

Walking, Welfare and the Good City

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ABSTRACT: This article considers welfare and the city and the ways in which pedestrian practices combine in the management and production of urban need and vulnerability as manifest in the experience and supervision of urban homelessness. The article combines writings on urban maintenance and repair with recent anthropological work on wayfaring (in which cities seldom figure). Fieldwork undertaken with rough sleepers, welfare workers and city managers in the city of Cardiff, Wales, provides the empirical basis. The main body of the article is organized around three walks through the centre of Cardiff with individuals variously implicated in care, repair and welfare in the city. In closing we assert the importance of a politics of street welfare in city space.

KEYWORDS: city, homelessness, public realm, walking, wayfaring, welfare repair

Introduction

In this article we consider welfare and the city and the ways in which pedestrian practices combine in the management and production of urban need and vulnerability, as manifest in the experience and supervision of urban homelessness. We report from fieldwork undertaken with rough sleepers, welfare workers and city managers in the city of Cardiff, Wales.

Contributors to this themed issue have been invited to consider well-being in the wider sense of that which allows human beings to realize their own versions of the 'good life' and to set our presentation of data and analyses in motion by framing welfare as journeying – the capacity to fare well through life. In what follows we respond to this invitation by taking the city as a distinctive site in and through which human beings might hope to realize the good life and by paying particular attention to mobile practices of urban welfare, care and upkeep. These are grand themes, the 'good city' and mobility; one an enduring motif of uto-

pian thought (Pinder 2005), the other a trans-disciplinary paradigm for twenty-first-century social science (Sheller and Urry 2006). But our starting point and scope are more modest, grounded as they are in the ethnographic study of little more than one square mile of mostly public space in a U.K. city centre (see Candea 2007) and through an attention, within that setting, to local and pedestrian patterns of urban mobility, the routine footwork of fieldwork informants who spend time each day walking the city streets – either because they are paid to do so or because they have nowhere else to go. Before we touch down in Cardiff, we set out a brief conceptual context in reference to everyday urban utopias and wayfaring in the city.

The Good City

Visions of the good life recurrently figure the city as the setting, engine and outcome of human well-being, of a life lived well together. Yet, in the early twenty-first century, with urban settlement now the majority experience of

the human species worldwide, we know cities to be as much the sites of poverty, ill-health and injustice as of human welfare, advancement and emancipation (see Davis 2006). How then, if at all, can the contemporary city qualify as the *topos* of the good life? Geographer Ash Amin (2006) asks and begins to answer this question in a recent article addressed to the nature of the 'good city', in which he makes the case for an everyday urban utopianism: 'a practical but unsettled achievement ... through which difference and multiplicity can be mobilised for common gain and against harm and want' (2006: 1011–1112); the urban homeless figure more than once in his account as among those who stand to gain. Steering clear of abstract and universal ambitions, Amin's practical utopianism is founded in four registers of everyday urban life – repair, relatedness, rights and re-enchantment. These four Rs are braided together with a particular concern for urban public space as a special site for the practice of solidarity and mutual regard, a space of entitlement, encounter and dissent and the seedbed of urban sociality.

In this article we are concerned only with the first of Amin's four Rs, repair. In positing repair as one of the basics of urban life, Amin refers to the machinic order of mundane objects and technologies that combine in the production and perpetuation of everyday urban rhythms – and the crucial significance, in this context, of maintenance as an activity that keeps this order ticking over from one day to the next. Amin draws on Nigel Thrift's arguments that such routine activities, 'various kinds of cleaning, all forms of building maintenance, the constant fight to keep the urban fabric – from pavements and roads to lighting and power – going' (Thrift 2005: 135), might, for all their seeming triviality, constitute the very possibility of the city. For Thrift this is a labour which sees the *physical* fabric of the city – buildings, roads, a broken down this or that – maintained, accomplishing 'the systematic replacement of place' (2005: 135). But to this we

can surely add that the *social* fabric of the city is similarly maintained, by similarly routine and work-a-day ministrations: volunteers and good Samaritans and myriad professional carers criss-crossing urban space, patching things up and keeping things – keeping us all – going. Welfare is maintenance too, after all; in common usage the word signifies the maintenance of members of a group or community in a state of well-being (also that relating to or concerned with such maintenance – hence welfare benefit, welfare office, welfare worker).

