"Because we're *all* different" – Everyday experiences of belonging among young people from immigrant backgrounds in Tottenham

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A B S T R A C T

The United Kingdom, as most other West European countries, is being confronted with increasing diversity in terms of ethnicity, language, religion and identity. Questions on the desirability and possibility of a multicultural society are a topic of debate. In the last decade, the public debate has increasingly centred on young people from immigrant backgrounds, often referring to their perceived failure to assimilate to the host society. Issues of 'belonging', either to the host society or the country of their parents are central in this debate. Little scholarly research, however, has paid attention to experience and negotiation of belonging of the young people from immigrant backgrounds themselves. In this study I look at how young people from immigrant backgrounds (12–19 years old) living in a highly diverse neighbourhood (Tottenham, London), experience and negotiate belonging to British society and to their neighbourhood. In this paper I show that (1) belonging negotiated by the young people in Tottenham is dynamic and situational, and should be seen as a process of seeking and being granted belonging which happens at different scales; and (2) whereas London is a city famous for its image of cosmopolitanism, openness, and tolerance we also see that the young people in the study do not always experience it as such. Expressing a strong sense of belonging to Tottenham could be seen as a reaction to not always feeling part of British society.

1. Introduction

Cities in the United Kingdom, as in most other West European countries, are becoming more diverse. Not only are cities diverse in ethnic, demographic and socioeconomic terms, but within groups also many differences exist with respect to attitudes, lifestyles and activities (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013). Questions on the desirability and possibility of a multicultural society are a topic of debate. In the last decade, these debates have increasingly centered on the lives and futures of young people from immigrant backgrounds. In the public debate we see a growing anxiety about the extent to which these young people feel they belong to the broader society, and as a consequence the extent to which they will contribute to a social cohesive society in the future (Crul et al., 2013). The question of immigrant loyalties is central in these concerns and young people from immigrant backgrounds are often seen as 'lost between two cultures' (Poynting et al., 2004). As stated by David Cameron in his speech on radicalisation and Islamic extremism at the Munich security conference (2011):

In the UK, some young men find it hard to identify with the traditional Islam practised at home by their parents whose customs can seem staid when transplanted to modern Western countries. But they also find it hard to identify with Britain too, because we have allowed the weakening of our collective identity. Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream. We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong.

Moreover, politicians increasingly refer to the high school dropout and crime rates among the young people from immigrant backgrounds, and see this as a sign that they fail to integrate (Thomson and Crul, 2007). The sense of belonging of immigrant young people is thus a principal concern of most countries in Western Europe.

Existing studies on the belonging of young people from immigrant backgrounds tend to focus mainly on belonging in the form of citizenship *or* on personal feelings of belonging. When studying belonging, however, it is important to pay attention to the *interplay* between people's own experiences and feelings – or in other words, their sense of being 'at home' (Duyvendak, 2011) – and the politics of belonging and processes of socio-spatial exclusion. The personal feeling 'I belong here' is unavoidably influenced by

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a complex set of power relations. As noted by Antonsich (2010: 644) *'The risk of focusing only on one of these two dimensions is to fall in the trap of either a socially de-contextualized individualism or an all-encompassing social(izing) discourse'*.

Moreover, a sense of belonging depends on the social context people find themselves in. In this paper I will specifically focus on the above-mentioned two dimensions of belonging among young people from immigrant backgrounds in Tottenham in London. London, and particularly Tottenham are interesting cases to study. The reason to choose London is that the city emphasizes ethnic diversity as something that is emblematic of the city and this is presented as a matter of pride, whereas at the same time this might not be experienced by all people in the city. In this context, Tottenham is a particularly interesting neighbourhood to study, as it is among the most diverse areas in the city. This might influence the dynamics of belonging among young people from immigrant backgrounds. In this paper I will answer the following research question:

How do young people from immigrant backgrounds in Tottenham experience and negotiate belonging in their every day practices?

I will show that (1) belonging negotiated by the young people in Tottenham is dynamic and situational, and should be seen as a process of seeking and being granted belonging which happens at different scales; and (2) whereas London is a city famous for its images of cosmopolitanism, openness, and tolerance we also see that the young people in the study do not always experience it as such. Expressing a strong sense of belonging to Tottenham could be seen as a reaction to not always feeling part of British society.

2. Belonging among young people from immigrant backgrounds

In the last decades, the question of belonging of young people from immigrant backgrounds has been discussed extensively (Elliot, 2009). The question of to what extent and how young people from immigrant backgrounds 'culturally adapt' to the host country is often covered both in mass media and scholarly publications (Brouwer, 2006; Song, 2003). In this context, Yuval-Davis et al. (2006) define belonging as the desire for attachments and emotional investments. Anthias (2006) adds that important aspects of belonging are that it gives a person a sense of identity and that it gives a feeling of being part of a larger whole. Duyvendak (2011) defines belonging as 'feeling at home'. He conceptualizes home as having three components—familiarity, home as haven (secure, safe) and home as heaven (place for self-expression, free identity). These components can sometimes contradict each other, leading to places that can be freeing and exclusive at the same time.

