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Governmental Mobility: The Power Effects of the Movement of Detained Asylum Seekers Around Britain's Detention Estate

Abstract

This paper explores the ways in which mobility can have governmental effects in the context of the management of asylum seekers awaiting deportation from the UK. Drawing upon the case of Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre, a facility for the incarceration of immigration deportees near Oxford, the paper makes the case that the way asylum seekers are moved between detention centres within the UK has implications for the way they are represented to both asylum activists and asylum sector employees, causing them to choose to use their influence differently by with-holding the support that they might otherwise provide. The constant moving and repositioning of asylum seekers means that they are depicted as transitory, fleeting and depersonalised to

those actors with the greatest degree of influence over them. The subjection not only of asylum seekers through forceful, blunt forms of power, but also of more powerful asylum sector actors through subtler, governmental techniques, has significant material implications for the incarcerated asylum seeking community that populates Britain's detention estate.

Keywords: Mobility, Governmentality, Asylum Seekers, Detention, Removal Centres, Incarceration

INTRODUCTION

Geographers have long been interested in the influences that space and time can exert over the ways in which social actors choose to conduct themselves (Allen, 1997, Philo, 1992, Soja, 1989). Time-space, they have argued, is not a passive container of social practice or a mere backdrop against which social events play out. Rather, the timings and spacings of people and institutions have their own social effects (Lefebvre, 1991, Soja, 1996). For some, these effects proceed from the ways in which the actual, physical location of objects and events encroaches upon the horizon of possible activities in which social agents can engage (Mills and Hamilton, 1994). For others however, the social effects of time and space are achieved not only by delimiting what is possible through the blunt constraints imposed by distance and delay, but also by influencing what is perceived, pursued and desired, through processes that suggest when and when not to respond to a given social event (Elden, 2007, Hannah, 2000, Huxley, 2007). If social events are particularly frequent or proximate, for example, this raises their perceived salience and demands a response or reaction, whilst sporadic or distant social events are more likely to be overlooked. Over time, this produces an ordering of social events in the mind of an individual. The spacing and timing of social life can, therefore, be seen to have a psychological effect by amplifying or softening the visibility of social phenomena (Gregory, 2004, Said, 1979).

The recent increase in interest in mobility begs the question of how the mobilities agenda relates to geographers' sensitivity to the presentational properties of time and space

(Blunt, 2007). One contribution that geographers can make is to draw attention to the way that mobility represents social reality in particular, subjective ways. This suggestion builds upon discussion of mobility by a range of academics (Hannam et al., 2006, Larsen et al., 2006, Sheller and Urry, 2006). Mobility here is not treated as a social outcome but as a process of representation. Along with an interest in mobility *per se*, it is appropriate to develop an interest in the representative *effects* of mobility, drawing upon the lineage of work in geography that is attentive to the socially representative, suggestive effects of timings and spacings (Elden, 2007, Gregory, 2004, Lefebvre, 1991, Soja, 1989).

The depiction of asylum seekers in the printed press has received widespread academic criticism and been associated with a range of negative consequences for asylum seekers themselves (Finney and Robinson, 2007, Kaye, 2001, Kessler, 2001, Mollard, 2001, Speers, 2001, Thielemann, 2004, Boswell, 2003). In the particular context of the detention of asylum seekers in the UK, Mallock and Stanley (2005) draw out the connections between aggressive media reporting of asylum seekers and the use of detention as a punitive system of immigrant disciplining in response to public fears surrounding forced migrants. The media is not, moreover, the only way in which asylum seekers are depicted. Outside of popular media accounts of asylum seekers, a range of academic studies have drawn attention to the subjective representation of asylum seekers in policy discourse (Schuster, 2003), institutional cultures (Düvell and Jordan, 2003), the language used to describe asylum seekers and their situations (Turton, 2003) and activist promotional material (Malkki, 1996).

The representation of foreigners in subjective ways has, from an historical perspective, been related to a deeper social unease about foreignness and an abiding association of the foreigner with disorder, chaos and threats to existing geo-political arrangements (Weber and Bowling, 2008). Such representations tend to be most marked in times of geo-political turmoil, when anxiety about the unknown is at its most pronounced. In this regard, the current epoch of globalisation shares with previous rounds of spatio-temporal global restructuring a tendency to single out suspect bodies and to contribute towards their separation through the disciplinary use of both mobility and controls over mobility (Weber and Bowling, 2008). As a case in point, the use of dispersal strategies in Britain, under which asylum seekers are required to travel to far-flung areas of the country if they are to receive subsistence support from the state, creates an impression of an asylum population that is both copious, due to their geographical dispersion, and burdensome, due to their routine location in areas of the country that offer cheap housing in precisely those areas that can ill-afford to support vulnerable immigrants who are prohibited from finding work and supporting themselves (Schuster, 2005).

One theme linking these studies is the effect that subjective representations and depictions of asylum seekers have over ostensibly objective actors who have influence over the determination of asylum seekers' claims for asylum or their welfare during their time in the UK. This paper argues that subjective depictions of asylum seekers exert a particular type of power over these influential actors, which causes them to treat asylum seekers in different ways without forcing them or overtly incentivising them to do so. It is