Welfare and Wayfaring

If the good life is only ever an unsettled achievement, as Amin has it, then welfare as maintenance reminds us that a state of well-being is not so much accomplished as continually worked at and towards. Put another way, to maintain is not only to keep things as they are but also to keep them going. It is this second sense of welfare, contained in the verbal phrase 'well fare', that we want to expand on, briefly, here.¹

To fare is to journey, through the world and also through life. Among anthropologists, Tim Ingold is probably best known for advancing an understanding of life as a process of making one's way, which he calls wayfaring: 'the most fundamental mode by which living beings, both human and non-human, inhabit the earth' (2007: 81). Ingold's work on walking, wayfaring, lines and traces (see 2004, 2007, 2008) operates, among other things, as a critique of the tendency of western thought to segregate knowing from being and life from environment; against which tendency Ingold asserts a relational ontology of being in which life does not so much occupy as inhabit the ever-evolving meshwork of the world, continuously contributing its own lines of growth and entanglement (Ingold 2006: 13). Keeping going, the very process of life is thus a movement 'of becoming rather than being, of renewal along a path rather than displacement in space' (2006: 15).

Yet Ingold's critique relies on its own binary segregations: inhabitation as distinct from occupation, movement through as against movement across, dwelling as against building and, significantly, for our purposes, landscape as against the built environment. Implied if not intended in this schema is a sort of phenomenological pastoral landscape in which the good life belongs to the embodied experience of wayfaring through 'natural' landscapes woven from paths of human movement and activity. Landscapes of modernity, on the other hand, and the city in particular, do not fare so well. The urban environment is no place for wayfaring, and perhaps no place for welfare, in its widest sense; city dwellers 'merely skim the surface of a world that has been previously mapped out and constructed for them to occupy, rather than contributing through their movements to its ongoing formation (Ingold 2004: 329); this groundlessness is the modern predicament. So much for the good city.

The remainder of this article directs attention to the urban environment and pedestrian spatial practice in the city centre of Cardiff, Wales. The good city as a site (perhaps even a landscape) for welfare is our broad concern, and we use the article to provide examples of, and also to raise questions about, street welfare in particular – need and care as experienced and exercised on and through the city streets. Having first considered Cardiff as a self-styled 'proud city', if not a good one, the main body of the article is organized around three walks through the centre of Cardiff with individuals variously implicated in care, repair and welfare in the city. In closing we assert the importance of a politics of street welfare in city central space.

The Proud City

Cardiff is the capital city of Wales, in the U.K. In the late nineteenth century it was one of the world's leading coal and industrial ports. The

twentieth century was not so kind to Cardiff and saw the city slip into decline and relative obscurity (see Thomas 2003; also Rees 1962), but the first decade of the twenty-first century has brought a change in fortunes: concerted efforts at urban regeneration supported by the city's political, professional and business elites (Thomas 2003: 8) have set the city on course – it is widely hoped and stated – for a bright future as a retail centre and visitor destination. Urban redevelopment occasions the redeployment of land as well as of people, energies and finance (Byrne 2001: 29). Startling reconfigurations in the look and layout of Cardiff's city centre today bear witness to this, and owe as much to global process as did those transformations that reshaped the city in the nineteenth century. Readers will be familiar with the policies and priorities of twenty-first-century urban renewal, many of which originate in the U.S., some endorsed by academic study (see Florida 2005, on the 'creative city'), but many subject to vociferous and critical examination (notable examples include Davis (1990) on the militarization of urban public space, Zukin (1995, 2010) on the commodification of the public realm). A common strand in these critiques is a concern to demonstrate the way in which gentrification, now generalized across the urban landscape of North America and western Europe (Smith 2002), has led to a systematic privatization of formerly public spaces resulting in heightened spatial inequalities. The alignment of neoliberal urban policies (Peck and Tickell 2002), with the generalization of 'third wave' gentrification policies has, thus, provided 'a vehicle for transforming whole areas into new landscape complexes that pioneer a comprehensive class-inflected urban remake' (Smith 2002: 443). This critique has culminated in a depiction of a bipolar, 'revanchist city' (Smith 1996), which is in danger of becoming a staple of urban critique; as generic, and global, as that which it attacks. British urban geographers, Cloke et al. (2010), have recently called into question the universal applicability of the

