

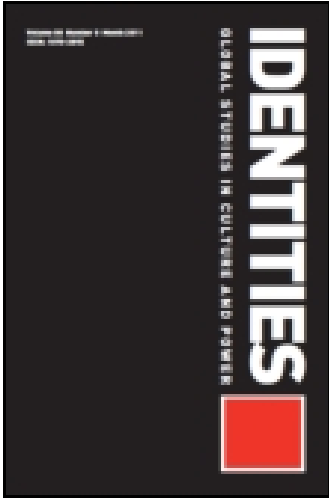
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## Super-diversity and the art of living in ethnically concentrated urban areas

Milena Chimienti and Ilse van Liempt

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This article discusses how local diversity is being experienced by Somali immigrants who have previously lived in the Netherlands and are now residing in London. It explores the various challenges and potential advantages of living in homogenous urban areas within a super-diverse city and focuses on three situations: (1) when homogeneity is functional and leads to living in parallel worlds; (2) when homogeneity creates social reproduction, even when located in a super-diverse city; and (3) when people manage to oscillate between both worlds – i.e. between homogenous urban areas and the potential offered by a super-diverse city. The article argues that migrants trace different pathways in the context of super-diversity. They have the ability to operate at different scales – the locale and the cosmopolitan super-diverse metropolis. However, the most vulnerable people have more difficulty in accessing and benefiting directly from the potential offered by super-diversity.

**Keywords:** ethnic enclave; urban area; integration; super-diversity; Somalis; London

### Introduction: bad and good ethnic concentration<sup>1</sup>

Thus far, urban studies have provided conflicting results and theories regarding the effects of concentrated immigrant neighbourhoods (Jargowsky 2009; Bloch, Neal, and Solomos 2013; Merry 2013). One school of thought has perceived the spatial concentration of immigrant groups as a barrier to integration, social mobility and social cohesion. Another argues that the beneficial aspects of immigrant clustering balance its negative effects. In this article, we go beyond this dichotomised view, acknowledging the dynamic relationship between choice and constraints. By giving voice to people who live in concentrated immigrant areas within a super-diverse city such as London, we hope to provide a more nuanced view on the effects of living in such spaces. In the introduction, we review the literature on urban ethnic concentration (focusing on evidence from the UK), then present three cases which, in our view, symbolise the three main forms of ethnic concentration. The empirical data on which this article draws are derived from research with former asylum-seekers from Somalia who first arrived in the Netherlands and then decided to go and live in London (Liempt 2011a, 2011b).

Most public and political debate has described ethnic clustering as creating a risk of ‘social dysfunction’ or as ‘signs of failure, particularly on the part of

minorities, to integrate socially, culturally, and economically' (see, e.g. Travis 2001; Ward (2001) quoted in Phillips (2006a, 28–29)). This dominant viewpoint is illustrated by the negative connotation of the terminology used to describe this phenomenon, which often links ethnic concentration with 'ghettoisation', 'segregation' or 'self-segregation', often suggesting a 'threatening' separation and a lack of integration. After the 2001 'riots' in the northern English towns of Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, areas with high concentrations of immigrants were (and still are) assumed in the media and political discourse to be working against integration, as illustrated, for instance, by the Community Cohesion Review Team's report into the disturbances in Oldham and Burnley. This report notes the risks for groups living 'parallel lives' that do not involve 'meaningful interchanges' (Cantle 2001). In the same vein, Trevor Phillips (2005) warned that Britain was 'sleepwalking its way towards segregation' because many immigrants led 'parallel lives' and were choosing 'self-segregation'. More recently, Cameron (2011) argued that 'under the doctrine of state multiculturalism we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream'. In this sense, policy interventions have contributed to anxieties about segregation and cultural withdrawal (Solomos 2003).

Much of the debate on ethnically concentrated urban area has been focused on the Muslim population (Bloch, Neal, and Solomos 2013). Given this culturalist emphasis, it is not surprising that the first political answers to segregation have been promoted through race-relations legislation (Solomos 2003; Bloch, Neal, and Solomos 2013). Although the first New Labour administration under Tony Blair (1997–2001) aimed to distinguish itself from the Conservative Party by emphasising its commitment to social justice for racial minorities (Schuster and Solomos 2004), little attention has been devoted to minority-ethnic segregation either in the Social Exclusion Unit established by Tony Blair in 1998, in the Runnymede Trust report (2000) on *The future of multi-ethnic Britain*, or in the Race and Housing Inquiry *Challenge report* (2001) – see also Phillips (2006a, 27). In other words, while the media and political discourse on ethnic concentration in the UK has been fairly pejorative, policies have not 'fought' ethnic clustering actively.

