



Routledge Research in Race and Ethnicity

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MULTICULTURE

**THE NEW SOCIAL AND SPATIAL RELATIONS OF
DIVERSITY**

Sarah Neal, Katy Bennett, Allan Cochrane and Giles
Mohan



Though we seemingly live in a time of flourishing anti-immigrant sentiment and a resurgence of the far-right... the story on the ground is a whole lot more encouraging. Now more than ever it is important to document the fact that lived multiculturalism is mostly entirely ordinary. Not always rosy, but far from the pathological space of conflict the populist right would have us believe. This book marks a major contribution to our understanding of the spaces and places in which this at once extraordinary, yet unremarkable togetherness is achieved. In dark times, it offers a story of hope that we overlook at our peril.

Amanda Wise, *Associate Professor of Sociology at Macquarie University, Australia*

A brilliantly sane and accurate portrait of the fact of English multiculturalism. This book offers a much needed antidote to the panicked debate about immigration and the toxic parochialism of the post-Brexit era. From branded corporate cafés where unfocused conviviality can be enjoyed anonymously over a cup of coffee to the common ground of public parks, we see the unspectacular triumph of how people actually live across differences of culture, race and nationality for most of the time. Its ultimate lesson is that we are defined not by the identity labels that are applied to us but rather by what we do everyday.

Les Back, *Professor of Sociology, Goldsmiths University, UK*

Lived Experiences of Multiculturalism brings together a rich seam of original empirical research with conceptual analysis to address the question of how multiculturalism is shaping and reshaping urban spaces. It seeks to show that a sense of place is an important framing principle as to how we experience formations of race, ethnicity and class. It is an important contribution to current debates about how we live together in diversity.

John Solomos, *Professor of Sociology, University of Warwick, UK*

Lived Experiences of Multiculture

In an increasingly ethnically diverse society, debates about migration, community, cultural difference and social interaction have never been more pressing.

Drawing on the findings from a two year, qualitative ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) funded study of different locations across England, *Lived Experiences of Multiculture* uses interdisciplinary perspectives to examine the ways in which complex urban populations experience, negotiate, accommodate and resist cultural difference as they share a range of everyday social resources and public spaces. The authors present novel ways of re-thinking and developing concepts such as multicultural, community and conviviality whilst also repositioning debates which focus on conflict models for understanding cultural differences.

Amidst highly charged arguments over the social relations of belonging and the meanings of local and national identities, this timely volume will appeal to advanced undergraduate students and graduate students interested in fields such as Race and Ethnicity Studies, Sociology, Urban Studies, Human Geography and Migration Studies.

Sarah Neal is Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield.

Katy Bennett is Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Leicester.

Allan Cochrane is Emeritus Professor of Urban Studies at the Open University.

Giles Mohan is Professor of International Development at the Open University.

Routledge Research in Race and Ethnicity

www.routledge.com/sociology/series/RRRE

16 The End of Black Studies

Conceptual, Theoretical, and Empirical Concerns

Clovis E. Semmes

17 Contemporary African American Families

Achievements, Challenges, and Empowerment Strategies in the
Twenty-First Century

Edited by Dorothy Smith-Ruiz, Sherri Lawson Clark and Marcia Watson

18 Return Migration and Psychosocial Wellbeing

Edited by Zana Vathi and Russell King

19 Mapping the New African Diaspora in China

Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging

Shanshan Lan

20 Doing Violence, Making Race

Mattias Smangs

21 Critical Reflections on Migration, 'Race' and Multiculturalism

Australia in a Global Context

Edited by Martina Boese and Vince Marotta

22 Mixed Race in Asia

Past, Present and Future

Zarine L. Rocha and Farida Fozdar

23 Lived Experiences of Multiculture

The New Social and Spatial Relations of Diversity

Sarah Neal, Katy Bennett, Allan Cochrane and Giles Mohan

24 The Body, Authenticity and Racism

Lindsey Garratt

Lived Experiences of Multiculture

The New Social and Spatial
Relations of Diversity

**Sarah Neal,
Katy Bennett,
Allan Cochrane
and Giles Mohan**

First published 2018
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2018 Sarah Neal, Katy Bennett, Allan Cochrane and Giles Mohan