revanchist model, particularly in the context of urban homelessness. In doing so they set out a detailed account of the human geographies of care and welfare services across a number of U.K. cities, intended as a counterpoint to 'revanchist and postjustice urbanisms' (2010: 60). In what follows we align ourselves with neither camp, but instead seek to walk a line that traces the conflicting priorities of containment and care as experienced and practiced by three principle informants.

These debates aside, revanchist or not, Cardiff is certainly embracing the logics of the global 'entrepreneurial spirit' (Harvey 1989) and its twenty-first-century cityscape is a model of place-marketing (Sadler 1993). Notable developments include the iconic Millennium Stadium, a national and international sports venue completed in 1999 and, most recently, the St David's 2 development, a retail-led, regeneration programme representing a £675m investment across 967,500 sq. ft. of land in the heart of the city. Regeneration of this sort and scale is something more than physical repair, and arguably something less, something more narrowly economic in focus, than welfare. Yet to regenerate is surely to have regard for the life and well-being of a place and people, and the city's governing body, Cardiff Council, certainly views regeneration and well-being as compatible ambitions. Its public strategy for the promotion of well-being in Cardiff, with its emphasis on anticipating the needs of a knowledge economy and on the delivery of 'landmark' sporting and retail projects, consolidates and extends the boosterist determination that has driven over a decade of significant redevelopment in Cardiff. Entitled *Proud Capital*, the strategy document opens with the following statement of intent: 'To ensure that Cardiff is a world class European capital city with an exceptional "quality of life" and at the heart of a competitive city region' (Cardiff Council 2009: 1).

Remaining within a local setting we ask; is this the good city? Setting aside corporate relo-

cation, sports tourism and the 'visiting classes' (Eisenger 2000), what of the local inhabitants, those for whom the city is (already) home ground; what can a proud capital offer them? This is the question – and the answers are several, difficult and contested. If we keep, for present purposes, to the centre of the city, one possible answer is that all stand to gain from the immediate attractions of an enhanced public realm. Thus the St David's 2 development, mentioned above, promises 'attractive and safe public spaces for people to enjoy, alongside a unique and exciting contemporary retail space', the revitalization of 'a currently under-used and tired area of the city ... [into] the Cardiff equivalent of a bustling European piazza'. In Cardiff Council's own estimation such 'improvements in the standard of the public realm ... [will] contribute to achieving the Council's vision of a "world class" quality of life city-region' (Cardiff Council 2009). We take this last citation from the Council's *Public Realm Manual*, a handbook underpinning the current redevelopment. The *Manual* defines the public realm as 'the spaces between buildings where the public have free access, such as streets, squares and green spaces', and goes on to assert that 'high quality design for all elements of the public realm ... can encourage people to stay longer and enjoy a city centre, rather than simply using streets to get from one location to another' (Cardiff Council 2009: 5). We have already noted the particular attention Amin's practical urban utopianism pays to public space and here we have something of the same attention, to the freedoms (and also enchantments) of such space in the urban centre, making the proud capital a good city perhaps. We also have an emphasis on pedestrian inhabitation of the streets as something other than transport – other than displacement in space, as Ingold has it. Whether or not we might speak of wayfaring in this context is a question to which we will return, along with the question as to who might not fare so very well at all in such a regenerated metropolitan realm.