One possible explanation for this lack of political action is related to the complexity of the phenomenon and its need for multi-dimensional solutions (economic as much as social, and individual as much as macro measures on migration flows, for instance). Another explanation for the lack of action in the UK is the fact that, in some circumstances, ethnic concentration was perceived an advantage, as in the case of asylum-seekers who were usually settled near others from the same country. The underlying assumption was that their community would help and give them support in the difficult initial period after their arrival in a new country. This perspective changed, however, with the increasing number of asylum-seekers arriving during the 1990s, their unequal distribution within the UK and the economic differences their arrival created, as well as the terrorist attacks and urban disturbances highlighted above. This resulted in the

implementation of dispersal measures for asylum-seekers in 1999 (see *Asylum and Immigration Act* 1999).

Except for refugees and asylum-seekers, few measures have been put in place to tackle segregation in the UK. Those measures which *have* been implemented do not attack the structural determinants of access to resources (as highlighted by, *inter alia*, Phillips 2006a, 2006b; Twigg, Taylor, and Mohan 2010; Bloch, Neal, and Solomos 2013). Firstly, they still neglect ‘how racism and the uneven flows of cultural power affect social relations’ (Bloch, Neal, and Solomos 2013, 63). And secondly, the responsibility to mingle is placed on ethnic minorities rather than on the majority (see also Phillips 2006b for a similar critique).

The negative effects of ethnic concentration have also been well documented in scholarly works, starting with the Chicago School and, in particular, Robert Park’s study ‘The city’ (1925/1967). Park sees ethnic concentration as a process of segregation which represents ‘moral distances’ and ‘make[s] the city a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate’ (1925/1967, 40). In other terms, segregation is thought to hamper social and economic mobility and leads to the social reproduction of inequalities, concentrating geographically deprived characteristics such as poverty, unemployment, high crime rates, poor schools and excessive mortality (Wilson 1987; Massey 1990; Massey and Denton 1993). Carling adds to this argument that segregation is chosen by people because of their increasing ‘differing racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds’ and the conflicts these cultural differences are argued to create between them (2008, 553). The long-term negative effect of segregation increases concerns about it. While the early Chicago-School researchers saw withdrawal from society as temporary and migrants moving out of enclaves and assimilating after a certain period of time, this linear process is no longer considered straightforward. It has been shown that, for certain groups, there are more-structural obstacles to moving out of specific areas (Taeuber and Taeuber 1964; Portes and Zhou 1993).

However, while the media and political discourse portray ethnic concentration in this negative, unilateral and static way, there is no evidence of ‘ghetto-style’ ethnic concentration within the UK (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2006; Phillips 2006a). It seems, rather, that the UK (in contrast with the US) shows ‘ethnic dispersal’ (Sabater 2008; Finney and Simpson 2009; Peach 2009). There are, nevertheless, cases of ethnic concentration<sup>2</sup> in housing and labour markets – especially for newcomers and those in a precarious situation of stay such as undocumented migrants (Anderson et al. 2006; Jones, Ram, and Edwards 2006; Erdemir and Vasta 2007; Bloch 2013). If we look into studies on ethnic enclaves, the positive effects of concentration are also emphasised.

Wilson and Portes (1980), for example, found that a sizeable proportion of the Cuban refugees they researched in Miami went to work for co-ethnics in concentration areas and that those who did so were doing better than refugees employed in non-co-ethnic businesses. This ‘ethnic-enclave hypothesis’ was later explained by Portes and Bach (1985) by the solidarity that exists between co-ethnics. Along with this work, the majority of studies emphasising the positive

