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Migrant belonging, social location and the neighbourhood: Recent migrants in East London and Birmingham

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Abstract

Scholars examining different aspects of migrant settlement have long recognised the importance of questions around how newcomers forge a sense of connectedness to the society in which they settle. This article contributes new knowledge by focusing on three factors which shape migrants' sense of belonging: firstly, the immigration-related diversity of the neighbourhood in which they settle; secondly, the migrants' social location in regards to race, gender, religion and language; and thirdly, migrants' previous experiences of migration-related diversity. Drawing on theories around civility, cosmopolitanism and migrant 'place making', and by comparing recent migrants in Birmingham and East London, the article focuses on the role of social interactions and encounters in public space. While migrants who had little previous experiences of diversity go through a process of multicultural adaptation when settling in ethnically diverse areas, others stressed the need to live in areas characterised by visible diversity because of fear of racism. Furthermore, their sense of belonging was also shaped by previous experiences of exclusion in countries of transit migration. The findings highlight that it is not necessarily the ethnic make-up of a city overall which impacts on a migrants' sense of belonging, but it is the neighbourhood, the immediate locality in which migrants live and the nature of social interactions with other residents in such areas which crucially impacts on their sense of inclusion or exclusion.

Keywords

diversity, interaction, migration, neighbourhoods, pioneer migrants

摘要

研究移民定居问题的学者早就认识到了新来人口如何建立与他们所居社会的联系感的问题之重要性。本文重点关注形成移民归属感的三个因素：一是居住区与移民相关的多样性；其次，移民在种族、性别、宗教和语言方面的社会地位；第三，在与移民相关的多样性方面，移民以往的经验。本文借鉴关于礼仪、世界主义和移民“地方营造”的理论，并通过比较伯明翰和东伦敦最近的移民，重点讨论社会互动和公共空间中相遇所发挥的作用。以前几乎没有多样性经验的移民在定居族群多样化的地区时经历了多元文化适应的过程，而其他人则由于害怕种族主义，强调需要生活在以可见的多样性为特征的地区。此外，以往在过境移民国家遭到排斥的经验也影响了他们的归属感。调查结果凸显了，影响移民的归属感的不一定是整个城市的外在族群特征，而是邻里、移民生活的直接地点以及在对包容或排斥感至关重要的领域与其他居民的社交互动性质。

关键词

多样性、互动、迁移、邻里、先导移民

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> This word, to BELONG, that's the most difficult, I think for a migrant. It's very hard. (Maria, Mexico)

This article addresses how recent migrants who settle in Birmingham and East London forge a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood in which they settle. It focuses on three main factors which shape their sense of belonging: firstly, the immigration-related diversity of the neighbourhood in which they settle; secondly, the migrants' social location in regards to race, gender, religion and language; and thirdly, migrants' previous experiences of migration-related diversity.

Scholars examining different aspects of migrant settlement have long recognised the importance of questions around migrant belonging. The ways in which migrants forge a sense of connectedness to the society in which they settle are directly related to questions around their cultural, socio-economic and social integration, as well as their transnational relations to their home country (Brah, 1996; Levitt, 2001; Sigona et al., 2015). Furthermore, the ways in which newcomers forge a sense of belonging are shaped by their ethnicity, language, legal status, socio-economic background, religion, etc., and the characteristics of the area in which they settle. This article specifically focuses on how migrants forge a sense of belonging to the neighbourhoods in which they settle, and, in particle, how the migration-related diversity of neighbourhoods affects belonging. Drawing on theories around belonging, migrant place making, civility and cosmopolitanism, the article also investigates how the demographic make-up of the areas in which migrants lived *prior* to their migration to the UK, either in another country of immigration or in their country of origin, impacts on their sense of belonging. Importantly, while acknowledging the importance of social relations and friendships in regards to belonging (Wessendorf, 2019), this article specifically focuses on how interactions in public space shape this sense of belonging. While migrants might forge important social relations and a sense of belonging within, for example, religious networks or community spaces across cities, this article primarily focuses on belonging to the neighbourhoods in which they settle.

The article compares experiences of migrants in East London and Birmingham. Research participants in East London settled in areas which could be described as 'superdiverse' (Vertovec, 2007), characterised by the absence of a dominant ethnic group and the proliferation of differentiations according to national origins, languages, religious backgrounds, class, socio-economic backgrounds, legal statuses, etc. In Birmingham, research participants described neighbourhoods as dominated by specific ethnic groups, and only those settling in the city centre described the area as 'diverse'. By comparing settlement processes in East London and Birmingham, and by taking into consideration migrants' own social location, the article extends knowledge in regards to migrant belonging and how this is related to the social environment in which they settle as well as their own background and their previous experiences of diversity.