The Pedestrian City: Cardiff in Three Walks

Urban regeneration in Cardiff's city centre is incomplete and in progress, with much still to do. Arriving by train, visitors to the city slide past an uneven cityscape of new construction, older buildings, cleared plots and derelict premises. Alighting at Cardiff Central station and stepping out into Central Square a welcome banner stitches the best bits together into a single vista (Figure 1, below).

Cardiff Council views Central Square as an important gateway to the city, and to Wales; a place where many visitors to the city form their first impressions (Cardiff Council 2008: 38). Yet, at the time of writing, the welcome banner aside, Central Square offers the visiting eye little more than a 'rather tired looking and overcrowded central bus station' (Thomas 2003: 40) ringed by low-prestige office buildings. And here is Peter Finch, local poet and literary entrepreneur, on the occupants, the inhabitants of Central Square:

On a good day, in steady rain, the mix of destitutes, winos, kids on dope, red-faced vagrants and tattooed, tin-whistled, be-dogged Big Issue sellers could not make a better entrée ... Right here, where transport, toilet, burger house and porno-rich news-stand meet, Wales raises its flag ... not a glorious place.
(Finch 2003: 88)

Like the welcome banner, Finch's is a composite portrait, and not entirely fair – but telling. It is taken from Finch's book *Real Cardiff*, a subversive, insider's guide to the city, full of this sort of 'rueful self-recognition' (see Herzfeld 1997: 4) of grubbiness and shortcomings. On this jarring note – unregenerated pedestrians loitering by city gate(way) – we turn to the first of our city walks and walkers.

Walk #1: Billy's Loop

Half a mile away two men step out of an end-of-terrace property on the margins of the city centre; they cut along a rear lane and on across the river towards Central Square. They



Figure 1: 'Welcome to Cardiff'

know each other only in passing, these two, but have met by agreement this morning to take a turn through the city centre together. Their names are Billy and Tom. Both men know the city well enough, although neither is native to Cardiff. Tom has lived there for ten years and works as a lecturer at the university. Billy has stayed in Cardiff a number of times – as a rough sleeper, a prison inmate and, as now, a resident in an emergency accommodation project for the homeless – but has never settled. Tom has asked Billy to take him on a ‘tour’ of the city centre featuring the places that he (Billy) knows best but which others might not recognize.

Passing through Central Square and behind the office premises of the Housing Department, nodding at the familiar faces already grouped outside, Billy enters a multi-storey car park and rides the lift to the top floor, which is open to the sky. A walk across the concrete apron offers up the vista of the city skyline and a bird’s-eye view of the commuter crowds below and leads to a battered door at the far corner, which opens onto an enclosed rear stairwell, very seldom used. People get together here to do drugs and stuff, says Billy; the stairwell is usually ‘full of pins [hypodermic needles] and shit and rubbish, and people sleep there sometimes’. Billy tugs open the door and there, as promised, are three young men sitting together on the landing smoking heroin, at first a little startled to be discovered but hardly panicked. Billy knows or at least recognizes one of them and there is some cursory conversation, at increasing volume and distance, as he and Tom descend the stairs, at the foot of which, by a (seemingly) discarded pile of blankets, Billy shoulders open a fire-exit door and steps out into daylight and the street.

