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Emotional citizenry: everyday geographies of befriending, belonging and intercultural encounter

Abstract

This paper develops the concept of emotional citizenry, as exceeding a fixed status of citizenship to be achieved in the formal political sphere, rather as a process grounded in the complexities of places, lives and feelings. Drawing on encounters between refugees, asylum seekers and more settled residents in a befriending scheme in Newcastle, England, it focusses on the emotional geographies of intercultural interactions, produced through everyday spaces. Contact in the scheme involves difficult negotiations of difference, yet it is precisely the emotional that opens up the potential of/for making connections, through which nuanced relationships develop, dualisms are destabilised, and meaningful encounters emerge in fragile yet hopeful ways. I argue that these emotional encounters evidence desires to (re)make society at the local level, beyond normalised productions and practices of citizenship as bounded in/outside, in which a politics of engagement is enacted. Analysis suggests that the felt, interpersonal dimensions of such praxis, the emotionality of these specific notions belonging and relationality, push at the concept of cosmopolitan citizenship to register something more. This paper contributes to debate on everyday practices of citizenship as already taking place, and poses questions to how individual relations may anticipate collective change in how we live together in an era of super-diversity.

Keywords:

Citizenship, intercultural encounter, multicultural, emotion, politics, civic geographies

Introduction

This paper develops the concept of emotional citizenry as process, embedded in the complexities of places, lives and feelings, beyond claims to and exclusions from nation-statehood. Citizenry normatively refers to a body of people, and I extend it here to call attention to how individual bodies and emotions mutually co-constitute a broader body politic, that exceeds any formal political sphere. Significantly, the processes through which people experience and practice citizenry and community are framed by increasingly global dimensions of migration; moreover, a greater complexity in contemporary migration trends, and the resultant ethnic make-up of society at the local level, raise critical issues for how identity, diversity and social relations are constructed and play out (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006; Linklater 2010). Such 'super-diversity' underlines heterogeneity beyond ethnicity or country of origin, recognising the 'dynamic interplay of variables' in many places (Vertovec 2007, 3). Living with difference is irrevocably central to 21st century debates surrounding urban migration and civic life (Valentine 2013): understanding who we are, and where we might belong, is being produced through and productive of a rising number and type of interethnic and intercultural^{*endnote} encounters, across a range of sites (Bauder 2014; Staeheli et al. 2012).

Key in academic and policy analysis is whether contact between migrant and established communities moves us towards a cosmopolitan society, in which encounters and prosaic interactions in public spaces, schools and workplaces facilitate multicultural reality as the new norm (Simonson 2008; Wilson 2011); or whether super-diversity increases conflict, especially in an age of austerity (Meer and Modood 2014). Indeed, Neal et al. (2013, 308) identify a 'marked tension' between discourses of ethnic polarisation and segregation, and those that emphasise contact and 'more interactive negotiations of multicultural'. This tension problematically simplifies the multiplicity of intercultural encounters, oscillating instead between a cosmopolitanism grounded in the potential of new hybridity, and 'postcolonial

melancholia' emphasising cultural racism (Gilroy 2006). Rather, structural in/exclusions and lived political economies cannot be separated from the social and cultural aspects of these discussions. And performances of and claims to belonging, community and citizenship are highly contested, multiple and fluid, and spatially inflected in a range of ways (Staeheli 2010). The concept of cosmopolitan citizenship itself does much to emphasise everyday lived experiences as interconnected across global and national spaces, and citizenship rights and obligations based on "the increasing convergence of the socio-cultural dimensions of citizenship and political formalities" (Dickinson et al. 2008 102). Yet this research suggests that the felt, interpersonal registers caught up in the multiplicity of intercultural encounters, belonging and recognition, point towards something more.

The paper draws on empirical research with refugees and asylum seekers (R-AS) and more settled residents¹ in the north east of England, exploring interpersonal relationships within a local community organisation-run scheme. In this context, UK government policies are increasingly repressive around immigration and human rights (Waite 2012); framed through 'austerity reform', dominant narratives centre around established communities having to defend scarce local resources against racialized incoming others, contributing to an increase in boundary-making and narrowing of the category of deserving citizen (Noxolo 2014). Such policy and rhetoric are clearly mired in essentialist identity constructions, and can be critiqued for failing to consider 'everyday practice, exchange and meaning making' (Wise and Velayutham 2009, 3). Neal et al. (2013) call for an 'emergent multicultural' approach to explore the competencies of informal practices in everyday living together, and emphasise the role of (especially) local places in which people experience relationships through intersectional diversity (see also Piekut et al. 2012). An everyday framing pays attention to the *process* of contact, involving diverse social and personal characteristics (gender, age,

¹ The term 'more settled residents' is adopted to encompass the wide variety of people who volunteer in the scheme, across age, gender, ethnicity and background, and including refugees. 'More' is intended to avoid the binary of 'migrant' and 'settled', pointing to relationality. Many asylum seekers live in the city for several years before their claims are processed, while volunteers may be new to Newcastle; thus 'more settled' refers to greater stability and security in people's circumstances.

ethnicity etc.) embedded in a complex interplay between actors, materials and space, in which new social relations may emerge (Askins and Pain 2011).