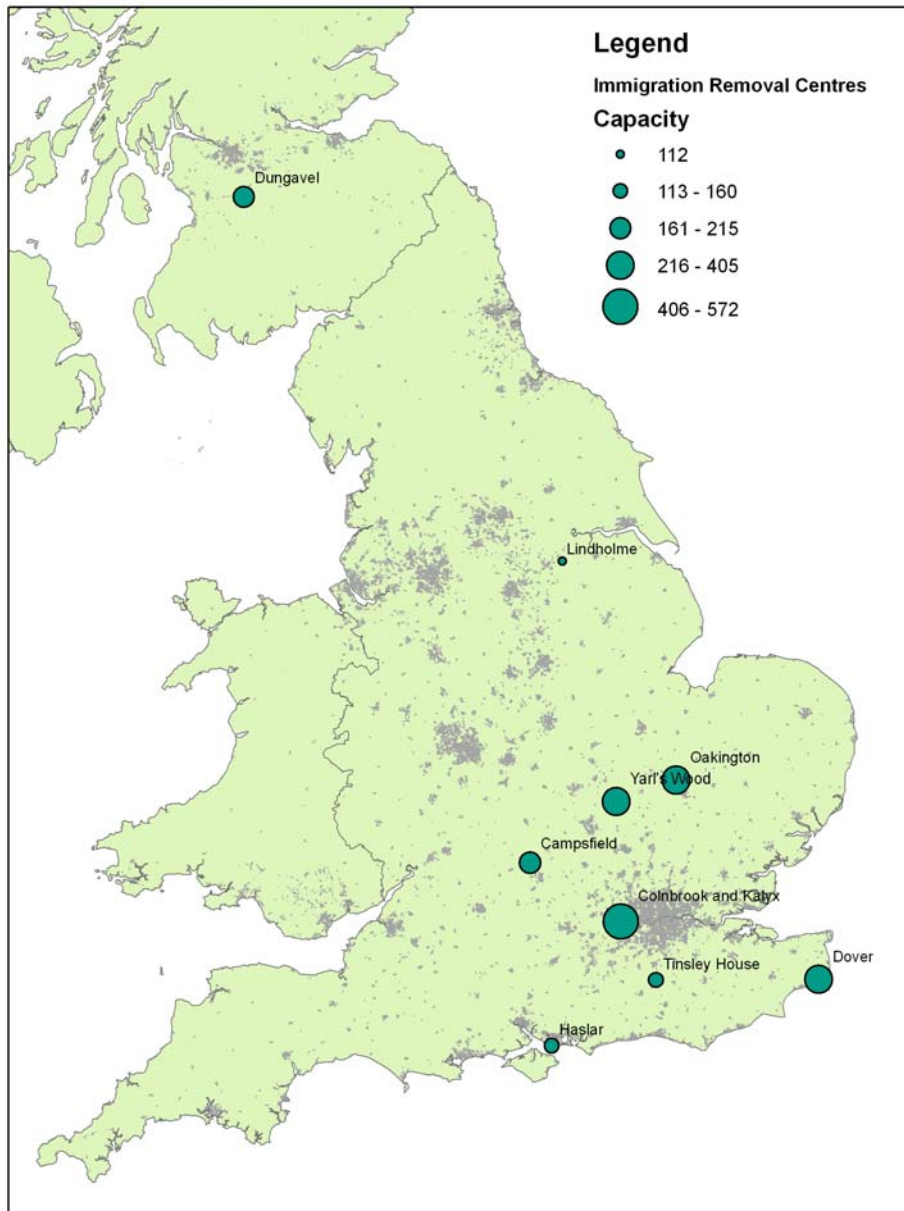
in this sense that it is appropriate to develop an interest in the governmental influences over asylum sector actors.

Governmental power is taken to mean influence over the dispositions of actors (Foucault, 1991). As opposed to power that either appeals to an actor's interests, or over-rides their interests, both of which treat these interests as exogenous, governmental power refers to power that re-casts interests, affecting the desires and aspirations of an actor and endogenising interests themselves into the realm of what is contestable and subject to determination by powerful factions (Lukes, 2005). This represents a significant move away from neo-classical models of agency which see individual interests as immutable. Rather, the importance of what Rose and Miller call 'techniques' that are capable of inducing within subjects particular desires or aspirations is what is at stake in a governmental analysis (Rose and Miller, 1992). This link between psychological factors and governmental power has been emphasised in work concerned with the operation of '*governmentality*': the orchestration of conduct that is nevertheless volitional (Foucault, 1991).

Drawing upon thirteen interviews with activists and employees in and around Campsfield, this paper contends that the mobility of asylum seekers around the detention estate affects both groups, encouraging, although not forcing, them to treat the asylum seekers under their influence in ways that increase the chances of their eventual exclusion from the UK. Mobility can thereby be understood as a governmental technique that acts upon this ostensibly powerful population.

Campsfield House in rural Oxfordshire is one of thirteen facilities that, together, constitute the ‘detention estate’ of the UK with a total capacity of 2663 places, excluding facilities to hold families (See Map One).

Map One: The UK's Detention Estate



Source: adapted from capacity and postcode information given by National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, correct 11th February 2009 (<http://www.ncadc.org.uk/about/capacity.html>). Excludes smaller, short term holding facilities in Manchester, Harwich and Dover Harbour. Colnbrook and Kalyx are separate removal centres at very similar postcodes so are represented together here.

One of the most noticeable trends in asylum seekers' incarceration in recent years has been the extent to which asylum seekers are increasingly moved between detention centres. In 2004/5, the most recent financial year for which figures are available, the British state spent over £6.5 million simply moving detainees from one secure facility to another within the UK (author's calculations from Hansard, 5th December 2005, Hansard, 9th January 2006).

While the rationale for these movements and the implications that they hold for asylum seekers will be discussed, this paper will focus upon the effect this degree of forced mobility has on the ways charity workers, asylum activists and detention centre managers choose to treat the asylum seekers under their influence. In focusing upon the governmental effect of the mobility of asylum seekers around the detention estate, the study addresses an area that has hitherto received relatively little attention. There has been a great deal of literature examining the implications of the government-orchestrated spatial and temporal organisation of asylum seekers for asylum seekers themselves (Chapman, 1999, Cornelius, 2005, Fekete, 2005, Thielemann, 2004, Van Hear, 2004). Less work, however, has considered the implications of the organised mobility of asylum

seekers for those who manage them, make decisions about them, ensure their well-being, and advocate or demonstrate on their behalf. While it is clear that the movement of asylum seekers has consequences for asylum applicants in terms of disruption and inconvenience (and it is certainly not the intention to detract from these impositions here) less attention has been paid to the way in which this mobility has the secondary, ancillary effect of presenting asylum seekers as more transient and fleeting to those actors that have an influence over their experiences.

The following section introduces Campsfield House, the system of intra-detention estate movement is examined in Section Three and the governmental effect of this system are examined in Sections Four and Five respectively. The paper concludes with a call to give spacings, timings and mobilities their proper places in the growing list of representative techniques that underpin governmental power.

