'National Recovery Guidance' (Cabinet Office 2007) and I became involved within this work throughout my time in Toll Bar. This meant that while I was a *participant* in what happened in Toll Bar at the same time I was associated with a set of values and beliefs *somewhere else* and the ethnography required constant negotiation and reassessment of my perspectives.

When I embarked on my research, I attended a number of workshops about ethnographic methods, and specifically feminist ethnography, and was particularly influenced by those undertaken in the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies under the direction of Anne-Marie Fortier. I learned about the way that some ethnographic researchers are constantly analysing their own behaviour; reflecting and reflexing, as new and confronting situations emerge in the field. Fortier's work examines the negotiated elements of an ethnographic study and the way in which elements of the identity of the researcher are negotiated between researcher and participants. I scrutinised my own actions repeatedly; abandoning my A4 note books bought proudly in the summer of 2007 and labelled *field notes*. I realised that local responders and residents thought I was a journalist and this would make them wary and hostile. More fundamentally, it continued to rain throughout that summer and I ended up with sodden pages and no notes. I stopped taking photographs in certain settings, and I started to think so much harder about the questions

I was asking or even whether questions were needed at all. Maybe I just needed to sit quietly, to help tidy up, to make a cup of tea or look at a photo album. My notes of so many visits were written up later; a set of prompt words typed into a mobile phone 'to do' list function.

My relationship with some residents and responders continues and as Anne-Marie Fortier writes:

> *personal involvement does not end when the ethnographer leaves the research setting. Relationships with the members of the group studies do carry on – either metaphorically or concretely – for a long time after the field study has been completed.* (Fortier 1998: 57)

I was also influenced by the way that John Law describes his anxieties about an ethnography conducted in a laboratory in his work '*Organizing Modernity*' and particularly his analysis within the book's postscript where he is concerned about how his participants will react and respond to the final work. I was amused by his description of feedback from participants that his book was '*very sociological*' and '*bloody hard going*' (Law 1994: 187). Others said that they had had to buy a dictionary to understand certain terms. This mirrored something that was concerning me greatly by 2009; the residents of Toll Bar had entrusted me with so much of their material and given me so many hours during such a difficult time and now they wanted to *see* what I had produced. They knew that it would hopefully form a book manuscript, and there were discussions at the '*One O'Clock Club*' about whether such a thing could be bought in book form from the new '*Waterstones*' branch that had opened in Doncaster. I was concerned that any final product would take many more years to complete and may also appear "*bloody hard going*"! That was what inspired me to propose an exhibition as a way of displaying not only my material but also all the other material that had been gathered by residents, researchers and the council.

Researching Disaster

At several points in this book, I address research during disasters and particularly my experience using ethnographic methods. I have therefore included below some methodological processes that shaped this work.

Selecting the Data Themes

> *Ethnographers differ from other social scientists who proceed deductively with a theory that explains phenomena and attempt to find instances in the data that illustrate or disprove it. While field notes may privilege certain kinds of events – those of significance to members or that illustrate social processes, for example – the ethnographer proceeds in a more open-ended way, seeking to identify issues and ideas by a careful sifting through and piecing together of fieldnotes*
> (Emerson et al. 1995: 166)

Through the course of the study, I collected large amounts of physical data as I illustrate in the Research Timeline below. This included thousands of photographs and many hours of recorded interviews and discussions as well as books of field notes and newspaper cuttings. Residents from Toll Bar and responders from the local council also provided notes, newsletters, diaries, poetry, photographs and artwork. As I will discuss in Chapter 7, the exhibition allowed much of this to be very visibly displayed and organised, with the themes here being decided by a committee of local residents and responders.

When it came to selecting the data that were used within this book, it became apparent that there were a number of key themes emerging repeatedly in discussions amongst residents. Most frequently, these were in discussions that I observed at the 'One O'Clock Club' and these were usually not raised in response to my questions or any direction from me. They just came up within the conversations. In some cases, they took me by surprise. Through the path of the book, the reader will note that I reflect on the origin of these discussions and their context in relation to what was happening at the time in residents' lives. The temporality of the lives after disaster was inextricably linked to the temporality of these themes.

There were also some themes that shouted out to be included in any final book, and I feel that one of these is the theme of Value and Waste after disaster that I review in Chapter 4. A number of other researchers, writing about the aftermath of disasters, have discussed the loss of personal items (as I reference in the chapter) but I felt that I could add a further view on this and a new angle with the link to the National Recovery Guidance and also my own practical experiences here. Most importantly, I was overwhelmed by data on this theme from

the respondents within the study. It dominated discussions at the 'One O'Clock Club' and activities such as taking photographs with the cameras that I gave them.

To reduce and distil so many narratives, generously given, caused me much concern as I reflect upon in Part III. I have viewed the narratives provided to me as knowledges in themselves, inconsistencies and uncertainties included, and have aimed to value the "messiness, depth and texture of lived experience" (Etherington 2004: 81). For many of the quotations that I use in the chapters, there are five or ten other strong quotations that illustrate the same point. I have tried to include as many examples as possible along with other artefacts such as maps, poems and photographs. In some of my earlier drafts of the book, I tried to include several quotations for each point that I wanted to make but this became unwieldy and I have had to leave some out.

Therefore, some editorial decisions were taken around data selection for this final draft based on how well they illustrated the point. I was also assisted with data selection through a series of workshops that I attended in the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies at Lancaster University (2008–2010) where tutors and fellow students reviewed extracts of field notes and discussed their views on the themes within them. With the guidance of my PhD supervisor Maggie Mort, an experienced ethnographer, I learned also to ask theoretical questions of the raw data before me, to ask about the implicit similarities and opportunities to compare, the chance to look beyond obvious actions and analyse further.

In the discussions throughout the book, I also reflect on my own expectations as I was embarking on the study and my prior experiences in emergency planning. These led me to assume that I would see certain things but often I saw something else. I would realise that what I was seeing could be partially explained by themes in disaster sociology but also there was an opportunity for me to add or adapt how I believed it was being used in this highly localised setting. This again helped me to select the final material.

An example of this aspect is my discussion of lifescapes in Chapter 6: The way that a day would unfold during my fieldwork as I walked from place to place within the village, each place resonating with importance to residents started to make me realise that so much of the work of 'recovering' Toll Bar was housed within the boundaries of