The discussion on belonging is especially relevant for young people from immigrant backgrounds (second and third generation immigrants). Reitz and Somerville (2004) argue that the integration experiences of second and third generation immigrants are different from those of the first generation because many of the initial settlement barriers, such as language, are no longer relevant. Moreover, second and third generation immigrants have grown up and been educated in the host country. However, their parents may have kept alive aspects of the culture of their country of origin, such as language, values, cuisine and music, and have transmitted them to their children (Gallant, 2008). As a result these children may feel a sense of belonging to the culture of their parents as well as to the host society.

The academic discussion on the belonging of young people from immigrant backgrounds has evolved over time. Initially, studies mainly focussed on the question how 'ethnic' the young people were (Baldassar, 1999) and how they could assimilate to the host country, as well as on cultural conflict between immigrants and the host society (Elliot, 2009). In the recent years, scholarly interest has shifted to the complexity of belonging of young people from immigrant backgrounds: belonging should not be seen as confined to just one category, or be put in either-or terms. Instead it is seen as multifaceted, contextual and hybrid (Hall, 2002; Song, 2003; Malson et al., 2002; Frisina, 2010). Belonging depends on the social environment and on the specific place and time in which it is 'enacted'. This can result in multiple and sometimes even contradictory social patterns of belonging. This also means that children of immigrants are no longer seen as being in a 'cultural dilemma' between the culture of their parents and that of the host country. Several studies (Hall, 2002; Malson et al., 2002; Elliot, 2009) show that rather than having to choose between two dichotomous life trajectories and identity formations, young people from immigrant backgrounds often cross different cultural fields.

2.1. Belonging as a process

In this paper I theorize belonging as something that is produced and reproduced through encounters and experiences with other people (Elliot, 2009). In other words, (young) people's sense of belonging is related to the cultural and social practices in their everyday environments. In this paper I use Antonsich's (2010) analytical framework for belonging, namely:

"...*belonging should be analyzed both as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging).*"

This distinction also resembles the one discussed by Fenster (2005), who differentiates between belonging as an official, public-oriented 'formal structure' of membership - for example, in the form of citizenship -, and belonging as a personal feeling of place attachment, which is the result of everyday practices (see also Jones and Krzyzanowski, 2008).

It is also important to understand belonging as a process rather than a state (Antonsich, 2010). Yuval-Davis's (2006, 2011) theorisation of belonging as a dialectic of 'seeking' and 'granting' is particularly useful here. She argues that we have to look at belonging as the outcome of a dynamic interplay between the side that claims belonging and the side that has the power of 'granting' belonging. This 'granting' belonging is done by those who in are in a position of power, such as governments or people from majority groups, and can lead to individuals or minority groups being excluded or positioned as 'the other'. Understanding belonging thus means we should also focus on processes of inclusion/exclusion that enable or restrict a person's claim for belonging. By focussing of the processes of seeking belonging and granting belonging at the neighbourhood and national level I respond to Antonsich's (2010: 20) call that *'methodologically (...) future empirical studies on the notion of (territorial) belonging can benefit from a perspective which aims to map belonging at the intersection of these two ongoing dynamics'*, and that we *'should look more carefully at the plurality of scales at which belonging is articulated'*.

2.2. Belonging in highly diverse neighbourhoods

A sense of belonging depends on the social context people find themselves in and might thus be dependent on the neighbourhoods and communities in which a person grows up (Hendry et al., 2007; Devereux, 1978). There now exists a growth of interest in the ways in which young people's identities emerge in specific

locales. Back (1996), for example, investigated *"the cultural dynamics of new ethnicities at the level of everyday life"* (p. 4) in two London neighbourhoods, one of which was primarily composed of white working-class residents ('Riverview'), the other far more multi-ethnic in character ('Southgate'). He illustrates that inequalities in housing allocation have resulted in different, complex, sets of community discourses in the two neighbourhoods, particularly in the ways in which diversity and racism were talked about. In Riverview, a particular anti-racist discourse developed alongside racist ideas of community. On the one hand, there was a 'white flight' semantic system, based on the notion of a lost (white) community, but at the same time there was a semantic of 'neighbourhood nationalism' characterised by inclusive harmony based on a shared territory. The latter semantic was predominant among young people. However, Back notes that it was still the white population which decided the criteria for inclusion (Back, 1996; Sveinsson, 2007). In the more multi-ethnic Southgate, young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds were more likely to cross differences and to construct more commonalities. A different semantic system developed, which Back calls the 'our area' system. The young people in Southgate stressed their community feeling, but also differentiated themselves from Englishness and instead emphasizing their black or multicultural backgrounds. Hickman et al. (2008) studied belonging among adults in London neighbourhoods. One of their main findings was that, at a neighbourhood level, locality played a more important role than ethnicity, race or class in defining belonging. This did not mean that ethnicity, race or class did not play a role at all, but that the way is which they were expressed and were socially viable were through locality, or the idea of 'being from here'.