CAMPSFIELD HOUSE IMMIGRATION REMOVAL CENTRE

The British practice of incarcerating immigrants has been in place since at least 1993, and has increased in sophistication through the development of contracting business models whereby private companies assume the day-to-day operation of an increasing proportion of the centres (see Bacon, 2005). This legacy of immigrant incarceration facilities, coupled with the layers of private accountability to public bureaucracy that surround it, serves to normalise and routinise the incarceration of immigrants. In Sidaway's terms,

despite the *prima facie* unsettling characteristics of immigration detention, the practice has become banal, with a focus more upon its operationalisation than upon its justification (Sidaway, 2003). It is precisely this banality that can reduce individuals within detention systems to mere numbers, positioning them in passive and vulnerable roles. This in turn opens the possibility to individuals becoming lost in carceral environments, constantly being moved so that their presence is always passing, fleeting and ghostly. Indeed, the possibility that the continual movement of detainees to reduce their visibility has become a government strategy, a process referred to as ‘ghosting’ (Wilson, 2008), has been raised in the light of apparent evidence of an international network of unacknowledged detention centres run by the American government (so-called CIA ‘black sites’) (Amnesty International 2007).

Campfield House has the capacity to intern 198 detainees. The facility is located in a secluded rural area, surrounded by fields on all sides. Access is provided by a long service road through a wooded area that screens the facility from public view. Security is extremely tight (see Photograph One), including pervasive CCTV monitoring; thorough checking and searching of all visitors and employees; guards patrolling the 12-foot high razor-wire-topped perimeter fence; heightened observation of detainees perceived to pose a risk of disturbance or self-harm; five steel security doors between the outside world and the detainees; an isolation unit; a segregation unit and the sanctioned use of forceful control and restraint procedures.

Photograph 1: Campsfield House

INSERT PHOTOGRAPH OF CAMPSFIELD HERE

The facility was converted from a youth detention centre in 1993. The composition of the detainee population in Campsfield varies according to Home Office targets but the largest national groups at the time of the Prison Inspection in 2002 were Albanian, Indian, Jamaican and Yugoslav (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2002).

Access to the centre was secured through two strategies. First, rather than the usual strategy of snowballing from the bottom to the top of an organization, some senior figures were asked to participate in the research from the outset. This was because while lower ranked officials might be fearful of management reprisals if they discussed the centre, senior figures had the authority to waive secrecy clauses. This strategy proved successful, with three management level interviews secured at the centre. The second strategy was to access the centre's administrative structure by snowballing from the asylum advocacy groups that operated around it, with which I already has some personal contact. While it might be expected that asylum advocates and management staff at the centre had an antagonistic relationship, and certainly this was true in some cases, in general the relationship inside and outside of the removal centre was surprisingly supportive. Both management and asylum advocates had as one of their goals the improvement of conditions for detainees so, at least to some extent, co-operation suited

both parties. External charities would sometimes be invited into the centre to provide entertainment, advice or friendship to the detainees, which involved a degree of co-ordination and the development of a necessary understanding between management and pro-asylum groups. For this reason I was able to snowball within the organization from the groups ostensible both outside it and opposed to it. The composition of the group of research participants reflects these strategies (Table One).

Table One: Details of Sources and Participants

Source 1	Campaign to Close Campsfield Promotional Leaflet entitled ‘Close Campsfield: Oxford’s Own Crime Against Humanity’
Source 2	Voluntary advisor to detainees who has worked in and around the centre for over five years.
Source 3	Local pro-asylum activist.
Source 4	Management level professional, Campsfield IRC.
Source 5	Volunteer with Oxford-based asylum advocacy organization.
Source 6	Email statement from management level professional, Campsfield IRC.
Source 7	Email interview with managerial-level professional. Had worked at another detention facility for over twelve months and frequently visited Campsfield IRC.

Source 8	Former detainee at Campsfield House IRC.
Source 9	Former detainee at Campsfield House IRC.
Source 10	Management-level professional, Campsfield IRC.
Source 11	Bail for Immigration Detainees volunteer.
Source 12	Management level professional, Campsfield IRC.
Source 13	Religious Leader and Asylum Activist
Source 14	Student pro-asylum activist

Of the participants, 54% (7 of 13) were contacted through snowballing, with another 38% (5 of 13) contacted through cold calling and one interviewee an existing personal contact. Also significant was the high proportion of interviews that were conducted in a public place, at the request of the interviewee, rather than either at work or at home 62% (8 of 13), the number of interviewees who additional consent to use the interview notes in any way other than for academic purposes which was 72% (10 of 13) and the number of interviewees who declined to be recorded using a Dictaphone 23% (3 of 13). These factors indicate the politically sensitive nature of the topic under discussion and the fact that some of the contributors to the research were taken a degree of personal risk in order to participate.

The asylum seekers incarcerated in Campsfield and elsewhere in the detention estate are not held under criminal law, but as the result of an administrative decision taken by civilian immigration officials (Weber, 2003). They have not been charged with an offence, they are not awaiting trial and they do not know the length of their incarceration (Schuster, 2005). The centre is privately run on a government contract that is periodically tendered. The company in charge of the centre at the time of this research was Global Solutions Limited (GSL), who lost their contract to a lower bid from a competitor, Global Enterprise on Outsourcing (GEO), in the summer of 2006. The imperative to cut costs reflects the fact that the management of detention centres is an expensive business. In response to a parliamentary question in 2001, the cost of detention in the UK was stated to range from £364 per detainee per week to £1620 (Hansard, 25th October 2001).

The rationale for removal centres is two-fold. First, the detainees represent those considered to be most likely to 'go underground' in an attempt to avoid deportation if they are not incarcerated. The second rationale is that these asylum seekers' deportations are imminent. In theory, every asylum seeker in Campsfield has reached the end of the legal asylum-claiming process and has received a negative final decision. In 2002 the centre was renamed from a 'detention' centre to a 'removal' centre in order to reflect this operational objective.

Both rationales are debateable. When a Select Committee on Home Affairs examined the practice of detention during 2003 they expressed concern that

Many of those labelled absconders are in fact people who, once their claims have been rejected and benefits withdrawn, have in the absence of any attempt to remove them drifted elsewhere in search of work.

Fourth Report, Select Committee on Home Affairs, 2003, para. 66

Of the small number of academic studies carried out into the subject, Bruegel and Natamba (2002) used the records of Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID), a registered charity, to trace ninety-eight asylum detainees who were bailed between July 2000 and October 2001. They found that over 90% of those released kept their bail conditions despite only 7% receiving a favourable final legal decision on their claim. This seemed to suggest that nine out of ten participants were incarcerated unnecessarily. Similarly, in tracing asylum seekers granted temporary admission, Weber and Gelsthorpe (2000) found that, for the ports covered in their research, absconding rates varied between 3% and 12%, again indicating a high degree of inefficiency because as many as 97% of asylum seekers due for deportation did not abscond. According to Bacon (2005: 5), citing a report by Dunston (1994),

A rare acknowledgement of the low rate of absconding among asylum seekers was made by the Home Office Minister in 1995, who informed parliament that of the 37,120 persons who were refused asylum in the three-year period 1992-94, only 220 were known to have absconded, the equivalent of 0.59 per cent.

