‘INDIGENOUS’ TRANSNATIONALISM: LIFE GEOGRAPHIES OF THE ‘WHITE WORKING CLASS’

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the author, and do not represent the collective view of ISET.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores recent invocations of a category of ‘indigenous white working class’ by media and political elites in England. Such imaginings in relation to a ‘migrant other' are juxtaposed with the ubiquity of spatial moves and ongoing transnational and translocal connections and absences that so many people maintain across space and which are often deeply *felt*, not least by those classified as ‘indigenous white working class’. The concept of life geographies captures the material, emotional and imaginative moves of contemporary people across both space and time, as well as the connections between these and the immobility – forced or chosen – of others. The paper’s focus on continuity and change in the transnational and translocal connections of people -- portrayed as fixed in place, and by some as ‘indigenous’ -- is revealing both of the subjects of the story and of those who create the categories through which the stories and their subjects are represented.

Keywords

Class, ‘race’, faith, nation, place, life geographies

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‘Indigenous’ transnationalism: life geographies of the ‘white working class’

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1

First, a personal reflection on the life geography of my family. The Holloway Road in London has a special meaning to me. Two or three times a year, I come here with my teenage son and daughter to the great temple of football – Arsenal’s Emirates Stadium. The train from my home in Brighton stops off at small Sussex towns like Hassocks and Haywards Heath and picks up other people, middle aged white men for the most part, who passionately discuss the match to come, sharing a sense of anticipation, of belonging. Sometimes I travel up to London at weekends and find myself uncomfortably pressed right up close to a group of Chelsea or even Tottenham supporters travelling to a home match. While all these clubs are now huge corporations with global reach and while many of their supporters have never left Africa, Asia or the United States, my hunch [is it a fantasy?] is that I have in common with the other London-bound passengers an upbringing in a particular part of the city, and an association with a football club and its locale that connects me to my childhood.

Doreen Massey has written much about what places mean to the people who live in or pass through them. Using Euston station as one of her examples she has discussed the ‘throwntogetherness of place’[i] – conceiving places as made up of coexisting meanings and experiences, ‘open, porous and the product of other places’.[ii] Holloway Road too is a place of arrivals and departures. When I was a teenager, one of the first London branches of McDonald's opened there. I associated Holloway then both with excitement – mostly football-related – and violence and danger. My parents were mixed in their class backgrounds, my mother with elite English connections, my father from a working class Jewish home, though he had grown up in white supremacist South Africa. But we were well off by any standards, living in Dartmouth Park,[iii] though

in my efforts to appear more ordinary I would refer to my neighbourhood as 'Tufnell Park', an area east of it that did not have any smart cachet at the time.

As a teenager, making friends with a group of young working-class Geordie men from Hebburn, who had recently opened up a nearby unoccupied house to squat in, actually accentuated rather than reduced my sense of difference. Going out for a few drinks without me on occasion, and heading back to their house late at night, often arm in arm with local middle-class girls, they would pass my place and shout up to see if I was in: ‘Lord Snooty’ was the cry that echoed down the leafy silence of my road. I have similar memories of the scout leader dropping me back home after a meeting not so far away, joking that we were entering ‘posh parts’.

Recently, reading Mica Nava’s brilliant *Visceral Cosmopolitanism*, particularly the last chapter which is autobiographical and set in the very same Tufnell Park, I realised that my mother's marriage to my father was part of a bigger story – one of attractions across difference, of being drawn away from a narrow elite tribal existence - which had echoes in my own hanging out in the then edgy Camden Town to follow the nascent pop/ska band Madness in the Dublin Castle pub; and my regular journey home from matches at Highbury, Arsenal’s previous home, with the feared Archway skinheads on the Nr.4 bus.

There was no class exclusivity about going to football then – you didn’t need money because you could jump the turnstile and anyway the entrance charge was set at a price most people could afford. One of the changes in the meaning of Holloway for many thousands of people is that it has become associated with the Emirates stadium and thus with the exorbitant prices top premier league clubs charge for entry. But for me the Holloway Road has also changed its meaning in other ways: while the excitement is still there, the sense of danger has gone. Now, walking down the road with its grungy feel, struggling independent cafes gives me a sense of belonging, a familiarity I still struggle to find even among fellow London émigrés in Brighton. The Madness song 'Africa' gives me feelings of warmth and connectedness but also a longing– not so much for Africa itself but for …. Holloway.

‘Cos I'll go down to Africa
When I fall asleep
The burning plains of Africa
Is where I'm going to be

Oh I've said goodbye to Holloway
Farewell Southend on Sea
The burning plains of Africa
Is where you will find me

The *ordinariness of spatial mobility* - of my father's move to England, of my Geordie friends’ moves to London, of my imagined posse of ex-Londoners travelling in from Brighton for the weekend football - is really at the heart of this paper.

Moving places is associated with changing meanings of place. It is also associated with a wide variety of temporalities – people leave the day they came, people stay for life, people oscillate between places etc. *What is important here is that people remain connected simultaneously to different places imaginatively, emotionally, and materially.* And at the same time as all this, as Sara Ahmed and colleagues emphasise in their book Uprootings/Regroundings,[iv] while some move because there is no other option, others may not have the option to move. I would add further, while the moves of some are highly constrained – in other words there is only one way of going - others have many choices of the kinds of moves they can make. And the choices of those who *can* move can be analytically connected to the lack of choice of those who can’t through understanding the organization of capital accumulation. This discussion about moving, therefore, has everything to do with history as well as geography, and everything to do with class and class relations.