The right of Sarah Neal, Katy Bennett, Allan Cochrane and Giles Mohan to be identified as authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-138-64505-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-62838-7 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
1 Spatialising multicultural: changing formations of urban diversity and the difference a place makes	1
2 The increasingly ordinary and increasingly complex nature of ethnic diversity: conviviality, community and why the micro matters	22
3 Researching difference: differentiated populations, lives and places	39
4 Multiculture and public parks: social practice and attachment in urban green space	57
5 Semi-public space: corporate cafés, multicultural and everyday social life	74
6 Conviviality and the social relations of social leisure organisations in diverse urban places	90
7 Educational spaces, identities and young people's management of urban multicultural	107
8 Multiculture and policy imaginations: engaging with the informal social world	125
9 Conclusions: precarious multicultural	143
<i>Appendix</i>	153
<i>References</i>	160
<i>Index</i>	177

Illustrations

Figures

1.1	Location of research sites in England	10
1.2	Map of the London Borough of Hackney	12
1.3	Map of Oadby	14
1.4	Map of Milton Keynes	16

Tables

2.1	Community and conviviality as comparative concepts	35
6.1	Profile of social leisure groups	96
A.1	Profiles of participants	153

Acknowledgements

Books are, in so many ways, always profoundly collective endeavours. They are the outcome of the ideas, writing, work, insights, voices and generosity of others. And this one is no different.

We are indebted to institutions – to the various university departments and colleagues we have worked in and with along the way. The project on which this book is based began life at the Open University and the University of Leicester, and then travelled in part to the University of Surrey, and this final writing stage was completed at the University of Sheffield. We would like to thank all of these institutions for their support and generosities. We would extend our thanks to the Economic and Social Research Council who funded the Living Multiculture project between 2012 and 2014.

Alongside our institutional affiliations, we are truly indebted to all of the participants in Hackney, Oadby and Milton Keynes who were each willing to be part of the project and spend time and effort talking to us and sharing their thoughts and experiences on how it feels and what happens as we live forms of urban multiculturalism. This was a diverse research population and our thanks would include all those people we got to know and interviewed about the parks they used, their college life, their leisure organisation, their policy and community work. Our thanks would include all those people who worked as gatekeepers helping us negotiate access and saying yes to our requests to be able to include an organisation, observe in a space as well as for time and local information. And our thanks would include those tireless and patient members of our three advisory groups who gave time, thought and wise steer over the two years. Wanting to do justice to what we were told and what was shared with us was very much part of what drove our efforts in the writing of the chapters.

With four of us working on the Living Multiculture we make quite a large team for a social science research project. But we have been larger at various points in the lifetime of the project which has had more than us four working on the project. We were incredibly fortunate to have some of the brightest research associates and consultants working with us, collecting the data and helping make sense of it. We would like to thank Hannah Jones, Kieran Connell, Christy Kulz, Akile Ahmet and Carolina Ramirez who were all at various times very much part of the team and whose contributions and work have been hugely valued and

appreciated. In this context we would thank the editors of *Population Space and Place*, *The Sociological Review*, *Urban Studies* and *Qualitative Research* who gave us permission to revise and reuse material first published in these journals. We would also like to acknowledge the co-authorship of Hannah Jones and Kieran Connell on previous versions of Chapters 4 and 5.

One of the themes of the book is about everyday life. Making this possible are those students, colleagues and friends who have helped in numerous direct and indirect ways either with our thinking or with the process of writing this book. In particular, we would like to thank Alice Bloch, John Solomos, Greg Noble, Amanda Wise, Susanne Wessendorf, Selavaraj Velayutham, Les Back, Gail Lewis, Clare Rishbeth, Kevin Ward, John Clarke, Karim Murji, Jon Garland, John Allen, Andrew King, Rachel Brooks, Victoria Redclift, Melissa Butcher, Carol Vincent, Humera Iqbal and Vron Ware. You have each had an influence on how we think and what we have written here but of course bear no responsibility for any of the errors or gaps! We owe a debt of gratitude to Emily Briggs and Elena Chiu, both ever patient and supportive members of the sociology team at Routledge.

And finally, while it goes without saying, we'd like to say it anyway, thank you to our families who keep us on the straight and narrow and make sure everything ticks along just as it should.