The second rationale for the incarceration of asylum seekers is that they are awaiting immediate deportation. This did not tally, however, with the accounts of activists in and around the centre. For example, one activist promotional leaflet (Source 1) claimed that ‘Less than half of those detained are liable to removal or deportation; many, if not most, await an initial decision on their asylum application’. This was corroborated by my own interviewees:

NG: How many asylum seekers are still appealing or still have legal issues?

Source 3: They shouldn't have if they are in a removal centre but they do have because the Home Office will remove people before they've come to the end of their appeal. That will happen time and time again.

Even the staff at the centre concede that a number of asylum seekers come to the centre directly upon reaching the UK. This indicates that asylum seekers' claims are, in some cases, entirely determined during their incarceration. Given that, in principle, they are not liable for deportation before their case is determined, this indicates that some of the asylum seekers incarcerated are not, in fact, ‘awaiting deportation’ at all. In response to the question ‘Do you get quite a few that come straight here?’ one manager remarked:

Source 4: We do get them, yeah, a fair few. People have been in detention for months but say "I've never seen England". We bring them some pictures of it and so they might have been here for four or five months and have no idea what it's like.

In general, there is acknowledgement among both staff and asylum advocates that Campsfield is holding asylum seekers whose legal claims for asylum are still being considered, contrary to the objectives of a 'removal' centre. It is also worth noting the governmental effect that this labeling can have. Detainees who are confronted by the fact that they are in a removal centre may become profoundly disheartened at the apparent dismissal of their claims before they have actually been processed. As one activist outlined:

Source 2: There are still many, many people in Campsfield who either haven't had even an initial refusal or have ongoing cases. You know, lots of people get let out and end up getting refugee status. It comes as a huge shock to people to find themselves locked up when they hope they've found a place of safety and it must be particularly awful to get to this place when it's called a 'Removal Centre' when they've just arrived.

The labeling of the centre can act to undermine the motivation of asylum seekers held within it in pursuing their cases. To the extent that such effects are not forceful or coercive, but nevertheless act upon the dispositions and motivations of detained subjects (Rose and Miller, 1992), the relabeling of the centre can be seen to have important governmental implications.

There is, unsurprisingly, a deep sense of injustice running throughout Campsfield. Management has consequently faced considerable resistance from outside, and within, the centre. From outside, the asylum advocacy community that operates around Campsfield includes BID, who attempt to facilitate bail for the detainees; Asylum Welcome, a charity that organises visits to the centre; Oxford University's Student Action for Refugees (STAR) who provide periodic workshops for detainees; and the Campaign to Close Campsfield, the most overtly political advocacy group that has regular contact with the Centre in the form of noisy, monthly demonstrations at its gates.

From inside, Campsfield's detainees have a long history of protest and resistance. As early as 1994 Algerian detainees went on hunger strike in response to their treatment, mounting rooftop protests, flying home-made banners and starting fires (Campaign to Close Campsfield, 2007). In 1997 fifty to sixty detainees escaped into a courtyard and protested loudly in response to the harsh treatment of their fellow inmates. Nine of these protesters were brought to trial as a result, yet embarrassingly for the then-management, a public enquiry ruled that the charges against them were without foundation (Hayter, 2004). Since then, Campsfield has been the site of hunger strikes, more rooftop protests, a catalogue of public appeals from within the centre and repeated self-harm and suicide attempts. In June 2008 seven escapees evaded capture over-night in the local area (BBC News Online, 2008).

In response to the difficulty of subduing the Campsfield inmates, the centre employs a range of innovations. The use of force is sanctioned as a way to control or deter particular behaviours, despite difficulties in regulating its use (MFCVT, 2004). Subtler mechanisms of control include a range of rewards and sanctions to promote compliant behaviour without the need to resort to force. Sanctions include, for example, isolation and segregation or the withdrawal of privileges such as library access, gym access and the purchasing of luxury items. 'Rewards' include five pounds a week for detainees who keep their rooms tidy.

It is policies such as these that can propagate an image of detainees as child-like and dependent. The operation of sanction and reward mechanisms positions the detainees as subjects that can be legitimately disciplined, and centre employees themselves as paternalistic, which can have its own consequences in fostering a condescending view of detainees among the management staff. In this sense, the treatment of detainees as disciplined and sanctioned subjects acts to alter the dispositions of the staff towards them, thereby constituting a governmental impact of the sanction and reward mechanisms. As one interviewee outlined:

Source 14: I've seen some staff being quite friendly and quite nice to the detainees but often, well, I find their way of being friendly a bit patronizing. For instance when we went and did [*a workshop with the detainees*] they would come and talk to us afterwards and tell us how good it was we kind of came there and let [*the detainees*]

do some things. I can't really explain it but just ... kind of the way you'd make kids do something creative and good for them. I mean, they were being friendly but it was very clear that they were working above these people.

INTRA-DETENTION ESTATE MOVEMENT OF DETAINEES

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the reward and sanction system to be introduced has been the movement of detainees around the various detention facilities of the UK. Although studies of prisoner mobility are scarce, Svensson and Svensson (2006) have analysed the social consequences of the increasing mobility of Swedish inmates. They argue that the act of mobility is at once humiliating and dehumanising to those who are moved. By moving prisoners the authority of the mover is performed and enacted and the identity of the inmate as a subjugated body is reinforced. They also recognise the value of moving prisoners within a prison estate in terms of subduing prison populations and breaking cultural ties.

[P]risoner transportation is an important part of the dynamics of the prison system. This is an obvious example of the distinctive nature of the role played by culture in neo-liberal forms of governance. Transferring prisoners is being used to maintain differentiation and security and to break the cultural rules and rituals that are establishing among the prisoner population.

