

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

Living multicultural: understanding the new spatial and social relations of ethnicity and multiculturalism in England

Journal Item

How to cite:

Neal, Sarah; Bennett, Katy; Cochrane, Allan and Mohan, Giles (2013). Living multicultural: understanding the new spatial and social relations of ethnicity and multiculturalism in England. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 31(2) pp. 308–323.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2013 Pion Ltd



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:
<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1068/c11263r>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

Living multicultural: the new spatial and social relations of ethnicity and multiculturalism in England

***Sarah Neal, Faculty of Social Science, Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA s.neal@open.ac.uk**

**Katy Bennett, Department of Geography, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RH
kjb33@le.ac.uk**

**Allan Cochrane, Faculty of Social Science, Open University, Walton Hall, Milton
Keynes, MK7 6AA a.d.cochrane@open.ac.uk**

**Giles Mohan, Open University, Faculty of Maths, Computing and Technology, Walton
Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA g.mohan@open.ac.uk**

***Corresponding author**

Abstract

Since 2001, as the social and spatial compositions of multiculturalism and migration have become more complicated and diverse, geography has moved back to the centre of policy, political and academic arguments about cultural difference and ethnic diversity in England. This spatial turn is most obvious in preoccupations with notions of increasing ethnic segregation but it is also apparent in discussions of the possibility of everyday multicultural exchanges in relationally understood places. Responding to the work of others on these questions and in these places, and informed by data from research exploring Ghanaian and Somali migrant settlement in Milton Keynes this paper reviews some of the quantitative and qualitative evidence being drawn on in academic, policy and political debates about contemporary multiculturalism. The paper problematises the dominance of the concept of segregation in these debates and examines the value of the concept of conviviality for understanding the 'in-development' ways in which multiculturalism is lived.

Keywords: Place, locality, ethnicity, everyday multiculturalism, segregation, geography, conviviality

Living multicultural: the new spatial and social relations of ethnicity and multiculturalism in England

Introduction

Multiculturalism in England has become increasingly complex over the last decade. This complexity is spatial and social. It is spatial in the sense that the emergent geographies of ethnic diversity are increasingly dispersed. It is social because new, different migrations have continued and because established migrant populations have fragmented along socio-economic axes. Taken together these spatial and social processes are generating intensely heterogeneous, labile, uncertain formations of multiculturalism.

In this context this paper reviews some of the key evidence and arguments concerning how the reconfigurations of multiculturalism in England might be described and understood. We suggest that two broad but distinct approaches can be identified within the current public, political, policy and academic debates – ethnic segregation and multicultural crisis on the one hand and everyday, competent multiculturalism on the other. It has been the segregation and crisis approach which has dominated public and political debates causing Virinder Kalra and Nisha Kapoor (2009: 1400) to ask why ‘segregation [has] again become so significant in the UK context when it was almost absent from major policy statements on immigration and diversity before 2001’. The contemporary dominance of ethnic segregation, withdrawal and ‘parallel’ lives (see, for example, Ouseley 2001; Cattle 2001; Phillips 2005, 2006; Straw 2010; Cameron 2011) as *the* terms of race and ethnicity debates are reflections and manifestations of longstanding, and newer anxieties and contestations surrounding cultural difference – as multiculturalism becomes more complex the anxieties and insecurities are heightened and demands are more draconian. Both the Ouseley (2001) and Cattle (2001) reports very

publicly worried over the extent of ethnic polarisation and an absence of routine inter-ethnic contact with the consequent policy response focusing on the goal of community cohesion.

But the dominance of the anxiety-crisis discourse does get disrupted. These disruptions can be seen in the unpanicked, often competent ways in which people routinely manage social interactions and relations in multicultural environments. It is this that is the focus of attention for those working from within an everyday multicultural approach (see Amin 2002; Gilroy 2004; Nava 2006; Wise and Velayutham 2009). Aspects of the more complex multicultural story have also forced themselves onto the policy agenda. So, for example, while the Commission on Integration and Cohesion accepted the broad framing delivered by the earlier reports, arguing that ‘diversity can have a negative impact on cohesion’ (2007: 9), it also recognised the changing spaces and composition of multiculturalism in the UK and highlighted the significance of locality, neighbourliness and civic interaction. While the cohesion approach has been criticised for its problematisation of cultural difference and for its integration demands on minority groups (Phillips 2006), its focus on locality, place, community and sociality bumps, albeit uneasily, into recent academic engagements with quotidian multiculturalism and the routine ways in which people live and negotiate cultural difference in everyday social and geographic settings.

While the segregation and everyday arguments appear as antithetical, they both incorporate a concern with spatiality. After a period, from the late 1970s to the late 1990s, in which policy institutions, social resources, identity and nation seemed to be the key arenas of public contestations about race and ethnicity, in the first decade of the 21st century geography and locality have moved back to the centre of the policy and academic arguments - and political anxieties - about the state of multiculturalism, how it is responded to and understood. This spatial turn is obviously present in the increasing ethnic segregation and multicultural crisis claims

but it is also at the heart of the more qualitative focused inquiry on multicultural exchanges in relationally understood places in the cohesion policy agenda.

The paper begins with a discussion of the argument that the UK is experiencing increasing segregation. There has recently been a series of debates in academic journals addressing these concerns (see for example Simpson and Peach 2009; Johnston et al 2010; Carling 2008; Husbands et al 2008). While we engage with these debates here this is not so much to provide an account of the findings of these researchers *per se* but rather to review the current significance of segregation arguments - and related research endeavors – and to examine the ways in which these infiltrate the public sphere and the race discourses circulating within it. The second part of the paper examines the shifting geographies and compositions of multicultural and examines in more detail the everyday multicultural approach, assessing the value and relevance of the concept of conviviality for understanding social interactions and negotiations in intensely multicultural environments. The third part of the paper reviews some of the findings that have emerged from research associated with this approach before concluding that the extent to which these processes are currently preoccupying scholars and more qualitative researchers in race and ethnicity studies may present countering, but nevertheless still problematic, routes through which to conceptualise and research the relationships between ethnic identification, cultural difference, residency and geography.

