Chapter 10: The Hidden Lives of Domestic Things: Accumulations in Cupboards, Lofts and Shelves

This chapter seeks to challenge the assumption that the accumulation of things that are not currently in use in domestic spaces is a sign of the 'throwaway society' (Cooper, 2010), or a product of frivolous consumers' constant desire for the new. This assumption entails thinking about things predominantly in terms of use-value and also that consumption is a result of individual's choices and preferences. In the current media fascination with clutter – seen in programmes such as Channel 4's *The Hoarder Next Door* – things that accumulate in domestic spaces, such as attics and cupboards, spill into whole rooms as a symptom of a psychological disorder. Having an excess of stuff that we do not use is seen as either wasteful or as a sign of an individual with a life that is out of control – an understanding that is mirrored in the multiple professional decluttering services. What is needed is a focus not upon the extreme behaviour of hoarding that these programmes portray, nor individual consumers who continue to buy new stuff when they have an excess of things at home, but rather a focus on what has been termed 'ordinary consumption' (Gronow and Warde, 2001). That is, the everyday patterns of use and storage of things within the home that is not spectacular but rather how people enact their everyday lives and relationships through things.

In focusing upon the things that have accumulated in domestic spaces as a form of everyday consumption practices, this chapter also develops two further challenges to the sustainability discourses around wastefulness and the popular representations of hoarding. Firstly, assumptions of the 'throwaway society' are based upon a flawed understanding of people and their things wherein an excess of things is seen as a sign of materialism. Instead, by adopting a material culture perspective, the interactions between people and things are central to the enactment and ordering of everyday life (Miller, 2005) and constitutive of the fabric of our social relations (Latour, 2000). They are the medium through which people construct their self-hood and biography, and their relationships to others and wider social worlds as people and things are mutually constituted. Things that are no longer used may still resonate with memories or associations of other people, as the process of ridding

can become a problematic and emotionally charged experience (Lucas, 2002, Gregson, 2007).

Secondly, this chapter challenges the understanding that the focus should be upon an individual and their possessions, which an individual has chosen to buy and then keep. Not only is the notion of 'choice' problematic, but also, things are always relational, in the sense that they may have been owned by and used by many different people, they also may externalise aspects of a relationship – such as dependence upon a parent - or even an absence of a relationship through feelings of loss. Whilst the relationship between material culture and consumption briefly introduced above is one that is well established (arising from Miller, 1987) the one between consumption, material culture and how this constitutes everyday relationships has been less extensively researched (although there are exceptions such as Hurdley, 2006, Woodward, 2007). It is this which is the focus of this chapter, as it will outline planned research into the accumulations of things that are not currently being used within domestic spaces and the practices and relationalities that surround these. This chapter will develop an understanding of critical consumption through a focus upon the intimate and relational facets of domestic goods. The values and meanings of things accumulate and disperse as everyday relationships are imagined and entrenched through things kept in domestic spaces. These things will be defined as 'dormant' in order to avoid reducing the domestic life of things to their use by people, as most things spend at least some time in storage, whether this is as a precursor to being disposed of or to being reused, it is therefore important to consider this phase of the life of things. The project that this chapter introduces aims to explore dormancy as a part of the material vitalities, which is not reduced to how things are moved by people (in the wake of Appadurai's account on the social life of things, 1996) or what people do with them. This empirical part of this project which will take place within people's homes has yet to be carried out (see Woodward, 2014, - the project website) and as such this chapter offers an account of why dormant things matter both theoretically and through the insights afforded through a a pilot that has been carried out. In thinking through the pilot project, the focus has shifted from unused items to the accumulations of dormant things in the home - a shift that will be charted later in the chapter. Things that have accumulated include both the deliberately stored as well as items that 'end' up being pushed to the back of a cupboard, things have been forgotten about or those which resonate with personal and relational meanings. The chapter aims to widen out the sociological understanding of consumption beyond what is currently being used, to items that are here understood as dormant and kept within the home as a means to explore the ways in which things allow us to enact, construct or even dismantle our everyday relationships.

