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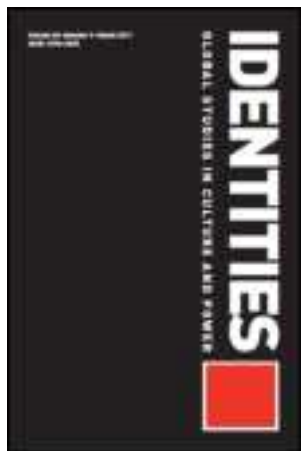
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Diversity, urban space and the right to the provincial city

Ben Rogaly^a & Kaveri Qureshi^b

^a Department of Geography, School of Global Studies, Arts C, University of Sussex, BN1 9SJ, UK

^b Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford University, 51-53 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 6PE, UK.

Email:

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Diversity, urban space and the right to the provincial city

Ben Rogaly and Kaveri Qureshi

(Received 27 March 2012)

Using three vignettes of the same physical space this article contributes to understanding of how the right to the city is contested in provincial England in the early twenty-first century. Oral history and ethnographic material gathered in Peterborough between 2010 and 2012 are drawn on to shed new light on the politics of diversity and urban space. This highlights the multiple place attachments and trans-spatial practices of all residents, including the white ethnic majority, as well as contrasting forms of active intervention in space with their different temporalities and affective intensities. The article carries its own diversity politics, seeking to reduce the harm done by racism through challenging the normalisation of the idea of a local, indigenous population, left out by multiculturalism. It simultaneously raises critical questions about capitalist regeneration strategies in terms of their impact both on class inequality and on the environment.

Keywords: diversity; right to the city; regeneration; conviviality; Muslims; EDL

Introduction

This article assembles contrasting vignettes from the same site in an English provincial city – Peterborough – at a time of economic crisis early in the second decade of the twenty-first century.¹ Like Koch and Latham (2012), we hold that an in-depth study of a single location can generate productive insights into different ways of inhabiting public space. Such an approach allows us to add to the growing evidence that public spaces are critical sites of struggle over competing visions for the city (Harvey 2012). They are also stages on which identities and communities are ‘built, imagined, performed, and fought for’ (Keith 2005, p. 260). At a time when public commentary excusing, even promoting, the scapegoating of people based on supposedly foreign ethnic, national and faith affiliations has intensified, we propose a counter-discourse; one which makes the familiar strange and the strange familiar, which, we hope, has the potential to reduce the harms caused by racism and xenophobia (Amin 2012).

Our rewriting of urban space insists on taking seriously the trans-spatial attachments and life practices of people who see themselves, and are seen as, indigenous or native (Rogaly and Taylor 2009). Like others who seek to unsettle the ethno-national group fetishism of migration studies (for a recent example, see Hickman

et al. 2012), our ontological position, strongly influenced by Doreen Massey, is that places are always already connected to elsewhere, ‘constructed out of articulations of social relations (trading connections, the unequal links of colonialism, thoughts of home) which are not only internal to that locale’ (Massey 1995, p. 183). Such ‘thoughts of home’ are individual and particular; at the same time they are common to many people, not only ethnic minorities and recent migrants but also long-settled ethnic majority populations. Even short moves across space can be intensely felt (Rogaly and Taylor 2009), while the experience of not having the resources to move, or having to stay put while others move in around one, may be equally affecting. For Massey, recognition that displacements happen both ‘through migration (or the geographical movement of others)’ and, through economic dispossession, while ‘staying still’, has the potential to ‘bring [people] together in common anger’ (Massey 2011).

The article draws on recent ethnographic fieldwork and the recording of 76 oral histories in Peterborough, a provincial city of 183,600 inhabitants in eastern England.² Peterborough is often characterised as diverse because large numbers of international migrants arrived to live and work there relatively recently. Jones (2011), for example, found that local officials in relatively far-off Oldham in the north of the country, and Hackney in London, saw Peterborough as an archetype of the twenty-first century phenomenon of large-scale international migration to rural and small town areas with little or no other recent experience of this kind of demographic change. Stenning *et al.* (2006) draw attention to the interrelation between this same migration flow and the city’s labour market, while Erel’s (2011) work focuses on how the arrival of large numbers of new international migrants in the city re-inscribed relations between the long-settled majority and minority ethnic communities.