According to a series of HM Prison inspections of Campsfield House (HM Inspectorate of Prisons 2002; 2004; 2007; 2008), the movement of detainees within the removal centres of the UK have caused concern not only as they are carried out, but also through the threat or possibility of movement in the minds of detainees. It appears from the emphasis placed in these reports upon the importance of preparing detainees to be released or transferred, which is seen as an important part of making them feel secure, that the process of movement and the anticipation of movement is very often profoundly stressful for detainees. That the practice of moving immigration detainees is becoming more common should therefore alert us to an emerging source of anxiety and confusion among detained asylum seeker populations in the UK.

The Detention Escorting and Population Management Unit (DEPMU) is a central government agency that is responsible for placing immigration detainees in suitable holding facilities (Prison Service, 2008, sections 5.1 - 5.4). They have been under particular scrutiny since the mishandling of 1,023 foreign criminals in April 2006, who were released rather than considered for deportation following completion of their prison sentences (BBC News Online, 2006). They have received criticism from HM Inspectorate of Prisons for giving late notification of movements to detainees who are due to be moved, causing alarm among detainees (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2006, section 2.14).

DEPMU are a key organisation because they arrange the transfer of detainees. While other, private companies are paid to do the actual work of transferring them DEPMU have the authority to 'arrange for a detainee to be moved in order to meet local demands or to provide more secure accommodation' (Immigration and Nationality Directorate, 2001a, section 38.10). At Campsfield, staff are able to request the movement of detainees to alternative centers via communication with the centre manager in the first instance, and, with the centre manager's authorisation, via DEPMU. These movements are not for the purposes of deportation but simply to transfer detainees between incarceration facilities (Hayter, 2004). Troublesome detainees are more likely to be transferred.

Source 12: If someone has raised complaints or has perhaps mobilised fellow detainees to put together a petition or something often you'll find that they're moved around, split up in some way and those who seem to be particularly vociferous seem to end up in some of the more secure centres.

The extent of these movements has become a striking feature of the centre at Campsfield. While it is difficult to access official statistics concerning the number of asylum seeker movements via DEPMU, Tony McNulty, the then-minister for immigration, did respond to a parliamentary question about the number of intra-detention estate transfers, posed in 2006. His response was as follows:

The figures for the number of inter-detention estate transfers of immigration detainees in 1997–98 are not available. In 2001–02, there were 30,334 such transfers, in 2002–03, 35,656; in 2003–04, 41,477 and in 2004–05, 54,670 ... These statistics cover all inter-detention movements of detainees including those from prisons, police cells and port holding rooms into Immigration Removal Centres.

Tony McNulty MP (Hansard, 9th January 2006)

Considering that the capacity of the detention estate is only just over 2500, these figures convey the fluency and constancy of detainee mobility. As a result, the average length of stay of detainees in Campsfield is reducing.

Source 3: They've initiated a totally different regime which is that they don't want to leave any detainees anywhere for any length of time. There are a few detainees in Campsfield that have been in there for a long time, but very few. They will come in and they will stay for 10 days and they will be moved to Harmondsworth or to Yarlswood or anywhere but it's a moving process. The average stay at Campsfield now is 10 days.

This means that individual asylum seekers often experience a variety of detention facilities.

Source 8: Before Campsfield House I stay long time I stay here for four detentions.

NG: Four different detentions?

Source 8: Four different detentions. My first detention is Oakington. Oakington I stay here three days for Oakington.

NG: Yes

Source 8: Four months five day in Harmondsworth

NG: Harmondsworth yes

Source 8: After Harmondsworth [*name*] bring me to Belmarsh prison

NG: Belmarsh

Source 8: Belmarsh I stay maybe one month. After Belmarsh I think I stay in Dover. Dover detention two months four days. After Dover I go again to Harmondsworth one week.

NG: Yes

Source 8: After Harmondsworth I come [*name*] bring me to Campsfield House

NG: Yeah so your total?

Source 8: Maybe the total's fifteen months in detention.

The average price of moving a detainee from one location to another in 2005 was £119.50 (Hansard, 5th December 2005), meaning that the government spent over £6.5m in 2004/5 moving detainees around the detention estate. Moreover, the movements also entail significant secondary costs. One of my interviewees was responsible for organising classes for the detainees.

Source 4: For a class, it's impossible to get any sort of cohesion and move along as a group and make any sort of progress because you might start with 10 people in your

group on a Monday and still have 10 at the end of the week but they're completely different people - the turnover's so high.

Furthermore, there are detailed checking-in procedures for new detainees, including heightened observation, medical screening and a reception wing for the first forty-eight hours of stay, all of which experience increased demand due to the transfer of detainees.

Source 4: The centre manager's actually complained about it because it's very costly and it's very time consuming. The facilities here, they were designed as a detention centre to have a much lower throughput. Now it's a higher throughput, they're having to deal with many, many more people every day checking them in and out.

Nevertheless, despite their cost, the movements appear to be an effective part of the sanction and reward system. For the Campsfield detainees, moving to another centre is an unwelcome prospect because the conditions in Campsfield are widely regarded as relatively good. Detainees are allowed free association during most of the day, meaning that they can leave their rooms and move freely around the centre. There are also good recreational facilities and generally friendly relationships with staff. Other centers are not so accommodating. Some offer much poorer facilities, premises that were originally designed as prisons and detention custody officers who treat the detainees much more impersonally (Source 5). A former Campsfield detainees described how detainees would often be grateful to return to Campsfield.

NG: What did people think about that when they came back?

Source 9: People is very, very content. Is OK. Maybe people is enjoy. Because I told you again - Campsfield House is better detention.

A governmentality-based analysis of detainee mobility focuses upon changes in the desires of the actors involved as a result of the movements. Source 9 provides a striking example of these effects. Through the selective differentiation of conditions within different removal centres, Source 9 has actually been induced to desire to be held within Campsfield. By making reference to the contentment he and other detainees felt upon arrival at Campsfield, the extent of the governmental influence of the mobility of detainees is thrown into relief.

THE EFFECT OF DETAINEE MOBILITY UPON ASYLUM ADVOCATES

It is certainly not the intention here to detract from the consequences that intra-detention estate movement holds for asylum seekers. They find the continual upheaval disorientating and dehumanising, as links to networks of fellow detainees, external supporters and even external lawyers and other sources of formal security are continually severed (Hayter, 2004). Nevertheless, with the objective of understanding why asylum sector activists and employees conduct themselves in the ways that they do, the aspect of intra-detention estate movement that concerns this paper is that which impacts upon these influential figures.