Doing relationships through things

In developing an approach to dormant things, I will draw upon a series of related literatures: families and relationships, consumption, temporalities and practices and material culture. Although these can be considered distinct literatures there are emerging connections between these fields, as is evident in recent developments in the study of relationships. David Morgan (1996) paved the way for the focus upon the *doing* of relationships as he argued that family is not an institution of a defined entity but rather a collection of practices. This has been developed by Finch (2007) through the related concept of 'display', as a potential route into thinking about how

family practices are conveyed to others. She suggests that this process of display or conveying to others is necessary in order for people to be sure that they are 'doing family things' Finch, 2007: 67). In a context where the household does not equate to family and what constitutes family changes over the life course, people have to actively engage in defining what their significant relationships are. The implication of this is that family practices are *displayed* and that *display is a family practice*. This approach lends itself to the study of material culture within the home – and can clearly connect to studies such as Hurdley's work on mantlepieces (Hurdley, 2013) and Rose's study of family photography (Rose, 2012) – both of which foreground material practices in the doing of relationships.

Gillian Rose (2012) looks at the practices surrounding family snaps as 'visual objects' which make both subject positions and relationships. These practices range from taking, printing, dating, storing, displaying, to looking at and circulating. Display here is the putting on display of particular photos, yet similarly we can consider the showing of a family album and talking through this as an act of display. In the example of domestic photographic practices, this act of display happens in relationship to storage – photos are put in a box and out of view. Similarly in Hurdley's (2013) work on mantlepieces although the focus is upon the items that are placed on the mantelpiece, these are understood by her participants, and in Hurdley's analysis, in relationship to things that are not there – often as things are in storage. Things that are made visible and are able to be put on display are always in relationship to that which is stored away – either as a deliberate act of concealment or through reasons of space. Often the choice of what is displayed is, in Finch's sense of display, an act of conveying to others which relationships matter. Yet this chapter will argue that the process of putting in storage, being out of view, is equally important as a relational practice. My own previous work with wardrobes (Woodward, 2007) challenged the over-emphasis upon the public presentation of the self at the expense of both clothing that is tried on in the bedroom and also things that never leave the wardrobe (see also Guy and Banim, 2001).

Hurdley's and Rose's case studies are useful as they prioritise everyday relational practices with things. There has been a transition in studies of consumption from the spectacular and focuses upon strategies of differentiation and identity construction through to what Gronow and Warde (2001) called 'ordinary consumption' which entails a focus upon everyday practices within the home. This had previously been a facet of feminist scholarship of the home (Devault, 1994) with a focus upon domestic spaces and the activities that women carried out in the home which had been devalued and hidden from view. These accounts paved the way for a renewed focus upon consumption in the home as part of the enactment of everyday life. In line with these recent shifts, practice theory approaches to consumption have been developed which rethinks consumption as the use of things in the enactment of social practices (Warde, 2005). A key facet of the use of practice theory to explore consumption is through routines which highlights a temporal dimension to consumption practices as part of the rhythms of everyday life. Practice theory approaches have been important in situating consumption within everyday life, and as practices are seen as composed of multiple elements – including for example knowledges and things – it also places material culture as the heart of everyday acts of consumption. However, in centering social practices Rose has noted that practice theory approaches can be reductive of the subjectivities of people, such as in Shove's work where Rose suggests that people are reduced to 'tool-users' (Rose,

2010). I would also add to this critique that these approaches do not give adequate account of the relationalities between people. Shove et al. (2012) foreground the relationalities between social practices, and between elements in practices and this usefully allows a move away from thinking about an individual and their possessions, yet what is lacking is a sense of how people's significant relationships are constituted through things. How this happens is a useful route into developing an understanding of the intimate and relationship means through which everyday values of things are negotiated and shift. My pilot and previous work into wardrobes encountered unwanted clothes sent by a mother to a daughter living overseas that filled a spare room, a loft full of old children's toys kept with the hope of future grandchildren. Things resonate with actual and imagined relationalities, and their entanglements in relations to others can be so powerful that people feel unable to dispose of things.