As with other studies of inter-ethnic relations in particular places in England (for example, Clayton 2009, Swanton 2010, Karner and Parker 2011), this established work on ethnic diversity in Peterborough does not tend to explore the diverse relations and attachments that the white ethnic majority population maintains across space, whether involving, say, rural areas within a short drive of the city, or places further afield. When Peterborough was dramatically expanded from a small cathedral city to a large New Town in the 1970s the relocation and settlement of ethnic majority people from other parts of the UK was far larger in scale than the arrival of international migrants this side of the millennium has been.

As Thomas Faist has argued, diversity is ‘not a pre-social category but always loaded with attributed meanings’ (Faist 2009, p. 178). This is taken further by Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley (2011) who differentiate *diversity politics*, with its critical possibilities, from the governmental *politics of diversity*. The politics of diversity involves intense efforts to manage culture and community, distinguishing ‘good’ from ‘bad’ diversity, the latter being associated with collective protests against structural injustices including racism and economic inequality (see also Jones 2011, pp. 117–118). ‘Good diversity . . . racializes the acceptable limits of adversarial politics; to criticize British foreign policy while being

identified as a British Muslim, for example, is to be poorly integrated rather than critically engaged' (Lentin and Titley 2011, p. 187). Diversity in this formulation thus carries an always pre-formed idea of a core, entitled identity against which immigrants and ethnic minorities can be defined as 'other' (Hickman *et al.* 2012, p. 4).

One way of bringing counter-feelings to bear on such rigid and fearful boundary maintenance is to include the apparently homogeneous ethnic majority and reveal their own affective connections to multiple places, their own histories of mobility and/or enforced immobility, the strangeness and heterogeneity within a category often portrayed as uniform and familiar. Urban scale studies can achieve this, helping to move away from reifying boundaries of ethnic and national identifications, and simultaneously revealing their mutability and how and why they shift. Importantly, they can also help to highlight the class politics of place that an emphasis on ethnic difference can all too easily obscure (Clarke 2009).

Who Peterborough belongs to, and what its future direction is has recently been contested in the immediate vicinity of the Peterborough United Football Club stadium in London Road. We provide three vignettes, each framing this space, and each with its own temporality. On 10 December 2010, it became the gathering point for an estimated 1500 followers of the far-right anti-Islamic English Defence League (EDL). The site had been identified as suitable by the city authorities, who also appealed to Muslim residents of Peterborough not to attend the counter-protest. The EDL were *outsiders* to the city, who nevertheless felt they could challenge certain *residents'* rights to belong on the basis of faith-based identity. Meanwhile, across the road from the stadium lies a community growing space, the Green Backyard, run since 2009 on a temporary lease from the city council, and at the time of writing subject to attempts at reclamation by the council for the purposes of regeneration. For David Harvey, the flip side of such 'capital absorption through urban redevelopment' is a 'process of displacement and dispossession' (2012, p. 15). The Green Backyard, on the other hand, aspires to be an inclusive space, and as we shall see, has been inspired by the migration histories and multiple place connections of those who run it. Finally, round to the north and east of the stadium each Sunday through the year a car boot sale takes place. When the car boot sale opens for business at 9 am, customers with a multiplicity of ethnic, national, linguistic and faith heritages arrive and banter over bargains, a picture of everyday conviviality, and all under giant billboards proclaiming the native soul of the city through appeals to an historic team, known locally as the POSH and supported by a mainly white English fan base from the city and its rural hinterland. In the final section of the article, we draw these vignettes together showing what they contribute to understandings of diversity and urban space.

Methods

This article draws on a larger, collaborative research project on place, citizenship, belonging and work in Peterborough. Research began in November 2010 when

Rogaly visited Peterborough and made contacts with migrant support organisations and an interfaith initiative that was in the midst of preparing a response strategy in the face of the visit of the EDL that was expected on December 10. Rogaly then attended a peace vigil in the grounds of Peterborough Cathedral the day following the rally. He later stayed in Peterborough 3 days a week from March to December 2011. Qureshi lived in Peterborough for 3 months during June to September.