Growing up in a highly diverse neighbourhood, such as Tottenham might influence the dynamics of belonging among young people from immigrant backgrounds. As also noted above, until recently the theories and methods used to study immigrants mainly focused on assimilation of immigrants into the mainstream culture: assimilation was considered successful when immigrants were able to achieve the socio-economic status of the mainstream, spoke the language of the host country and when spatial concentrations of immigrants were reduced. This approach, however, does not capture the present-day reality in highly diverse neighbourhoods. Due to processes of globalisation, migration and European unification, encounters with other cultures and languages have greatly increased (Blommaert and Backus, 2011; Vertovec, 2007a). Vertovec (2007a) speaks of post-multiculturalism and introduces the term 'super-diversity' to describe the emergence of new forms of socio-cultural diversity. Tasan-Kok et al. (2013) even speak of hyper-diversity, referring to an intense diversification of the population, not only in socio-economic, social and ethnic terms, but also with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities.

Scholars increasingly start to study (young) people's experiences in these super- or hyper-diverse social contexts. Central in these studies is often the question of which factors yield a sense of community and an appreciation of difference in diverse neighbourhoods. Wise (2009) illustrates the importance of paying attention to the sites where everyday encounters with difference occur. To really understand diversity and belonging it is key to study how encounters, interactions with, and negotiations over difference occur in the everyday places of neighbourhoods. Mayblin et al. (2015), for example, investigate what kind of encounters produce 'meaningful contact' that changes values and translates into a more positive attitude towards 'the other'. They conclude that it is important to establish a space where participants from different groups can safely explore their differences together and where they can establish shared interests. Moreover, Neal et al. (2016) illustrate how children in super-diverse neighbourhoods in London

encounter diverse others through schools, and that interactions across differences at school radiate out to other local social spaces, both public and private. The relations between encounters and meaningful contact, however, are not always that straightforward. Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) study the dynamic movement of an individual through space and time and show the constant processes of differentiation evident in socio-spatial relationships. More concretely, Harris (2013) shows how young people experience and deal with living in diverse neighbourhoods. She argues that young people often experience their local community as a physically divided space, such that they have a strong sense of belonging in some places and exclusion in others. Moreover, Hopkins (2011) investigated the impact of another social location, namely the university campus, on the cultural and religious experiences of young Muslim males. He shows that the campus is experienced as tolerant and diverse, but at the same time as exclusionary and hostile. These different experiences were related to the influences of global issues and national policies, as well as to the ways in which they encountered discrimination and exclusion in their everyday activities.

In this context it is specifically relevant to look at young people – in addition to adults – for three reasons. First of all, having fewer freedoms and less money than adults means that many young people are by necessity more rooted in their local environments. They are therefore more likely to occupy places where the production and contestation of difference is most heightened and meaningful (Harris, 2009). Children and young people have repeatedly been shown to be the social group who spend most time using urban spaces, and tend to have far more nuanced knowledge of local urban environments than do adults (Matthews and Limb, 1999; Karsten, 2005; Davis et al., 2006; Horton et al., 2014). Secondly, youths grow up in a much more diverse world than their parents did. This might mean they are more familiar with diversity in their everyday environments, which might influence their sense of belonging. Studies, for example, show that younger people are often more at ease with cultural diversity than older people (Hoerder et al., 2005). Young people interact more with other ethnic groups on a daily basis, for example in schools, youth clubs or sport clubs or neighbourhood settings, than adults. Thirdly, and related to the previous point, some scholars argue that the formal, public language of diversity and multiculturalism – including concepts like social cohesion and shared values – is an adult language (Semi et al., 2009). These concepts might not correspond with youths' everyday lived experiences.

3. Context and methods

3.1. Diversity in London

In the last decades, the changing immigration flows to the United Kingdom have led to a 'diversification of diversity' (Vertovec, 2007b). This means that not only people from more different ethnic backgrounds come to the UK, but also that the group of immigrants is much more diverse in terms of socio-economic backgrounds, education and lifestyles. This increasing diversity can primarily be seen in London. The 2011 census shows that 31% of the population of London was born outside of the UK. Moreover, 55% of respondents defined themselves as other than White British (for example residents that own a foreign passport, or people born in the UK, but from minority ethnic backgrounds). In 1991 this percentage was only 31% (Raco et al., 2014). In terms of socio-economic diversity, levels of inequality in London are strikingly high. Dorling (2011) shows that the richest 10% of London's residents have 273 times the income and assets of the poorest 10%. Twenty-eight per cent of the population live in households that

are in poverty compared with the UK figure of 22%. This means that more than two million Londoners live in poverty (Leeser, 2011).