Preoccupations with segregation and polarized data arguments

The 2001 disturbances in towns in Northern England can be identified as the moment when the crisis-segregation discourse became dominant.ⁱ With its emphasis on ‘parallel lives’ the findings of the official enquiry into the disturbances consolidated and extended anxieties

about cultural difference and the phrase ‘parallel lives’ has become a ready political shorthand for the idea of multicultural troubles. However, the empirical data surrounding segregation in the UK is subject to intense contestation. For example, using the Census data of 1992 and 2001 the *State of English Cities Report* (2006) argued that overall, ethnic segregation had declined in the UK between 1991 and 2001. The Report found that ethnic segregation had fallen in 48 of 56 cities while it had risen slightly in 8 and significantly in 2 locations. Similarly Deborah Phillips (2006), Nisa Finney and Ludi Simpson (2009), Ceri Peach (2009) and researchers based at the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research at Manchester University (e.g. Sabater 2008) have all consistently argued that the available data sets show that there are no ‘ghetto style’ ethnic concentrations within the UK. Rather the minority ethnic residential patterns can be understood as patterns of overall growth accompanied by more dispersed, more mixed and less clustered settlement patterns. As Finney and Simpson argue there are ‘no very high concentrations of particular minority ethnic groups other than white because the areas with fewest white residents are diverse and becoming more so’ (2009: 187).

The work of these researchers suggests that it is possible to track the movement of *all* ethnic groups away from areas of high deprivation to more affluent, white and/or mixed areas and away from established areas of migration settlement. For Sabater ‘the combination of increased population and increased residential evenness confirms that non-white groups are also taking part in outward migration to suburban areas’ (2008: 39). While early research on this sub-urban, small-urban and semi/rural in-migration phenomenon reveals some of the ambivalences and challenges about the experience of being in these ‘new spaces’ of emergent multiculturalism (see for example Tyler 2006; McGarrigle and Kearns 2009) what it also evidences is the changes occurring within established BME communities and more recent migratory populations and the socio-spatial dimensions of these changes.

However, these dispersal trends have not managed to contain arguments as to how to measure segregation *or* arguments that segregation is increasing (see for example Poulsen, and Johnston 2008; Carling 2009; Peach 2009; Poulsen, Johnston and Forrest 2010). Mike Poulsen and Ron Johnston (2008; 2010) avoid more traditional single number segregation indices such as the Index of Separation or the Index of Polarisation which were used in the *State of English Cities* report and instead develop a gradation of segregated-to-mixed *area* typology methodology (Type I = exclusively white and Type VI = areas with over 70% of the population defining themselves as belonging to BME categories) in order to respond to complex and shifting population structures and their geographies.

Poulsen and Johnston (2008) argue that there has been an increase in the number of people living in segregated areas in the UK between 1991 and 2001 but that there was also an increase in the numbers of people living in ethnically mixed areas that was five times greater. Poulsen and Johnston found a decline of Type I areas as these increasingly become Type II (have an ethnic mix between 20-50%) areas in the 1991 to 2001 period. However, within these changing population configurations Poulsen and Johnston (2008) also argue that there are specific geographies in which greater levels of ethnic polarization are evident. Certain places in the West Midlands and Northern Pennine towns show rises in the numbers of population living in Type IV-VI areas which are larger than the rises in populations living in Type II-III areas. They highlight, for example, the Yorkshire town of Keighley where in 1991 18% of the Pakistani community lived in Type IV-VI areas but in 2001 this had risen to 51% (2008: 166). This kind of data leads Poulsen and Johnston to argue that ‘residential segregation remains an important urban issue within a limited set of British cities and towns’ (ibid: 176).

The findings of Poulsen and Johnston show contradictory patterns of residential settlement. Acknowledging the complexity of their evidence they point to the importance of qualitative studies for gaining small scale and more nuanced insights into these geographies.

While their typology measurement allows an emphasis on temporal, spatial and ethnic complexities the language and intentions remain focused on measuring degrees of ethnic separation. As Poulsen and Johnston explain ‘our concern is not whether residential segregation is permanent or problematic but rather that an appropriate methodology be used to measure levels of residential segregation’ (2008: 159).

However, this attempt to disconnect race politics from research method is immediately problematic because of the highly political context into which segregation data is received and interpreted by a range of audiences. This is a point effectively made by Ceri Peach (2008: 2) when he notes not only the problem as to how to measure segregation but also that ‘there is a gulf between the understanding of segregation as an academic, technical term (meaning a scale of high to low segregation) and its everyday meaning (high segregation)’. Peach’s warning has an earlier echo in the Commission on Integration and Cohesion suggestion in their interim report that it was more important to focus on people’s perceptions of and feelings for their localities given that the statistical intelligence on ethnic polarization was so contested and misleading that it was a ‘red-herring’ (2007a: 27). The Commission’s unease with the segregation debates reflects not only uncertainty about what the statistics actually reveal but also the intensely political context into which segregation-related data gets received and argued over.