2

Moving away, while not open to all, and open to some only in highly structured ways – such as the moves to Peterborough that were facilitated for brick factory workers from southern Italy by the Italian and UK governments in the 1950s – is, I would argue, an important part of the life geographies of many more people than those commonly thought of as ‘migrants’ or ‘immigrants’. I want to look inside how this binary division

between those who move and those who don't is discursively produced, and who does this. This is to enter the world of representations, which may seem out of place when so many of us are fighting material battles – over benefit cuts, job cuts, education cuts, including the disappearance of the educational maintenance allowance for 16-18 year olds, and last year's passing of the bill to triple the fee-based debt of English university students, which in spite of the government's protestations, promises to make family wealth and income ever more effective shapers of who goes to university.

You're not English anymore

Yet, the central issue I want to address in this paper *is* connected to these material struggles. Because, in England, representations of ethnicity and migration history (or lack of it) and associated entitlements, have the effect of dividing people just when we need to unite. In this presentation, developed out of research carried out with Becky Taylor, I want to problematise the recent representation (by well-off journalists, politicians and some academics) of an 'indigenous' English 'white' working class in terms of *a tribe in danger of extinction* that needs protecting from *new diversity*, from people that have been portrayed as its 'other' and referred to as either migrants or immigrants.[v]

Given the growing anti-Islamic activism of the English Defence League (EDL), it is also important to bring *faith* into the representational arena, alongside 'race', nation and class. When it comes to representation, many in the EDL claim a working class heritage – explicit in banners shown at demonstrations in 2010 announcing the organisation to be the voice of the English working class - though in spite of the overwhelming predominance of white men among their active supporters, they deny that this is based on skin colour. I should mention at the outset that although nearly 70,000 people had 'liked' the EDL's Facebook page by the beginning of 2011, opposition rallies in response to their actions in towns and cities across England – including widespread union-led opposition within Peterborough to the EDL march held there in December - demonstrate that they are *not* representative of working class people. Moreover, there is a distinctive *non-metropolitan geography* to the movement – in late 2010 leader Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, who goes by the pseudonym Tommy Robinson, told a Radio 5 Live interviewer 'you should come and live where we live' –

clearly making assumptions about the interviewer's own place of residence, as well as their ethno-national and faith-based identifications.

Crucially for my argument today, the EDL's cause is bolstered ideologically by support from elite sources including directly from self-described Grande Conservative Blogress Diva, American Pamela Geller, in a message on her website 'Atlas Shrugs' – 'I admire them' she writes, 'as they are taking a beating in the press but they keep on fighting'.[vi] Geller was responsible for an explicitly anti-Islamic advertising campaign on New York City buses.[vii]

Here in the UK, indirect succour was given to the EDL's actions this winter in Jack Straw's notorious 'easy meat' comment, and by former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey statements that Christians should display their religious signs prominently on 1st December (which he was launching as national 'Not Ashamed Day'), and that councils using the term 'Winter Festival' rather than Christmas needed to be upbraided for brushing aside Britain's 'rich legacy' of Christianity.

This came just days after the EDL's Yaxley-Lennon declared: 'Any council that does not keep the word Christmas in the annual celebrations and opts for Winter Festival out of the politically correct appeasement of others to the detriment of *our* traditions, will have their town/city visited by the English Defence League throughout the following year.'[viii] Nuneaton was recently selected for a visit on this basis.

A recent journal special issue guest-edited by Mike Crang and Divya Tolia-Kelly has called for academic attention to move away from deconstructing racialised representations towards a greater focus on 'race' as *affect*, on the ambivalent and contradictory *work* 'race' *does* through everyday embodied interactions, including with non-human objects.[ix] One really excellent and insightful article in the collection, Dan Swanton's ethnography of everyday life in the northern English mill town of Keighley, is valuable for revealing the different registers of such interactions in situations that have been too crudely portrayed in the Cantle Report - following riots in northern towns in 2001 - as consisting of 'separate communities' leading parallel lives.[x] Swanton, like the editors of the collection, urges us to attend especially to the *affective* register, to the non-conscious readings of 'race' from clothing, accent, body language etc and how this

morphs across situations. Swanton's study is mainly concerned with a 'white gaze' and with how 'race' does specific kinds of work in particular moments, for example, contrasting wonder inspired by eastern fashion with suspicion surfacing on seeing four brown-skinned youths with rucksacks and a copy of the Koran.

Yet I want to argue here that in spite of the importance and richness of this collection of articles, there remains a political imperative for academics to continue to investigate how race-based categories are given life particularly regarding the elite portrayal *both* of a wounded 'indigenous' white working class in England *and* of Islam as a backward, threatening faith identity.[xi] As Gary Younge writes in his recent book *Who are we and should it matter in the 21st century?* :

> The notion that identity is a refuge for the poor and dispossessed – a means of guarding the special interests of those who cannot support themselves – is sorely misguided. Those most wedded to preserving their identity – indeed, handcuffed to it – are often powerful. When all is said and done, they have the most to lose. They just don't refer to it as identity. They call it tradition, heritage, or, simply history.[xii]

This doesn't mean avoiding paying attention to the *affective* register, however. In fact, one of the reasons for the EDL's successful mobilisations has been their appeal to non-conscious solidarities, including through the use of football songs – turning the familiar 'you're not singing anymore', for example, into 'you're not English anymore'.