3.2. Tottenham

The research was conducted in the Tottenham area in the North of London. In the 1970s the area was described as 'a place with just four big communities: an Afro-Caribbean community, a White 'cockney' community, an Irish community and a newly arrived Greek and Turkish Cypriot community' (Baker et al., 2015: 119). However, in the decades after that, the area has changed rapidly. Several waves of immigration have transformed the ethnic and socio-economic composition of Tottenham. The arrival of groups such as Asian immigrants in the 1980s, Kurdish and Somali refugees in the 1990s and Eastern European immigrants in the 2000s makes that Tottenham is often called 'the most diverse constituency in the world' (Baker et al., 2015: 119). The proportion White British residents in Tottenham is only 32%, compared to an average of 45% for London and 80% for England.

Besides being one of the most diverse areas in London, Tottenham is also one of the most deprived areas. Unemployment rates are high in Tottenham compared to the city average. In 2014, 4.7% of the working population claimed unemployment benefits (London average: 2.5%, Caven, 2014). A study by End Child Poverty (2014) showed that 42% of children in Tottenham are living in poverty, putting it in the worst 20 constituency areas in the country. Moreover, the area has a high residential turnover, partly as a consequence of the relatively cheap cost of living compared to wider London. The turnover disrupts schooling and leads to lower regard for the urban environment (Mayor of London's Office, 2012). The report of the Mayor of London's Office (2012) 'It Took Another Riot' describes Tottenham as 'a dismal environment' of intergenerational unemployment, boredom, poor aspiration, households living in poverty, troubled families and toxic relations between youth and the police (Dillon and Fanning, 2015).

3.3. Diversity policy in London and Tottenham

The image of London as one of the most diverse cities in the world is also presented in policy documents, academic literature and the popular media. London is often presented as a 'true cosmopolis' (Storkey and Lewis, 1996) and a 'world within a city' (GLA, 2011). In these representations ethnic diversity is seen as an important characteristic of the city and something to be proud of. After the 7/7 bombings in 2005, for example, the 'We are Londoners, We are one' campaign was lounged, which celebrates the fact that London is one of the most diverse cities in the world and that despite this diversity it is united (Morales and Giugni, 2016). The diversity of the city is generally seen as something that has to be celebrated and nurtured, rather than to be contested. This can be illustrated by the following quote from the document 'Equal Life Chances for All' (GLA, 2012a: 3):

> London is a great world city and its strength continues to be its dynamism and the diversity of its constantly changing population. London has always, and will always, welcome immigrants. It is immigrants that have made this city great over many decades, and successive generations bring new energy, skills, enterprise, opportunities, prosperity, and a rich and varied culture.

The narratives of diversity that exist in London are very different to those of national government. The latter primarily focuses on gangs of young people and 'extremism' among the city's Muslim population (see Cameron, 2011), whereas there is a much more consensual approach in the London policy discourses, which is less in inclined to stereotype particular groups (Raco et al., 2014). This consensual approach is even truer at the level of boroughs, including Haringey where Tottenham is part of. Diversity is seen as something that Tottenham should be proud of and the area's 'diverse ethnic profile' is presented in several policy documents as something that makes Tottenham a 'great place to live' (Haringey Council, 2013, 2014).

In this context of diversity, policies in Tottenham have, on the one hand, focused on making public spaces more secure, and less threatening for diverse groups (GLA, 2012a). The assumption behind this is that safer spaces encourage greater social interaction as more vulnerable groups are able to use public spaces in a more open way. However, the realities is somewhat less positive, particularly in terms of issues such as policing and anti-social behaviour, as security policies often target specific citizens, particularly young people and those from non-western backgrounds. Such practices have had toxic effects on relations between police and minorities (Raco et al., 2014). Parallel to these policies aimed at public space, schemes also increasingly promote the mentoring of young people from poor and immigrant communities and focus on educational attainment, individual aspirations, and projects that will equip 'young people with tools for the future' (GLA, 2012b: 12). In Tottenham there are several youth initiatives in place to achieve these goals, some of which were used as starting point for recruiting respondents (see below).