Alongside the effects on the detainees themselves, the movement of asylum seekers around the detention estate both delimits the work that asylum advocacy organisations are able to do on behalf of the asylum seekers and undermines the basis of their motivation to carry out work on asylum seekers' behalf. These two effects correspond, respectively, to the blunt effects of timing and spacing outlined in the introduction and the governmental aspect of mobility, that works upon desires, aspirations and 'interests'. In the first instance, the legal support that the asylum advocacy community was *able* to deliver was impoverished as a result of the mobility of detainees. Legal advisers such as BID, as well as local lawyers, did not have the time to familiarise themselves with asylum seekers' cases before they were moved. At the time of my research, BID volunteers were concentrating on creating self-help notebooks in a wide variety of languages that asylum seekers could take with them when they moved:

Source 11: We have so many clients now we can't possibly do even a small fraction of them. So BID has devised a system, we call it the notebooks, which explains to people the process of bail and how they can run their own bail hearing, how to list for it in the court, the timescale and we actually help them make the arguments for themselves. The idea is that they take these with them wherever they end up.

Ideally, BID would make the applications for bail themselves but given the potentially limited duration of their interactions with each client, they have had to devise second-best alternatives. The 'notebook' solution is a direct response to the mobility of asylum

seekers that delivers the responsibility for making a bail application back to individual detainees, who may be ill-equipped to formulate the sort of legal arguments that strengthen applications.

While it is clearly the case that the mobility of detainees has a blunt, direct impact upon the efficacy of asylum advocacy groups in terms of what they are able to achieve, the movement of detainees also undermines the motivation of these organisations, impacting not only upon what they can and cannot achieve, but upon what they want and do not want to achieve. In the case of the governmental impact of mobility, the difficulty of establishing a relationship with detainees had the specific effect of constricting the degree to which the advocacy community could secure bail. To achieve bail, an asylum seeker must be sponsored by two external guarantors, who are each required to put down financial deposits, so called 'sureties', that they will lose if the asylum seeker absconds. Additionally, they must be able to provide an address that they will stay at should they be granted bail.

Source 11: Unless you've got accommodation to go to and at least one surety you're very unlikely to get bail.

It is often the case that the amount of deposit required to secure bail tests the degree of trust between the depositor, who is often simply a sympathetic member of the public.

Although deposits are usually in the region of a few hundred pounds, they have been as high as two thousand pounds, at the discretion of the bail tribunal.

Source 2: Sureties vary a lot ... Sometimes there are horrible situations where you go to court and the adjudicator tries to up the amount they offer in court in front of the detainees which is very hard on sureties. It used to, and probably still is, quite common to demand two sureties of £2,000 each.

The strategy of demanding sureties puts pressure not only upon the actual ability of advocacy organisations to support detainees, but also their willingness to do so, providing one example of the way in which factors that undermine trust and reciprocity, such as intra-detention estate movement, can affect advocates' behaviour.

The requirement for bail applicants to be able to provide an address that they will stay at should they be released further illustrates the stress that is put upon relationships between advocacy groups and detainees by the latter's constant movement. To secure bail detainees must show they have somewhere to reside during the period of their bail term. Providers of accommodation were often either private individuals or civil society organisations such as churches and convents. One priest described the way in which some asylum seekers who are frequently moved, both within and outside the detention estate under the UK's dispersal program, can become detached from communities of

support, making them targets for future transfers because no-one would be in a position to try to trace them or stop them being moved again.

Source 13: They should stop moving them around the country, which they do. The number of times I've had to write panic letters saying you know you cannot move this person to the other end of the country because it destabilises them in terms of their mental health...

NG: What reasons do they give for the movements?

Source 13: They can be totally gratuitous. They have to go somewhere. Sometimes it's totally gratuitous, there is no reason.

NG: And when you've written how have they responded to that?

Source 13: Well actually almost every time I've managed to stop the move.

NG: Right, with a letter.

Source 13: Yes. But if people don't have a community they're attached to who actually cares about them as an individual then they're just going to be moved because they will have no-one to speak on their behalf.

It is reasonable to expect the willingness of civil society organisations to accommodate asylum seekers to vary in proportion to their familiarity with those wanting to be housed.

Moving detainees regularly therefore directly undermines the basis of their goodwill, with important ramifications for transferred detainees.

The likelihood of forming meaningful relationships with detainees who are constantly moved is further reduced by the difficulty of visiting them. Although there are dedicated facilities to allow visitors and detainees to meet and interact within Campsfield, the process of visiting is difficult because visitors have to navigate demanding organisational procedures and undergo extensive security checks. Detainees must be known to the visitors before they receive a visit; appointments with named detainees must be booked twenty-four hours in advance. The constant movement of detainees means that visitors must navigate these organisational requirements on behalf of someone that they do not know and have not met before with increasing regularity.

Source 5: It's quite difficult to visit people, you have to book in advance you can't just turn up. You have to have a named person and visiting is allowed from 2.00 till 5.00 every afternoon and from 6.00 till 9.00 every evening. When you go in they check against your booking your name and who you're visiting and you then have your photograph taken. Anything on you you have to leave in a locker except for like I always take in a notebook and pen, I usually take my diary for various reasons, phone numbers and things. I've had my diary removed from me though because it had a map of the underground in it. They don't let you take your driving license in if it's got a picture on it.

NG: Why?

Source 5: Goodness knows. And then you get searched. You have to stand, take your coat off front and back. Only 10 people can be visited at one time. But I've often been when it hasn't been at all well used.

This account tallies with criticism levied at the centre by HM Inspectorate of Prisons for employing a range of intrusive security measures:

[T]he number of security measures taken for domestic visitors was disproportionate. These involved having a photograph taken, a biometric finger print check, an identifying arm band, completing a written form, producing photographic identification, a pat down search and an x-ray of property.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2007, p14

Given the strict regulation of visits enthusiasm for visiting detainees declines in the face of their constant movement. Even detainees with a number of supporters in one part of the country may be completely unknown at their new location:

Source 14: Here in Campsfield a lot of the detainees will have people supporting them outside. They'll have people in BID or Asylum Welcome or just friends or family that are helping them and obviously moving them to different detention centres disrupts all of that. No-one knows you're there and there's no-one you can get in touch with.

This has prompted some of the asylum activists at Campsfield to try to trace detainees moved to a different centre. Describing this process, one activist outlined both the difficulty of doing this through the official channels and the consequent reliance upon the goodwill of individuals within detention estate.