1 Spatialising multicultural

Changing formations of urban diversity and the difference a place makes

Introduction

We have been living in an ‘age of migration’ for some time. The first edition of the book by Stephen Castles and colleagues (2014) bearing that title was published in 1993. But in the early decades of the twenty-first century, the scale and extent to which new and diversifying forms of human mobility, migration, settlement and resettlement have begun to reshape national populations has intensified. Not surprisingly the implications of these processes have been the focus of political contestation and extensive public (and academic) debate. One aspect of this is to be found in the re/emergence of nationalism in Europe and the US. The UK’s 2016 vote to leave the European Union was widely interpreted as a vote about and against migration. The 2016 US presidential election of Donald Trump has been similarly read as a reorientation towards ethnic and national closure.

But such events, and unleashed new nationalisms, cannot erase the co-existing cultural differences of and between multicultural national populations. In the noise and anxieties of anti-migration discourses and increasing levels of racist violence, the quotidian lives of ethnically diverse, proximate urban populations tumble on. In urban environments, corporeal cultural difference and the multicultural that has evolved over decades of migration settlement continue to characterise and shape the micro, multifarious encounters, exchanges, tensions, activities that make up every day social worlds. Following Husband and Alam (2011: 223), this suggests that ‘we must define our collective identity through the way we live with difference rather than by the desperate assertion of sameness’.

In this book we aim to explore and understand the complex (and actively negotiated) experience of – what we have called – living multicultural with the help of research undertaken in three urban environments in England. Of course, it is not appropriate to argue for the replication of our findings elsewhere or to generalise from this qualitative work, but we believe that the discussion that follows in the chapters of this book provides insights which are in and of themselves significant and, at times, may also be translated into other contexts. The chapter begins with a consideration of the spatial in debates about migration,

2 *Spatialising multiculture*

difference and settlement; it discusses the meanings of multiculture and the ways in which it can be understood as situated, shaped by relations of place and space. The second half of the chapter charts the changing maps of ethnicity in England and introduces the three geographies and places in which the qualitative data on which the chapters all draw was collected. The chapter then considers the ways in which the project draws on comparative approaches before it outlines the organisation and structure of the book.

Urban diversity and cultural difference: between crisis and the ordinary

At the heart of the book is a counter narrative. Dominant approaches to ethnic diversity and cultural difference work with a problematising lens associating cultural difference with conflict, social disorder, threats to national identity and social strain. In the UK there has been a policy approach in which the governance of cultural difference is managed through extensive immigration legislation *and* a policy tradition of multiculturalism and the celebration of diversity (Bloch *et al.* 2013). In the early twenty-first century however, the notion of ‘multiculturalism’ has increasingly been associated, by a range of high profile public voices (for example, former UK Prime Minister David Cameron in 2011; Casey 2016; the political commentator David Goodhart, 2013; Trevor Phillips, former Chair of the Equalities and Human Rights Council, 2005) with failure and crisis (Lentin and Titley 2011; Stephen Jones 2015).

However, the dominance of the ‘cultural difference equals conflict’ position has been challenged by a range of interdisciplinary and transnational debates which have emphasised the ways in which cultural difference gets routinely navigated and managed (Amin 2002; Back and Sinha 2016; Gilroy 2004, 2006a, b; Hall 2012; Heath and Demireva 2014; Jones 2014; Noble 2013; Vertovec 2007a; Wessendorf 2014a Wise and Velayutham, 2009). Following what Greg Noble (2009) has described as ‘unpanicked’ multiculturalism in which cultural difference is culturally ordinary and ethnic diversity a ‘commonplace’ demographic experience (Wessendorf 2014a), we hope to contribute to an understanding of the significance of the quotidian ways in which cultural difference and ethnic diversity are both tacitly and consciously managed by multicultural populations through our exploration of experiential multiculturalism in a variety of distinct geographies and social worlds.

The starting point of ‘living multiculturalism’ reflects both the ways in which people routinely manage difference and the ways in which cultural difference evolves and develops dynamically – shaping, converging and changing *all* cultures. In the book we examine the possibility of social relations of multiculturalism that can be defined through forms of interaction across cultural difference involving encounter, engagement, negotiation, practice and competencies, while continuing to recognise the significance and impact of strain, exclusion, racism and division (Back 1996; Gilroy 2004, 2006a, b; Kaufmann 2014; Neal *et al.* 2013; Nowicka and Vertovec 2014; see also Chapter 2).