3.4. Methodology

The finding in this paper are based on field work conducted in the spring of 2015. Young people from immigrant backgrounds[1] were, first of all, recruited through community organizations. The community organization included a boxing school, a soccer club, and two youth clubs offering a wide range of activities, such as sports, music and homework club. The community organisations were based in different places throughout Tottenham. One of the youth clubs was a government organisation, the other organisations were set up by volunteers. Furthermore, I relied on snowball sampling to find additional respondents that were not involved in one of the community organisations. The aim was to find a mix of respondents from diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, age and ethnic background. Because of the recruitment methods used, there might be a slight bias towards young people that are involved in community organisations. These organisations were places where young people from all ethnic backgrounds were welcome: the encounters with diverse others here might result in a somewhat more positive view of ethnic diversity. The characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1.

In total 15 interviews were conducted. The interviews lasted between approximately 45 min and 1.5 h and were conducted by a white, female researcher, who was not from the United Kingdom. The fact that the researcher was an outsider to the neighbourhood and the country turned out to be mostly beneficial for the interview process. It allowed for more distance and for making the youth experts on their own neighbourhood.

The interviews focused on perceptions of urban diversity; socio-spatial activities; diversity of social networks and resources present in these networks; and experiences of racism and social exclusion. The interviews were transcribed in their entirety and then coded in NVivo. In the first round, general patterns in the data were identified and these were further refined during the subsequent rounds. Furthermore, text query and negative case analysis were used to strengthen or nuance the themes that emerged from the

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[1] In the context of this study 'young people from immigrant backgrounds' are young people that are born in the United Kingdom, but of which at least one of the parents is born abroad.

Table 1
List of respondents.

Respondent	Age	Gender	Ethnic background of parents
1. Abigail	12	Female	Turkish-Portuguese
2. Berenice	12	Female	Guyanese-Portuguese
3. Cathy	12	Female	Welsh-Indian
4. Deon	12	Male	Jamaican-Sierra Leone
5. Eli	15	Male	African
6. Felix	16	Male	African
7. Giannis	19	Male	Turkish-Cypriot
8. Hasan	13	Male	African-Irish
9. Isabel	18	Female	Jamaican
10. Jessica	15	Female	Jamaican
11. Kareem	16	Male	Ghanaian
12. Leah	15	Female	British-Jamaican
13. Max	16	Male	Congolese
14. Nathan	18	Male	African
15. Olivia	15	Female	Congolese

data. Participants were assigned pseudonyms, which are used throughout this paper to protect the participants' anonymity.

The fieldwork also included observations in the area, attendance of meetings at youth centres, and informal conversations with community workers. Notes were taken based on these observations and conversations and this information was used to inform the theorizing about the topic.

4. Results

As noted in the theoretical section, belonging should be seen as a process between seeking belonging and being granted belonging which takes place at different scales. Below I will discuss how the processes of seeking and granting belonging takes place at national and the city level, and at the level of the neighbourhood. Moreover, I will illustrate that experiences of belonging at different scales can influence each other.

4.1. Belonging to British society

In the public debate we see a growing anxiety about the extent to which young people from immigrant backgrounds feel they belong to the broader society. Particularly after the London bombings, this way of thinking emerged in the public discourse. People became increasingly worried about the prospect of 'home-grown terrorism' and the uncertain loyalties of young people from immigrant backgrounds (Skrbiš et al., 2007). In this section I will discuss how the respondents seek belonging to the wider society – which includes national belonging and belonging to the city of London – and how this belonging is granted.

4.1.1. Seeking belonging – experiences of belonging

The idea of belonging to British society was very much present in the narratives of young people. Almost half of the respondents indicated that they felt mostly British, and the majority of the respondents indicated that they felt at least partly British. Feeling British was mostly related to political factors such as being born in the UK, speaking the language and having a British passport. Belonging in this respect is thus defined as an official, public-oriented 'formal structure' of membership to the United Kingdom. As noted by Olivia:

> I feel more British because personally, I don't wanna go to Congo, but emm, yeah, I just feel more British because I was born here, I've got a British passport, this is basically my country.

When asked what it means to be British, Cathy answers the following:

> I would think, if you were born in England and it was your home and you lived there, you're British. You speak English, you're British, that's what I'd say, that was the terms of being British, yeah.

At the same time, several of the young people also mentioned a sense of belonging to the country and culture of their parents. In this context, young people referred to belonging more as a cultural construct. They saw their local, (multi-)ethnic culture as having different values than those of the 'white' society, which was mainly defined as the people living in other, white neighbourhoods in London and other parts of the United Kingdom. The difference between the young people and the 'other' were mainly defined in terms of them being less individualistic, more communitarian, more friendly and less posh (see also Doran, 2004). Abigail, for example, indicates that she feels less emotional belonging to the city of London, primarily because she feels the people living in 'the city' are 'not like her':

> I just feel like my own culture is Portugal and Turkish. I want to learn Portuguese for one of my subjects, that's it really. I don't feel like I'm British, English because I just don't feel like London, like posh, they like their fish 'n chips all the time. I'm just different.