effects of ethnic enclaves have been dedicated to the economic and social role of co-ethnics in finding a job (Model 1988; Etzioni 1993; Sanders and Nee 1996; Hagan 1998; Waldinger and Lichter 2003) or in developing ethnic businesses, either because they are barred from the primary labour market (Wilson and Portes 1980; Portes and Jensen 1989; Zhou and Logan 1989; Light, Bhachu, and Karageorgis 1993) or because they manage to take over a particular market (Waldinger 1993; Schrover, van der Leun, and Quispel 2007; Aytar and Rath 2012; Bloch 2013). Zimbabweans in Britain, for instance, are clustered in the care and cleaning industries (McGregor 2007), while agriculture, construction and catering have been identified as sectors where ethnic minority-owned businesses which employ undocumented migrants are more likely to be found (Anderson et al. 2006; Jones, Ram, and Edwards 2006; Erdemir and Vasta 2007; Bloch 2013). These employment niches also have spatial implications, as illustrated by several articles in a recent special issue of *Identities* as they can transform a neighbourhood into a transnational hub (Gidley 2013; Schmoll and Semi 2013). Ethnic enclaves can thus represent a ‘gateway’ to residential as well as economic upward mobility. They can also have a protective role towards authority (Keith 1993), minimise ‘culture shock’ (Ward, Bochner, and Furnham 2001) and may create a sense of familiarity and belonging (Peach 1996, 386). Spatial proximity, for example, can make it easier to live an intense family life and maintain social networks that may be beneficial to ethnic minorities’ participation in society. Research in Hackney shows that areas with social and economic deprivation and high ethnic concentrations do not necessarily lead to tensions (London Borough of Hackney 2010), as long as ‘people adhere to a tacit “ethos of mixing”’ (Wessendorf 2013, 407).

Recent work on residential patterns is characterised by the combination of choice and constraint as explanatory factors in ethnic clustering and the mixed views regarding the consequences of this phenomenon on people’s mobility and integration (see, for instance, Kudenko and Phillips 2009 and Merry 2013). In other words, these types of study recognise ethnic diversity as a dynamic phenomenon both determined by and determining different variables such as economic and social status, gender, migration, education status, age and religion (Sarre 1986; Sarre, Phillips, and Skellington 1989; Bloch, Neal, and Solomos 2013). From these studies, we can conclude that the impact of ethnic clustering is far from univocal.

Vertovec (2007) argues that ethnic enclaves are enabled by the ‘diversification of diversity’ or superdiversity<sup>3</sup> which implies a more complex profile and experiences in terms of migratory trajectories, legal status, economic situation, educational background, gender and age-created differing statuses within groups of the same ethnic or national origin (Gidley 2013; Rogaly and Qureshi 2013; Wessendorf 2013). An illustration of this can be found with former migrants from the 1960s–1970s, who have now the resources to employ co-ethnic migrants with a less-stable residence status (Bloch and Chimienti 2011). Newcomers can benefit from this context of super-diversity, which might allow them to find work in

co-ethnic businesses. Besides, the ‘many more potential identities related to super-diversity that are negotiated at the level of the neighbourhood’ gives them several entry points through which to get attached to a place and ‘makes it slightly easier for them to belong’, despite their vulnerability (Gidley 2013, 366).

In this article, we argue that immigrant pathways in super-diverse cities operate at different scales, the local as well as the cosmopolitan super-diverse metropolis. In line with Bourdieu (1999), we argue that fixedness is a characteristic of the disadvantaged (see also Savage 2010; Gidley 2013; Jensen 2013, 440–441) and acknowledge that the more vulnerable tend to be stuck in the local sphere. Bourdieu underscores that various types of capital (human, economic, cultural and social) are needed in order to access mobility. While he depicts mobility as a sign of power, Bourdieu also recognises that physical proximity can promote social capital and mobility (1999, 127; Jensen 2013, 441). Differences are thus not static. Other scholars have also highlighted that ethnic clustering is a fluid phenomenon and that differences are mostly negotiated during everyday experiences (Amin 2002). In order to grasp this dynamic relationship, we need to focus on how people interact in their daily routines and acknowledge that differences are not static but relational and situational (see also Alexander, Edwards, and Temple 2007; Wise 2009; Leeuwen 2010; Bloch, Neal, and Solomos 2013; Wessendorf 2013). Following this line of thought, Knowles shows that the focus on ‘everyday registration in the city’ and ‘micro-dynamics of super-diversity’ will enable a better understanding of super-diversity and of its spatial implications, which have not so far been sufficiently empirically explored (2013, 652).