The research project generated a core of 76 oral history interviews. In order to engage with the city as a whole we sought to maximise the diversity of ages, ethnic, national and class backgrounds, and histories of spatial im/mobility of the men and women with whom we conducted the oral history interviews. We wanted to understand the perspectives of people who had known Peterborough all their lives as well as people who had started their lives elsewhere, from those who had moved to the city from other places within the UK to those who had moved across international borders. We also conducted key informant interviews and extensive residential fieldwork, becoming embroiled in the daily lives of the households we were temporarily part of. We maintained field diaries of our interactions with people across the city and of the households in which we were living, both of which were making ends meet through various acts of resourcefulness in hard times.

Through our fieldwork, we both became closely acquainted with the space around the stadium. Rogaly, whose lodgings, with a white English man, a life-long POSH fan, were in an adjacent street, passed it regularly at different times of day and night, noting the traces of Italian heritage such as Britaly Travels on the London Road, as well as the changing landscape as older retail units were demolished in preparation for the redevelopment of parts of the stadium. He would often drop in to the Green Backyard and occasionally attend football matches. Qureshi meanwhile came to the car boot sale on Sundays with the family she lodged with. Her landlady was a car boot sale regular but, like most people of Pakistani heritage in Peterborough, had never been inside the football ground itself.

The English Defence League visit to Peterborough

The economic austerity that followed the US sub-prime mortgage crisis, and the subsequent bail out of the banks coincided with a rise in scapegoating of migrants and ethnic minorities – and particularly of Muslims (Amin 2012). One manifestation of such racism is the emergence of the EDL. Copey (2010) suggests that the EDL is best understood as an Islamophobic ‘new social movement’. Originating in the town of Luton,³ with a base in football and skilful use of Facebook (Allen 2011, pp. 285–286), the EDL stretched out across England, capable of bringing up to 3000 supporters at a time together in English cities, directly contesting the rights of Muslims to urban space, or indeed to belong to the English nation (Trilling 2012, pp. 182–192). Late in 2010, the EDL threatened local councils with such a ‘visit’ if they did anything that resembled ‘banning Christmas’. None had been

planning to, but such statements connected national belonging with faith identification and, together with the use of reworded football chants, intensified the affective charge of the EDL's national presence.

The police in Peterborough knew that in a city with long-established Muslim communities a visit from the EDL could cause a major disturbance. In the 3-month run-up, negotiations took place between the police, the city council, EDL representatives and the host of local community groups and associations to determine how to manage the visit. The final decision to situate the march at the POSH stadium was taken by the police. One key informant, a senior police officer, explained the logic:

We identified 'red areas' where we told the EDL, well – we can't stop you from going anywhere you want, but come on guys, don't go *there*, or we'll be facing a riot. Then there were some areas that were 'green'. Then there were issues of what's operationally best from a policing perspective . . . They said they wanted the city centre, so that's what we came up with.

There was a natural click, a sense that the EDL supporters, despite being predominantly outsiders, were entitled to gather at the football ground. When it came to Peterborough's prime football space they were granted the 'homely privilege of automatic belonging' (Back 2009, p. 207). The police officer continued:

It's their history . . . You can see the whole thing sprouting off from Luton Town football supporters. Then football offers people like the EDL the ability to mobilize a group . . . Their view was 'we wanna be able to park the busses, go to the pub, don't wanna have to walk too far 'cos our lads don't like to walk, we wanna have a rant and go home'. It's the same as with the football . . .