Interesting to note here, is that she relates this absence of belonging to London not only to ethnic differences, but also to differences in behaviours related to socio-economic status. Leah (see below) also indicates that she feels a stronger sense of belonging to the culture of her parents than to the national and regional culture. What is interesting here is the fact that she is mixed race - her father is British - but she indicates that she does not identify with this part of her ethnic background:

> I'm from Jamaica, well my mum's from Jamaica, my dad's from England and Wales, but I don't really classify that, I don't classify myself as Welsh 'cos it's weird, I don't like it, but it's a'right. But I mostly tend to hang with my mum's side of the family, so most of the black people.

Several respondents also emphasized the multi-layered nature of their identity, feeling sometimes British and sometimes more related to the culture of their parents. Jessica, for example, refers to both her British side and her Jamaican side. She refers to cultural habits such as food and music, as well as aspects of her lifestyle as being Jamaican, but to language and being born in the UK as part of belonging to Britain:

> I've always said Jamaican, but obviously when I speak, I'm British, but I would say Jamaican 'cos that's like how I've grown up ... the food I eat, the music I listen to and sometimes the way I talk and just the way I do everything (...) I would say I'm more Jamaican, even though I was born here, deep down, I'm more Jamaican than I could ever be British, it's just something 'cos everyone in my family is Jamaican, it's just like Jamaicans coming down to me ... but I would say my brother's more British than Jamaican 'cos he's just different. He don't like all the Jamaican stuff I like, he likes more the British stuff, like we just contrast.

These findings suggest that national belonging among the young people in the study is multi-layered. We see that when referring to their Britishness the young people mostly refer to identity as a political construct. The young people sense of belonging was often a reflection of being born and living in Britain and speaking English. At the same time this does not exclude them from the feeling of also belonging to the culture of their parents.

4.1.2. Being granted belonging

All of the respondents in the study have British citizenship and, as shown above, they do refer to political factors to express their belonging to British society. Yet, even when political belonging is

granted, this might still not be enough to generate a sense of emotional belonging to British society. As I will show below, political determinants of belonging fail to respond to the need of some of the young respondents to feel recognized and accepted in their diversity.

Several of the respondents indicate that there is discrepancy between officially having citizenship, and thus officially belong to the UK, and the degree to which they are granted this belonging by others. Whereas the majority of the young respondents feel – at least partly – British as well as part of the city of London, this is not always seen as such by outsiders. Giannis, for example, explains:

(...) when I was younger I did, the primary school that I went to when I was about 9/10 was very English, there wasn't a lot of multicultural people. When I would go into different areas to play football, I was the only non-English person in my football team, so you would get a lot of people saying things, especially as I used to pray before I played a game, so you'd get people laughing, or things like that, but around here you wouldn't get it as much, you get it occasionally, but I don't believe you get it as much around here because it's so culturally diverse, it's more accepting around here.

Similarly, Abigail tells about negative experiences living in the 'white' city of Colchester:

Before, we moved to Colchester for a bit and we went to this place and this girl was calling me names and being racist because Colchester was full of loads and loads and loads of white people. In my primary school, you'd barely see black, or Asian, so I felt very different then and I didn't like it (...) when you mix with loads of different people, you find less racist people because they're used to nonwhite people. When you're mixed, people treat each other with respect.

These quotes show that these young people, while they might be official citizens of the UK, they feel that they often are not treated as such. They illustrate that political recognition in the form of citizenship is not sufficient, if the rest of society fails to 'grant' this recognition. In order to belong young people should feel that they are accepted in their diversity, but in some contexts it is difficult to claim belonging as the young people have to negotiate the 'othering' processes that are performed by those who have the power of 'granting' belonging. These results show similarities with the findings from Valentine and Sadgrove's (2012) study on the way in which individuals understand and live processes of social differentiation. Particular spaces, and the notions of who does or does not belong to these spaces, are produced through moral codes of the dominant groups that occupy them (e.g. what kinds of behaviour are perceived as good or acceptable). The pressure to fit in creates a sense of discomfort that comes from using a space with which young people's personal norms and values are not compatible. The narratives of the young people in our study also illustrate that this sense of discomfort is primarily the case in 'white' environments. As will be illustrated in the next section, the feelings of exclusion were less prominent in the highly diverse area of Tottenham.

4.2. Belonging to Tottenham

Above I have shown that the young people are granted political belonging, in the form of citizenship, but that this was sometimes not enough to generate a sense of emotional belonging to wider British society. This was related to the fact that they were often not granted belonging in spaces outside Tottenham. Below I will argue that a feeling of belonging to Tottenham functioned as an alternative for expressing a sense of being part of British society.