Source 5: We ring Campsfield to speak to a client who was maybe there yesterday talking to us and they say 'oh they've gone'. So we say 'well have they been removed [*i.e. deported*] or have they just moved [*i.e. transferred within the detention estate*]?' ... Sometimes they won't even tell you whether or not they've been deported. So we have to then trail through the immigration service route and they won't answer anything on the phone, you have to fax.

Tracing asylum seekers is important because it allows detainee support groups to coordinate their efforts across the country and may go some way to alleviating the alienation of asylum seekers. The barriers to tracing detainees are therefore significant, meaning not only that supportive communities are lost to the detainees, but also that contact with detainees is denied to supporters. In these ways, the movement of detainees disturbs the relationship between them and their support networks, which are often a prerequisite for motivated support. To the extent that supporters' dispositions towards detainees are to some degree determined by their contact with them, any factors that curtail this contact, including movement, can be seen to have the governmental effect of eroding supporters' willingness to persevere with their support.

THE EFFECTS OF MOBILITY UPON CENTRE STAFF

The governmental effects of detainee movements are not confined to the activist sector. The management team at Campsfield includes roughly ten individuals who each have responsibility for one aspect of the detainees' welfare during their stay. Although they are a powerful and influential group, they are also subject to the governmental power that is exerted over them through the representation of the detainee population in their care. This is not to suggest that, in the absence of detainee movement, managers would consistently choose to help the detainees: the research gave evidence of a mixture of attitudes towards detainees among the management at Campsfield. Whatever goodwill does exist towards detainees, though, is systematically undermined by the continual mobility of asylum seekers.

There are minimum standards of behaviour that are expected of all staff within Campsfield. The Detention Centre Rules (Immigration and Nationality Directorate, 2001b) set out what is expected of detention centre officers, with emphasis placed upon their roles in protecting the well-being of detainees, maintaining vigilance about their physical and mental health, and encouraging their self-respect. Significantly, the rules also include objectives that custody officers should pursue that are measurable precisely in the dispositions of detainees themselves. Just as the good fathers that Foucault (1991) describes who possess the ability to imbue their children with the desire to conduct themselves in ways that the father deems appropriate, so detention custody officers are charged with the responsibilities to enlist the 'willing co-operation' of detainees under

their authority (Detention Centre rules, Immigration and nationality Directorate 2001b, clause 45.5), and ‘encourage ... a sense of personal responsibility’ (Ibid., clause 45.6). In this way custody officers within the detention estate are enlisted in the governmental project of eliciting the consent and co-operation of detainees.

As with any system as complex and politically contentious as the detention estate, the enforcement of the minimum requirements set out in the detention centre rules is challenging. To this end, HM Inspectorate of Prisons serves an important function as the primary means of accountability of the centre, and many of the pro-asylum seeker activists I came into contact with during this research were highly supportive of the Inspectorate’s work. Recent inspections of Campsfield House have been both announced and unannounced. There are, however, at least three difficulties with HM Inspectorate of Prisons’ work regarding Removal Centres.

First, the name of the Inspectorate is unfortunate. Associating inspections directly with the prison service undermines efforts among removal centre staff to distinguish between removal centres and prisons. Second, some of my interviewees questioned the degree of influence the Inspectorate had. On the one hand, their remit was seen as relatively tight:

Source 11: Their reports address four issues – detainees’ safety, the respect they received inside detention, the provision of purposeful activity for them, and adequate preparation for release or transfer. That’s four issues which leaves a great big space around them. I mean I quite understand when you have to structure what you’re doing but there are a lot of unanswered things.

On the other hand, individual removal centres are not bound by the recommendations of the Inspectorate:

Source 6: Unfortunately they can only make recommendations and most of those are ignored by [*the contracting company in charge of Campsfield at the time the statement was written*]. As one officer said: "We don't have to do what HMIP [*Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons*] says!

A third difficulty with the Inspectorate system is the fact that their visits are infrequent. At Campsfield they occur roughly once every two years. A more regular form of monitoring is also provided by the 'Independent Monitoring Board', also known as the 'Visiting Committee'. This is an independent organisation composed of volunteer workers who have been trained explicitly for the role of up-holding standards of care and decency within prison and immigration removal establishments across the UK. Although the Campsfield monitoring board did not contribute to this research, they have produced annual reports detailing the financial, legal, infrastructural, social and security-related status of the centre for a number of years (see www.imb.gov.uk). Despite the obvious importance of their role, however, this organisation was criticised by my interviewees. First, my interviewees suggested that they were unaware of the practice of detaining immigrants whose cases had not come to an end:

Source 2: A lot of people including the official visitors group, the so-called independent monitoring group, seem to think that the people who are there are either illegal immigrants or failed asylum seekers - people who are imminently going to be removed. I mean I don't know what the exact proportions are but I'm sure that there

always have been people in Campsfield who've been picked up at the airport so they're not technically illegal.

Second, the group had caused consternation among some of the management at the centre because they had apparently not interviewed detainees thoroughly enough:

Source 6: They are not competent and very ineffectual. They do not manage to protect human rights in the centre. Don't talk to people about the right issues. Not on detainees wavelength. One can learn more by visiting and talking to a few detainees.

Given the apparent flaws in the monitoring of places such as Campsfield, there is scope for individual members of staff to make life difficult or easy for the detainees in a number of ways. This point was illustrated to me most effectively through some of the challenges I experienced in accessing detainees of Campsfield. During this research, although a number of interviews were conducted at the centre itself, these were with centre managers and not detainees. It was strictly prohibited to record any conversation with the asylum seekers themselves.

Due to the fact that the detainee population was exceptionally difficult to access, focus was concentrated upon gaining access to *former* detainees. It was this strategy that revealed the power and discretion wielded by the management. Two former Campsfield detainees were interviewed (Sources 8 and 9). Both of them owed their release

exclusively to the support of a member of the management team at the centre. In one case, a very young detainee had been bewildered and confused during his incarceration, and one of the management had befriended him and taken up his case out of kindness. In another case, a detainee had attracted the attention of a manager who had decided to 'stick his neck out' in order to get the detainee released due to the respect he had for the detainee. Although these were clearly neither equitable nor regulated forms of intervention, the release of these two former detainees demonstrates the influence of Campsfield's management, appearing to command a significant degree of influence over individual asylum seekers' fortunes.