Anne-Marie Fortier has recently conducted a forensic deconstruction of the 'community cohesion' policies of the last government to build up an argument about *governing through affect*, including what she calls the 'management of unease'. In an article in the journal *Citizenship Studies* Fortier untangles recent use of the term 'community cohesion' to show how it started out in 2001 being framed in terms of 'mixing' being the key 'governing principle for the management of diversity in local communities across the country' – a response to the 'parallel lives' narrative I've mentioned already.[xiii] She then shows how official use of the term had shifted by 2007, by which time diversity had begun to be regarded by the government as a challenge rather than a social good. Community cohesion was seen in a report from the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, for

example, as needing to focus on tackling the challenges posed by '"increasing diversity, rising sympathy with extremist sentiments, and persistent differences in life chances (including perceptions of unfair access to public services)"'.[xiv]

In keeping with her argument about the governmental use of affect, Fortier argues that *increasingly*, community cohesion has come to be about attending to '*feelings'* rather than to what she refers to as the 'economic, social and historical forces that structure inequalities and tensions…'. Citing the Department of Communities and Local Government's cohesion delivery framework, she goes on: 'Emotive responses are the subject of polls,[xv] and affect becomes a mode of categorising, classifying and coding responses that then define what needs attention from the government' (p.22). Government then focuses on creating the 'affective citizen' out of the 'affective subject' through encouraging *interaction*. Crucially for Fortier's argument, 'affect is *differently* distributed between different kinds of group formation, and some affects are favoured over others as desirable bases or outcomes of such interaction' (p.23). So there is agency, intentionality and power involved in who does the favouring.

What Fortier identifies is a simultaneous delegitimizing of – and an effective end of funding routes for – minority groups based around particular ethno-national heritages, alongside a governmental identification with the 'unease' of white British people about difference:

> 'This simultaneous racialisation of white Britons and de-racialisation of 'immigrants' in social policy discourses serves to suture Britishness with fantasies of whiteness further while it casts *all* 'migrants' *against* the white-bodied British citizen.' (Fortier p.23)

In fact, the official report Fortier is citing at this point – that came from the Commission on Integration and Cohesion - was not addressing itself to *all* British citizens identified as white, but focused in particular on people who lived in the 86 most deprived areas. There is thus a *class* element here, a language carrying echoes of historical relations of patronage - governmental elites seeking to evoke a long-established white working class Britain as wounded, as challenged, not by inequalities of wealth but by their newly de-racialised ethno-national 'Other', the migrant. The idea of prioritising 'longer term established communities' also begins to hint at the notion of an 'indigenous' *entitlement* – one explored at greater length in Dench et al (2006).[xvi]

Class, race and nation, the three components of this widely deployed composite category of the 'indigenous white working class', variously labelled English or British in the discourse under discussion – become much clearer in the statements of certain branches of the media and of politicians. I will briefly relate two examples. The first involves the series of programmes shown on BBC television in 2008 under the title The White Season. The second refers to the discourse of Labour politician Margaret Hodge regarding the changing character of her Barking constituency, and journalist Patrick O'Flynn's response to it in the Daily Express. As I suggested at the start, there is another important element of representation here alongside 'race' and nation, which Fortier doesn't deal with, namely the element of *faith*. I will say more about that below.

3

When the BBC launched its 2008 *White Season* of five television documentaries and one drama it was accompanied by a barrage of publicity on radio as well as TV. While the films themselves covered diverse topics, from a reappraisal of Enoch Powell's notorious 'rivers of blood' speech[xvii] to a more subtly worked film on 'race' and immigration, *All White in Barking*, the advertising summed up the series as a whole in the words shown here:

> The white working class in Britain is put under the spotlight… in a season of unflinching programmes examining why some sections of this community feel increasingly marginalised… the *White Season* explores the complex mix of feelings that lead some white working class people to say they feel under siege and as if their very sense of self is being brought into question.[xviii]

Notice that the BBC seems to be attending to its racialised construction of 'white working class' in *affective* terms – 'the complex mix of feelings that lead some white working class people to say they feel under siege'.

Writing in the Daily Mail, the BBC's then commissioner for documentaries Richard Klein argued that the 'fabric' of our nation had been changed in 'revolutionary' ways by

cultural and racial diversity. '[I]n all the heated discussion', he continued, 'the voices of the British working-class public have been all but ignored…[M]any of the white working class see themselves as an oppressed ethnic minority… Every other culture, they argue, is revered except that of the indigenous population.'[xix]

This clearly resonates with Fortier's point about the re-racialisation of the 'British working-class'. Klein uses this 'British working-class' category interchangeably with 'white working class'. Britons constructed as 'non-white' –itself a historically contingent category (as Alaistair Bonnett has so brilliantly shown in his book *White Identities*) are not to be considered British at all.

Klein's language is reminiscent of that used in my second example by Labour's Margaret Hodge of her white working class constituents in Barking in the lead up to the local elections in 2006:

> They can't get a home for their children, they see black and ethnic minority communities moving in and they are angry.[xx]

Finding herself feted on the British National Party (BNP) website, Hodge retracted this apparent gaffe, clarifying that the cause of anger was the pace of arrival of new (im)migrants. But the damage was done, and the irony that so many of the migrant workers arriving in the country at the time were white central and eastern Europeans passed relatively unnoticed. Having said that, Hodge's resounding defeat of the BNP in last year's election was a rare cause for celebration on election night.