Most young people in the study are strongly rooted in their own neighbourhood. They often still live in the neighbourhood where they were born, and where many of their friends and family still live. The young people identify strongly with their neighbourhoods and localities, feeling that they have a stake in the local turf. It seems that local identity can provide the young people from immigrant backgrounds with an alternative by means of which they can feel at home. Cathy describes this feeling of being at home as follows:

(...) what I like about it is it's like homely, it feels like you can do stuff, you can go outside, you can travel places where you wanna go and some people there are really nice, they make you feel really good about yourself.

We really see the a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in Tottenham (Duyvendak, 2011). Personal experiences, relations, and memories attach the young people to the community. It was clear that for many youths their neighbourhood formed an important part of their identity. Also the high levels of social cohesion were mentioned as an important marker for belonging. Isabel, whose mum lives in Tottenham and dad lives in nearby Hackney – which is also a highly diverse neighbourhood – compares the two neighbourhoods:

I like Tottenham better because I feel like everyone knows each other more, and like Hackney's a bigger place, so everyone doesn't know each other 'cos they don't live close to each other and I feel like Hackney is a good place because it has more stuff to do, I guess and it's cleaner n'everything, but I think round here, it's like a neighbourhood, but everyone knows each other and like does stuff together.

A previous study in a diverse neighbourhood in Rotterdam (Visser et al., 2015) shows that young people are attached to their neighbourhood because it meets their needs for self-esteem and self-efficacy. The young people felt socially valued in their neighbourhood and felt they could be themselves. Similar mechanisms are likely to be at play in Tottenham as well.

Interestingly, the young people feel that they belonged to Tottenham and its community because of its diversity. Growing up in an area which is highly diverse, meant that ethnicity often did not form an important marker of in- and exclusion (see also Back, 1996). Diversity had become a normal part of the young people's life. The young people spent much time in public spaces such as the streets and plaza's, where they met and develop friendships with other neighbourhood youth with diverse social backgrounds. Moreover, parochial spaces such as community centres, schools and sports clubs also appeared important places for meeting diverse others and develop meaningful contacts (see also Amin and Parkinson, 2002). The narratives of the young people showed that they created new boundaries between groups, beyond culture, race and religion. They developed commonalities based on interests and activities, or in other words, they created new modes of belonging. As also shown by Mayblin et al. (2015), sharing interests was one of the main processes through which meaningful contact was created. As noted by Hasan:

Well, there's a lot of young people like my age from the same area, born in the same area, raised in the same area and we all like the same things, like the same football team, like the same everything 'cos we always like the same things, so you become friends very quickly.
Interviewer: And that's even despite people having a different cultural background?
Yeah. If they did have a cultural background, it didn't really matter 'cos we still like the same things and get to know each other even better, to try different things and just ...

Similarly Leah, explains:

Yeah, everyone's mixed, they'll be like Turkish people, Jamaican people, African, white people, there's everyone. No-one will ever ... you won't see a party with just one race, it's weird (...) Imagine walking into a party and there's pure Africans, it's uncomfortable.

Also the feeling that the young people were all 'in the same boat' – namely living in one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in London and struggling with the same issues, such as poverty and social exclusion – influenced the feeling of bonding between different groups of young people. Olivia (see below), for example, illustrates how outsiders have a specific image of Tottenham, as a poor and problematic area. This common feeling of being socially excluded might strengthen the sense of belonging young people have to the community and their locality, across ethnic boundaries:

Sometimes people feel like because we're in Tottenham, we're not higher class, we're just people that are ... 'cos grades are falling, so we're not really clever here and people sometimes feel that we're bad because you know how boys wear tracksuit bottoms and girls wear more revealing clothes, we're not like higher class, do you know what I mean?

The young people often referred to how Tottenham differed from the 'posh' parts of London. They mentioned different practices in terms of dress, food, community feeling, loudness and, as the example of Deon below shows, also in the ways in which football is played:

There's different things in north and east London because in east London and north London, people play football in the streets, but if you was to go to west London, they'll be playing on grass with boots and they'll be like come, just play on the streets like little street football and they'll be like 'no, we don't play on the street football.' (puts on a posh accent).

The quotations above support the conclusions of Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) who note that questions of social difference, exclusion and group identity are rarely reducible to ethnicity alone: social class, economic status and related behaviour are also important determinants of the demarcations of groups. For many of the young people in this study, their sense of difference from the 'white' population was not simply about a difference in skin colour, but also about the class status and value system of the white middle- and upper-class. Moreover, we can see that in Tottenham a local semantic system has developed that is similar to what Back (1996) calls 'our area' semantic. The young people in our study claim that the community is free from racial tension and stress harmonious relations amongst ethnic groups (though racism outside Tottenham remains a problem). At the same time, images of being different from the white community – whose members are posh and play 'football on grass' – are used to construct this sense of community.