Importantly, this article takes a 'bottom up' perspective, putting individual stories of

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migrants at its centre. When talking about the neighbourhoods in which they settled, almost all research participants talked about their sense of belonging or exclusion in relation to social interactions with other residents. These interactions are importantly shaped by the existence or absence of intercultural skills among the long-established population, coupled with migrants' previous experiences of diversity (and thus their intercultural competences). By interpreting belonging through the lens of narratives of social interactions, the article fills an important gap in knowledge of how belonging is not only constituted by factors such as the demographic make-up of the area and migrants' social location, but also the existence of cosmopolitan skills among migrants themselves as well as those they interact with.

Scholarship on migrant belonging has generally focused on migrant diasporas of more or less established communities with shared histories of migration and settlement (while acknowledging within group differences along, among others, socio-economic or class lines, generation, etc.) (Brah, 1996; Fortier, 2000; Sigona et al., 2015). This article expands knowledge on migrant belonging by focusing on 'pioneer migrants' who have come to the UK individually and lack social networks upon arrival. They thus represent the first migrants of their cohort (defined by, for example, generation, nationality, religion, region of origin, educational background, etc.) and have not followed an established chain migration. They could thus not 'dock onto' already existing migrant 'communities' where they could get support for their settlement and develop a sense of belonging with co-ethnics (Wessendorf, 2019).

The article sets out by bringing together literature on migrant belonging and place making, linking these debates with notions of civility and cosmopolitan competences. Following details of the case study selection and methods, the article analyses the differences between settling in ethnically dominated versus mixed areas. The following section shifts the focus to the role of cosmopolitan competences in settling in a new place, and how those migrants with little experience of diversity prior to their migration go through a process of multicultural adaptation. The ensuing discussion highlights the need for a differentiated analysis of migrant belonging which takes the three factors discussed above into account.

Migrant belonging, cosmopolitanism and civility

Yuval-Davis (2006: 197) has distinguished between three interrelated levels of belonging, relating to 'social locations', 'individual's emotional attachments to various collectivities' and the 'ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and others' belonging/s'. Drawing on this conceptualisation of belonging, this article focuses on the sense of attachment and connectedness migrants develop within the area in which they settle, and shows how this attachment is related to migrants' social location within structures of power, inclusion and exclusion, especially with regards to race, religion and gender.

Structures of inclusion and exclusion differ according to locality, which this article demonstrates by comparing different areas of settlement with different degrees of migration-related diversity. This relates to Valentine's claim that belonging is contingent on how particular places are:

> … produced and stabilized by the dominant groups who occupy them, such that they develop hegemonic cultures through which power operates to systematically define ways of being, and to mark out those who are in place or out of place. (Valentine, 2007: 18)

For example, Butcher (2010) has shown how young people in New Delhi navigate the city, and the skills they use to manage encounters with others who are different (in terms of religion, educational background, region of origin, gender, etc.). They divide the city into spaces of belonging: spaces where they 'fit in', can 'be themselves' or be with people 'like me' (Butcher, 2010: 523), and places where they do not feel this sense of belonging. Importantly, their sense of belonging is related to their experiences of positive or negative encounters with those perceived to be different. Migrant newcomers similarly develop a sense of belonging according to such experiences of interaction in public spaces.

Forging a sense of belonging amongst migrant populations who settle in urban neighbourhoods has also been conceptualised with the notion of 'place making', especially in situations where migrants are faced with discrimination (Castles and Davidson, 2000; Gill, 2010). Pemberton and Phillimore (2018) note that much of the research on migrant place making has focused on large migrant 'communities' which settled in specific areas and developed neighbourhood identities and markers, for example by way of shops, signs, places of worship, community centres, etc. (Pemberton and Phillimore, 2018). This literature has shown how some ethnic minorities prefer to live with co-ethnics because of fear of racism and discrimination (Phillips, 2007). The literature on place making is often based on the assumption that 'migrants cohere in distinct ethnic communities within which a process of place-making occurs' (Pemberton and Phillimore, 2018: 736). The place-making literature thus interprets place making through an ethnic lens, assuming that individuals forge identities along ethnic lines. The pioneer migrants presented in this article, however, often either lacked co-ethnic social networks, or distanced themselves from co-ethnics and showed little interest in co-ethnic relations on the grounds of few commonalities in terms of, for example, socio-economic backgrounds, religion or shared interests (Wessendorf, 2019). Pemberton and Phillimore (2018) raise the question of how migrants develop a sense of affinity to areas which could also be described as super-diverse, demonstrating that an area of long-standing diversity made it easier for visibly different migrants to settle and develop a sense of belonging. This article builds on these findings by looking at pioneer migrants who have come to the UK individually and do not join an already existing 'community' and are thus unable to develop a sense of belonging to a diasporic community. Their sense of belonging is primarily shaped by a sense of 'not sticking out', of being able to be *invisible* on the grounds of already existing neighbourhood diversity. Visibility and invisibility are thus crucial in regards to belonging. This resonates with writings on the city which have shown how diversity makes it easier to fit in (Simmel, 1995 [1903]; Tonkiss, 2003) because it enables newcomers to 'feel accepted in their otherness' (Van Leeuwen, 2010: 642). Belonging in this context is thus not related to long-term residence, but rather a sense of fitting into the social landscape made up of a range of different people (Wessendorf, 2014).