The police and council worked hard to try to persuade residents not to join the counter-protest. In Lentin and Titley's (2011) terms, the politics of diversity meant keeping the lid on local expressions of anger against the EDL. Although the city authorities wanted to maintain peaceful coexistence between the ethnic majority and minority groups (good diversity), they would not welcome explicit anti-racist protest on this occasion (bad diversity). Rather, a mode of managing potential unrest was established with the population of the city carved up methodically into 'themed areas' in need of consultation, including an area for 'indigenous communities', 'whatever that means', in the policeman's words. Indigenous here did not necessarily mean born in Peterborough with a long ancestry in the city. Rather it referred to being white and British. The police officer gave this 'spoken-for "white majority" apparently left behind by multiculturalism' (Lentin and Titley 2011, p. 181) a sympathetic hearing, something which, as we will go on to suggest in the next section, resonates with the ambivalence of some white long-term residents towards the EDL: 'We always consider "cohesion"', the police officer added. 'But not the white English majority, who increasingly feel that they're not getting a voice or resources, and are starting to feel like a minority themselves.'

With the best of intentions the Faith and Cohesion Network worked tirelessly to ensure that a statement of unity was signed by leaders of all the major faiths – including Sikh support, which was important because senior EDL member Gurmeet Singh had been sending letters to the two Peterborough gurdwaras trying to stoke historical embers of hostility between Sikhs and Muslims in the Indian subcontinent.⁴ The police choreographed an elaborate score to separate and pen in the visiting EDL, the counter-protest, and ‘the community’ – read Peterborough Muslims – whom they called ‘the third and biggest threat’. They coordinated via text messages and walkie-talkie with a cell of ‘community mediators’ – specially selected people of Pakistani heritage who were understood to wield influence over their cohorts of peers in their respective bases across the city. Retailers in the city centre gave Muslim members of staff the option of staying away, or carrying out alternative duties in stockrooms.

The strategy of the city authorities was heralded as a success. There were some minor skirmishes on the day, but these were contained. A narrative developed among the police, mosque and gurdwara leadership about how the march had ‘brought the city together’. However, the presence of the EDL was very intensely felt by Peterborough Muslims. Sanam, a second-year student and part-time shop worker, told Rogaly about the tensions mounting in the weeks prior to the rally:

We were expecting a thousand people, anything up to . . . five thousand. I was like, ‘Oh, OK, whatever. I’m sure there will be police and it’ll be OK.’ But as weeks went on, more and more people were talking about it and . . . getting scared.

The threat of the EDL brought back painful memories for her of earlier racist attacks on her father, who worked on the railway as a ticket collector:

I was really scared because some of them passengers, EDL members, can go through, you know, travel by train and . . . there’s been loads of times where my dad’s been pushed and shoved, sworn at, even hit, spat at . . . you know, I just fear for him . . .

Sanam said she felt reassured by the degree of protection afforded to her by her manager acknowledging that her phenotype could potentially put her at risk of violence – as her father had endured before her:

My manager, she goes, ‘we’re happy to put the shutters down, we’re happy to move you about . . . we want to protect you.’ . . . I think I was actually really pleased. Basically just thought of them, putting themselves in my shoes, and I thought it was quite nice actually. I wasn’t offended, I wasn’t like, ‘Oh, just because I have slightly tanned coloured skin,’ you know.

However, in the 12 months following the march tensions in Peterborough grew. Despite incendiary anti-Muslim rhetoric by Gurmeet Singh being posted on YouTube, the Crown Prosecution Service dropped charges against him. This led to increased anger that the ‘Muslim community’ had done what was asked of it

but received no recognition from the council. Pakistani Muslims in Peterborough began to revisit the police consultations that had taken place prior to the march and became increasingly aggrieved that the line pushed by the city authorities, that Muslims should stay away from the counter-demonstration, had denied them their right to protest. Mohammad Ali, a 17-year-old Shia, alleged that tactics of divide and rule had been used to silence dissent. He recollected how his attempt to encourage other young people to join the counter-protest had been discredited by the authorities by invoking the spectre of sectarianism – clearly a case of ‘bad diversity’:

[One of the Mullahs] was saying, ‘Oh brother, you can’t do this. In Islam we taught you follow the law of the land.’ I said: ‘Acknowledged. But the law of the land is saying you have the right to protest and why can we not go to the TUC⁵ march?’ And then this massive uproar because I’d spoken out, and I heard the youth worker on the other side saying, ‘Take the mike off him’ . . . People made it into a sectarian issue because ‘he’s Shia and he’s Sunni. That’s why he’s saying it.’