Yet these kinds of representations of white British working-class people, in opposition both to black and minority ethnic British people and foreign nationals of all classes, are, as I suggested at the outset, usefully divisive for owners of capital and for the state. No surprise then to find Hodge's representations further disseminated by the Daily Express's Patrick O'Flynn:

> Many of Mrs Hodge's constituents in Barking are not only suffering this unfairness now but come from families already bitter at being driven out of the East End of London due to migration from the Indian sub-continent. In the Sixties and Seventies, most council housing in the East End was given to large families just arrived from Bangladesh. The cockney families headed

> further east to towns such as Barking and Dagenham because there was nowhere else for them to go. Families who had manned the docks, lived through the Blitz and helped fend off Nazi Germany were flabbergasted to find Britain's rulers showing more consideration to strangers from the Third World. So Mrs Hodge's English constituents have been refugees in their own country. They saw one beloved neighbourhood with a legendary community spirit destroyed in the name of multiculturalism and are understandably anxious that the same thing should not happen again. Increasingly desperate, they have begun voting in large numbers for the BNP.[xxi]

De-historicising in the vein of O'Flynn's piece here is common to many who conveniently forget not only the crucial role played by Britain's colonies in both world wars, but also the legacy of colonialism in producing the global inequalities which form the context of much post-1945 migration. Yet, it is not only populist journalists of this sort who encourage readers to visualise the East End as divided between true 'cockney', i.e. white east-enders, and so-called 'strangers from the Third World'. Succour is given to such a position from more scholarly quarters too. For example, in Dench et al's *The New East End*, the authors examine relations among working-class people in the East End (white people and people with Bangladeshi heritage) and relations between working class and recently arrived middle-class residents (mostly white). No reference is made either to the sacrifices made by south Asian, African, Caribbean or Polish forces in the two world wars, nor any serious consideration given to the role of colonialism in producing Britain's wealth.

4

I said I would return to the question of faith identifications. The big representational battle of the moment, the one that has enabled the exponential rise of the EDL and which Fortier does not engage with explicitly in her article, poses an ahistorical indigeneity against something labelled *Islamism*, often used as a euphemism for Islam itself. As Tory party chair Sayeeda Warsi recently emphasized, it is currently seen as legitimate to criticize everyone who sees themselves or is seen as a Muslim, and – just as with Jews in the 1930s (a parallel made by Nava in *Visceral Cosmopolitanism*[xxii]*)* - it is not just the EDL with their football-inspired affect-laden chant of 'You're not English anymore' who cast doubt on whether Muslims can belong to the English nation.

While the EDL hold up banners declaring themselves an organization of the English working class (alongside other banners associating themselves with Zionism, with local football clubs and with opposition to the building of mosques, including outside the UK such as at Ground Zero in Manhattan), their *raison d'être,* namely opposition to Islam and to Muslims, is given succour, refreshed and nourished by members of the middle and upper middle classes.

Writing after the 9/11 attacks in the USA, literary theorist Edward Said connected the apparent acceptability of anti-Muslim sentiment with new forms of imperialism. 'The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanising ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed.'[xxiii] Said was angered by writers who promoted such discourses, mostly members of the same elite university class circles in which he moved, such as Bernard Lewis:

> [Lewis'] ideas are… fairly current among his little acolytes and imitators, whose job seems to be to alert Western consumers to the threat of an enraged, congenitally undemocratic and violent Islamic world.[xxiv]

Although their books were published later, current Conservative Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove and the self-professed Leftist journalist Nick Cohen may be the kind of writers Said had in mind in his reference to Lewis' followers. Gove certainly cites Lewis with approval: 'As the noted scholar of the Middle East Professor Bernard Lewis has explained, the decline of the Islamic world relative to the West provoked agonized soul searching within Muslim minds'.[xxv] Neither Cohen nor Gove take an historical approach regarding Britain's economic relations with (or military intervention in) other countries. Given Gove's proposed rewriting of the school History curriculum to include a greater appreciation of the positive role of the British Empire, this should come as no surprise. Crucially, although the two books state that they are opposed to Islamism rather than to Muslims *per se*, they seem to take no account of the potential effect of their writing on the *experience* of being seen as 'Muslim' in contemporary Britain.

Indeed, sections of their text can be read more generally as anti-Muslim. For example, Gove in one passage seems to blame Islam the faith for 'Western' superiority over what he calls 'Islamic nations':

> Islamic nations were crippled, relative to the West, by their institutional inability to adapt politically. The faith that had imbued traditionalist Muslims with conquering fervour also narrowed minds to such an extent that they were closed to innovation.[xxvi]

Cohen's allusions are to the allegedly illiberal attributes of Islamic culture:

> The contempt for universal standards of judgement suit the liberalism of the late twentieth century which placed an inordinate emphasis on respecting cultural difference and opposing integration even if the culture in question was anti-liberal and integration would bring new freedoms and prosperity.[xxvii]

So the idea of a victim group labelled 'indigenous white working class' and the demonization of Islam are not rooted in actual and ongoing working class struggles but in what Fortier refers to as a 'fantasy' of the white – and one might as well add Christian - nation. Class divisions and class inequalities increased under New Labour as, among others, Danny Dorling has made plain in his book *Injustice*. They promise to be accelerated under the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition. To win power [back] to reverse this process will require better understanding of the economic structural changes that have taken place, and of the political projects of capital. Ranged against this is the division sown by ethnicised representations of indigeneity and the threat of the other, a silencing of Mica Nava's 'visceral cosmopolitanism'.

5

I'd like to move now towards grounding some of these debates empirically. As part of the ESRC *Identities and Social Action* programme, Becky Taylor and I conducted oral history interviews with seventy-three people who were, or had once been, residents or workers in three social housing estates in Norwich. When our fieldwork began in 2005 we set out to look at people's experiences of stigmatization, poverty and marginalization since the construction of the estates in the 1930s, to set these against elite and popular discourses of the area as one made up of 'sink estates'.