The next hour and a half sees Tom and Billy move slowly from one remaindered or hidden space to the next, never leaving the environs of the city centre but generally skirting the busiest pedestrian streets and shopping precincts. Service lanes, fire-exits, goods entrances, stair-

wells, vacant and derelict premises: these are the settings and spaces that Billy has used and will use again to rest-up and take cover, to sleep, and to stash the assorted goods he shop-lifts on an almost daily basis to maintain his drug use. It is a cramped and shabby circuit of the city, sparsely peopled by friends and associates whose lived circumstances are not so different from Billy’s own. As the two men make their way along, Billy talks about his life and present situation. He is three weeks out of prison and slipping back to the drug use and petty crime that saw him locked up six months ago; he has a bed in a shared room in an accommodation project he has used several times before, and is thinking of leaving, as he has done before, even if that will mean sleeping rough – just to get away from the same old crowd. He has been in and out of prison, on and off the streets, on and off drugs and back on them again all his adult life: ‘Stuck in a loop, like a cassette. Just round and round. Going nowhere really.’ The two men part outside the local offices of the *Big Issue*, for which Billy is an occasional vendor. He will be on his feet for the rest of the day, until eight o’clock when the doors open at the end-of-terrace property – the accommodation project – from which he and Tom set out this morning.

Billy’s morning walk traces out a shape of hardship and vulnerability across the city, and raises questions – not just for Cardiff. Street homelessness is a feature of urban life common to cities worldwide (see Davis 2006: 31–37; also Glasser and Bridgman 1999). No proud capital is without its share of those gone public with their cares and difficulties in this way, and the good city has to find a way to measure up to such claims on its space and sympathies.

Introducing welfare in this manner, as combination of need and space strung together as a circuit through the city, we can note an elementary point: the pedestrian pleasures of the city streets are not guaranteed. Walking can be a chore, can be drudgery. Billy is on his feet a good part of every day, moving around

the city from one temporary respite to the next. Stopping anywhere too long can draw attention and if he doesn't keep moving himself he can sometimes find himself moved along – by police or security staff; in the wet and cold, the weather exerts its own imperative. And if on this particular morning Billy is out and about by invitation, as tour guide, then the fact remains that his walk with Tom takes him nowhere new – nor is the circuit expansive, keeping as it does to streets and settings with which he is wearily familiar. Moreover, his unhappy assessment of his lived circumstances employs metaphors of repetition matched to this habitual geography: '[j]ust round and round. Going nowhere really.' This is some distance from the pleasures of urban walking – loitering, idling, strolling – as invoked by ideas of a pedestrian-friendly public realm. Some distance also from the subtle pleasures of urban solitude and introspection (see Solnit 2001: 186). Walking is hard on Billy and does not take him anywhere much at all, does not lead to any sort of good life.

Yet the good life, or a version of it, is all around. Billy's walk cuts across some of the city's most lively and attractive public spaces, never more than a stone's throw from Cardiff's premier retail redevelopments. But he skirts these spaces where he can. Why? The simplest answer is that he must. Billy is a prolific shoplifter and widely known as such, and is consequently barred from a number of the city's shopping centres, arcades and department stores; were he to go into these spaces he would soon enough be put out again. Beyond this there is another, more general and dispersed sense in which the redeveloped public and pedestrian spaces of central Cardiff do not set out to encourage the city's homeless (see Borden 2000: 21). Unkempt and weary, nodding off on heroin or irritably fretting about his next hit, Billy is an 'undesirable' presence, arguably at odds with the provision of 'better spaces' (see Whyte, quoted in Siegel 1992: 376). The settings that Billy does share with

Tom are neither lively nor conventionally attractive, they are neglected spaces – rundown, backstage, disregarded; sites of inattention. Which is why they matter to Billy. In these spaces – less so anywhere else in the middle of the city – no one will much mind if he slumps down and snatches some sleep, or sorts out his drugs or stashes his gear. These are not spaces where appearances matter, at least for now. A contrary combination then, of respite and disrepair, and an alternate geography of need in the city, traced out as spatial practice.