Belonging is, however, not only about being accepted and not sticking out, but also about interaction in public space (Ahmed, 2000). Studies on urban encounters have drawn on the notion of 'civility', referring to the 'capacity of people who differ to live together' (Sennett, 2005: 1), independent of variations in 'physical abilities, beauty, skin colour and hair texture, dress style, demeanour, income, sexual preferences, and so forth' (Lofland, 1998: 464–465). While civility can also be interpreted as a way to avoid possible tensions (Valentine, 2008; Wessendorf, 2014), for the recent migrants

represented in this article, being treated with civility is crucial in regards to their sense of belonging. This becomes manifest when there is a lack of civility. Importantly, civility can also be described as a 'learned grammar of sociability' (Buonfino and Mulgan, 2009). In neighbourhoods characterised by long-term immigration-related diversity, both long-term residents as well as newcomers have to continuously learn to deal with diverse others, according to changes in the population and, in regards to newcomers, depending on their previous experiences of diversity. Such skills have also been described as cosmopolitan skills which facilitate interaction with culturally different others and the management of difference and inequality (Datta, 2009; Noble, 2009; Vertovec, 2009). While civility refers more generally to interaction with people who differ in various ways, cosmopolitan practices more specifically refer to interactions across cultural differences. Noble brings the two notions together, referring to 'habits of intercultural civility' (Noble, 2013: 164), which, importantly, can exist in parallel to racism and exclusion. Similarly, scholars have shown how such intercultural civility can emerge out of daily habits of 'perhaps quite banal intercultural interaction' (Sandercock, 2003: 89), but that it can exist in parallel with exclusion and racism (Amin, 2002; Hall, 1999; Noble, 2011; Tyler, 2016; Wessendorf, 2014; Wise and Noble, 2016).

Building on this literature, this article looks at how newcomers experience already existing patterns of conviviality in neighbourhoods which differ in terms of their migration-related diversity, and how their sense of belonging to a neighbourhood is shaped by these patterns.

Case study selection and methods

Research in East London primarily concentrated on the Borough of Hackney and its surrounding areas, while research participants in Birmingham lived across the city. With its population of 257,379, Hackney figures among the most deprived areas in the UK, but it is currently seeing the arrival of an increasing number of middle-class professionals (DCLG, 2015). Some of them form part of the pioneer migrants described in this article. It is also one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in Britain, with only 36.2% of the population being white British, and more than 100 languages spoken in the borough. Since the 1950s, migrants from West Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia have arrived, followed by Turkish speakers and Vietnamese. Among the biggest minorities are Africans (11.4%), people of Caribbean background (7.8%), South Asians (6.4%), Turkish speakers (4.5%), Chinese (1.4%) and 'other Asian' (2.7%, many of whom come from Vietnam), while 6.4% of the population identify as 'mixed'. This 'old diversity' is now over layered by 'new diversity' (Vertovec, 2015), with 35.5 % of Hackney's total population being foreign-born. They come from 58 different countries, ranging from Zimbabwe to Cyprus, Somalia, Iraq, Albania, Denmark, Germany and Brazil, amongst others. Recently, there has been an increase in people from Eastern Europe and in Spanish speakers from Latin America and Spain[1] (London Borough of Hackney, 2015).

While the ethnic minority and migrant population of Hackney and surrounding areas is spread out over the various wards of these boroughs, it is different in Birmingham. With its population of just over a million (1,073,045), Birmingham could be described as super-diverse, with a considerable increase in immigration-related diversity since 2001. Neighbourhoods such as Lozells and East Handsworth house residents from 170 different countries, ranging from Poland to Somalia, China, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Iran, amongst others

(Birmingham City Council, 2013; Phillimore, 2013). White British people account for 53.1% of Birmingham's population. The biggest ethnic minority groups are Pakistani (13.5%,) Indian (6.0%), Bangladeshi (3%), Black Caribbean (4.4%) and Black African (2.8%) (Birmingham City Council, 2013). In contrast to Hackney and its surrounding areas, however, these ethnic minorities primarily live within specific wards of Birmingham. For example, three wards of Birmingham (Washwood Heath, Bordesely Green and Sparkbrook) recorded more than 70% of people identifying as Muslim (Birmingham City Council, 2013). Even areas such as Handsworth, which have seen a considerable increase in migrants from a variety of countries of origin, are still dominated by the presence of long-established minority groups from south Asia (54%) and the Caribbean (12.2%). The visible presence of these long-established ethnic minorities by way of shops, places of worship, restaurants, etc. also shapes the impression newcomers have about these areas. Research participants in Birmingham described most neighbourhoods as either Asian or white British, with the exception of the City Centre, where a variety of people of various backgrounds are present during the day. Descriptions of East London, in contrast, were characterised by the emphasis that there were people from all over the world and that nobody dominated the area.