To sum up, the narratives of the young people show, that they feel a very strong belonging to Tottenham. Possibly the most important reason for the young people's appreciation, was the feeling that they were not judged by their peers on the basis of their race, ethnicity or class, where this was often the case outside their neighbourhood. Within the confines of their neighbourhood, and in relation to their peers, diversity seemed to serve the youth quite well. Olivia, for example, mentioned the following:

Yeah because we're all different, we're all different (...) that's why I feel like I'm no different to anybody else 'cos I'm already different.

For the youth in this study, their diverse neighbourhood largely provided them with an area in which they could be themselves and where they could claim their multiple identifications with confidence. This seems a positive thing, but we need to be aware that the appreciation of the neighbourhood and its diversity could be a reaction to not being granted belonging in other parts of society. A similar concern is mentioned by Hopkins (2011) in his study on the experiences of young Muslim students at a university campus. He notes that the student's image of the university campus as diverse and tolerant raises worrying questions about how they will be able to negotiate socio-spatial relations in contexts outside of the university setting.

5. Conclusion and discussion

This article has examined how young people from immigrant backgrounds negotiate belonging. This negotiation process was conceptualized as a dynamic dialectic of 'seeking' and 'granting' belonging. I discuss two types of belonging: namely to wider British society (which includes the national and city level), and to Tottenham. The reason for this is that belonging can be experienced and negotiated differently in different societal domains, and that these different social domains can influence each other.

First of all we find that belonging to British society is multilayered. When referring to their Britishness the young people mostly see it as a formal, public-oriented political construct, referring to being born and living in Britain and speaking English. At the same time, when they talk about belonging to the culture and country of their parents, they mention the more cultural dimensions, such as lifestyle and cultural habits. For really 'feeling at home' in the United Kingdom, however, more is needed than just political recognition. Even when political belonging is granted, for example in the form of citizenship, this might still not be enough to generate a sense of emotional belonging. Political determinants of belonging fail to respond to the need of some of the young respondents to feel recognized and accepted in their diversity. Feeling rejected or not welcomed by the people outside Tottenham had a negative effect on the sense of belonging young people experience in several contexts outside the neighbourhood. In other words, the young people find challenges to their claims to belonging as they have to deal with 'othering' processes that are performed by those who have the power of 'granting' belonging. Even though the young people are officially British citizens, some of them feel that they are not always treated as such, referring to experiences of racism and homogenous images of certain ethnic groups. The way in which mainstream society perceives them is still as immigrant – or as an outsider who has another place of origin and another place of belonging (Howard, 2000; Kumsa, 2006). The findings further illustrate that London's policy of celebrating diversity is not always experienced as such by young people. London is a city famous for its images of cosmopolitanism, openness, and tolerance, but outside of Tottenham, this openness to difference is not always experienced as such by its young residents.

The study further shows that a feeling of belonging to Tottenham functioned as an alternative to expressing a sense of being part of wider British society. This can be seen in the fact that the respondents express stronger attachment to their neighbourhood than national belonging or belonging to the city of London. The majority of the young people felt a strong sense of belonging to Tottenham, had mixed circles of friends and were positive about the diversity in their neighbourhood. At the same time, the strong emphasis on the local identity could be seen as a reaction to the feeling of the young people of not fully belonging to the majority society. Possibly the most important reason for the young people's appreciation of Tottenham was the feeling that they were not judged by their peers on the basis of background, whereas this

was often the case outside their neighbourhood. Both ethnicity and social class played a role in this, confirming the findings of Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) that questions of social difference, exclusion and group identity are rarely reducible to ethnicity alone. One could argue that to some extent the exclusion processes are similar to those among white young people from disadvantaged areas (see Haylett, 2001; Back, 1996), both groups are often stereotyped as backward and unprogressive. However, for the young people in our study it is mainly the intersectionality of class and ethnicity that makes them feel that they do not fully belong to wider British society.

The stories of the young people in Tottenham illustrate that we should not be worried about young people being in a 'cultural dilemma'; most of the young people do not see a conflict between national and ethno-cultural identifications. Rather we should worry about young people's attachment with the locality being a consequence of social exclusion from the rest of the society. Moreover, the findings call for further research into how strong senses of local belonging and feeling of social exclusion could function as obstacles to social mobility of young people from immigrant backgrounds. At least some of the respondents feel, to some extent, socially excluded from British society. A Swedish study (Johansson and Olofsson, 2011), for example, has already shown that the conception of being 'the other' could have a strong influence on the life plans and the educational and occupation careers of young people. The territorial stigmatization of their neighbourhoods and the weak position of immigrants are internalized and made into a potential barrier to academic and occupational success.

Acknowledgements

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