This is apparent from the way they were drawn on in a widely reportedⁱⁱ speech made in 2005 by Trevor Phillips, then Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality and now head of the Equalities Commission. In the speech, the claim was made that the UK was ‘sleep walking to segregation’ with ‘marooned communities [who] will steadily drift away from the rest of us’, and the case was based on Phillips’ understanding of media reports of a paper by Poulsen, Johnston and Forrest which was presented at the Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers conference. Five years on, in a review paper in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Johnston, Poulsen and Forrest (2010) spend some

time discussing this incident. They argue that their findings were ‘mis-represented by the media, and the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality used those misinterpretations to suggest that Britain was sleepwalking towards segregation – towards a New Orleans-type situation – with other media suggesting that ghettos were emerging. We have *never* said there are ghettos in Britain or that future ghettoisation is possible’ (ibid: 702, original emphasis).

The authors provide a fascinating account of the engagement of the media with their paper and include details of how Mike Poulsen carefully explained the complexity of their findings about population mix to the interested journalists and repeatedly stressed that the findings were not about ghettos (ibid: 704). Nevertheless the 2005 paper was widely reported at the time as evidence of segregation and the emergence of ghettos in the UK, as well as providing the focus for the Phillips speech. The speech itself – along with Cattle’s parallel lives sentence – has entered the lexicon of ‘spectacular race talk’ in the UK in the 21st century. Not only does this fit with the long history of alarmist race politics but it also demonstrates the wider political attention that can be paid to particular forms of race research and data. Husband, Simpson and Alam (2009: 2000) have argued that there is a ‘preoccupation with ethno-cultural conflict’ and the Philips story demonstrates how data that can be read as substantiating this becomes very publicly disseminated. The focus on separation and withdrawal ‘arguably says more about contemporary politics than it does about those who live within and across contemporary social spaces’ (Husbands, Simpson and Alam 2009: 2000). It is these contemporary social spaces that the paper now considers.

New constitutions of multicultural and new spaces of multicultural

As urban areas become increasingly identified as ‘super-diverse’ (Vertovec, 2007) and with new spaces of multicultural emerging it seems strangely contradictory that it is the concept of segregation that occupies much of the argumentative space as to how to understand current

forms of multi-ethnic social relations. These shifts in the nature and geographies of UK multiculturalism have come about through a constellation of factors – migration trends, migration dispersal policy, social mobility, labour market demands – and have permanently disrupted the old maps which located multicultural populations with inner city areas and the post-industrial Pennine towns. This has resulted in what Stuart Hall once described as a ‘multicultural drift’ taking place in residential and settlement patterns in smaller cities, suburbs, towns and rural areas as well as changes in those established multicultural spaces which now experience intense diversity. The idea of multicultural drift resonates with Doreen Massey’s (2005; 2011) arguments as to the elusiveness of space and her suggestion that places cannot be understood through static Cartesian geographies but as fragmented, evolving ‘collections of stories so far’. The idea of places as multiple, with identities shaped in relation to wider geographies (Escobar 2000; Allen and Cochrane 2010) and ‘stretched’ by populations that are shifting, diverse and connected to other places (Henry and Mohan 2003; Mohan 2006), is very apparent in the four contexts we consider below – multicultural suburbs, ‘ordinary’ towns and cities, urban spaces of super-diversity, and new rural spaces. Each of these captures and reflects notions of multicultural drift and relational space.

Increasingly, established BME and migrant groups are relocating to suburban areas (Sabater 2008). In their study of South Asian relocation to Glasgow’s suburbs, Kearns and McGarrigle (2008) compared 1991 and 2001 Census data for ethnicity and residency in the city and found a marked growth of South Asian (Indian and Pakistani) populations away from established areas of settlement and into neighbouring suburbs, ‘south of the city, five suburban postcode sectors all within East Renfrewshire which were all areas of low South Asian settlement a decade earlier, saw notable increases in their South Asian population’ (2008: 463). In Leicester too there has been increasing aspirational mobility and suburbanisation among more affluent South Asian populations since the mid 1990s (Tyler 2006). For example, Oadby, an affluent suburb of Leicester has experienced the relocation of

minority ethnic groups from the inner city centre wards such as Belgrave (Bonney and Le Goff 2007).

As with multicultural suburbs, there is evidence that more ‘ordinary’ small cities and large towns such as Peterborough and Milton Keynes have become sites for emergent multicultural populations. For example, the School Census (2010) data for Milton Keynes (Milton Keynes Intelligence Observatory (<http://www.mkiobservatory.org.uk>) shows that black and minority ethnic groups represent 31.0% of school pupils compared with 20.7% in 2005. Of those children of primary school age 33.2% come from minority ethnic groups and 26.7% of those children of secondary school age come from minority ethnic groups. In the sixth forms there are higher percentages (28.9%) of black and minority ethnic groups than in compulsory secondary education (26.7%). There are rapidly establishing Ghanaian and Somali communities in Milton Keynes and it is the Black African Group that is the largest minority ethnic group in the schools survey.

These new spaces of multiculturalism have previously had little to no history of multiculturalism and/or ethnic tension and correspondingly tend to be ‘blank’ spaces in terms of policy experience of multicultural and cohesion interventions and in terms of migratory settlement and minority communities’ social capital (Mohan 2006). Moreover given these circumstances the transitions to more diverse identities are uneven, which reinforces the need for disaggregated and spatially- sensitive analysis of the processes at work. Research in Peterborough identified a ‘settled residents’ backlash’ and an ambivalent reaction to new migration and found conflicts occurring in relation to local labour markets, housing arrangements and perceptions of neighbourliness (Hickman et al 2008; Erel 2011).