The article is based on qualitative research from 2014 to 2017, including 46 in-depth interviews as well as four focus groups with recent migrants, and 30 interviews with people working in the migrant sector such as English teachers and social workers, altogether involving a total of 99 respondents. Research participants were found through personal social networks formed during previous fieldwork in East London (Wessendorf, 2014), snowball sampling, religious and voluntary organisations, English classes and through serendipitous encounters, for example on playgrounds, at school gates or at children-related activities. Most interviews in Birmingham were undertaken by three research assistants who were themselves of ethnic minority or migrant background and who had links to migrant networks. Interviews were conducted in English, French, Italian and Spanish, transcribed and were coded in NVivo. Respondents (including those who participated in focus groups) came from 48 countries of origin (see Appendix). People of different legal statuses were interviewed, and it soon became clear that legal status determined all other aspects of settlement because of UK asylum dispersal policies which house asylum seekers in places which are not of their choice (Hynes and Sales, 2010), and because of the prohibition to work. This made them by far the most disadvantaged and excluded among the research participants, an issue I discuss elsewhere (Wessendorf, 2018). Full ethical approval was gained for the project in advance of fieldwork being undertaken, and research participants could choose to change their names.

Findings

Several factors made a difference in whether research participants developed a sense of belonging to the area in which they settled. One factor is related to migrants' country of origin or the country of residence prior to migration (in the case of transit migration), and whether migrants previously formed part of an 'invisible' ethnic majority, or whether they formed part of an ethnic minority. The second factor related to the area of settlement, and whether it was characterised by long-standing diversity in which no dominant group existed, or whether the area was dominated by either a white British majority or one ethnic minority. These

factors are directly related to the social location of migrants, especially in regards to race, and to a lesser degree religion and gender.

Settling in an ethnically dominated area versus a mixed area

The ethnic make-up of an area made a considerable difference to how research participants felt about their neighbourhood. This was the case for migrants who are 'visibly different' to the majority society, for example Africans and some of the Latin Americans, as well as migrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, albeit in very different ways.

Boniface from Zambia lives in an area in Birmingham dominated by elderly white British people. He described how he found it isolating to live among them because he feels that his neighbours are avoiding him. They 'shut the door and [go] back in the house and that's it, you come out, they go in'. He describes how he is 'trying to integrate in terms of being social', to show that he is here to stay, but he is met with resistance. Not only does he experience this exclusion with his neighbours, but also in the local area, for example in the park:

> Like last Saturday we went to the park … We were outnumbered, but my children, the way they are, they are too vocal, and they are easy speaking (…) 'hi, how are you' (…) and we saw people moving away, and keeping their children [away] (…) I find it difficult because I wanted to be like a normal, normal. Life is the same, we are different in colour, but the blood is the same.

He then went on to describe Birmingham more generally:

> The problem is, what I have come to discover about the diversity in Birmingham, you know the natives of the blacks [Black British], they are concentrating near the city, but when you go outside, it's not like that. (…) If you begin to go to the Black Country, as far as you go, it becomes different. But when you come in the city you find, wow, it's very diverse, you can see everywhere you look at there's another [black person], there's another. But when [you] begin to go to Solihull, my goodness.

In his account, Boniface contrasted these white British dominated areas not only with the city centre, but also with Handsworth, where it 'is like your own is there'. His account reflects other research participants' impressions of Birmingham city centre as a mixed space, in contrast to many of the other neighbourhoods. Olga from Russia described this as follows:

> Birmingham is diverse and not at the same time, because if you look at it from the overall number, ok you have so many Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis, Estonians, and African Caribbean living here and so on, so yeah it looks diverse. But when you start to look at the pockets of the people, then there is not much of pockets of diversity, there is quite a few ethnic backgrounds who congregate in the same environment. They form a mono-ethnic environment within, and that basically excludes others. The same with British people as well, they have their pockets. So there are more pockets, but you don't see many places where you can actually see people mixing, the city centre is that place.

Pemberton (2017) similarly found that newcomers to Birmingham felt a greater sense of ease and belonging in the city centre because of its immigration-related diversity, in contrast to the more ethnically defined other neighbourhoods. Just like Butcher's (2010: 523) young Indian research participants in New Delhi, these migrants 'divide the city into spaces of belonging' where they do or do not fit in.

In general, many of the research participants described their surprise when first

coming to Birmingham and seeing so many people of South Asian background. A research participant from Mexico ended up settling in the area of Sparkhill, which is dominated by people originating from Pakistan. Similar to Boniface, her experience exemplifies how settlement and belonging are shaped by both the ethnic makeup of an area as well as one's own background, in this case her being Mexican (and thus visibly not white British) as well as being a woman.