Since the emergence of oral history as a methodological means of challenging elite histories there has been an understanding of its role in empowering marginalized people, giving voice and weight to their experiences, and uncovering the silences and

absences in mainstream productions of history. While I believe we were successful in challenging outsiders' views and opening up different ways of understanding the area, the research was not always a comfortable process. At various points in interviews, and in personal interactions outside formally recorded sessions, participants – making assumptions about our identities – shared their own racist opinions with us. Significantly, most of these tended to centre around fears over people identified by the speaker as 'Muslim'.

So, although now living in Norwich, Eva had for many years lived in Leicester, and in the course of the interview she revealed how she felt threatened by Islam, which she regarded as strong in Leicester and nationally and internationally resurgent:[xxviii]

> What's worrying me… [and] I shall be glad when I'm gone and that is the honest truth, is the Christians and the Muslims, they're my main worry. Because [Muslims] are completely taking over. And my daughter and her husband, they have been inducted as lay preachers. And her religion is everything to her. Well, it is to me too. And I wouldn't like anything to happen to them.

Another research participant, Sandra Dyson, placed the onus on immigrants to the UK to do the integrating: 'getting more foreigners…it doesn't bother me…as long as they integrate…some do, some don't…they won't talk to you half the time'. In contrast to her *approval* of what she saw as the Jews' tendency to stick together, Sandra raised questions in particular about the willingness of *Muslims* to integrate. Referring to Muslims in general, she later told us:

> Nothing against them. As long as they don't go to extremes like some of them have. But if they're going to live in this country, I'm sorry, they should live under our rules, not theirs. If they want to be Muslims and behave the way they did in their own country then go back to it.

The fear of, and antagonism towards, Muslims and their apparent agenda of 'taking over' in contemporary England was shared by Tom Crowther. In common with many, he elided the category 'Muslim' with that of 'Arab' and made an explicit link to the emigration of (implicitly white and non-Muslim) Britons:

> I see this eventually as the Muslims taking over England. I really do because they breed like rats and rabbits and…they've already established themselves in mosques here, there and everywhere and…eventually I mean a great number of Britons are going to emigrate away from this island and consequently it will be an Arab state. I really do feel that most strongly.

Other participants spoke in racist terms variously about people with darker skin colour than themselves, often eliding the presence, status and activities of 'foreigners', 'immigrants', 'Muslims' and 'asylum-seekers':

> My grandson who works at Kettles Crisps up the Bowthorpe, he says that there's more foreigners now… The government has sent them here, they're paying the firm extra to employ [them]. He said, 'we've got Asians, people from Poland'. We're getting so many different people in this county of ours now. And that's all been sent by the government… a lot of them come here and they're all on benefits. And the hous[ing] situation is difficult, isn't it? There's lots of our young people can't… get houses and they've all got to be housed (Bert Kersley).

Becky and I often reflected on how we would square our commitment to giving voice to marginalized communities and individuals with profound political disagreement and personal discomfort over the content of what was sometimes revealed.

Here the work of Kathleen Blee is, we think, useful. Based on interviews with women involved in the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s in Indiana, Klee wrestled with such dilemmas, although in an altogether more extreme and highly charged context.[xxix] She argued strongly for profound critical engagement and contextualization of her participants' stories and memories. Consequently her work successfully reveals the internal contradictions of the accounts, as well as opening up ways of understanding how and why people became involved in extremist politics.

In a similar vein in our work we aimed to set participants' comments in the context of their own migrations, and their connections to migration by loved ones, which I am conceiving of here as parts of their life geographies, namely the materialities, meanings, discourses and imaginings associated with places of work, play, rest and transit across people's lifetimes. This enabled us not only to move away from uncritical acceptance of the material presented to us by participants, but also allowed us to reject the absurd dichotomy that is presented in much of the mainstream media between migrants and a usually undefined 'we', the 'not-migrants'. We found this led us to challenge the racial coding of apparently neutral concepts such as 'transnationalism' and other tropes of the academic migration studies community. This is not new or revolutionary. However, it can play its part in questioning the complicity of academic conceptualization in ethnocentric and totalizing discourses about who migrants are, about 'whites' and possibly also about 'Muslims'.

The term we came up with when writing up the research in our book *Moving Histories* was ‘indigenous’ transnationalism. This aimed to foreground forms of transnational life that involve long-term settled majority ethnic residents of England, and it can be used to add to critiques of an ‘indigenous’ Englishness. There is after all, as Robert Young has shown, no intrinsic, essential Englishness (let alone Britishness), but rather an identification which can be learned and adopted and is thus, in the process, changed.[xxx] Migration out of the United Kingdom is as important as migration into it in the making of its constituent nations and of the idea of Britishness.

We do, however, accept that ‘indigenous’ transnationalism is a rather clunky term to express this idea, and if anyone can think of a better way of expressing what we are talking about, please bring it up at the end as we’ve been scratching our heads about this for some time. One problem is the need for inverted commas around indigenous [which is further complicated by completely different anti-colonialist claiming of the category 'indigenous' by people in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the Americas, whose ancestors experienced the brutal violence of settler colonialism].[xxxi]

Another problem is the use of transnationalism that, curiously to us, privileges the analysis of ongoing connections *across borders* between those who’ve migrated and loved ones who’ve stayed behind. The additional concept of translocalism that Conradson and Latham and others have used to refer to intense connections between particular locales, usually in different nation states, was borrowed by us, again rather clunkily, to think about how migrants within national boundaries maintained relations with home.[xxxii]

It seems to me that there are important connections between the two – between translocalism and transnationalism which can profit from greater analysis – perhaps building on Massey’s conceptualization of place’s ‘throwntogetherness’ that I started the talk with. This work we argue needs to be historical too. It is historical analysis that can help us to think again about who *are* the migrants in the story and about relations of domination involving groups currently being painted (not always or only by themselves) as victims.