Research in Milton Keynes, involving three of the authorsⁱⁱⁱ, also sheds some light on the complexity of migration narratives and how cohesion and diversity policy is developed through ‘learning on the job’ (Kesten et al 2011). Distinct and different migration trajectories

may be particularly apparent in newly multicultural spaces. In Milton Keynes, Giles Mohan (2006) found that longer established Ghanaian middle class residents who had worked hard to become 'accepted' into local civic life were disparaging of the newer Somali arrivals who they represented as giving 'Africans', and by implication the Ghanaian community, a 'bad name'.

It is the complex migration narrative, but also the *contingent* attachments to newly multicultural spaces, that are captured in this account from Anwar, one of the participants in the Milton Keynes study. Anwar is a 17 year old Somalian who was born and lived in Norway, before moving to Sheffield and then to Milton Keynes where he has lived for the past 10 years. The polyphonic and relational way in which he explains how he would describe where he is from comes out strongly:

'It depends. If I am in London and like my cousin's friend asks me where I am from I would say Milton Keynes because I think they mean where are you from in England. But if I am on holiday somewhere and someone from that country asks me 'where are you from?' I would just say 'England'. If it's someone in MK and they ask me 'where are you from?' I would probably say 'Somalia or Norway' because I am in Milton Keynes' (Kesten, 2011: 226)

As well as having highly mobile identifications and relationships to places, participants in the study spoke of the complex nature of places themselves. For example, Cyril, the pastor of a thriving local (predominantly Ghanaian) church, describes the experiences of establishing it in the city, *'I mean Milton Keynes is a very peculiar place, because in London when you start a ministry you tend to have a solid base, you don't have a churn. In Milton Keynes you find out that... they're [Ghanaians] here working on contracts and then they're moving on to Northampton or to Bedford. The congregation was more people who had come seeking work in Milton Keynes, and because of that I mean... You know they're sort of transient or they're*

kind of mobile in that sense...we've had that, and sometimes you just wonder, 'what's going on here, you know?' (Kesten, 2011: 229).

The experience of places being in process, or in 'churn', as described by Cyril, is not confined to newly emergent multicultural spaces. The reconfigurations of multiculturalism in long established diverse urban spaces have also been the focus of research attention. These are areas steeped in histories of race struggles and conflict, with established minority population capacity, experienced policy makers and community builders. For example, in the London Borough of Hackney, the third most ethnically diverse borough in England and Wales, just under half of the population is White British. Black British, Black African, Black Caribbean and Mixed populations are all significant and higher than in London overall as are the White Other populations, which reflects the significant Turkish and Jewish Charedi resident population (www.hackney.gov.uk). The Borough's Cohesion review (2010) similarly identified a resilient, cohesive local population comfortable with migration and with a 'tolerant' ethos and strong sense of attachment to Hackney although it noted that the nature and extent of 'meaningful interactions across ethnic difference remain unknown' (ibid: 9). This hints at a more uncertain set of interactions reflecting the extent of the shifting population mix in super-diverse areas.

John Perry (2008: 8) observes that 'new migrant communities often have few social or cultural similarities to longer established BME groups' and this produces contradictory social interactions. In Leeds, for example, Deborah Phillips (2010) found evidence of both a welcoming migrant sensibility *and* unease between established local Muslim populations and new migrants from Eastern Europe that is indicative of the uncertainties of the everyday living of 'intense' cultural difference. In Moss Side in Manchester Maria Hudson et al (2009) describe the ways in which local communities enjoyed being multicultural but also describe the ways in which tensions and strain partially shaped everyday social relations between the established BME community and more recently settled Somali migrants, 'longstanding

residents often placed the onus on newcomers to mix more with the existing population. Sometimes this was tinged with an implicit racism and distaste for interacting with newcomers' (2009: 209).

While super-diverse urban areas may seem far removed from rural areas of England the narrative of population change and migrant settlement is shared. Thetford in East Anglia illuminates the nature of this change and its rapidity. Thetford until recently overwhelmingly monocultural, also demonstrates patterns of culturally diverse in-migration and population change as its agricultural and tourism/leisure industries attract large number of migrants from European Union countries. Thetford's local authority - Breckland - notes in its cohesion report that in the 2001 census, 95.27% of residents in Breckland classed themselves as White British. The largest other minority ethnic group identified in the census was the Other White group at 2.67% (3,242 people) with all other minority ethnic groups recorded as being well below one per cent. However, more recent ONS estimates (June 2006) suggest an increase in population in Breckland but with the share of the population who are White British decreasing to 92.1 per cent and the Other White population increasing to 4.1 per cent (5,200 people). These increases are made up of the A8 countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia) as well as a significant Portuguese migrant population. However, this increase is also differentiated between a more established Portuguese migrant worker community (which started arriving around 2001) and the newer A8 communities that started to arrive from early 2004 onwards. More recent migrants coming to Breckland were 'increasingly Eastern European' and tended to be young, middle class, well educated and skilled (Taylor and Rogaly 2004).

As these examples illustrate, the current geographies of UK multiculturalism are intensely complicated, linked into wider networks of stretched relations which define place as much as any imagined fixed notions of the local. Changes can be seen in those geographical areas

which have recently become more ethnically diverse through BME social mobility and especially through agricultural demand and asylum dispersal *and* in those areas where new migrants who present a far greater mix of nationalities feed into a well-established and much older tradition of multicultural settlement. These established BME groups are themselves highly diverse and changing as some BME populations become economically prosperous (Moore 2008; Vincent et al 2011), as different forms of racism and discrimination processes emerge and develop e.g. anti-Muslimism (Kalra and Kapoor, 2009; Husband and Alam 2011), and as generational differences disrupt older patterns of cultural identification and aspiration (Kudenko and Phillips, 2009). In these contexts in particular the concepts of (minority) ethnic segregation, cultural withdrawal and multicultural crisis are theoretically and empirically inadequate and too politically selective to describe and capture the current spatial and social formations of multicultural. What might be an alternative approach – a focus on the everyday and on routine social interactions in ethnically and socially diverse urban environments - is considered next.