This ambivalence, or what Les Back (1996) describes as the ‘metropolitan paradox’, is a key aspect of the wider contestations and contradictions that define debates about multicultural social relations. Spatial dynamics are central to these debates. There is a powerful and continuing tradition within public policy and political discourse which identifies (minority) cultural withdrawal concretised into ethnic segregation as a (or even the) problem that has generated a multicultural crisis. In urban England, however, as the 2011 Census data show (Office for National Statistics, 2012), the new migration flows and the resettlement patterns of older migration flows have created more dispersed maps of ethnic diversity and heterogeneity. The contemporary focus on cultural withdrawal and the notion of ‘parallel lives’ (see, for example, Ouseley 2001; Cantle 2001, 2008; Phillips 2005; Phillips 2006; Cameron 2011; Cantle and Kaufmann 2016) as *the* terms of migration and ethnicity debates are reflections and manifestations of longer standing racialised politics, as well as newer anxieties and contestations surrounding cultural difference. In short, there is a contradiction between the trends towards increasing heterogeneity and ethnic dispersal on the one hand, and a high-profile concern with segregation, in which demands for integration and conditional forms of national belonging are rearticulated, on the other. The politics of race shape this contradiction. It is in this context that Kalra and Kapoor (2009: 1400) 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 easy way in which an old term like ‘segregation’ moves from the political to the academic arena and back again has been widely noted (Neal *et al.* 2013). In public imaginations, segregation calls up images of the complete separateness of Jim Crow in the US and Apartheid in South Africa, while geographers and social scientists generally use it to capture more complex sets of spatial differentiation between social groups. As Ceri Peach (2009: 1382) puts it, ‘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)’. The argument developed by Trevor Phillips (2005) based on (mis) readings of data collected by Poulsen and Johnston (2006; see also Johnston *et al.* 2010) that in the UK we may be ‘sleepwalking into segregation’ with ‘marooned communities [who] will steadily drift away from the rest of us’, which received much attention, is just one example of the way that segregation retains a powerful popular resonance. The ‘sleep walking’ phrase and the arguments about levels of segregation continue to circulate in the public domain as reflected in the question posed by Ted Cantle and Eric Kaufmann, ‘Is segregation increasing in the UK?’ (Cantle and Kaufmann 2016). Again this work attracted widespread media attention and comment. Even Cantle and Kaufmann reminded their audiences that the findings were nuanced; that some urban locations had seen an increase in white residential settlement in ethnically diverse areas and they conclude not that ghettos are being created (as Cantle (2001) himself earlier implied) but rather that predominantly white areas are increasingly identifiable alongside more diverse urban areas (Cantle and Kaufmann 2016).

4 *Spatialising multiculture*

But there has, nevertheless, been some shift in the terms of debate over the last decade. If in the early years of the twenty-first century concern was expressed in a language that identified the ways in which certain minority groups were said to cluster together in particular areas (apparently creating ghetto-like places), today it is acknowledged that what have emerged are mixed or diverse areas alongside others which are dominated by white British populations. The white spaces, of course, never attract the soubriquet ‘ghetto’ and ‘segregation’ is rarely blamed on those who choose to live in them. Instead the debate is framed by the rise of anti-immigrant popular politics, associated with UKIP and even the political geography of the referendum on membership of the European Union in June 2016 (Kaufmann 2014; Kaufmann and Harris 2014). Kaufmann notes the apparent paradox that in the diverse areas of cities there is widespread acceptance of the ‘legitimacy’ of various migrant and minority ethnic populations by those he describes as White English, even as in neighbouring areas and areas with low levels of diversity anti-immigrant (and potentially anti-minority) attitudes are common.