In several points in this chapter I have talked about relationalities; a relational focus is something that is present within numerous distinct literatures within which it is conceived very differently, such as actor network theory (which will henceforth be referred to as ANT), social networks, practice theory and in work on personal relationships. In this chapter, relationalities is employed to signify a number of different relationships that can be explored when looking at dormant things: the relationships between things, between a person and their things, and relations between people through things. In practice theory, social practices are understood as the interaction – and thus relationship – between different elements such as knowledges, competences and things. Ingold (2007) has suggested that there should be a renewed focus upon materials, arguing that in studies of material culture and consumption there tends to be a neglect of the materials things are made of and an assumption that things are coherent (this latter comment is something that is shared by work in the fields of non-representational theory and also ANT). Although I would depart from this stance in several ways, it is useful in highlighting the relationalities at play between materials, form, the environment (things such as dust that cause things to change). However, I would suggest that there is still virtue in thinking about things as things; for example even if a table is made from wood and other materials, it ultimately falls apart and will be broken down into constituent materials, it still has a significant life as a table. It is important to do justice to this life and the significance this has in the lives of people. Therefore even though this chapter will draw from writers such as Ingold in his emphasis upon needing to look at materials and upon the vitalities of these materials as things change through are interactions with the environment, it will still draw from material culture perspectives. These perspectives allow an understanding of the co-constitution of people and things and the ways in which the making, use and storing of things is central to the constitution of social relations.

Wardrobes as a method: looking at accumulations and assemblages of things

Domestic spaces – such as shelves and cupboards – and the things that accumulate in them are the empirical focus of this proposed research. Yet here I would also like to propose that this is a kind of method. The interest in dormant things and the spaces in which they reside arises from previous work on women's wardrobes, which also explore the possibilities of wardrobe studies as a kind of method. I will here outline some of the wardrobe research in terms of this as a possible set of methods and approach and also what this allows us to understand. This will then be extended to consider wider spaces within the domestic. The research into women's wardrobes

(see Woodward, 2007) arose out of a desire to redress the over-emphasis upon the public presentation of identity through clothing, and to situate clothing within household economies and provisioning. The emphasis then fell not only on what is worn out in public, but what is kept and never worn, what is tried on in the home, and maybe never be worn and things that used to be worn but may never be again. By looking at wardrobes – as a space for things that are worn all the time and things that are rarely worn if ever – allowed an understanding of the diversities of clothing practices. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to rehearse the findings of this research (see Woodward, 2007 for a full account) but I will here briefly outline the methods and the types of insights these elicited in order to explore how this could be extended to other storage spaces within the home.

The research was broadly ethnographic, taking place in London and Nottingham, in order to situate clothing practices within women's relationships and lives more broadly. The research started with a wardrobe inventory and interview, as I photographed each item women owned as they responded to the request to 'tell me about' each item. Subsequent to this, I got women to fill in wardrobe diaries in order to explore both the outfits that women wore and what occasion to and also things that were tried on and never actually worn out of the house. From this I constructed an understanding of clothing in the wardrobe as temporally dynamic ranging from items that are never worn (see also Banim and Guy, 2001), items that tried on but never worn, items that are worn rarely and items that are worn all the time. This was constructed as a typology of 'active', 'inactive' and 'dormant' – items that are not currently worn but are kept with the potential to be worn again. These dormant things are those that are of particular interest in the proposed research here. In the wardrobe research they were categorised at things that were not being currently worn but may be used again. However, as I developed this research into other storage spaces, I realised that this is reductive of things to possible future uses. Dormant will be expanded here to incorporate things where future possible uses may not have been considered – items that have accidentally ended up in a cupboard, or deliberately kept as they are replete with memories or associations of others.