M: Let me tell you, my problem is very specific, I don't look like English of course, I could easily be Pakistani or Indian, but I don't use traditional clothes and I don't, my hair is not tied up, and I have been, I have never had a real problem but when I go to the shops, men don't like to look at me, so they give me the money like this, looking away (…). And one day, I frequently go and have a walk in the park because there's a park nearby, and when I pass close to men they avoid me (…), and women look at me too because I'm not using the traditional …

S: So they think that you are one of them but not following the rules?

M: That I'm westernized probably. And at the beginning in the school [her child's local primary school], now everyone knows that I'm Mexican, but at the beginning, when I came for the first time, the first two months, when no one knew who I was, they looked at me, they were looking at me A LOT, because for them I was Pakistani (…). And that's another thing, my husband is English, British, white, and multicultural couples are not common here. So my husband is odd here, because now there are no white people in this area. (…) It's just so unfair in a way, it's just because of the looks, the way people judge you. I'm not complaining but it was a big learning curve.

At the time of the interview, she was planning to move to a 'more mixed place'. She described how she felt socially isolated because 'you need interaction, you need friends, you need to create another community, and I cannot find it here'. She also referred to her previous life in Mexico, and how she used to interact with her neighbours, which she now feels unable to do. She was hoping that in the new area where she was planning to move, it would be more sociable: 'you know they have a little club nearby, by the church (…) they do Karate, Yoga, and these things (…), so it means that there is a group of people that lives nearby that go there'.

Maria's and Boniface's accounts exemplify the coming together of the three factors which I have described as crucial in shaping a sense of belonging: the ethnic makeup of an area, the migrants' social location, particularly in regards to race and gender, and the migrants' previous experiences of diversity and local interaction. Their examples also confirm Valentine's claim that 'in particular spaces there are dominant spatial orderings that produce moments of exclusion for particular social groups' (Valentine, 2007:19). These moments of exclusion were also produced because of a lack of interulturual skills among the long-term residents in these areas resulting from a lack of the daily habits of 'intercultural civility' described by Noble (2013) and others (Sandercock 2003; Wessendorf, 2014; Wise and Velayutham, 2014).

In their study on migrant place making in Handsworth (Birmingham) and Kensington (Liverpool), Pemberton and Phillimore (2018: 746) have shown how 'more visible migrants were clear that they needed to live somewhere where visible difference was unremarkable in order to avoid racial harassment'. The research participants of this

project who were visibly different to the white British majority all emphasised how much easier it was for them to settle in a context where visible diversity was the norm. This, however, went beyond race. Religious diversity, gender and diversity in lifestyles were additional factors which facilitated a sense of belonging (Wessendorf, 2016). Aika from Kyrgyzstan who settled in East London describes how she 'never felt like I'm a foreigner here, I don't feel that, I don't feel like I don't belong here, I feel like I can be part of it or not part of it, no one bothers'. She described how it does not matter:

> … how you dress, how you look, there's not many norms. Whereas at home even leaving the house was, not brushing your hair seems to be a crime. It's hard work, it's hard work. Living up to that image with women, well kept women, educated, you have to live up to that perfect ideal.

Elsewhere, I have shown how other migrant women similarly enjoyed the freedom gained in the UK, for example in regards to less pressure to dress up when going out (Wessendorf, 2016). Madina, a Chechen woman who grew up in Latvia, emphasised how she had never left the house in flat shoes before moving to the UK, and that in London, 'you have a freedom of expressing yourself, dress how you want, be whoever you want, follow the religion you want, no one is going to tell you anything'. These migrants thus feel a sense of belonging on the grounds that an area is so diverse that there are less expectations of conformity. This also pertains to language. The existence of 'audible' diversity, i.e. the presence of many different languages, as well as many different accents when speaking English, makes it easier for non-English speakers to communicate, feeling less self-conscious about not speaking perfect English. Also, many native English speakers in such areas are used to hearing different accents and dealing with people who speak limited English, which represents another example of intercultural civility among the long-term residents (Noble, 2013).

Religious diversity is another factor which facilitates some of the newcomers' settlement. Marieme from Senegal, for example, who lives in East London, expressed her relief that she felt free to fast for Ramadan and that people respected it. Similarly, Madina, mentioned above, finally felt free to wear a headscarf when moving to London. In Latvia, she did not dare to show her religious background for fear of discrimination, because 'as soon as you say you're a Muslim you are a terrorist'. In her account, Madina thus compared her experiences of Islamophobia in a less diverse place with her experiences in London. Similarly, African and Latin American migrants who had come to the UK via Italy or Spain described how they experienced less racism in London and Birmingham than where they had previously lived. Of course, this does not mean that there is no racism in these UK cities. However, these recent migrants' experiences of exclusion were directly shaped by previous experiences of discrimination in the places where they lived prior to coming to Birmingham or East London. This also included experiences in other places within the UK for those who had lived in other places prior to settling in Birmingham and London.