The convivial, everyday turn

With an emphasis on lived experiences, contingent identifications and amicable interactions everyday multicultural approaches disrupt the segregation narratives by repositioning debates about cultural difference away from panic, crisis, conflict and apartness and suggest instead the need to focus on *competent* multicultural populations. If we think back to Anwar's account of his relationship to places it was the competency of this narrative that was particularly striking. Cyril's description of places accommodating, and being touched by mobility, also speaks to the themes that run through the everyday multicultural approach. It is intensely interdisciplinary in that it relies on a hybrid mix of social geography and spatial sociology which is reflected in the interdisciplinary nature of those associated and/or working

in the field (see for example, Amin 2002; Back 1996; Clayton 2008; Gilroy 2004; Nava 2006; Noble 2010; Watson 2006; Wise and Velayutham 2009).

Wise and Velayutham have suggested that existing theoretical approaches to multiculturalism have tended to the abstract, failing to engage 'adequately with the everyday lived reality of cultural difference in super diverse cities and spaces' and go on to stress the importance of understanding 'how wider structures and discourses filter through to the realm of everyday practice, exchange and meaning making' (2009: 2-3). That people mix with, encounter one another and manage cultural difference and ethnic identity in more contingent, pragmatic and 'at ease' or convivial ways than is popularly imagined is a core argument of those engaged in the emergent 'everyday multiculturalism' approach. This argument does not ignore tension and discord but rather attempts to reposition the dominance of conflict and pay attention to the co-existence of other, often slight and spontaneous and sometimes amicable forms of multicultural social interaction that can occur and be thrown up in the vast range of settings that are often moved through in any one day and night. Whether, and to what extent, these informal, fleeting socialities can be recognised as socially and culturally transformative - and thereby political - is a puzzle that the approach seeks to engage with.

This argument chimes with Amin's arguments to recognize the 'prosaic sites of multiculturalism' where 'much of the negotiation of difference occurs at the very local level through everyday experiences and encounters' (2002: 959), in what Massey (2005) refers to as the 'thrown togetherness of place'. Amin proposes that by taking into account interactions 'from below', social-cultural divisions may be better understood and reconciled, establishing a progressive politics of place. Gilroy has elaborated on similar themes with the idea of conviviality and what it might mean when the 'processes of cohabitation and interaction...have made multiculturalism an ordinary feature of social life in Britain's urban areas' (2004: xi). While recognising the potential limitations of what may be no more than 'endless

talk amongst adversaries’, Amin speaks to the notion of conviviality as a possible frame not only for describing interaction across cultural difference but also for transcending it.

The interest that the concept of conviviality holds for the everyday multicultural approach reflects its affective associations, and here we want to consider the implications of taking those associations seriously.. Following Ivan Illich’s (1973: 11) definition of conviviality as the informal ‘autonomous and creative intercourse among persons’, anthropologists Joanna Overing and Alan Passes (2000: xiii) argue that conviviality has to be understood not - or not simply – through its English jovial, festive and merry-making associations. Instead they focus on its ‘original Latin root meaning of the Spanish word *convivir*, to live together/to share the same life’. This is a helpful clarification of the concept as it allows for an understanding of conviviality as a mode of being and interacting. The ‘high affectivity’ and a ‘sociable sociality’ that are at the heart of the Overing and Passes definition of conviviality sit alongside an emphasis on conviviality being ‘informal and performative as against the formal and institutional’ (2000: xiii-xiv). Again this is valuable for understanding why conviviality might be appropriate for describing and capturing the social relations in shifting, multicultural settings. In contrast to the related and also affective, but more formal, concept of community, conviviality is more open, less demanding and defensive and more transient. It can be felt and experienced in the most momentary encounters as well as in more sustained social relations. Community relies on trust, familiarity, memory and prolonged contact or bonds (Bennett 2009) but conviviality can work with much slighter and more unstable engagements across a range of routine contexts – work, school, public transport, streets, shops, leisure venues - in both voluntary and involuntary contact moments. It is the lighter touch, ‘cooler’ qualities of conviviality that enable exchanges to happen through and across difference - and even conflict - without necessarily demanding any particular resolution.

While, as Neal (2009) has argued, the concept of community continues to speak to people's everyday experience, makes emotional connections and elicits everyday and policy efforts to make it 'real' (Amit and Rapport 2002), it is the amicability and spontaneity of conviviality that makes it particularly relevant to the fast changing permutations of urban multicultural living. So, for example, Henry Shaftoe (2008: 5) notes that it is the 'casual encounters and positive interactions between friends and strangers' that make up conviviality within cities and which keep urban spaces thriving and safe, while Thrift has suggested interpreting cities not as sites of dystopian conflict but as 'potential nests of kindness' (2005: 143) (see also Watson 2006). Scholars researching multiculturalism from the everyday perspective have tended to focus on micro and/or seemingly mundane research sites where informal exchanges and routine encounters are more likely to take place. For example, Amanda Wise (2009) has explored such practices as gift giving and exchanges (vegetables, food, care services) and gossip networks in two Australian suburbs and interprets these as cross-cultural engagements and transversal socialities. Similarly, and staying with the seemingly slight, Greg Noble (2010) has looked at 'manners and etiquette' as part of the skills for living together in his analysis of the Cronulla riots in Sydney in 2005 and at routine suburban 'community labour' and the endeavors of community activists in 'getting along' in culturally complex environments.