This article builds on the body of scholarly work on ethnic clustering and super-diversity and aims to expand it by exploring the individual experiences of Somali immigrants living in ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods anchored in the cosmopolitan city of London. We investigate Somali’s motives for choosing to create and live in such a homogenous area within a super-diverse city and their perceptions of the advantages and challenges of living in these areas. We take ethnic clustering as a fact based on our interviewees’ feelings. We do not provide statistics, or question whether this phenomenon has increased, nor do we explore structural causes such as institutional racism and economic inequalities. Instead, we are interested in various individual reactions to clustering in a context of super-diversity, by exploring how people deal with space, where they want to live and why, and the meaning they attribute to London’s super-diversity. We aim to gain more understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and urban space and to explore the different ways of experiencing diversity which defy classification as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ ethnic clustering.

### **Three cases**

This article is based on 33 semi-structured interviews with Somali immigrants who came to the UK after having lived in the Netherlands. Fieldwork was

conducted between March 2008 and March 2009 in London and Leicester. Sixteen Somalis were interviewed in London (6 female and 10 male) and 17 in Leicester (8 female and 9 male). These 33 Somalis are not representative of the whole Dutch Somali community in the UK, but their stories do give important insights into their experiences of moving from one European country to another and, more importantly in the context of this article, of moving from a dispersed situation to living in a concentrated area within a super-diverse city. Of the 33 families interviewed, 25 had moved within the Netherlands (usually from small villages to modest cities) before making the decision to move again to the UK (Liempt 2011a). All our respondents had ended up in deprived areas (either in London or Leicester) with high concentrations of the foreign born. However, they show different paths of mobility and different ways of coping with deprivation in their neighbourhood.

For this article, we have selected three stories from the London interviews which, to us, represent the main patterns of migrants' coping with deprivation in a context of super-diversity. The three cases show how ethnically concentrated urban areas have diverse meanings for different people and can be experienced in a number of ways. The article limits itself to the data that were collected in London because of the city's unique character when it comes to diversity and because it hosts the largest Somali community in the UK. The 2011 Census estimates the Somali community in London at around 112,000 (Office for National Statistics 2011). Besides, London has a vivid history of Somali immigration. The first Somalis arrived in the nineteenth century as seafarers. Leicester has a large immigrant population as well, but less diversity within this group. Moreover, it only recently experienced Somali immigration (Liempt 2011a, 2011b), again allowing for less diversity within the immigrant population.

Somalis in London are located all over the city. Accurate data are missing, but high concentrations can definitely be found in Tower Hamlets (Bethnal Green and Whitechapel). This borough has a history of Somali inhabitants, as it hosted the first Somali seafaring community, and Somalis are, today, the largest refugee group and the second-largest minority ethnic community there (Cole and Robinson 2003). The first story, that of Mohamed, is situated in Tower Hamlets and illustrates how beneficial living in a homogenous neighbourhood can be. The second story, Nimo, takes place in Dagenham, a large suburb of East London, part of the London borough of Barking and Dagenham. It is a diverse working-class area with African, Asian and Eastern European migrants. Nimo's experience emphasises that ethnic clustering can endure and may increase social control. The third case we present is located in Wembley, in northwest London. Somalis in this area are mainly refugees who have arrived since 1990 (Cole and Robinson 2003). However, the area is close to Heathrow airport, which is a significant source of employment and has a number of low-cost housing estates that have attracted Somali refugees and other Somalis from across London to settle there as well (Cole and Robinson 2003, 16). Lula's story exemplifies the ideal situation for migrants who benefit from the advantages of both the



super-diversity present in London and of the ethnically concentrated urban area where they are living.

***Functional ethnic concentration: the potential of living in homogenous neighbourhoods***

Mohamed (44 years old) moved to London's Tower Hamlets in 2000 from the Netherlands. He had arrived in the Netherlands as an asylum-seeker in 1993, had been granted refugee status in 1998 and Dutch citizenship in 1999. He liked the Netherlands as a country very much. He described it as 'clean, very modern, very organised and sociable'. He contrasted it with the UK, which he described as 'dirty and pure capitalism, everybody works really hard and people hardly have time for each other'. In the Netherlands, Mohamed had tried to open a shop with friends but bureaucracy had worked against them because they did not have the right certificates and did not speak Dutch well enough. As a result, Mohamed did not see how he could build up a future in the Netherlands. When he visited friends in London in 1998, the idea to move to the UK had really taken hold.

I felt like I was in Somalia when I walked around in Tower Hamlets. I also saw Somalis opening up businesses everywhere and having successes.

Although Mohammed knew it was a risk to move countries...