Samina, a youth worker, warned that if the EDL were to return to Peterborough, the police could not expect such a cooperative response a second time round:

I went to [a local secondary school] and saw people chanting ‘EDL, Pakis out; EDL, Pakis out’ on the day before they’re breaking up before Christmas holidays . . . You’ve got people on Facebook making blatant racist comments . . . Yet you’re deluded enough to say, the EDL weren’t there. It was really good, it brought the city closer. *It didn’t.*

In this section, we have suggested that the EDL were permitted to gather next to the football ground because its supporters were seen as entitled to that space although the vast majority of them were outsiders to Peterborough. Meanwhile, the police choreographing of EDL, anti-fascist and Muslim bodies in the city on the day of the march was later revisited by many Peterborough Muslims, who began to retrospectively understand the consultations of the city authorities as a deprivation of their right to protest, and thus effectively their right to the city.

The Green Backyard – an alternative vision for the city

The Green Backyard was locked when the EDL supporters gathered in the street outside. But two of its workers were inside, hoping to be able to protect it from any violence. One of them, Sophie Antonelli, spoke about how they opposed the visit of the EDL, because it directly contradicted the ethos behind the setting up of the Green Backyard – a much more inclusive vision for the city:

It was really upsetting you know . . . We’ve tried so hard to create somewhere that is trying to be symbolic of a united community, that in some way that everybody in Peterborough can come there and can be proud of what they’ve created . . . And then to have all this *hate* marching past your gate?

The Green Backyard has been hailed by one alternative magazine as ‘a stunning example of inner city food growing somewhat in the vein of New York City’s green backyards of the 1970s and 1980s’ (Muggleton, 2011, p. 37). It can thus be seen as part of a long tradition of alternative visions for cities that emerged in the very capitalist spaces that they sought to transform – visions that held out the possibility that these same spaces need not be dominated by commodification or profit-seeking (Brenner *et al.* 2012, pp. 1–2). Green Backyard co-founder Renny Antonelli was passionate about common use rights to land in the city in general and allotment land in particular. With the help of local city councillors and key council officials, Green Backyard founders were given permission to use the Ram’s Fair Meadow allotment site between London Road and the main East Coast railway line on a temporary basis from early 2009. At the time the site resembled wasteland but retained its classification as allotment land. However, according to one volunteer, by 2012 the council had had the land reclassified. Its economic value as a ‘prime development site with a price tag of £2–3 million’ (Muggleton, 2011, p. 38) could now legally be realised. Although the city was a self-declared Home of Environment Capital, and despite the importance of environmental sustainability for the Green Backyard, a catering manager at the football ground told Rogaly of the council’s plan to turn it into a new car park for the football supporters. The former Horse Fair Meadow car park, where the EDL visitors had parked their coaches, had recently been closed to allow work on a new residential development.

In 2012 the Green Backyard launched a public campaign to be allowed to continue at its current location. It was precisely because of the Green Backyard’s alternative vision for the city that the visibility provided by this specific site, close to the city centre, was so important to its founders and supporters. Moreover, Ram’s Fair Meadow had a history of common use going back to at least the fifteenth century. For Harvey, the ‘right to the city is . . . far more than a right of individual or group access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change and reinvent the city more after our hearts’ desire’ (2012, p. 4). Renny’s 30 years of involvement in creating sustainable environments and, indeed, of contestations over land use were, for him, explicitly about the *hearts* of the people of the city. As he put it,

The last time I went to court [over another project] one of the things that really bolstered me was that I really did feel that people told me they were praying for me quite literally. I felt really part of their hearts, I was part of Peterborough and Peterborough people wanted me to succeed and they still do.