While conviviality as an informal mode of being may seem a long way from the formal worlds of policy making there may be more convergences than expected. We argued earlier that concepts of segregation and cultural withdrawal had driven the cohesion policy agenda post 2001 but it is possible to see threads of interest and connection between the engagements of cohesion with the realm of the informal. The emphasis in the cohesion policy documents, particularly *Our Shared Future*, stress the importance of micro and quotidian civic interactions in developing an understanding of the complex ways in which cultural difference is lived. For example, the Foreword in *Our Shared Future* states 'the most valuable

contribution comes from all of us as local citizens [...] it is through millions of small everyday actions that we can all either improve or harm our local communities' (2007: 5). So while the cohesion agenda vilifies cultural difference and over-emphasises common values (see Husbands and Alam 2011), its incorporation of locality, place, community and sociality speak to a different and potentially more complex policy framing.

Highlighting this conviviality-cohesion policy resonance is to pick up on the arguments made by Achille Mbembe (2001) who, in the different context of post-colonial Cameroon, suggests that it is through conviviality that effective governance takes place. For Mbembe the 'postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance or of collaboration but can best be characterized as convivial, a relationship fraught by the fact of the *commandement* and its "subjects" having to share the same living space (2001: 104 original emphasis). He shows how the institutionalisation of festivities, celebrations and ceremonies in Cameroon were integral to the routine, sometimes banal and sometimes violent maintenance of social order and the relationship between state and society. Although not so explicitly expressed, similar possibilities seem to be implicit in the more nuanced understandings of cultural difference to be found in the cohesion agenda, even if they are sometimes in danger of being lost in its totalising rhetoric.

Limits of conviviality and the everyday?

Mbembe's identification of appropriated conviviality in the postcolony and the convivial aspects of cohesion policy emphasise the need to be cautious as to the possibilities of multicultural proximity, of interethnic exchange and negotiated cultural difference. Some of this caution has been reflected in recent studies. Gill Valentine warns of a 'worrying romanticisation of urban encounter' (2008: 325) and Nancy Ettliger (2009: 218) argues that multicultural geographic mixing does not necessarily transfer into 'meaningful interactions and shared experience'. This position is echoed in Tim Butler's work with Greg Robson

(2003) and Chris Hamnett (2011) in their studies of education and the super-diverse, high density areas of North East London where they detail the extensive and entrenched everyday ways and educational strategies which get enacted to ensure that there was much social but little spatial distance within ethnically and socially diverse local populations. Similarly, from his qualitative based study of young people from a range of BME backgrounds in Leicester a city now routinely described as a multicultural success John Clayton found only limited and contained interactions and a sense of ethnicised spaces in Leicester between different groups of young people. Like Butler and Robson, Clayton also warns that, ‘knowledge of and physical co-presence with those seen as different is no guarantee of progressive relations, particularly for those in fragile economic and social positions’ (2009: 325).

Valentine argues that the current trend towards viewing the city as a civic cosmopolitan site in which cultural difference is routinely lived and negotiated reflects a re-emergence of Gordon Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis which posits that contact between strangers and familiarity with cultural difference reduces prejudice and also generates ‘at ease’ and hospitable forms of interaction and engagement. For Valentine this celebratory framing of the multi-ethnic urban is somewhat premature until there has been more scrutiny of the existence, extent and possibilities of the ‘scaling up’ of convivial multicultural social relations. Valentine’s research showed a lacuna between instances of individualized courtesy and kindness across difference and wider social transformation. For Valentine ‘proximity did not equate with meaningful contact’ (2008: 334) and this was pronounced in the more socially and economically deprived areas in the study where proximity between different groups led to majority white participants presenting narratives of injustice and victimhood especially around social goods and resources. For Valentine, like Clayton, it is the recognition that structural factors and their connecting ontological insecurities that need to be taken into account in understandings of multi-ethnic social relations because ‘encounters

never take place in a space free from history, material conditions and power. The danger is that contemporary discourses about cosmopolitanism and new urban citizenship, by celebrating the potential of everyday encounters to produce social transformations, potentially allow the knotty issue of inequalities to slip out of the debate' (2008: 333).

What these studies appear to evidence is the absence of an easy or straightforward correlation between localities, multi-ethnic mixes, routine interactions and social transformation. Our research in Milton Keynes similarly revealed numerous accounts of amicable sociality and competent interaction between and within ethnically diverse communities but it also showed that in a city space without a multicultural history there were stories from both Somali and Ghanaian participants which told of much more limited inter-cultural encounters (Kesten et al, 2011). But a 'cool conviviality' or 'light engagements' are not in themselves problematic. Mundane competencies for living cultural difference are preferable to the conditional 'meaningful interactions' demanded by the cohesion agenda and more realistic than the transformative expectations of the encounter approach. These ambivalent findings reinforce the importance of examining the everyday but an everyday that recognizes and is embedded in structural contexts as well as the more generic need to heed Wise's (2009: 42) call for more attention to 'who, where, how and why people get on [and] how diversity is lived on the ground.'

Conclusions

Noting that geography has returned as *the* terrain across which cultural difference and multicultural social relations are being contested, this paper has emphasised the changing spatial and social formations of multiculturalism in a mainly English context and described some of these shifts through an account of places and current research. In its attempts to map some of the key contours of the current debates this paper has sought to emphasise the highly

politicized, partial knowledges and policy collisions/convergences that currently mark out and circulate around race and ethnicity studies.