Walk #2: Street Welfare

Early evening on Central Square, two Cardiff Council employees, Jeff and Charlie, accompanied by an ethnographer, Robin, step out of the offices of the Housing Department. Turning right and then left they enter St Mary's Street, and make their way together past coffee shops and department stores. This is not an invited walk but a routine 'outreach' patrol. Jeff and Charlie are welfare workers with a particular responsibility for vulnerable adults in the city centre; the next couple of hours will be spent making and maintaining contact with 'hard to reach' clients, many of them homeless.

Halfway up St Mary's Street a man is seated begging, his legs crossed underneath a dirty blanket with a small pile of change nestled in the dip between his knees. This is Jim. Jeff and Charlie know him well enough, so there is no need for introductions. Crouching down next to him, they ask about his day and check to see if he has a place to stay tonight – he does, in a local homeless hostel. Reassured, Jeff and Charlie (and Robin) move on. Five minutes further on, they spot Dave, another 'regular' client, seated by himself on the steps of St David's Hall (the National Concert Hall and Conference Centre for Wales). Dave is a diffident and sometimes difficult character and Jeff suggests that he and Robin hang back, 'We don't want to go in mob handed'; Charlie walks over alone and comes back shortly to report that

things are the same as ever with Dave – he will be sleeping out tonight. Ten minutes later they are on Queen Street, where, turning down one of the narrow service lanes behind the shops, Charlie spots a body curled up at the back of a car park. This is no one they know or recognize, so Charlie and Jeff make their way over cautiously to find out who and what they have here. A young man, it turns out, not injured or unwell, and new in town – not one of the regulars. After a short discussion, he agrees to come along with Jeff and Charlie to their next port of call, a drop-in project – ‘The Bus’ – where he can get food and drink and they can all have a proper chat; the project is just round the corner, by the city museum (and is literally a bus, a converted double-decker, the lower deck adapted with benches running the length of each side and a small galley kitchen to the rear where hot drinks and toasted sandwiches are prepared).

There are about fifteen people standing outside or sitting inside the bus, smoking cigarettes and sipping from polystyrene cups. Most are waiting to speak to the emergency bed coordinator, who attends the Bus each evening to allocate available bedspaces in the city’s various hostels. The allocation operates on a more or less first-come, first-served basis and there is no guarantee that everyone in need of a bed will get one. Jeff and Charlie take the young man aboard and get him a cup of tea, make a couple of calls and, eventually, speak to the bed coordinator; it transpires that the young man is registered as a missing person and the police are duly contacted. Everyone waits for the police to arrive, amidst groans and comments from the homeless client group: ‘Why the fuck can’t they leave us alone?’ Heading back across town Jeff comments to Robin ‘Well, we’ve managed to find a missing person without even knowing they were missing. That’s pretty good outreach that.’

This is welfare enacted as pedestrian patrol, and if Jeff and Charlie’s interventions appear piecemeal and outwardly trivial – kind words,

cups of tea, respectful attention, first aid, missing persons, housing advice – in aggregate this labour of social care and repair may nonetheless underwrite the very possibility of the (good) city. It may also be that one can talk of this sort of welfare footwork as urban wayfaring. Welfare professionals engaged in ‘outreach’ work in central Cardiff do not move across the city as transported bodies en route between places (and abstracted in transit), nor do they patrol in line and step with the geographies of retail and prioritized pedestrian occupancy that are a feature of Cardiff’s regenerated public realm; they are out and about in the city to glean further knowledge of their client group – their whereabouts and situation – and this means adopting a spatial practice aligned to the wayward geography that Billy traces out as much as any pre-figured or designated routeway. Not that this is a matter of swapping one pedestrian orientation (city centre retail) for another (city centre homelessness). Setting off on patrol, workers cannot know for sure who they will encounter and where, and although they are sure to take in the sites and spaces that make up Billy’s city centre they will take in others too, putting themselves about and forever sidetracking and rerouting as their attention is drawn first this way then that by whatever sign the cityscape may hold out to them (see Hall 2008, 2010). Thus the pedestrian practice of outreach work, whilst certainly purposive (see Wunderlich 2008) in that workers walk to accomplish a job of work, is essentially peripatetic, and so *topian* (see Olwig, quoted in Ingold 2007: 79).