This mention of what ‘Peterborough people’ want should not be read as representing some kind of essentialised local or indigenous identity. At the same time, exploring some of the trans-spatial connections of white ethnic majority people in the city revealed an ambivalence towards ethnic diversity in general and the presence of Muslims in particular. Like many white residents of Peterborough,

Renny was born to Italian parents. Thousands of Italian men, including Renny's father, had moved (through an intergovernmental labour migration programme) to work in the city's brick pits in the 1950s, while women, like Renny's mother, had worked on the land or in food processing plants. Whereas, at that time, Italians had been collectively ethnicised and could be subject to racist abuse in daily life, the subsequent arrival of large numbers of black and Asian people made it easier for the descendants of Italian migrants to become part of the ethnic majority white population. As Renny put it:

I'm coloured by what's happened to me and how I've been brought up in this city, and my identity as somebody foreign anyway. I've always said that if I'd been foreign and black I would have had a much harder time, but because . . . I was white you could blend into the background more easily.

A group of Irish men Renny met as a young man working away at Milton Keynes inspired him to train as a carpenter – craft training is now key to the Green Backyard. Moreover, he connected with what he referred to as Italian heritage residents' 'love' of allotments. When his father's work had moved from the brick pits to manufacturing food processing machinery at Baker Perkins, his parents had taken advantage of a company scheme entitling workers to allotments. One of Renny's daughters described the commitment her paternal grandmother had shown to the allotment, explaining the connection to her grandmother's young life in Italy:

Yeah they were a very, very poor family . . . she was the eldest . . . and she brought her brothers and sisters up in the fields pretty much. They were labourers and they used to cook in the fields their lunch and then off they'd go. So it's definitely things that she brought from Italy and carried on in England, so that's where dad got his love for it.

The degree to which the Green Backyard was envisioned as a playful 'ludic space' (Sandercock 2003, p. 8) may also have been connected to the freedom Renny remembered when he spent 3 years living back in Italy with his grandmother:

In Italy I'd had lots of freedom . . . My grandmother didn't used to keep me by her side all the time . . . Whereas here [at home in Peterborough] . . . it was . . . much more restricted . . . In Italy I used to go for big long walks and . . . disappear all kinds of places and go off with a little gang of mates.

Such traces of lives lived elsewhere influenced other white majority ethnic visions of Peterborough, producing both an opposition to the injustices and inequalities generated by capitalist urban regeneration, and, in some cases, an ambivalence, a wariness, to the presence of marked others. Tom Smith, born in 1947, had moved to Peterborough from the Fens, a rural region adjacent to the city. He expressed a hatred of the British class system which he told Rogaly had evolved through his experience of deep poverty in childhood as his parents moved between landed

people's tied cottages, relying on agricultural wage work. A Labour supporter, he remembered foreign workers coming to the UK to harvest fruit in the 1960s, emphasising the long history of international migrant workers in the Peterborough region. 'And yes, fine, no problems . . . I worked in a sugar beet factory . . . where you've got Italians, Germans, the usual Peterborough mix.'

However, having emphasised the unity of working-class people Tom took recourse to the notion of an ethnicised national working class. He felt aggrieved that 'the ordinary white English working man . . .' had been 'neglected'. Tom's mixture of despising the rich and defence of white British working-class residents perhaps made it unsurprising that he attended the EDL rally 'as a neutral' (his words), and then at the same time said he had been outraged by the racism of Gurmeet Singh's speech.

This kind of articulation of *de facto* ambivalence towards the anti-Islamic EDL among some white residents, who would generally see themselves as non-racist and on the left, reveals a remaking of white ethnic solidarity in relation to Asians, especially Muslims, and may explain the Green Backyard's Sophie Antonelli's puzzlement: 'I was really surprised that most people weren't that bothered by [the EDL visit] and young people as well . . . I was just furious and I just assumed that everybody else would be.' This resonates with Sandercock's argument that the 'multicultural city/region is perceived by many as more of a threat than an opportunity . . . contemporary cities are sites of struggle over space, which are really two kinds of struggle: one a struggle of life space against economic space . . . the other a struggle over belonging' (2003, p. 4).

Yet our final vignette, based on ethnographic engagement in the car boot sale to the north and east of the football stadium appears to put both belonging and life space to one side. The car boot sale succeeds in re-inscribing the white space of the stadium with an unselfconscious multicultural. In Karen Franck and Quentin Stevens' (2007) words, this is an informal and spontaneous 'loose space' where long-term residents and new migrants exercise an emplacement in the city through the careful work of making ends meet. This is a space of banal encounters in the search for low-priced items, an economic process in a time of austerity in which ethnicity seems less important than the experience of social class.