To leave again, to go to a new world, was difficult, what do you lose, what do you gain? I was thinking, 'Can I really take the risk of leaving everything behind again?'. I had to start from zero again.

..he was seduced by the presence of co-ethnics and the ease of opening a business in the UK. Mohamed only had 1000 euros, but he decided to leave everything behind and go. He knew many people in Tower Hamlets who explained everything about life in London and who helped him to find a place to stay. In the first month he found a flat to share for £20 a week. Later he found a bigger place for himself to live. He was able to pay for it because his friends had also helped him to find a place to work. His first job was in a money-transfer company and he worked in a Somali restaurant on the side. He enjoyed working in the neighbourhood very much. He had a lot of contact with Somali people; they talked about politics, listened to BBC Somalia radio, went to the mosque together and ate Somali food in the local restaurants. These were the things Mohamed had missed while living in the Netherlands. Of course, he was also working long hours and that was tiring, but he explained that getting his self-esteem back while working hard was worth the move. He also felt himself lucky to be able to begin saving money from the start.

Mohamed hardly ever leaves his neighbourhood: he lives, works and socialises in Tower Hamlets, the 'Little Mogadishu' of London as people call it. The

concentration of Somalis within the neighbourhood of Tower Hamlets has been really favourable for Mohamed. Economically, it allowed him to find a job and a stable income, which he had not succeeded in the Netherlands. This finding supports the ‘ethnic-enclave hypothesis’ (Wilson and Portes 1980, see also Jargowsky 2009). In addition, the presence of a Somali community also allowed him to collectively listen to BBC Somalia radio in local Internet shops, go to the mosque together and eat Somali food in the local restaurants. This social function of the ethnic enclave turned out to be very important in Mohamed’s daily life. More than just a ‘sense of familiarity and belonging’ (Peach 1996, 386), the link with his ethnic community and the fulfilment of his professional purpose have reinforced his self-esteem and confidence – something that he had lost in the Netherlands.

The story of Mohamed illustrates that living a ‘parallel’ life that does not involve the so-called ‘meaningful interchanges’ can be something ‘meaningful’ for migrants. Mohamed feels better in London than he did in The Hague (the Netherlands), he has a job, an active social life and is generally much happier. At the same time, his story also shows that he would not have been able to move to London if he had not known people in Tower Hamlets. One very important reason why he survived the first difficult period in London was his transnational network. His Somali friends and family gave him access to information, housing and even a job. Besides, for Mohamed the context of super-diversity does not add much to his daily life because he spends most of his time in the neighbourhood, at the local level.

### ***Endured ethnic concentration: the challenges of living a ‘Locked-Up’ Life***

Nimo is a Somali girl of 25 who was born in Amsterdam and now lives with her Somali husband in Dagenham, a predominantly white working-class area, with only an estimated 10% being black. She initially moved from the Netherlands with her parents when she was 16 years old, which was not an easy move. Nimo describes the process of settling in as ‘something you just have to accept’. She knows several young people who have rebelled against the decision but, according to her, they are worse off now. Her parents decided that it was better to move to the UK; they did not communicate with their children and it was hard, but ‘There is nothing you can do’.

Nimo’s first city of arrival in the UK was Leicester. In 2002, the whole family moved in with an uncle and aunt in a small house but they soon found a place for themselves. After a year they moved to Birmingham because Nimo’s mother did not like Leicester and found it too small. Nimo stayed for 5 years in Birmingham before moving to London, where she moved in with her husband. He had lived in Dagenham since he first arrived in the UK from Somalia. His whole family lives in the area and Nimo complains about her in-laws being very present in their lives. ‘I am used to a bit more privacy, I want less casual dropping in and more

phone calls ahead'. But, again, she told us that there is little she can do and that she tries to get used to it.

When we talk about her youth in the Netherlands, Nimo points out a difference in terms of living in a country where the Muslim community is much more present. She describes the fact that many of her Dutch Somali friends have changed since they have moved to the UK: 'They have become more Somali'. She herself has also changed.

I am also wearing a headscarf now, it is only since I live here [in the UK], that is pretty strange actually. I started wearing one when we arrived here. We just had to wear the headscarf, because everybody was looking at us. You know the thing is people here they talk, in Leicester it was worse, it was my aunt, my mother's friend, they always came to the door to look at me whenever I passed by. It was such a strange feeling. At first I did it because of the pressure, but then you get used to it. And when you see other people wearing it, at some point you feel at ease with the headscarf.