If we position this pedestrian welfare work as a social analogue of the material repair practices to which Thrift draws attention (building maintenance, roadside repair of vehicles, the general upkeep and servicing of the physical fabric of the city), then, to follow Thrift, we have an exercise in urban kindness (see Thrift 2005). Such kindnesses give Amin grounds to enrol Thrift in making the case for the ‘[t]he good city ... [as] the city of continual mainte-

nance and repair' (2006: 1014). Only outreach work is an exercise in something other than simply kindness, or, rather, maintenance and kindness are not so simply coupled in this context. The aim of outreach work is not, after all, simply to maintain, to keep things as they are, given that things as they are are not so very nice for rough sleepers in Cardiff. Outreach patrol is a welfare intervention aimed at making, or at least opening the way to making, a change in the lives of its clients. And this leads to an all-too-familiar ambivalence, shared by any number of welfare practitioners: the amalgam of assistance and control, the aim to help and enable clients but only within wider and given frameworks of understanding and expectation – of what the good life looks like (and what should be expected of those who might share it). Thus outreach patrol is of use and value to Cardiff Council not only in its meeting the needs of a particular and vulnerable client group but also in its addressing the potential impact these needs might have, unmet, on the city centre and its public realm.

Walk #3: Wipe Your Feet

Another council employee similarly concerned with the good of the city is Steve. He too takes a daily, exploratory turn through the streets to check that all is well and in order; but his remit is not the same as Jeff and Charlie's. Steve works for the City Centre Management team (CCM), whose job it is to enhance the city centre experience for visitors, provide support to local business and maintain a safe and welcoming public realm. Steve has Robin in tow today and together these two ride the lift down from the CCM offices to step outside into the early morning streets and pouring rain. They make the short journey to Central Square where Steve stops outside the train station and says, 'Here we are, the welcome mat of Cardiff. This is where you wipe your feet.' Keeping the welcome mat tidy is not so easy. Steve points out the bounds of a newly estab-

lished Alcohol Exclusion Zone. 'The trouble is that the drinkers just get displaced and so they'll move somewhere else and then that'll become a problem area. Either that or they just step over the exclusion line and carry on drinking,' Steve explains.

They continue their walk and five minutes later Steve stops again, shaking his head and pointing to the side-entrance to one of the bars along St Mary's Street. Oversized refuse bins, lids resting open on the piled sacks inside, are blocking the pavement. The bins are provided by the Council to facilitate the orderly storage and (weekly) collection of commercial rubbish, but rather than have the bins take up room inside, some smaller premises leave them out all week. 'You see,' says Steve. 'Damned if you do, damned if you don't.' At the top end of St Mary's Street they stop again. The road here is being resurfaced as a pedestrian space and is cordoned off while the work is in progress. Some passers-by have forged a short cut, breaching the cordon, and Steve is concerned. He will come back later with his camera to document the hazard and take the matter up with the construction firm responsible.

A few hundred metres further on, Steve and Robin arrive at another construction site, by a railway bridge. Work here has been moving slower than planned and the site has been more or less dormant for some weeks, in which time there have been problems with trespassing and drug use. Just a week ago the space directly under the railway arch was strewn with empty cans, dirty bedding and needles. Not today. Steve has been pressing for work to start again and is pleased to see the same space transformed: new lights line the walls of the arch and the stone paving has been jet washed clean. After a word with workers installing a new handrail, Steve and Robin make their way up through the city centre, past the St David's 2 development, where Steve talks with pride and animation about the quality of the new paving and street furniture. And on they go, round to Queen Street, where they pass

a homeless man touting the *Big Issue*. Steve explains to Robin that the magazine vendors are allocated specific pitches around the city centre agreed by local businesses, the *Big Issue* Cardiff office and the CCM. This vendor is at his allocated pitch, so there is no problem. But for Steve the 'homeless situation' more generally is a difficulty given the sort of city centre space and experience that he works to secure and maintain.