The car boot sale and everyday conviviality

For many, the draw of the car boot sale is the simple pleasure of thrift and finding a good bargain. For others, it can be the basis of a livelihood cobbled together out of informal economies of recirculation. For Qureshi, living in the Gladstone area of Peterborough, the car boot sale became a weekly ritual. Her landlady, a Pakistani Muslim living as a single mother and on benefits, would go every Sunday to pick up bargains that she would re-sell during the week at a stall set up on the pavement outside her house – handbags, teddy bears, slightly broken toys, flip-flops, CDs of diverse musical tastes. She would pick up items for a maximum of 20p and try to

sell them for a pound, to any passerby who would stop to sort through the jumble – often new migrant women pushing prams. Sitting outside the house from 9 am to 3 pm, she took in between £2 and £5 a day.

Attending the car boot sale with landlady Fozia on a Sunday in July, Qureshi learnt how the items recirculated through the car boot sale could be important in creating a sort of banal cosmopolitanism expressed through an expertise in material culture (Werbner 1999, p. 22). They parked the car on Fletton Avenue and walked round to the entrance of the car park, people milling around in a thick throng as they paid their 50p entrance fee and had their hands stamped with ‘POSH car boot’. Fozia recalled how she had once managed to obtain gifts for all her relatives in Pakistan from the car boot sale, making lighter one of the major burdens of transnational life. ‘These kinds of things go down very well in Pakistan’, she told Qureshi, ‘especially the electronic goods. I bought a hairdryer for 50p and my sister-in-law was thrilled; she said to me “thank you baji, that machine you gave me, it keeps my blanket nicely warm!”’.

As they went through the turnstile, Fozia and her friend Muqaddas set about their routine. They were keen for the hanger-on researcher not to dawdle by useless stalls. First, they wanted to do the whole round before making up their mind about what to buy. The football ground environment was prominent: football crowd hot food, the POSH shop with fan paraphernalia, the home and away stands. They set off past a van selling hot dogs and chips, the smell of sausages and onions wafting innocently through the air and unremarked upon by this hijab’ed and burqa’d group of women.

People from all walks of life were there. The car boot sale exemplifies Gilroy’s convivial culture, where racial and ethnic differences are unremarkable and ‘people discover that the things that really divide them are much more profound: taste, lifestyle and leisure preferences’ (2006, p. 40) (see also Wessendorf and Rhys-Taylor, this volume). Most of the stalls were selling unwanted clutter reflecting the bric-a-brac of people’s lives. A Sikh family had a suitcase full of Patiala-style nylon suits with heavy gold embroidery. A number of Eastern European young parents were selling off baby equipment and toddlers’ clothing as the families they established in the city grew up, children translating for their parents. Roma people were selling fruit and vegetables for a pound a bowl, and haggled with Fozia and Muqaddas over the price of watermelons in Hindustani. An elderly English man was selling off what looked like a prized collection of Boys’ Own annuals dating back to 1903. Another elderly Englishman was selling a collection of Wedgwood ceramics for a pound. Alongside these artefacts from old England were stalls selling the ubiquitous England paraphernalia from the 2010 World Cup. Muqaddas bought an England sun hat for her son, and put it on top of her hijab to shelter her eyes from the sun as she scoured for other 20p bargains in a pile of old clothes.

The weekly car boot sale, we suggest, is low-key and inclusive. What for much of the week is an empty space associated with white working-class football culture becomes, on Sunday mornings, a loose space where people come together,

religious and cultural differences rendered banal, to make informal livelihoods, haggle over a bargain, exercise expertise in material culture, and make their homes with recirculated items. Unlike the use of the space surrounding the football stadium described in the other two vignettes it does not emerge from an individual or collective vision contesting the right to the city. The organiser Rogaly interviewed gains a modest income from renting the pitches and provides a further example of ambivalence. Portraying himself as a member of the white ethnic majority, his narrative resonates with the fish stall holder described by Les Back (2009, p. 209), prone to 'racist melancholy'. Back gives the example of the stall holder's sigh as he refers to the market as 60% foreign, and yet revealing 'a measure of homely coexistence' with his diverse clientele.