The wardrobe as a method is one that has been explicitly formulated subsequent to the wardrobe ethnography by Klepp and Bjerk (2012) who have also developed it as method and employed through specific empirical projects (such as Van der Laan and Velthuis 2013). In each case it is explored as a method of moving towards a material culture understanding of clothing, as meanings are not reduced to what is said, and also as a critique of associating clothing with an explicit formulation of identity. The wardrobe is a space where clothes (and other things) accumulate and offers a means to explore consumption beyond display; it allows for an exploration of the practices through which things 'end up' accidentally accumulating as well as things that are deliberately stored and hidden. Things are considered in relationship to others – how the wardrobe is ordered – what things are submerged at the bottom, which things hang pristine in a clothing bag, and which others are crumpled and un-ironed on the floor. Exploring wardrobes methodologically incorporated all of these interrogations of the space of the wardrobe and its relationship to the things and the condition they are kept in within the wardrobe. As already mentioned in this chapter, the research explores the relationalities between things and between people through things. This approach is enabled through looking at accumulations of things in particular spaces as meanings are not reduced to individual items. Exploring the relations between things in the wardrobe was also a means of understanding the

relationships between people. Although the research involved looking at women and their individual wardrobes, the women selected for the research were predominantly those in relationship to each other (family networks, friendship groups, colleagues) as a means to explicitly explore the relationships between women. However, even within the specific wardrobes, when women talked about each item and when they acquired it, it is apparent that wardrobes are full of items handed-over or gifted to them by significant others. The positioning of these in storage spaces and the condition they are in also tells a lot about the ways in which the relationship or particular facet of it is preserved.

This project aims to extend this approach to other spaces where things rest within the house, and in turn to consider the relationships between these spaces. The specific focus upon the accumulations of things within domestic spaces, which is different to 'storage' which implies a deliberate and explicit act of separating out. As the wardrobe research highlighted – and also apparent in Hurdley's work on mantle-pieces things often just 'end up' (2013) – as people are unable to remember how something was positioned in the back of a drawer – or are surprised to find it there. There is a lack of existing research into things at rest, as work upon domestic consumption tends to focus upon things in use, or things in movement. This project will focus upon dormant things (see Woodward, 2014) which include the deliberately hidden away and concealed, the things which end up accidentally situated at the back of a drawer, things which the provenance of has been forgotten or that do not mean very much to people through to things that are replete with personal and relational meanings. Dormant things of this order are not fully addressed in academic work; items 'at rest' are acknowledged as being a significant moment in the life of things, as they await reuse, repair or disposal (Schiffer et al., 1981, Gregson, 2007), yet have so far been considered as a background to processes of ridding (Gregson, 2007), through a specific temporal trajectory of an imagined future (Hoschild, 1996), as a specific genre of material culture (Woodward, 2007) or in terms of possible future uses (Fisher, 2009).

This research will focus explicitly upon spaces within the home where things 'pause', through looking at the accumulations of things. These accumulations can also be conceived of as assemblages; this idea has been expounded in the work of Jane Bennett (2009) as well as within work on actor network theory (such as Law, 1994). Thinking about the juxtapositions of things as assemblages in Law's sense (developed in Hurdley, 2013) allows an assemblage to be an assemblage of people stuff, moments, times, talk, architecture (amongst other things) which assemble to perform the social. By focusing on the assemblages and layers of things within domestic spaces (akin to archaeological approaches such as Harrison, 2011), this project will develop an original approach to a largely unnoticed but vital set of questions about our relationships with things.

From unused things to spatial accumulations of things

The main empirical research for this project has not yet been carried out, however, as I have been developing the theoretical framework and the research design for the project, I found myself opening drawers in my house to think through the ideas of the project. I would read a bit from a book, write a bit on my computer, and find my eyes wandering up to the shelves around me. I found it impossible to think through the project and its possibilities without thinking through specific things, spaces and

assemblages. Given that the project involves foregrounding things and their relationalities, this is perhaps hardly surprising. And as a consequence of this, I carried out a pilot project, which involved looking at different spaces for dormant things with each participant (3 in total). As is perhaps in the nature of a pilot, there was not any attempt to choose particular participants, or types of houses. I will in this final section of the paper introduce some of these examples as a means to more concretely develop the possibilities and ideas of the project to start to develop the ideas of looking at spaces of accumulation and assemblages and what the consequences of this are.