Contrary to depictions of the British working class as 'fixed in place' our interviews revealed the degree of movement, not only within Norwich and the UK, but also abroad. Significant migrations for many of the older research participants included travel through National Service or more generally in the military, moves to Australia under the 'ten pound Pom' scheme, to the US, for example as GI brides in the 1940s, and more recently to a wider range of countries in Europe, Africa and Asia. In a similar vein, historian Ben Jones' forthcoming book *The Mid-Twentieth Century English Working Class Experience*, based on dozens of oral and written memoirs, found that only one participant had lived at the same address throughout their life and '20 per cent had spent significant proportions of their lives outside of the UK: in Australia, New Zealand, Guyana, Germany and Eastern Europe – moving for employment or with the military as part of national service.' Others 'had meaningful connections with family members who were living in Australia, Canada, the USA and parts of Europe.'[xxxiii]

In *Moving Histories* we use the term 'indigenous' transnationalism to refer to the transnational practices of such people - people who have *not* moved away from their place of birth but are related or otherwise connected to people who *have* done so – and also to the ongoing transnational practices of people who have lived abroad temporarily and returned. In our interviews, we found that connections with other places continued through memories, absences, practices learned elsewhere, through the media, the internet, through gifts, letters, phone calls and emails, and through ongoing visits and travel. These manifestations of life stretching over time as well as space were very often as emotionally charged as the transnational practices of new arrivals. It is our contention that the flows of things, people, and imaginations that these processes taken together involved, meant that the people in these estates were not as entrenched or fixed in place as writers in various genres have often made white working class people out to be.

In proposing the idea of 'indigenous' transnational and translocal life, we echo Mary Hickman, Helen Crowley and Nick Mai's agenda of drawing attention to migration 'as part of everyday life' and to 'the intrinsic heterogeneity of local society',[xxxiv] although *immobility* is often as important as mobility in the making of places.

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As well as revealing the extent of people's mobility, the life stories we collected also repeatedly revealed the depth of emotion which accompanied the moves – often related to us from the perspective of those who were left behind. Sisters Greta Fawcett and Jean Holmes spoke of their younger sister Theresa, who left Norwich for Australia on the 'ten pound Pom' scheme in her early twenties. She was initially deeply unhappy, but, as with working class immigrants in other contexts, instant return was not possible because of the financial resources required. Greta remembered the moment of parting vividly:

> I'd arranged, before I knew... what day she was going, to go to London with a friend. And Mum went to London with Theresa to see [her] off at the airport. And we met up with them, and I thought, 'oh dear, she looks so…' She was only little, she was the smallest one of us, and I thought, 'she doesn't look old enough'.

For Eva Garland, her son Michael's departure for Australia was particularly painful. He and his wife had been living with her and they had a son:

> I was absolutely distraught when they took him. I was more bothered about the grandson than I was them two going, but I mean they made their lives.

Bill Fussell's younger brother emigrated after the Second World War, and any feelings of loss that Bill had were reconciled through his account of how his brother had succeeded in challenging and circumventing class boundaries through becoming a successful mechanical engineer in Canada. Like Bill, his brother Stanley stood up to his boss in the Parks' Department of the council:

> Something they got arguing about… He didn't do no more, he got the bucket, and tipped the whitewash all over [his boss and resigned]… So, that time of day they were looking for people to emigrate to Canada and Australia and places like that…
> Becky: And did he ever want to come back to England?
> Bill: No. He won't come back here, no.
> Becky: Why's that?
> Bill: Well, he didn't think that was good enough. Cos he was badly treated, wasn't he? At work. And he was like me, got a will of his own, he knew what he wanted to do.

The frequency of visits varied from family to family. Bill, although maintaining telephone contact, only visited his brother once in Canada, while Eva has been to Australia seven or eight times, as she felt it was the only way to see the grandchildren.

In Margaret Brooke's case, contact with her sister was minimal after she left with her new husband, also an estate resident, in 1964. Her sister never visited England and Margaret, who had been seven when she left, never went to Australia:

> I speak to her at Christmas round Mum's and she always writes to my Mum and… my Mum always get like photos every year of the grandchildren and that sort of thing but she's never ever come home.

The turbulence of emotions – hope, unsettlement, struggle, homesickness – relating to migration is encapsulated in Edward Dale's recounting of how he and his wife finally settled in Australia. 'We landed in Fremantle in 1958 then on to Perth', Edward wrote to Becky in an email,

> It was a bit of a shock, as at that time there was very little work for bricklayers… but eventually I found work with my own efforts but I had to leave my wife and children for two or three weeks at a time for work, but I made sure that they never wanted for anything… but I knew that my wife was homesick for her family, so I said we would save up and go back to England.. I knew… after a month in England that I could never settle back there, plus the children missed Australia and was always asking, 'when are we going home?'… So, we both worked hard to save the money to come back. One of my wife's brothers decided that he and his family would give it a try. So once more after saving up for our fares we sailed back to Australia, and I can honestly say that we have had no regrets.[xxxv]

As Edward's account suggests, visits and returns could be as painful and unsettling as absences.

Such emotions were echoed in the experiences of Satnam Gill, a recent arrival to the area. He described his homesickness when he was away from India, and how happy he had been to return home there from the US:

> It felt like finally… you came back to your home again [laughter]. I mean when you are like there for long, long time you know, twenty years, twenty-five years… you're always homesick… wherever you are… Because you've got all your old friends, your circle, your relatives…

White residents with memories of living elsewhere in Britain and Ireland, and people who continued to visit relatives in other places, also had lives that stretched across space in other ways.