Kaufmann’s focus on the geographies of division and diversity and on the rise of right wing populism in the white areas geographically close to (but also socially and culturally often far away from) more diverse parts of the city lead him and his colleagues into a series of policy recommendations, for example, around the building of garden cities ‘to help insulate existing communities from rapid ethnic change’ (Kaufmann and Harris 2015: 100) and a stress on the possibilities of an English ethnicity (Kaufmann and Harris 2015: 104–6) which sit uneasily with the arguments about interaction, practice and place which are developed in this book. But his insights about the ways in which people are able to live proximate cultural difference and his convincing demolition of the notion of ‘white flight’ (Kaufmann and Harris 2015) reinforce our ambition to pursue a rather different way of thinking. Without denying the significance of the divisions identified in Kaufmann’s work, for us it is the extent to which and ways in which people engage in evaluatory and negotiated processes of living with cultural difference in places that are of central interest, rather than the extent to which divisions are maintained over time and at a wider spatial scale. Karner and Parker (2011: 357) similarly argue from their examination of community cohesion in Alum Rock in Birmingham, a problematised part of the city associated with low levels of integration, that it is only by drilling down into the particularity of place that more granular accounts of communities – which disrupt the absolutism implied by the terms cohesion and integration – can be revealed. Their three-year qualitative study of Alum Rock allowed Karner and Parker to offer a bespoke, place and context-focused analysis in which they found that ‘co-existing tendencies [...] towards both *local* exclusions *and* inter-ethnic strategies for improvement’ (original emphasis) shaped local social relations in this area of the city.

In this context, our work takes places seriously, and seeks to explore the partial stories of places in which cohesion and community, interaction and tension may all be unevenly present (Jones *et al.* 2015; Neal *et al.* 2015; Neal

et al. 2016; Bennett *et al.* 2016). We give an emphasis to the sometimes divided, antagonistic and sometimes, reflexive, competent ways in which people routinely manage social interactions and relations in multicultural environments. This process is often most apparent in ways that are rooted in social practice and informal interaction rather than being expressed in codified knowledge or institutionalised policy regulation.

Our use of the concept of ‘multiculture’ is deliberate. In part this is to distinguish our approach from those that focus on ‘multiculturalism’ as a policy object, but also because the debates around multiculturalism have been distorted whether through the thin celebratory talk based on a hierarchical ordering of cultural difference *or* through thick crisis talk in which the governance of conditional difference and the maintenance of social order underpin policy intervention. But our use of the concept of multicultural is also a recognition of the dynamic and contingent ways in which minority and majority cultures co-constitute and shape the other in an unfinished process of becoming. Far from the stable, discreet and exclusive co-existing but distinct formations of cultures which make up multiculturalism, and not simply summed up in the demographics of super-diversity, multicultural is a concept that demands recognition of the ways in which cultural formations are made through the crossings, adaptations, borrowings, translations, convergences that take place between and across cultural difference. We stress the importance of understanding multicultural as a process to be negotiated rather than an outcome expressed in either a collection of diversity statistics or a particular policy frame. It also offers the prospect of an open and unfinished range of possibilities, in which intersectionality (across class, gender, place, the life-course, religion and sexuality as well as ethnicity) may be as important as any implicit or explicit assumptions that we are working with sets of more or less fixed cultures, however diverse they may be. For all its abstractions, multicultural is not an abstract process; multicultural gets made in places, and the spaces within them, in the everyday (at ease/uneasy) interactions, interdependencies, materialities and practices that are part of urban social worlds. It is this process and the places and spaces in which multicultural is made that the book examines and that we consider next.

Situated multicultural: the return of place in debates about migrant settlement and cultural difference

Our focus on the spaces and places of multicultural reflect the ways in which they have emerged as *the* terrain across which cultural difference and multicultural social relations are being enacted and lived. Doreen Massey’s (2005, 2011) suggestion that places cannot be understood through static Cartesian geographies but rather as socially made, fragmented, evolving ‘collections of stories so far’ is a helpful reminder of the extent to which they need to be understood 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).

This return to place, after a longstanding focus on national identities and processes of racism and exclusion within institutions and social resources (Neal *et al.* 2013), has a number of drivers. First, it reflects the wider shifts in the twenty-first century geographies of ethnicity and migrant settlement. As Phillips and Robinson (2015: 409) argue,

despite recognition that migration is experienced differently in different places and is affecting different places in distinct ways, less is understood about the factors underlying the variable geographies of experience and outcome associated with migration. Why do immigrants, for example, appear to assimilate more smoothly in some parts of the host country than others? What underpins different experiences in different places? How strongly do migrants connect and identify with new people and places in a transnational world?