When we talk about the difference between the Netherlands and the UK, Nimo tells us that Somalis in the UK are less exposed to other nationalities and that there is no need to integrate because they live in areas with predominantly Somali people and are not exposed to different views.

In Holland, whether you like it or not you are living amongst them, whereas here it is, they don't want to be part of any other community, you just encounter [the] same ideas, same people, same background. And there is more pressure from the community to conform to the ideas of the group.

Nimo's story sheds another perspective on ethnic enclaves than Mohamed's story – her neighbourhood is predominantly white but, because of her personal experiences with social control by her Somali in-laws, and her previous experiences in Leicester, a city that is majority Muslim, she describes her area as an ethnic enclave. She also mentions how social pressure has changed her behaviour as she is now, for example, wearing a headscarf whereas she did not do that in the Netherlands. Besides, she points out that living in an enclave for a long time may have socioeconomic disadvantages as well. She points out that 'There are people here who live here for more than 20 years and they do not speak a word of English'.

In Nimo's case, living in a homogenous area emphasises the distance and difference from the rest of the population. She longs for other types of encounter than with her Somali country men – women and highlights that people in her neighbourhood do not mix: 'The Blacks stick with the Blacks, the Asians with the Asians and the Rugby types with the Rugby types'. This finding is in line with other research that questions the ability of ethnically diverse urban areas to help people mix with others (Butler and Robson 2003; Valentine 2008; Ettlinger 2009; Butler and Hamnett 2011).

Nimo is also very nostalgic about her life in the Netherlands, where she never considered herself an immigrant but just a Dutch girl, and where she intermingled much more. Previous experiences thus also matter a lot in how people experience their neighbourhood.

For Mohamed, the homogeneity of his little enclave within Tower Hamlets offers him functional and symbolic advantages; for Nimo living in a congregate area represents more a barrier to her social mobility. The differences between Mohamed and Nimo could be explained through all kinds of vulnerability and gender differences (Okin 1999), but generational differences also seem to play an important role. Interviews with the second generation in particular show that living in ethnically concentrated areas is often experienced as oppression. Concentrated areas may thus represent a 'gateway to residential and economic mobility' (Jargowsky 2009, 1130), and offer opportunities to socialise with country men and – women as in the case of Mohamed but, if people stay in a situation of vulnerability, lacking other opportunities for too long, ethnic enclaves may also become a barrier to migrants' social mobility, as illustrated by Nimo.

### *The best of both worlds*

Lula is a young Somali woman who went to London to study international law. She spent her youth in a small town on the Dutch coast where she went to an international school. Lula moved to the Netherlands from Somalia when she was three and a half years old. She had a very good life in the Netherlands, with many international friends. When she was ready to go to university she decided to change countries. She could not find the courses she wanted in the Netherlands and so decided to go for a degree from an English university.

So I moved in July 2004, just after I graduated. In June I did my exams, got my degree and then I came here and started in September. I had a really difficult time – I came with my brother and we were living with my auntie in a two-bedroom flat. That was a big difference from having your own space, also the commute. I was really surprised by how long it takes to get to university. In Holland it was just five minutes on my bike; here in London it was different – the bus, the tube, everything takes so long.

Despite the difficult start, Lula really enjoyed London. She made friends quickly and profited from everything the city had to offer.

London's cosmopolitan character is very attractive for those who want to move away from small villages and middle-sized cities in the Netherlands [...]. We were advised by Somalis to go and live outside London because it is cheaper, but why would you go there if you can live in London?

The city also gave her access to the discipline of her choice at university, which does not exist in the Netherlands. Lula mostly talks about London as a whole

when she refers to all the possibilities available to her and is not stuck to her neighbourhood. Her brother who is less educated and has only Somali friends has a completely different experience of the same city and the same neighbourhood.

The area where we live, close to Wembley, is densely populated by people of ethnic-minority background. My brother says because we live in a deprived area the only socialisation he can get is going to teahouses. He hangs out with young boys who eat *qat*. I think he should take responsibility for his own life.