One of the paradoxes that the paper has puzzled over has been the ways in which notions of segregation; withdrawal and crisis have dominated public and policy debate despite the new complexities and newly emergent spaces of multicultural. The increasing segregation argument is effective in the noisy public sphere of race talk because it implicitly and explicitly problematizes minority ethnic groups – and currently, Muslim faith ones in particular. It is also powerful because, as multicultural disperses and intensifies segregation and crisis talk shapes wider agendas concerned with the management and regulation of cultural difference. This is the context in which academic and research based interest in segregation operates and is engaged and the highly politicized nature of this engagement can be seen in the Poulson, Johnston and Forrest and Trevor Phillips story. The paper's unease with research engagements around trends towards (or away from) segregation relates to the presentation/mobilization of empirical data and mediated expressions of fear about polarized, parallel lives which in turn creates the policy and political space in which the broader demands for conditional and integrative multicultural are being ever more rigorously and coercively made.

The return to geography has not been confined to the segregation debates. We have suggested that a relational concept of place, of multi-ethnic proximity alongside a stretching of social relations across space, makes it possible to consider how cultural difference is competently lived in everyday settings and routine ways. The everyday multicultural approach is exciting because it challenges and potentially repositions the dominance of the segregation arguments but it also brings the small scale, micro multicultural worlds of personal lives and social relations and routine interactions into view. The focus on these relationships being unpanicked and convivial is politically significant and theoretically significant in that conviviality – its meanings broadened out to the modes of sociality

definitions proposed by Overing and Passes may offer a frame of analysis, or a means of describing, social relations, interactions and connections to places that is not as hidebound, conditional and troubling as the concept of community. This does not mean it is trouble free – we have identified some of the cautions and doubts raised around conviviality and the everyday approach – but it may yet be the most appropriate and relevant way of describing and thinking about the rapid and on-going reconfigurations of multicultural and cultural difference.

References

Allen J and Cochrane A, 2010 “Assemblages of state power: topological shifts in the organization of government and politics” *Antipode*, **42**(5) 1071-1089.

Allport G, 1954 *The nature of prejudice* (Addison-Wesley, Reading MA)

Amin A, 2002 “Ethnicity and the multicultural city: living with diversity”, *Environment and Planning A* **34** 959-980

Amit V, and Rapport N, 2002 *The trouble with community* (Pluto, London)

Back L, 1996 *New Ethnicities and Urban Culture, racisms and multiculturalism in young lives* (UCL Press, London).

Bennett K, 2009 “Telling Tales: Nostalgia, Collective Identity and an Ex-Mining Village” in Eds *Emotion, Place and Culture* Eds M Smith, J Davidson, L Cameron, and L Bondi, (Ashgate, Aldershot) pp187-206

Bonney R, and Le Goff W, 2006 Leicester’s cultural diversity in the context of the British debate on multiculturalism, *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 6.

Butler T, and Robson G, 2003 *London Calling: the middle classes and the remaking of inner London* (Berg, London)

Butler T, and Hamnett C, 2011 *Ethnicity, class and aspiration: understanding London’s new East End* (Policy Press, Bristol)

Clayton J, 2009 “Thinking spatially: towards an everyday understanding of inter-ethnic relations”, *Social and Cultural Geography*, **10** (4) 481-498

Carling A, 2008 “The curious case of the mis-claimed myth claims: ethnic segregation, polarization and the future of Bradford”, *Urban Studies* **45** (3) 553-589

Cantle T, 2001 *Community cohesion review team report*. The Cantle Report, HMSO.

Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007a *Our Interim Statement*
www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk

Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007 *Our Shared Future*
www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk

Erel U, 2011 “Complex belongings: racialization and migration in a small English city”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* doi: 10.1080/01419870.2011.574715 pp 1-21.

Escobar,A, 2000 “Culture sits in places: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization”, *Political Geography*, **20** 139-174.

Ettlinger N 2009 “Surmounting city silences: knowledge creation and the design of urban democracy in the everyday economy”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, **33.1** (3) 217-30

Finney N., and Simpson L.2009 *Sleepwalking to segregation? Challenging myths about race and migration* (Policy Press, Bristol)

Gilroy P, 2004 *After Empire: melancholia or convivial culture?* (Routledge, London)

Han C, 2009 “We both eat rice but that’s about it: Korean and Latino relations in multi-ethnic Los Angeles” in *Everyday Multiculturalism* Eds A. Wise and S. Velayutham (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke) pp 237 - 254

Henry L. and Mohan G. 2003 “Making homes: the Ghanaian diaspora, institutions and development”, *Journal of International Development*, **15** (5)611-622.

Hickman M, Crowley H, and Mai N, 2008 *Immigration and social cohesion in the UK: the rhythms and realities of everyday life*. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, London)

Hudson M, Phillips J, and Ray K, 2009 “Rubbing along with the neighbours – everyday interactions in a diverse neighbourhood in the North of England” in *Everyday Multiculturalism* Eds A Wise and S Velayutham (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke) pp199 - 215

Husband C, and Alam Y, (2011) *Social cohesion and counter-terrorism* (Policy Press, Bristol)

Illich I, 1973 *Tools for Conviviality* (Marion Boyars, London)

Johnson R, Poulsen M, and Forrest J, 2010 “Moving on from indices, refocusing on mix: on measuring and understanding ethnic patterns of residential segregation”. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, **36**(4) 697-706

Kalra V, and Kapoor N, 2009 “Interrogating segregation, integration and the community cohesion agenda”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, **35** (9) 1397 - 1415

Keith M, 2008 After cosmopolitanism? New geographies of race and racism in *New Geographies of Race and Racisms* Eds C. Dwyer and C. Bressey (Ashgate: Aldershot)pp 193-208