Kitchen drawers

When I first conceived of this project I was interested in things people did not use any more, however, it has since developed through the idea of dormant things and looking at the accumulations of things. Each of the examples discussed here are ones which I first looked at as an example of an 'unused' thing in the home. As I started to talk to people about them and think about them, this is where I started to think about their meanings in relationship to the things around them. As such, the examples will be presented as the movement from looking at the unused thing to thinking about assemblages. The first 'thing' that was explored was a now unused hand-blender. It belonged to a woman on the cusp of turning 40, who lives in a house with her partner, having previously lived alone. The hand-blender was owned by her for nearly 20 years, as it had been bought for her by her mother when she first went to university. It was an item that she had used regularly for making soup and other 'everyday meals'. She loved the item and it is something that made her a better cook as it 'saved' her a few times such as when a cheese sauce was lumpy. The years of use are evident in looking at it, as the plastic part at the end has broken, and so even though the motor still works, it is unusable as food spurts out of the bottom when it is used. The hand-blender has also aged through exposure to the sun, and to food stuffs as the plastic has gone a yellowish colour. Now that the item is broken she has since asked for a new one - an almost identical model but with more attachments. I ask her why she still keeps it, she tells me she will get rid of it 'just not yet'.

The old hand-blender has always been kept in a drawer in the kitchen under the hobs for ease of access. Even though it is now broken, it still resides in the same place. The new one now sits next to it. The other things in the drawer include saucepans and frying pans; none of the other items are broken, most are used regularly, with a few such as a spare frying pan being used less frequently. A year after having first spoken to her about this, I get in touch about it again – she tells me that the hand-blender is still there in the same drawer. In part she tells me that it is laziness about not getting rid of it, and also about 'sentimentality'. What is interesting about this example is that even though it is no longer useful, it is as if she can't end its life too abruptly. It may no longer have a useful life in her home, but it does still have a life. The item is allowed to pause in the drawer before it begins its journey to disposal. This raises interesting issues around the lives of things and how dormant things can be thought of as being vital. Developing on from Appadurai's work (1986) the lives of things has been considered predominantly in terms of the movement of things, and what people do with them. There has been a critique of this position as it has failed to attend to the materiality of things (Thomas, 1991); indeed dormant things form a necessary challenge to this, as their continued life cannot be reduced

to movement as they rest in drawers and cupboards. They have a continued material vitality which emerges from the interaction of materials and the environment (Ingold, 2007) as things continue to change. Yet even this is not enough to explain the continued life of things that are not used, their ability to provoke responses, or their materiality that means people feel unable to dispose of them.

The unused item is placed back into the same cupboard after it is broken. In part this may be initially due to habit, it is where it usually goes, she may not be able to think about where to put it. Yet also, even when I talk to her about it, and she takes it out of the cupboard as we reflect upon it, it still returns to the cupboard. It has 'ended up' where it has always been, yet also there is a sense that this is where it belongs for the last phase of the items life in the home. Moreover, it is placed in an assemblage with a range of other things that are still being used all the time. In doing so, the thing is not being defined as waste, or rubbish, but instead is vitalised by being part of this assemblage. The space in which it rests is not one that is a 'storage space' but instead for 'kitchen things' and also 'things that are used all the time'. It is technically a space that is usefully positioned for things that are used on or next to the hob. The presence of a broken hand-blender does not totally disrupt this space, but rather allows the thing to transition to it being 'waste' and also as the meanings and uses of spaces are muddled by the things that are assembled in them.

Rarely used rooms

The second example is in a different type of space – residing on the floor of a room that is rarely used. The 'unused thing' that this example started with was a large stainless steel rice cooker, which was owned by a man in his late 30s, who used to live alone but now lives with his partner. The rice cooker started off in the kitchen, but as it was never used, moved to a shelf in the room that is hardly used, to sitting on the floor at the edge of the room. The room is one that will be being redecorated, and as such in the interim has 'ended up' being a place where things are dumped. It is not a storage room, but by virtue of things being placed in there that are not often used, areas of it have taken on that function. There is space in the room where tools are kept which are organised on a separate shelf. The movement of the rice cooker to the floor shows that it is not a forgotten about room, but there have been clear attempts to order the room.