When we talk about the future, Lula does not see herself going back to the Netherlands and, in the UK, London really is the only city where she could live. She sees life in London as a fantastic opportunity in terms of work and education, and also socially and culturally. Although Lula has had the opportunity to live in a less-poor neighbourhood than she does right now, she stays in Wembley, where she feels protected. In terms of social control, Lula points out that she is lucky because people in her neighbourhood think she is Ethiopian as she does not wear the headscarf. If they thought she was Somali, she fears they would stop her and make comments. As such Lula's experience is very different from Nimo who suffers a lot from 'eyes on the street'. Her assumed 'Ethiopian' identity thus frees Lula from the social control of her community and London allows her to adopt different identities according to the situations she finds herself in.

Lula's case shows that the traditional literature on segregation is inappropriate for the reality of super-diversity, a reality in which migrants can navigate different sorts of pathway that either replicate or break patterns of segregation. Lula has the ability to operate at different scales and to live 'the best of both worlds'. Her higher human capital when she arrived in the UK is an important explanation for why she is able to benefit from London's opportunities. Several quantitative studies show that social mobility happens for all migrants but that it occurs more rapidly for those who arrive with more human capital (see, among others, Jargowsky 2009), which supports the relationships made by Bourdieu (1999) between fixedness and lack of power or capital.

## **Conclusion**

This article has explored the implementation of understandings and practices around ethnic concentration and super-diversity. It argues that both employ very static and bounded notions which deny the complex formations of lived experiences. While, for Mohamed, living in an ethnic area has a functional meaning and is not against his will, Nimo finds it oppressive and experiences it as a constraint. Finally, Lula manages to use the opportunities offered by super-diverse London while, at the same time, residing in a homogenous area. From these cases, we see that super-diversity is not available to all. For some it is a luxury that benefits them only indirectly (as ethnically concentrated areas are created thanks to the diversification of society). They do not have the individual

resources to break out of their *habitus*, which leads to their social and economic reproduction. For others it is a direct advantage to be able to switch between various ‘parallel lives’. The explanations of the different experiences of living in ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods are therefore both structural as well as individual. Ethnicity and the neighbourhood effect are one explanatory factor for deprivation and conflict but not the only one. In other words, social inequality and exclusion should be considered in the light of intersecting and multilevel factors of vulnerability.

Another point that we would like to stress is that ethnic concentration, as Iris Young points out, occurs ‘partly as a result of voluntary clustering and partly because of exclusion’ (Young 2000 quoted in Merry 2013, 3). While housing prices might restrict where we are able to live, we may also to live close to those who are similar to us as it provides emotional and economic comfort. In this sense, residential mixing does not necessarily lead to integration and therefore should not be imposed at any price as also argued by Merry (2013). Now of course voluntary actions are also influenced by ‘involuntary forces’ (Merry 2013, 3) and part of the reasons why some ethnic minorities want to live with country men and – women are related to the lack of other possibilities either economic or social, as well as the stigmatisation they would face if they were living in another area. While we are aware of these structural barriers, we have shown that some like Mohamed and Lula manage to invert or rearrange the negative effects of ethnic concentration.

Finally, we want to emphasise that in order to avoid a downsizing spiral related among other factors to ethnic clustering, living in a mixed residential area should remain accessible for those who want to. To allow people who lack the resources to benefit from super-diversity, the active governance of diversity is needed in order to tackle the structural barriers – including racism and the correlated downsizing patterns – between (among others) the place where people live, their level of education and their job. The problem, as we have argued in this article, is that, although recent policies are more sensitive towards diversity (like, e.g. the final report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, *Our Shared Future*), they tend to emphasise individual responsibility for social cohesion and to promote ‘more punitive and exclusionary interventions’ (Bloch et al. 2013, 272). This trend towards individualising the responsibility to integrate renews former assimilationist policies and the side effects correlated with this culturalist approach, such as various forms of exclusion. The UK’s increasing diversity presents an urgent need to adopt a different perspective which focuses on the structural barriers to integration. To tackle these structural barriers does not mean to implement forced dispersal which has been shown to be counterproductive in terms of integration and solidarity but to change ‘the conditions under which one’s segregated experience occurs’ (Merry 2013, 4).

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## Notes

1. We borrow this title from Peach's (1996) paper 'Good segregation, bad segregation'.
2. In this paper, we use the term ethnic concentration to discuss our empirical data. We do not use the term segregation because of the negative connotation and avoid the term self-segregation because we feel that it ignores the structural causes of ethnic concentration.
3. For a discussion on this concept, see Berg and Sigona (2013).

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