The return to place also reflects the nature of twenty-first century social policy interventions. While the cohesion approach has been criticised for its problematisation of cultural difference and for the integration demands it lays on minority groups (Phillips 2006), its focus on locality, place, community and sociality bumps, albeit uneasily, into recent academic engagements with quotidian multicultural and the routine ways in which people live and negotiate cultural difference in everyday settings.

But, most important, perhaps the return to place as the optic through which to explore the social relations of multicultural reflects a recognition of the significance of encounter, interaction and practice. This is a response to Wise's (2009: 42) call for more attention to be given to 'who, where, how and why people get on [and] how diversity is lived on the ground' and follows Ash Amin's (2002: 959) well-cited emphasis on the significance of those 'prosaic sites of multicultural' where 'much of the negotiation of difference occurs at the very local level through everyday experiences and encounters'. Amin proposes that by taking into account interactions 'from below', social-cultural divisions may be better understood and reconciled, with the potential of establishing a progressive politics of place.

While recognising the potential limitations of what may be no more than 'endless talk amongst adversaries', Amin identifies an urban multicultural, and the encounters and exchanges that emerge from and within it, as a possible frame not only for describing interaction across cultural difference but also for transcending such differences. Approaching issues in this way implies 'attending to the ordinary social spaces within which people of different backgrounds encounter one another, and the mundane practices they construct and draw on to manage these encounters' (Harris 2009: 188). In this book we work through a range of 'ordinary social spaces' to understand how diversity is lived. And like Amin, in the chapters that follow, we seek to move beyond simplified notions of encounter to understand processes of negotiation, reflection and co-production as well as co-presence within places. In Chapter 2, in particular, we build on Paul Gilroy's elaboration of similar

themes drawing on the notion of conviviality in the context of the ways in which ‘processes of cohabitation and interaction ... have made multicultural an ordinary feature of social life in Britain’s urban areas’ (2004: xi).

In the remainder of this chapter we return to the broader geographies of ethnic diversity shaping England, before introducing the particular geographies of the places on which our research has focused, reflecting on the difference that place makes for experiences of multicultural and how multicultural shapes different places in distinct ways.

Multicultural drift and super-diversity: evolving urban multicultural

As we have already noted, the make-up of England’s urban population has been transformed over the last two decades – the UK’s 2011 Census confirms that England’s cities have become increasingly diverse (Jivraj 2012; Office for National Statistics 2013; Catney 2016a).

The rapidly changing nature and geographies of multicultural in England have come about through a constellation of factors – globalisation, migration trends, migration dispersal, EU agreements, social mobility, demographic structural change, labour market demands. This is a manifestation of what Stuart Hall (1999, 2000) once described as a ‘multicultural drift’ or the ‘growing visibility and presence of ethnicised communities at the heart of British life’ (2000: 231). Hall describes this drift as ‘visibly registering the new play of difference across British society’. He says:

this creeping multiculturalism is, of course, highly uneven. Large tracts of the country, most significant centres of power and many so-called ‘ethnic minority’ people are largely untouched by it. Many white British people may accept it as a fact of life, but do not necessarily welcome it. Outside of its radius, the practices of racialised exclusion, racially-compounded disadvantage, household poverty, unemployment and educational underachievement persist – indeed, multiply.

(Hall 1999: 188)

Hall’s idea of multicultural drift was culturally rather than spatially orientated and he did not develop it in anticipation of the new scale and multiple forms of migration flows in the twenty-first century, but it continues to have a powerful resonance in the changing geographies of ethnicity and migration settlement. The UK’s most recent migration experience has meant, according to Vertovec (2007a: 1024), that ‘Britain can now be characterised by “super-diversity”’, a notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity in migration flows which surpasses any the country has previously experienced. Such a condition, he says, ‘is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and

legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade'. London in particular, and some other urban settlements, have seen rapid population shifts with the arrival and settlement of new migrants who are highly differentiated and often have little connection to previous migrant communities or with the UK. While the concept of super-diversity speaks to heterogeneity and the transnational nature of new migrant populations, it is the thicker slow burn of multicultural drift that continues to effectively capture the experiential and shifting dynamics of both older and more recent formations of multicultural.