Steve's walk covers (by now) familiar ground, crossing tracks with Billy's loop through the city centre and the paths of outreach patrol; he is another walker whose pedestrian practice is a little out of step with the routes and goals of Cardiff's retail footfall (though he is there to see to it that the city is as good as it can be for those whose routes and goals these are); like Jeff and Charlie, he makes his sorties daily, in a purposive but also exploratory and improvisatory mode, nosing about to confirm what he already knows and to see what is new and needs doing. Steve's professional (and no small amount of personal) concern for the look and upkeep of the city centre surely make him an agent of care and repair and also well-being – though tied to a particular version of the good life manifest in the ongoing commercial redevelopment of Cardiff's city centre, in the midst of which the homeless are mostly out of place.

Walking and Welfare in the Good City

Recent years have seen the city of Cardiff transformed, some would say reborn (see Ungersma 2005), in the context of new urban economic priorities: the knowledge economy, service-sector growth, shopping, leisure and tourism (see Bristow and Morgan 2006; Punter 2006). However, the transformation is unevenly distributed across the city, concentrated in particular locations and settings, including much of the city centre. The hope and expectation

is that commercially driven urban regeneration and 'landmark' development projects in such locations will prime the pump for future (and eventually wider) reciprocities of business investment, corporate relocation, tourism and retail spend. One notable feature of urban redevelopment in Cardiff's city centre to date has been the attention paid to enhancing public space and the priority given to pedestrian occupancy and use of such space. Pedestrian streets and spaces have become a measure and symbol of urban quality of life and even well-being.

Who then fills these spaces, and how? The pedestrian public realm in Cardiff anticipates moneyed consumers and the visiting classes (Eisenger 2000), from whose presence the whole city might stand to gain. But what then of the city's homeless, in public need yet 'undesirable' in this new retail context. This is a puzzle for the good city. But rather than present this as a grand impasse between abstract principles (commerce and profit versus tolerance and inclusion) we have followed Amin (2006) in attending to everyday urban practices. Locating questions of welfare at the street level and in pedestrian practice(s) we have also referenced Ingold's thoughts on walking and the city. It seems unlikely that shoppers and tourists in the city centre, encouraged to loiter and spend time 'rather than simply using streets to get from one location to another' (Cardiff Council 2009), can qualify as urban wayfarers; the idea that one might bring wayfaring into being by first designing the spaces in which it will then be practised runs precisely counter to Ingold's arguments. But it does not follow that the city always and altogether rebuffs movements through and with a cityscape (as opposed to movements across it).² Our chosen examples of urban pedestrian practice feature people for whom walking in the city is something other and more than dallying or displacement in space; our walkers are pedestrians of necessity. Billy knows the shape and streets of the

city as someone who has made his bed and his living there; Jeff and Charlie's outreach patrols are movements of close attention, knowingly aligned to an urban environment that is their place of work; Steve too, attending to the look and upkeep of the public realm, undertakes necessary footwork, in which knowing and going couple together for the good of the city.

In tracing out the minor acts of attention and upkeep that make up Jeff and Charlie's work with the homeless as well as Steve's oversight of the redeveloped urban fabric we have tried to show urban welfare as a mesh of intersecting lines of spatial practice. Obviously there is a vital politics here, but again this is not something we have chosen to render as crudely adversarial – opposing sides drawn up *behind* opposing lines. Instead we have tried to show the intersecting lines *along which* this politics can be traced. As Amin (2006) points out, if the good city is the city of repair it is also the city that exercises a politics of close attention to the structure and consequences of such practices. Urban anthropology is well placed to supply this close attention.

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Notes

1. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition 1989, entry: welfare, *n*.
2. Nor (in fairness) does Ingold say as much, at least not so bluntly.

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