Kesten J, 2011 *Multiculture, Community and Social Exclusion in New City Spaces*, Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Department of Geography, Open University, Milton Keynes

Kesten J, Cochrane A, Mohan G, and Neal S, 2011 “Multiculture and community in new city spaces”, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, **32** (2) 133-150

Kudenko I, and Phillips D, 2009 “The Model of Integration? Social and spatial transformations in the Leeds Jewish community”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, **35** (9) 1533-1549

McLaughlin, E. and Neal, S. (2007) “The public sphere and public interventions on race and nation: intellectuals, policy formation and the Parekh Report,” *Cultural Studies*, **21** (6) 911-993

Massey D, 2005 *For Space* (Sage, London)

Massey D, 2011 *Landscape/space/politics: an essay* <http://futureoflandscape.wordpress.com>

McGarrigle J, and Kearns A, 2008 “Living apart? Place, identity and South Asian Residential choice”, *Housing Studies*, **24** (4) 451-475

Mbembe A, 2001 *On the Postcolony* (University of California Press, London)

Mohan G, 2006 “Embedded cosmopolitanism and the politics of obligation: The Ghanaian diaspora and development”, *Environment and Planning A.*, **38**(5),867 – 883.

Moore K, 2008 “Class formations: competing forms of black middle-class identity”, *Ethnicities*, **8** (4) 492-517

Nava M, 2006 Domestic cosmopolitanism and structures of feeling: the specificity of London in *The Situated Politics of Belonging* Eds N Yuval-Davis, K Kannabiran and U Vietan, (Sage, London)

Neal S, 2009 *Rural identities: ethnicity and community in the contemporary English countryside* (Ashgate, Farnham)

- Noble G, 2009 Everyday cosmopolitanism and the labour of the intercultural community in *Everyday Multiculturalism* Eds A Wise and S Velayuthan (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke) pp 46-65
- Noble G, 2010 (ed) *Lines in the sand: understanding the Cronulla riots.*(Institute of Criminology, Sydney)
- Ouseley H, 2001 *Community pride not prejudice: making diversity work in Bradford.* The Ouseley Report. (Bradford Vision, Bradford)
- Overing J, and Passes A, Eds 2000 *The anthropology of love and anger: the aesthetics of conviviality in Native Amazonia* (Routledge, London)
- Peach C, Robinson V, and Smith S, 1981 *Ethnic segregation in cities* (Croom Helm, London)
- Peach C, 2008 *Slippery Segregation: discovering or manufacturing ghettos* University of Manchester Institute for Social Change Working Paper, University of Manchester
- Perry J, 2008 *The housing and neighbourhood impact of Britain's changing ethnic mix.* Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report, London
- Phillips D, 2006 "Parallel lives? Challenging discourses of British Muslim self-segregation", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, **24**, 25-40
- Poulsen M, and Johnson R, 2008 The 'new geography' of ethnicity in England and Wales? In *New Geographies of race and racism* Eds C. Dwyer and C. Bressey (Ashgate, Aldershot) pp 157 - 178
- Sabater A, 2008 Ethnic segregation over time and cohorts in England and Wales, 1991-2001. *Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research Working Paper 14*, www.ccsr.ac.uk
- Shaftoe H, 2008 *Urban convivial spaces: creating effective public places* (Earthscan, London)

Simpson L, Husband C, and Alam Y, 2009 “Comment: recognising complexity, challenging pessimism: the case of Bradford’s urban dynamics”, *Urban Studies*, **46**(9) 1995-2001

Taylor B, and Rogaly B, 2004 *Migrant Working in West Norfolk*, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex.

Thrift N, 2005 But malice aforethought: cities and the natural history of hatred, *Transactions of British Geographers*, **30** 133-150

Tyler K, 2006 Village people: race, class, nation and the community spirit in *The New Countryside? Ethnicity, nation and exclusion in contemporary rural Britain* Eds S. Neal and J. Agyeman (Policy Press, Bristol) pp

Valentine G, 2008 “Living with difference: reflections on geographies of encounter”, *Progress in Human Geography* **32**(3) 323-337

Vertovec S, 2007 “Super-diversity and its implications”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, **30** 1024-54

Vincent C, Rollock N, Ball S, and Gilborn D, 2011 *The educational strategies of the black middle classes: project summary*, University of London, London

Watson S, 2006 *City publics: the (dis) enchantments of urban encounters* (Routledge, London)

Wise A, and Velayutham S, 2009 (eds) *Everyday Multiculturalism* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke)

Wise A, 2009 Everyday multiculturalism: transversal crossings and working class cosmopolitans in *Everyday Multiculturalism* Eds A Wise and S Velayutham (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke) pp 21 - 45

ⁱ But the beginnings of the panic discourse can be tracked back to the negative media and political responses to The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain Commission's report in 2000. These responses marked a shift away from what can be seen as a brief period of more reflexive race thinking in the UK in the late 1990s (McLaughlin and Neal 2007).

ⁱⁱ Media coverage of the Phillips speech included such headlines as 'Race Chief Warns of Ghetto Crisis' (*Sunday Times* 8th September 2005) and 'Ghettos Blighting Asian Integration' (*Times*, 1st September, 2005). Phillips was to apologise a year later for how he presented the Poulsen, Johnston and Forrest findings but he maintained that he believed that segregation was increasing in the UK (<http://news.bbc.co.uk>, 30th August, 2006).

ⁱⁱⁱ This was a qualitative three-year (2007-10) ESRC CASE studentship conducted in partnership with Milton Keynes Council. The studentship was held by Jamie Kesten and supervised by Allan Cochrane, Giles Mohan and Sarah Neal (ESRC Reference No. ES/F033311/1).