In 2011 20 per cent of people in England and Wales identified with an ethnic group other than white British compared with 13 per cent in 2001 (Jivraj 2012). There is more ethnic diversity in England than Wales, with the greatest ethnic diversity found in urban areas, because places with a history of migration and associated with particular ethnic groups continue to be attractive to new migrants and grow with the birth of successive generations (Catney 2016a). In Leicester, Slough, Luton and most Inner London boroughs no ethnic group accounts for the majority of the population (Jivraj 2012), while London is the UK's most ethnically diverse city and those identifying as white British declined from 60 per cent to 45 per cent between 1991 and 2011.

Although the majority of the population identifying with an ethnic group other than white British lives in cities, between 2001 and 2011 the greatest growth in ethnic diversity took place in suburbs and rural areas newly experiencing ethnic diversity (Jivraj 2012). In part this has been the direct result of international migration, as has been the case in some rural areas such as East Anglia which have been newly experiencing ethnic diversity, as migrants from European 2004 'A8 accession' countries are employed in agricultural work (Robinson 2010; Neal *et al.* 2013; Catney 2016a). There has been a dispersal of minority ethnic groups from areas in which they were previously concentrated and a spreading out of ethnic diversity to suburban and rural areas close to ethnically diverse cities, with all ethnic minority groups represented in newly diverse places (Jivraj 2012; Finney and Jivraj 2013; Kaufmann and Harris 2015; Catney 2016a). This means that while minority ethnic groups (as well majority ethnic groups) may be clustered in particular wards, census data provides evidence of dispersal over time as households move into neighbouring wards and beyond (Finney and Jivraj 2013; Catney 2016a).

We have already noted the apparent paradox that concerns about parallel lives and segregation persist (Phillips 2006) alongside this increasing evidence that patterns of internal and international migration are breaking down some of the most obvious examples of spatial separation, except where these coincide very clearly with issues of class in some of the predominantly 'white' areas of high end suburbia (Simpson and Jivraj 2015; Catney 2016b). 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). In other words, it might be argued that those who are left isolated (and in the rhetoric associated with debates around EU

membership, this has been made explicit in a concern for the ‘left behind’) are not those living in now increasingly diverse urban areas, but those living in areas whose residents predominantly identify as white British (or even white English) (Kaufmann and Harris 2014).

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. 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 earlier reports, arguing that ‘diversity can have a negative impact on cohesion’ (2007: 9), it also recognised the changing spaces and composition of multicultural in the UK and highlighted the significance of locality, neighbourliness and civic interaction.

The current geographies of multicultural are constantly evolving, linked into wider networks of stretched relations which define place as much as any imagined fixed notions of the local. It is this convergence of drift and diversity alongside a variety of intersecting wider structural factors that is apparent in the emergent maps of ethnicity that we have already discussed and which shape the three places on which we focus our attention – suburban multicultural, newly multicultural smaller cities and urban spaces of super-diversity.

Putting multicultural in its place

All three of the places we look at are part of a bigger national story, which itself is shaped by its post-colonial identity and transnational connections within a globally defined economy. The places on which we focus – the London Borough of Hackney; Oadby, once a small town in the Midlands but now more of a suburb of the city of Leicester; and the new urban space of the city of Milton Keynes in South East England – have all experienced multicultural drift in different ways. Whilst Hackney, Oadby and Milton Keynes all reflect the wider narrative of new formations of multicultural, they each have their own stories to tell which are interwoven with the migration histories, transnational connections and life stories of people who live and work in these places.

While each is distinct, all are places of population and economic growth. While the London Borough of Hackney has something of what Karner and Parker (2011) describe as a ‘reputational geography’ with a track record of attracting the attention of social researchers drawn to its East End history, cultural and migration history and new forms of gentrification (see Neal *et al.* 2015, and Chapter 3), research on Milton Keynes has tended to focus on its urban planning as a new town (see, for example, Clapson 2004) attracting little other research attention, and few readers may even have heard of Oadby. The three cases we have chosen make it possible to think across some fundamental aspects of the changing social geography of England’s emergent multicultural: Oadby allows a focus on multicultural suburban spaces; Milton Keynes a focus on