Eileen Donald had migrated from Ireland to England. Describing her move as having been driven by extreme poverty and a violent father, she said she identified closely with the book *Angela's Ashes*. Her visits home were tempered by emotion, and in fact she felt unable to go for her father's funeral:

> I wouldn't go home. My sister arranged everything. And I just wouldn't go, because I just couldn't forgive him. See my sister left home a lot longer and I was only a kid...

We have already seen how Eva Garland's experience of transnational living when her son and grandson moved to Australia was emotional from the start. The connection between spatial mobility and emotion in her life was also evident in the description of her continual longing for home while she herself lived in Leicester:

> I was always homesick. I mean I enjoyed being [there] but I always longed for Norwich. If I was ill or anything, or bogged down, I would come home, have a week and then go back… When I was down in the dumps I used to sneak back… home… in the end, we saved enough and had a little caravan at Hemsby [on the Norfolk coast].

It was Eva's account of Muslims in Leicester which we spoke about earlier and which exemplifies the connectedness of translocalism and transnationalism.

Another Norwich-based woman Flo Smith's narration of how she continued to think about moving to Wales to be near one of her daughters further illustrates some of the paradoxes that emerge when people recount their own migration stories alongside the expectations they have of others labelled as 'migrants'. Although Flo said she felt comfortable in that part of Wales where her daughter lived "because there's so many English live down in that part now", and there had been 'only' one incident of anti-English behaviour (being ignored in a shop) that had upset her "in all the years I've been going there", she thought again and added:

> But I think once you shut your door, you'd be very isolated. You'd have to join in the Women's Institute, you know what I mean. You'd have to join all that sort of thing, to get yourself integrated, can you understand what I mean? But the best way to get in is to have a dog.

Thus in thinking about *her own* possible migration, Flo articulated the advantages there would be to living in an area with a good number of fellow-English people. Flo in a different conversation with Becky weighed up the pros and cons of migrating to Cyprus, where she had lived while her husband was stationed there. She set the advantages of there being a large English community against the general feeling of the presence of 'foreigners' on the island.

However, elsewhere in her interviews she did not apply this very human criterion to Muslims, nor indeed to black and minority ethnic people more generally:

> Flo: I don't know nothing about the Muslim religion. I ain't that bothered. But why should we have to conform everything for them, for their human rights? Why should we turn our lives round to fit them in all the time?
> Becky: But, do you feel that you have? I mean, has it affected you, having lots of Muslims in this country?
> Flo: No, it hasn't affected me as much as [I] don't have anything to do with them, but, when you go to the bigger cities like Birmingham, like to my daughter's…I just feel as if a white person's a bloody minority. Cos there's so many of them there and they're even getting now, where they've got their own schools…. And I think they are affecting our lives.
> Becky: In what way?
> Flo: Well, the way they're taking over.

Our interviews were also able to reveal, albeit in a more limited way, aspects of middle class racism in the city. Like that experienced by Tracey Reynolds' research participant Camille, this could be both subtle and insidious. Camille told Tracey:

> 'You have to learn to read the signs… Where I live, some of my neighbours are definitely hostile to us; they don't like that we as a black couple can afford to live in a nice area in a nice house. They're nice enough to your face, but you feel that they're constantly watching you, just waiting for you to mess up.'

Despite living in her street for over six years, Camille had never been invited to one of the barbecues her white neighbours regularly invited each other to.[xxxvi] In our study in Norwich, middle class Khushi Chatterjee, an English teacher at the local comprehensive in the estates in the 1970s and 1980s, faced racism from pupils and teachers at school. But significantly, her own children also experienced 'race' in the family's more middle class area and at the school that had an intake of predominantly middle class children. While one daughter had experienced being called 'chocolate face' in the street, at school it was:

> the usual middle class thing which hides it in all kinds of ways.... When [my daughter] went to... secondary School, one of the things that really... made me very very angry was that the head master... had given her [a] name [using word-play on her actual name] to rhyme with toilet. I was so angry.

Just as we need to be alive to the ways in which middle class individuals perpetuate racism, we would argue that such an awareness needs to be extended to consider the racialisation of working class people. Among the teenagers we interviewed, there was a sense of feeling looked down upon by 'students' from nearby UEA, of being despised, akin to a sense of being racialised themselves as working class estate residents. Dean felt he got 'dirty looks' from the 'students: "They look at us and go, oh, yeah, chavs."'

7

Life geographies is a concept used by historical geographers David Lambert and Alan Lester to analyse the career-related movements of nineteenth century British colonial officials around the empire.[xxxvii] This was a time of large-scale moves abroad by British people staffing the expanding global empire, and also one when in Edward Said's words, the category of the 'Oriental was linked to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien… since the Oriental was a member of a subject race, he had to be subjected: it was that simple.'[xxxviii] .

I would argue that life geographies can more generally be deployed to capture the material, emotional and imaginative moves of contemporary people across both space and time, and the connections between these and the immobility – forced or chosen – of others. As part of this, a focus on continuity and change in transnational and translocal connections of people portrayed as fixed in place, and by some as 'indigenous', can be revealing, not only about the subjects of the story, but also those who create the categories through which the stories and their subjects are represented. As Gary Younge puts it 'the more power an identity carries, the less likely its carrier is to be aware of it as an identity at all… Because their identity is never interrogated, they are easily seduced by the idea that they do not have one. Devoid of

any awareness that they too possess a perspective rooted in their own experience, for them every food with which they are unfamiliar is 'ethnic food' and every month their history month.[xxxix]

This paper has in particular explored recent invocations of a category of 'indigenous white working class' by media and political elites in England. Such imaginings in relation to a 'migrant' other have been juxtaposed with the ubiquity of spatial moves and ongoing transnational and translocal connections and absences that so many people maintain across space and which are often deeply *felt*, not least by those classified as 'indigenous white working class'. The Ten Pound Pom scheme for emigration to Australia was reprised in 2009 when a travel company offered 10 tickets to people with working visas. Over one hundred people queued for as long as five days. Streams of economic emigrants to a variety of destinations may well grow in the coming months and years. The paper has also considered the mainstream media promotion of the idea that Islam, the faith, and its adherents, are somehow suspect – incompatible with Englishness.