The following section compares migrants who arrive in the UK with previous experiences of diversity who have acquired 'cosmopolitan competences', with those who arrive with limited experiences of diversity.

Cosmopolitan competences and multicultural adaptation

Cosmopolitanism has been described as 'an orientation, a willingness to engage with the other … an intellectual and aesthetic

openness toward divergent cultural experiences' (Hannerz, 1990: 103). Importantly, it is also related to specific practices and competences (Vertovec, 2009). There is a substantial body of literature which has looked at these cosmopolitan practices among migrants and non-migrants on the local level, and how they skilfully interact with people who are different in terms of their cultural backgrounds, languages and religions (Datta, 2009; Glick Schiller et al., 2011; Noble, 2009, 2013).

How do previous experiences of diversity in migrants' countries of origin, or in places of transit migration, impact on experiences of diversity once migrants settle in the UK? This section looks at two types of migrants: white migrants who come from less ethnically diverse places, primarily in Eastern and Southern Europe, and migrants from places where diversity is the norm. In regards to the former, I use the notion of 'multicultural adaptation',[2] referring to the ways in which they first have to adjust to their new social environment. Take for example Nadia from Belarus, who was an English teacher back in her home country and lived in the centre of Birmingham.

> My country is so homogeneous, I wasn't used to see a variety of cultures, some of which I haven't seen before. I was always wary about my surroundings, and also I struggled a bit to understand people who speak with an accent. (…) When I first arrived I stayed with my husband because I was afraid of going outside, because I was afraid to get lost and not find my way, it was scary. (…) I didn't have the basis for communication. I did not understand what is polite, what is rude, what questions to ask. (…) You know, basically when you know a culture, then you can sort of relate, but if you don't know the culture you are afraid to be social. You are afraid to break the social rules. I know that it sounds a bit strange, but …

This confirms Glick Schiller et al.'s claim that experiences of migration as such do not 'necessarily produce either cosmopolitan sociabilities or identities' (Glick Schiller et al., 2011: 404). Rather, it is through sustained and regular contact with difference that both migrants and non-migrants adapt to culturally different others and learn the cosmopolitan skills required to live with difference. Nadia's example confirms how civility towards difference can be seen as a 'learned grammar of sociability' (Buonfino and Mulgan, 2009). This was also described by Alejandro, a migrant from a rural area in Spain who lives in Birmingham. For him, the most important thing that 'you learn when you start to live abroad in a multicultural place [is that] not because he is from Asia or that [he] is from America, they are strange or weird. No, they are just different'. Similarly, Nadia, quoted above, describes how she became more open when living in Birmingham, describing how back in Belarus, she 'probably wasn't as open-minded about the cultures'.

Of course, individual dispositions play a role in shaping the extent of acceptance of diversity in different ways. While the research participants of the study presented here did not express negative opinions about living in diverse urban areas, others have found that some Eastern European migrants struggle to adjust to areas dominated by ethnic minorities. Pemberton and Phillimore (2018: 746) have found that some of their Polish research participants were 'unfamiliar with visible difference and could not identify with it'. They therefore attempted to move to less ethnically diverse areas (see also Nowicka, 2013). Importantly, however, some Eastern European migrants arrive with previous experiences of diversity. Joe from Hungary for example worked in the building sector in Marseille (France), together with North African migrants, before moving to Birmingham. Despite being used to ethnic diversity, he was surprised about the number of South Asians in Birmingham. He describes how different 'the Britain that I

studied in school' was, which he had pictured as 'a very nice green country, with people drinking tea'.

Interestingly, African newcomers especially were not new to diversity when coming to the UK. Mamadou from Ivory Coast who lives in London, for example, describes how where he lived back home, there were 62 ethnic groups which all spoke different languages. Charlie, who also comes from Ivory Coast and lives in Birmingham, describes his surprise about the large Asian population in Birmingham, but also how he was used to diversity from back home:

C: Yeah, when I came here I was surprised to interact with a lot of Asian people (…) that's one of the first things that I noticed. This city is quite Asian, and then I discovered other nationalities.

I: Did you know other Asian people when you lived in Ivory Coast?

C: Ahhh, what do you mean Asian? Because I used to have an accountant firm and 85% of my clients were traders and most of them were foreigners, because most of my clients were civil servants, mainly those who make business with foreigners, so we have a lot of Lebanese people, a lot of Chinese. You know, a lot of Chinese are coming to Africa now, a lot of Chinese and African people like Moroccan, people that have industries and stuff like that, and French people.

The contrasting experiences of migrants like Charles and Mamadou from Ivory Coast who arrived in the UK with plenty of experiences of ethnic and cultural diversity, and people like Nadia from Belarus who first did not dare to go out of the house by herself because she did not 'know how to behave' with people she perceived to be different, show how cosmopolitan competences have to be learned over time and by living with difference on a daily basis. Now, Nadia's best friends are a black woman from South Africa and a Greek woman, both of whom she met through a flat share. For Nadia, becoming more at ease with diversity was thus a crucial factor in developing a sense of belonging to Birmingham.