The ability of staff to determine the experiences of individual detainees to such an extent prompted further enquires into their authority. According to a number of interviewees, management level staff in Campsfield have in the past used their discretion to support legal appeals, re-open legal cases, accompany asylum seekers to court, support bail applications, act as character references, prepare legal arguments, translate legal documents, secure good legal representation, deter poor or unscrupulous legal representation, allow transferred asylum seekers to be traced by friends and supporters and block the transfer of detained asylum seekers (Sources 4 and 6). One manager underscoring the discretion staff command:

Source 7: We have been able to arrange for luggage to be collected, arranged new lawyers, medical appointments, phone cards, money for some being deported,

clothes. We have provided for festivities and have a supply of Bibles, Q'urans and other faith literature to give away. We have contacted detainees' families, and have put those being sent to NASS accommodation addresses of churches or refugee support groups where they can get help and advice. We have contacted organisations such as Jesuit Refugee Service about those being deported so that they have some support on their return.

Given the degree of influence wielded by management, the way in which detainees are presented to managers is of critical importance. Members of the centre's management team need personal relationships with the detainees in order to provoke them into using their considerable discretion to provide support because this discretion often entails personal costs to them in terms of time, emotional investment and, sometimes, risk. The movement of detainees undermines their opportunity to forge meaningful attachments and support the asylum seekers they come into contact with.

One of the centre managers interviewed (Source 4), for example, detailed the ways in which he used to be able to help the detainees under his authority but was less inclined to do so since the heightening of detainees' mobility. I asked him whether he ever developed an emotional attachment to the detainees:

Source 4: It's less difficult now because the turnover's so high. In the past someone would leave and you'd wonder 'what happened to him?' 'I haven't heard from him for months, I wonder if he's still alive?' But now the turnover is so high that the minute

someone's left there's someone who's arrived with just as big problems or just such nasty situations so there's always someone else to help. Nasty as it sounds you very quickly forget the ones who've just left because you're onto the next batch. You have to develop a sort of professional detachment whereby you listen to them sympathetically at the time and help in any way you can. But when you leave you have to leave that at work. If you were to take it with you I think it would be a huge obstacle because you'd be useless to the next batch that come through.

The transience of detainees means that this manager is unwilling to engage with them to the same extent as before the system of moving detainees came into force. While it would still be possible to track individual cases, the manager cites 'professionalism' and the needs of incoming detainees as justifications for not doing so. The moral sensibilities of the manager cause him to respond to the mobility of detainees by reducing the level of support offered. Consequently, he is far less likely to utilise his authority to support the detainees under his influence, for example in drafting letters of support or spending time explaining their legal situation. In this way, the relationship between managers and detainees is depersonalised as a result of the movement of detainees.

The mobility of asylum seekers can be seen to exert governmental effects by presenting detainees in a particular, subjective way to those who have influence over them, undermining the basis for lasting relationships of support. As is the case with the asylum advocacy community associated with the centre, the mobility of the asylum seekers in Campsfield affects their relationship with the managers, making them appear fleeting and

altering managers' aspirations for the asylum seekers in their care. It is precisely through the alteration of managers' and other member of staff's dispositions towards the detainees in their care that detainee mobility can be seen to exert governmental effects, not just upon the detainees but also over this ostensible powerful set of actors.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that the increasing mobility of asylum seekers around the detention estate has significant implications for both the advocacy groups and professionals who hold influence over their experiences in the UK. By considering the ways in which the movement of asylum seekers depicts them in particular, subjective ways to those with influence over them, the paper has demonstrated one instance in which mobility has governmental effects. While the asylum advocates and staff at Campsfield were sometimes financially incentivised to act differently, at other times their mentalities towards the asylum seekers in their care altered as a result of the strategy of intra-detention estate mobility that has been effected. This argument indicates one way in which geographical thinking about space and time can contribute towards recent sociological theorisations of mobility. A long pre-occupation with the representative effects of social spacings and timings (Lefebvre, 1991, Soja, 1989) combines with more recent theorisations concerning the governmental attributes of space (Huxley, 2007, Larner and Walters, 2004) to produce a critical standpoint from which to scrutinise mobility as a means of establishing and depicting the transience of subjects.

The findings presented here are not intended to suggest that the movement of detained asylum seekers around the detention estate represents the only way in which asylum advocates and asylum system managers are constructed. There are clearly influences proceeding from the largely negative and defamatory discursive construction of asylum seekers in the media (Kaye, 2001, Mollard, 2001). Moreover, the training of asylum sector managers has also been shown to constitute a powerful influence over the degree to which they are likely to pursue asylum seekers' interests (Düvell and Jordan, 2003, Weber, 2003). Nevertheless, without wishing to deny the importance of these factors, it is the argument of this paper that the construction of actors who hold influence over asylum seekers is also achieved through the presentational effect arising from detainees' mobility.

A striking implication of the findings reported here relates to the objectivity and independence of influential figures in and around the detention estate. While the removal centre staff and asylum advocates discussed here are nominally autonomous, the effect of the mobility of their charges undermines their objectivity, suggesting that a clearer focus upon the malleability of ostensibly powerful actors within the immigration sector is appropriate.

Finally, given the salience of the representative effects that the mobility of asylum seekers can engender within the populations that have authority over them, attention is drawn to the politics of mobility not only as an outcome but as part of a process of

representation. Since mobility is active in structuring the social world in such a way as to soften or obscure certain elements within it, with the attendant material effects that this entails, it is conceivable that certain factions will compete in order to monopolise this effect. In other words, control over mobility may offer more than simply control over movement, but also control over the perceptual implications that movement or inertia also entails (Cresswell, 2006). While there is no evidence to suggest that ‘the state’ (which is, in any case, an unhelpfully vague abstraction here) directly engages in the control of asylum seeker mobility for anything other than the immediate gains offered in terms of the control and subduing of the asylum seeker population, it is clear that political forces that seek to reduce the number of asylum seeker applications to the UK have indirectly benefited from the governmental advantages that this intra-detention estate mobility can offer through the representation of asylum seekers to those with influence over them in ways that are conducive to exclusionary uses, or non-uses, of this influence. It is not unreasonable to expect that the dividends of mobility arising from their presentational effects may come to form sufficient reason to pursue the monopoly of mobility further in the future.

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