Conclusions

Between 2010 and 2012, the area adjacent to the Peterborough United stadium witnessed both contrasting *uses* of urban space and competing *visions* of the right to the city. Our study reveals divergent temporalities and affective intensities that connect the site with wider processes of economic and environmental change and with the politics of diversity in the city.

The context of austerity and government-through-affect (Fortier 2010) produced and enabled over 1000 people from outside the city, claiming affiliation to a national heritage supposedly under threat from Islam, to march in the name of the English nation in opposition to long-established Muslim communities' right to the city. The march took place on a single day in 2010 but its affective reverberations were also present in the months leading up to it and in the years that followed. The city authorities' detailed, forensic, demarcation of space into gradations of permitted and forbidden microzones in order that the march would be able to go ahead exemplified the politics of diversity as governmentality.

Just as minorities in the city were being expected to downplay ethnic difference and multiple place attachments and to demonstrate loyalty to the nation, senior police officers saw it as important that white working-class people from other parts of the country should be enabled to assert what were portrayed as justifiable grievances in the face of a multiculturalism that had excluded them. Yet setting the EDL march alongside the two other framings of the same site revealed the presence of alternative visions and practices of diversity and urban space in Peterborough.

While the car boot sale operated as a small business and facilitated the sale of household bric-a-brac, it could not be accurately described as commercial when set against the urban capitalist regeneration being carried out at the stadium. Nor did its organisers attempt to offer a coherent alternative *vision* of the right to the city. Rather it is suggestive of an ongoing convivial *practice* of diversity, where the discourses of Englishness and otherness are held back in their everyday context and differences are rendered mundane. While the extent to which such encounters are socially and politically transformative may be questioned, in

attending to exchanges that take place outside the football ground on a Sunday morning we have argued that it is a space for playful and spontaneous encounters between strangers that would not otherwise happen. The car boot sale is also a crucible for informal economies of recirculation allowing those at the margins of the labour market in the city to get by in an ever more vicious austerity regime.

In contrast the Green Backyard does explicitly offer a vision – one that runs counter to the council's regeneration plan. This vision, unlike that of the EDL, is one of an inclusive city, of all city residents' rights to enjoy common land, and of radical shifts in production and consumption to achieve environmental sustainability. Our analysis suggests that the Green Backyard alternative emerges out of histories of spatial mobility and multiple place attachments that are more often associated with ethnicised minorities and recent international migrants. While the Green Backyard retains traces of Italian heritage, it also grew out of its co-founders' work and encounters in other parts of Britain. This modern provincial city, like other places, is, in Massey's terms, always in flux, made up of multiple stories including those of the large in-flows of white British people from within the UK, as well as international migrants from a large number of countries and established ethnic minority and majority communities. We hope that, in contributing to the understanding of such trans-spatial connections, our own *diversity politics* can help to make the familiar strange in ways that reduce the harms of a racism often hidden behind a *politics of diversity*.

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Notes

1. Photographs illustrating this article are available as supplementary material. Further illustrations of the wider research project on which the article draws can be found at <http://www.placesforall.co.uk>
2. Census of England and Wales, 2011.
3. Fifty kilometres to the north of London.
4. Since its inception the English Defence League has sought to build alliances with members of other (non-Muslim) religious faiths, including Sikhs and Jews. These attempts are opposed by the vast majority of people in all faith communities.
5. Trades Union Congress.

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BEN ROGALY is Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Sussex.
ADDRESS: Department of Geography, School of Global Studies, Arts C, University of Sussex, BN1 9SJ, UK.

Email: b.rogaly@sussex.ac.uk

KAVERI QURESHI is John Fell Research Fellow in the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Oxford University.

ADDRESS: Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford University, 51–53 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PE, UK.

Email: kaveri.queshi@anthro.ox.ac.uk