Conclusion

How do migrants forge a sense of belonging in the area in which they settle? How does the demographic make-up of an area shape their sense of belonging or create a sense of exclusion? And how are these processes related to migrants' social location? This article has addressed these questions by comparing pioneer migrants settling in East London and Birmingham, and by considering the role of the migrants' ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds in regards to their sense of belonging. It also discussed how experiences of diversity or racism in the countries in which migrants lived prior to coming to the UK impact on their sense of belonging.

Studies on migrant belonging have predominantly focused on patterns of belonging among migrants who can draw on the affective and practical support of established diasporas. They have rarely captured the complexity of circumstances related to the immigration of individual migrants who lack an established co-ethnic community upon arrival and who settle in areas which are already characterised by immigration-related diversity. This article has contributed to knowledge on migrant belonging by examining how, in light of a lack of 'collectivities and groupings' to which migrants can form emotional attachments (Yuval-Davis, 2006), migrants forge a sense of attachment to the local area in which they settle, and how this is directly related to their social location. By looking at these individual migrants, and

taking their ethnic and religious background, previous experiences of diversity and the demographic composition of the neighbourhood into account, the article has illustrated these multiple aspects which contribute to a sense of belonging or exclusion.

Visible difference is one of the main factors which shapes whether migrants feel like they fit into an area or not. This most importantly relates to race and religion, but also, less dominantly, to gender and lifestyles. As shown in literature on urban civility (Sennett, 2005; Tonkiss, 2003; Van Leeuwen, 2010), increased visible diversity facilitates a sense of inclusion of those who are visibly different and would 'stick out' in areas which are less diverse. This relates to Ahmed's conceptualisation of strangers as 'not simply those who are not known in this dwelling, but those who are, in their very proximity, *already recognised as not belonging*, as being out of place' (Ahmed, 2000: 22, emphasis added). This was particularly prevalent for migrants from Africa, who contrasted the challenges of living in predominantly white British areas with the comfort of living in more mixed areas where they could blend in more (see also Pemberton and Phillimore, 2018). However, living in an area dominated by one ethnic minority was similarly described as challenging on the grounds of not fitting in and feeling treated like an outsider.

In addition to 'not sticking out', belonging is also related to experiences of social interactions in public space. My research highlights the continuing need to consider the importance of 'banal intercultural interactions' (Sandercock, 2003) and routine encounters (Amin, 2002; Noble, 2013) when analysing processes of belonging, inclusion and exclusion. I have shown how practices of civility and interaction across differences, also described as cosmopolitan skills or 'habits of intercultural civility' (Noble, 2013: 164) play a crucial role in whether migrants feel excluded or included within the neighbourhood context. In more ethnically diverse neighbourhoods where diversity was commonplace (Wessendorf, 2014), the long-term residents were already skilled in such intercultural interactions, and everyday multiculturalism was common practice (Wise and Velayutham, 2014). I have shown how migrants' experiences of such encounters are conducive to what could also be described as 'intercultural belonging' (Noble, 2009). Importantly, this did not mean the absence of racism, confirming that 'conviviality of the everyday is not in opposition to but is woven in with everyday racisms' (Wise and Noble, 2016: 427).

An important factor shaping a sense of belonging relates to previous experiences of either being excluded as part of an ethnic minority, or forming part of the majority. Such references to experiences of diversity in the country of origin also relate to transit migration and experiences of racism in previous countries of immigration. Many Latin American and African migrants who had come to the UK via Italy or Spain described a sense of relief when settling in the UK, which, in regards to social interactions in public space, they described as less racist than where they had lived before. This, of course, does not mean that there is no racism in the UK, but these migrants' experiences are shaped by where they had lived before. Belonging thus needs to be conceptualised in the context of trajectories of migration which are often composed of experiences 'en route' to the UK.

Experiences of diversity in the place where people lived prior to coming to the UK are crucial for all migrants. I have shown that migrants from white majority contexts, for example in Eastern and Southern Europe, went through a process of multicultural adaptation when settling in the UK. They had to learn to adapt to a social context which was visibly diverse in terms of

ethnicities, cultures and religions. It was not only a matter of getting used to being surrounded by visibly different people, but learning to interact with them, or, in one of the research participants' words, 'learning how to behave' and 'learning the rules'. Cosmopolitan practices and skills can thus not be taken for granted, but they are built by way of daily encounters and interactions which 'bring people into relation with each other, and thereby bring differences into relations of reciprocity' (Noble, 2009: 59). By adapting to a diverse environment and building confidence in dealing with difference through routinised encounters and the sharing of space, they developed a stronger affinity to the place in which they had settled. Acquiring the skills to communicate across difference and forming social relations with people of different ethnic, national, linguistic or religious backgrounds, forms part of the process of building a home within a context of diversity. I have conceptualised this as 'multicultural adaptation', which is closely related to the notion of civility as a 'learned grammar of sociability', which Buonfino and Mulgan (2009) compare to language. While humans are born with the disposition to speak a language, they still have to learn it. For Nadia, sharing a house with a Greek and a black South African woman represented this process of transforming feelings of insecurity and alienation on the basis of being unfamiliar with ethnic and cultural differences into relations of intimacy and friendship, which, in turn, added to her sense of belonging to the city in which she had settled. Importantly, however, belonging cannot simply be interpreted as a state one achieves, but it can entail different modalities and scales, as exemplified by processes of 'unbelonging' after the Brexit referendum (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2017).