We need more conceptual work to develop the notion of 'indigenous' transnationalism, as well as more work deconstructing how and why such categories are made. Just as governing by affect has grown, and division been sown – usefully from a reactionary viewpoint - along lines of ethnicity, faith, nation and migration history, the space for struggle against the current vicious cuts is being reduced. The work I am calling for is therefore both academic and political. Interventions could include oral history work enabling people to see the spatial moves in their own family histories, their own connectedness to other places, and thus create greater empathy with people who may previously have been dismissed as that other, 'migrants'.

This in turn can contribute to finding more effective ways to focus on the structural causes of the current fiscal crisis, and to work against the demonization and racialisation of particular groups based on class or faith, including the ratcheting-up of the notion of the 'undeserving poor' in government rhetoric on the cuts. It can also build on the work of David Matless, Divya Tolia-Kelly and Robert Young (among others) in recognising the *importance of lives lived elsewhere* in ever-shifting notions of Englishness.[xl]

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[i] Massey, Doreen (2005) *For Space*, London: Sage, p.140.
[ii] Massey, Doreen (1995) 'The Conceptualization of Place', in D. Massey and P. Jess (eds), *Place in the World?* Oxford: OUP, p.59.
[iii] An area close to the Highgate Road entrance to Parliament Hill, part of Hampstead Heath.
[iv] Ahmed, S., C. Castañeda, A. Fortier, M. Sheller (2003) (eds) *Uprootings/ Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, Oxford: Berg.
[v] See, for example, Michael Collins (2004) *The Likes of Us: A Biography of the White Working Class*, London: Granta; G. Dench, K. Gavron and M. Young (2006) *The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict*, London: Profile Books.
[vi] http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/counter_jihad_2009/, accessed April 26th 2011.
[vii] See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/05/26/pamela-gellers-leaving-is_n_591112.html, accessed April 27th 2011.
[viii] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-11848225, accessed April 27th 2011.
[ix] See the Special Issue on affect, race and identities edited by Divya Tolia-Kelly and Mike Crang in *Environment and Planning A*, 42 (10), 2010.
[x] Swanton, D. (2010) 'Sorting bodies: race, affect, and everyday multiculture in a mill town in northern England', *Environment and Planning A*, 42 (1): 2332-2350.
[xi] Interestingly the idea of the widespread acceptability of anti-Islamic sentiment was also drawn attention to in early 2011 by the current chair of the Conservative party, Baroness Warsi.
[xii] Younge: 31
[xiii] Fortier, A. (2010) 'Proximity by design? Affective citizenship and the management of unease', *Citizenship Studies*, 14 (1): 17-30.
[xiv] Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2007) *Building on progress: security, crime and justice*, London: Cabinet Office (p.13), cited by Fortier (2010) p.21.
[xv] For example individuals whose responses to pollsters suggested they were in favour of immigration or felt they could influence decisions were seen in the government's *Cohesion Delivery Framework* as likely to make a positive impact on cohesion, while those who responded that they felt unsafe after dark, feared a racist attack or felt that council housing allocation was discriminatory were seen as likely to have a negative impact on cohesion.
[xvi] Dench, G., K. Gavron and M. Young (2006) *The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict*, London: Profile Books.
[xvii] It may seem curious that Powell was resurrected in this way, but Paul Gilroy has recently pointed out that many of the 'most powerful, influential and ambitious people and institutions [in Britain] cannot leave the vexed memory of Enoch Powell alone' (Gilroy, 2008: 190).
[xviii] See http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2008/02_february/14/white.shtml, accessed 30th April 2011.
[xix] See http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-523351/White-working-class---ethnic-group-BBC-ignored.html, accessed 30 April 2011.
[xx] See http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/david_aaronovitch/article706524.ece, accessed 30 April 2011.
[xxi] See http://www.dailyexpress.co.uk/posts/view/7693/Hodge-sees-the-light-to-confront-injustice-of-mass-immigration/, accessed 30 April 2011.
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[xxiv] Said: 342-343.
[xxv] Gove, M. 2007, *Celsius 7/7*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p.16.
[xxvi] Gove: 16-17.

[xxvii] Cohen, N. (2007) *What's Left? How Liberals Lost their Way*. London: Fourth Estate, p115.
[xxviii] All names of individual research participants used here are pseudonyms.
[xxix] See Blee, B. (1993) 'Evidence, empathy and ethics. Lessons from oral histories of the Klan', *Journal of American History*, 80 (2): 596-606.
[xxx] For example, the 'Saxons, having become English, would then subsequently work to anglicize the Normans in turn. The assimilation of the Normans represents the first instance of the idea that being English is something that you do not have to be born into but that you can become' (Young, R.,2008, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, Oxford: Blackwell: 19).
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[xxxiii] Quoted with the permission of the author from a pre-publication manuscript. Hence no page numbers given here.
[xxxiv] Hickman, M., H. Crowley and N. Mai (2008) *Immigration and social cohesion in the UK : the rhythms and realities of everyday life*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.184.
[xxxv] The Dales still live in Australia, and sent this account via email.
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