The rice cooker is one that was bought 6 years ago, by his sister – he had asked for it for Christmas as he had previously had a flat mate who had had one that cooked very good rice easily and you don't have to 'think about' cooking – you just put in the rice and water and it does it for you. In the first year he owned it he used it a few times while when he was sharing a house when the housemates were eating together. But the main problem was that it cooked rice for 6 people '[a one person rice cooker] was what I had in mind when I requested a rice cooker – not one suitable for opening a restaurant with'. As rice doesn't keep well he found it wasteful. When he eats rice with his partner now, they cook it in the saucepan – even if they were cooking for several people - as she finds the idea of a rice cooker a hassle, preferring 'multi-functional' items such as saucepans.

When I ask him why he has not got rid of it already, he says in part he has not got round to it, but also as it was a present from his sister it stops him being able to offer it to family and it is also about the 'time distance away from being given it. When I

know she [sister] has gone to the effort of buying it'. As it was gifted to him, he is forced to keep the thing for what is a 'suitable time'. There is a vast literature – predominantly anthropological – about the gift (ensuing from Mauss, 1992). This relates to examples from my work on wardrobes, where gifted clothing in one example took over almost an entire storage room, as a woman's mother continued to buy her clothing she did not want (Woodward, 2007). The gifts effectively externalise a relationship to others, and as such may not only be a cherished item but may also be a burden. Through several reorganisations of the house, the unused thing is moved about. When he moves in with his partner, she has no attachment to the thing or its history and it is evicted from the kitchen as he also comes to acknowledge that it will not be used. It joins the assemblages of other 'unused' things in various transitional spaces within the home, which in the case of the rice cooker ends up being placed with other things that belong to him. When it is moved to the floor, it has begun its journey out of the home.

In both this example and the hand blender, there is a clear life beyond use. In part there is an issue of convenience or getting round to disposing of things, or even that unless space demands you dispose of something then there is no need to worry about this. In most cases, people do not want to get rid of things straight away - as though things cannot end their life too abruptly. Even if there are examples where people would be happy to get rid of something straight away - if they do not get round to doing it, as a consequence, things *have* a continued life. Things are animated by their own histories, uses and also relationalities (seen in the gifted items) and they are also animated by what they are placed with – seen in the example of the unused hand blender as it is placed with things that are used all the time. The hand blender doesn't move and as such its own vitality cannot be conceived of in terms of movements or even what it done with it. Even though the rice cooker is moved several times, it is not the movement that vitalises the rice cooker, but rather it is moved in an attempt to manage it and find a space for it because of its continued vitality as a gifted item.

Under the bed

These two examples are both coming towards the end of their life in the home. But also, as I suggested other things that have accumulated are items that have the potential to be reactivated. The final example is of a mattress, which is something that resided within my own home for a while. Items as large as a mattress are interesting as often due to its size, they are much harder to store and often find themselves in garages, lofts or unused rooms. The mattress is one that lived in a flat I shared with my partner when we first moved in together in a rented flat. He was given it by his brother who had finished living in his shared student house. It was the only thing kept under the bed, which was one of the only spaces it would fit in the flat given its size. The mattress spent most of the year living in that flat under the bed, but it had the potential to be used when someone came to stay when it became a bed on the living room floor. It was stored under the bed not only as there was enough space but it had the effect of concealing the mattress. Deemed un-slightly, it was not something that could have been rested against the wall in the bedroom or living room, as that would make the house look like a temporary dwelling or student digs rather than a 'home'. The construction of 'home' as 'home' centres upon the ability to house friends/family who are staying; yet also for it to look like a 'home' the mattress has to be unseen and hidden to avoid looking like temporary

accommodation. Even though the flat itself is rented and ‘temporary’ – as it is the first flat that is shared together it has to feel as though it is a ‘home’. Returning to Finch's notion of display (Finch, 2007) – having the capacity to home other people matters to the construction of this as a serious relationship and as a home, yet this here happens also through what is concealed – the mattress has to be hidden in order for this same process of display to take place.