While the story of 'multicultural adaptation' among the white research participants is a positive one, the study also confirmed that racism continues to be one of the main factors of everyday exclusion on the local level. Especially migrants from Africa stressed the need to live in areas characterised by visible diversity, and pointed to the challenges of living in areas where visible diversity was uncommon, even if these areas were not all that far from other, more ethnically diverse areas such as Birmingham City Centre. The findings have thus highlighted the importance of place in showing how it is not necessarily the ethnic make-up of a city overall which impacts on a migrants' sense of belonging, but it is the neighbourhood, the immediate locality in which migrants live. Although racism also exists in areas characterised by visible diversity, less diverse areas were generally experienced as much more difficult to fit in, and the continuities of prejudice among some of the residents living in such areas crucially impacted on their sense of inclusion or exclusion.

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1. The number of the total population is taken from the ONS 2013 Mid Year Estimates. The remaining numbers are taken from the 2011 census.
2. Conversation with Marisol Reyes, who described these processes as 'multicultural adaptation'. But see Lefringhausen and Marshall (2016) who use the term to refer to the majority population's adaptation to newcomers.

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Appendix

Age	Country of birth	Location	Legal status	Occupation	Gender
35	Chile	London	EU citizen	Yoga teacher	F
31	Spain	London	EU citizen	Film technician	M
32	Kyrgyzstan	London	UK citizen	Own business	F
34	Southern Azerbaijan	London	Refugee	Student	M
40	Argentina	London	EU citizen	University lecturer	F
42	Colombia	London	UK citizen	Freelance teacher	F
34	Georgia	London	Spouse	White collar	F
47	Argentina	London	EU citizen	University lecturer	F
30	Slovakia	London	EU citizen	Nanny	F
37	Brazil	London	EU citizen	Flower shop	F
23	Romania	London	EU citizen	Student	F
32	Yemen	London	Refugee	Mother	F
32	Chechnya	London	Refugee	Unemployed	F
40	Mauritania	London	EU citizen	Unemployed	F
26	Chechnya	London	EU citizen	Unemployed	F
34	Senegal	London	Spouse	Unemployed	F
44	Senegal	London	EU citizen	Unemployed	F
30	Yemen	London	Asylum seeker	Prohibited	M
31	Uzbekistan	London	Undocumented	Prohibited	M
50	Ivory Coast	London	Refused asylum seeker	Prohibited	M
33	Ivory Coast	London	Refused asylum seeker	Prohibited	F
41	Mali	London	Undocumented	Prohibited	M
25	Yemen	London	Refugee	White collar	F
40	Spain	Birmingham	EU citizen	Engineer	M
46	Mexico	Birmingham	Spouse	University research	F
43	Zambia	Birmingham	Refugee	Church councilor	M
41	Angola	Birmingham	Work visa	Dance teacher	M
49	Argentina	Birmingham	EU citizen	Trampoline Olympic trainer	F
46	Colombia	Birmingham	Spouse	Beautician	F
36	Mexico	Birmingham	Spouse	Photographer	F
40	India	Birmingham	EU citizen	Shop assistant	F
37	Hungary	Birmingham	EU citizen	Teacher	M
35	Hungary	Birmingham	EU citizen	Painter	F
41	Armenia	Birmingham	UK citizen	Security guard	M
28	Armenia	Birmingham	Spouse	Receptionist	F
44	Ecuador	Birmingham	EU citizen	Church councillor	F
30	Belarus	Birmingham	Spouse	School teacher	F
29	Guinea	Birmingham	Refugee	Unemployed	M
40	Senegal	Birmingham	Spouse	White collar	F
33	Guinea	Birmingham	Asylum seeker	Prohibited	F
36	Ghana	Birmingham	EU citizen	Cleaner	F
18	Ghana	Birmingham	EU citizen	College student	M
26	Egypt	Birmingham	Asylum seeker	Prohibited	F
38	Malawi	Birmingham	Asylum seeker	College student	F
23	Mali	Birmingham	Undocumented	Prohibited	M
54	Ivory Coast	Birmingham	Refugee	Accountant	M
33	Russia	Birmingham	Working visa	White collar	F
32	Syria	Birmingham	Refugee	Unemployed	M