This year is only one phase in the life of the mattress, and it has since been passed onto another family member to make use of as this particular thing has a continued life ahead of it that does not yet include being disposed of. There is a desire to prolong its useful life, and although the mattress is not ‘special’ in itself, nor would anyone know from looking at the mattress that it is the same one – its family continuities and movements seem to continue to propel it in this way such that it has a life of its own. The mattress has in fact moved 6 times in less than 5 years, given the size of the mattress this has required the mobilisation of other family members. The moving of stuff in part comes to constitute family connections (in a family where communal DIY weekends are common) ‘helping out’ in practical tasks is pivotal to the connections between the family living in different parts of the country. The mobilisation of family members that this requires is therefore pivotal to its journeys. The relationality of the mattress is multiple; firstly, it comes from its previous histories of use which propel it to be kept within the family and passed on. Secondly, the materiality of the mattress and its size propels the mattress to be moved by several family member, creating and reinforcing relationships between family members. What matters is not just what people do with it, but also what it enables and directs people to do. The moving of the mattress is a way of ‘doing’ relationships (Morgan, 1996) and of showing to each other which relationships matter (Finch, 2007). These relationships which matter were always carried within the mattress when it was not being used. Through the size od the mattress and the ways in which it carried these possibilities, the act of exchange is a moment through which this doing and displaying of relationships is possible. Thirdly, the mattress can only be used by other people who are connected to the family through perceptions of cleanliness – the materiality of the mattress includes things like dust. The ‘assemblage’ of the things is then not just the item itself but the invisibility of things like dust and the ways in which mattresses take on the bodies of people as neither bodies nor things are bounded and separate but porous. In this instance the mobility of the thing is important in how it enabled continued connections between others, in other instances the size of things may mean that things have a statis and remain dormant in a garage for longer due to the materiality and size of a thing.

Conclusions

The example of the mattress is one that is very different to the others from the pilot, not only in terms of its size but also as it could be thought of instead in terms of something that is used occasionally. However, it is a useful example to include in relation to the others in part due to the issues it raises around space and the materiality and size of things. It also highlights a different type of dormancy - as a more shifting and temporary phase in the life of things. The dormancy here is of a cyclical nature as the mattress moves in and out of being kept under the bed, rather than just before the end of its life and before disposal which seems to imply a more linear trajectory (although of course it is never just linear as these time before disposal is a snapshot in the life of things). How we think about dormancy and the

life of things is one that is constituted by the materiality of stuff, the lives of people and their practices. In this example dormancy is a phase that weaves in and out of the thing being used.

As this project has developed, it has entailed a shift from thinking about unused things to how dormant things 'accumulate' that entails looking at the assemblages of things in, for example, drawers. The broken hand blender was vitalised by being assembled with things that are used all the time, kept next to the new hand blender; the rice cooker was kept with other things that are not often used, or that people don't know what to do with. Things may be deliberately placed with particular types of things, yet in other examples they 'end up' somewhere, and the effects of assemblage are accidental. The mattress is an item kept alone, but can still be considered as an assemblage, as dust rests on its plastic cover, and the mattress itself includes the imprints and bodily matter of people who have slept on it. Assemblages are not just of discrete 'things' - even if the mattress is still same thing at the beginning and end of year resting under bed. Assemblages are also spatial, as these spaces are also material and exist in relationship to each other.

Running through this chapter has been the idea of the life of things - an issue which is touched upon in a range of different theoretical positions. The pilot study has provided some incipient ideas around how things that are dormant can be seen to be vital. By virtue of remaining in the house, even things kept accidentally have a life. But the accidental keeping is only a small part of the picture, as instead what emerges is that things have their own trajectory. Even if things are not necessarily cherished, they cannot be disposed of straight away. Things that are profoundly evocative of people that we may feel unable to dispose of, yet most of the things that reside in drawers and cupboards are not as explicitly cherished. They have formed part of the everyday enactment of people's relationships and lives and even when they are no longer used they still continue to do so. How things enact relationships is as much a question of what is displayed as that which accumulates in the hidden spaces of the home.

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