This literature is critically concerned with debates regarding the need to build cohesive societies (Clayton 2012; DCLG 2015; Valentine and Sadgrove 2014), and the spaces of interaction that may enable meaningful encounters between different social groups. Meaningful encounter is broadly understood as interactions that shift entrenched, largely negative versions of the 'other' to reduce social tension, develop inclusive notions of citizenship, and enable minority rights to public space. This paper stresses such encounters as not simplistically positive or easy; rather it is through negotiating emotional geographies that new interpersonal understandings may be fostered, and citizenry enacted across public and private spheres.

The following two sections review conceptual discussions regarding desire for attachment and belonging through (making) social bonds with others and to place. These issues are first considered through notions of in/security, how this may be produced, and especially how emotions matter. I draw on Waite et al.'s (2014) concept of 'the capacity to hurt' to comprehend more fully the power relations in contested claims to citizenship as an essentialised, static category. The paper then highlights the potential of emotions to move beyond such reductive productions of citizen, rethinking encounters between individuals as not only limited to difference. This is linked to debates on the politics of recognition, and especially the 'quest for recognition' (Koeford and Simonsen 2012). The latter calls for an understanding of intersubjective encounters, and I connect this to work on relational citizenship, as already enacted in everyday geographies, embedded in *yet also exceeding* dominant discourses of nation-statehood.

Next, I outline the research process, and methodological issues caught up in making the situated knowledges presented here. The empirical discussion subsequently develops key analytical themes around the desire to belong as embedded in a need for intersubjective

recognition* across a range of spheres (private, legal, communal) and scales (local, national, global). I suggest this as ambitious belonging, desires at once hopeful and fragile, shared across differently positioned R-AS and more settled residents, with embodied belonging simultaneously situated in wider normative structures and geographies.

The paper argues that everyday, informal spaces enable meaningful encounter, through the specific praxis of engagement adopted by participants in the organisation-run scheme. This analysis builds to the paper's primary contribution to geographical understanding: the notion of emotional citizenry as already practiced, enacting social relations that are precarious and possible. This prompts questions as to how individual relations may anticipate collective change in how we live together in an era of super-diversity, and the need to reframe and repoliticise everyday interactions, and the emotions caught up in them, as interwoven through broader (state) politics.

Emotional geographies of belonging and in/security

Literature across the social sciences has long explored issues of belonging, identity and space, considering the complex and contested meanings around place, displacement, migration and group affiliations (Erdal 2013; Mee and Wright 2009; Mountz and Hiemstra 2014; Yuval-Davies et al. 2006). Much of this literature is concerned with the racialisation of migration, how marginalized groups are excluded from the public realm, and struggles over citizenship and polity (Leitner and Strunk 2014; Staeheli et al. 2012). More specifically, a growing body of work has focused on the emotionality of belonging, building on Probyn's (1996) conceptualisation of belonging as 'longing to be', incorporating a *desire for attachments*, through social, familial, emotional bonds with others and to place. Geographers in particular have emphasised the emotional and embodied sense of being 'in place' and 'secure' as beyond fixed and fixing notions of exclusion/inclusion, highlighting the relationality of desires and practices that incorporate becoming, and 'becoming towards belonging' (Hall 2013, 246). In this vein, Wood and Waite (2011, 201) argue that 'belonging

is a dynamic emotional attachment that relates people to the material and social worlds that they inhabit and experience’.

Indeed, literature around migration and diaspora is concerned with the role of emotions in how immigrants’ senses of belonging or alienation play a crucial role in developing social relations in any new place (Ho 2009; Karner and Parker 2011), and the ways in which emotions circulate and accumulate to inform individual and collective social relations in affective economies (Ahmed 2004a). Research on the significance of emotion in wider migration processes examines emotional logics and regimes vis-à-vis decisions and experiences around movement, return, and multiple migrating, highlighting ‘the emotional economy of migration’ (Ho 2014). Literature on forced migration considers R-AS’ access to material resources, such as food, housing, medical services, as well as social support and inclusion, such that R-AS can feel they belong (Conlon and Gill 2013; Waite 2012). Any sense of belonging among R-AS, then, is irrevocably intertwined with in/security, about making themselves more secure.

In trying to understand intercultural relations, it is also necessary to consider more settled residents’ desires to belong and senses of in/security, alongside those of immigrants. Belonging may be for a specific bounded community, with immigrants perceived as a threat to security prompting exclusion (Hubbard 2005; Valentine et al. 2015). Tyler (2013) suggests that nation-states orchestrate such fear of the migrant other, constructing the most marginalised as scapegoats for the failure of capital logics (see also Pain (2009) on ‘emotional geopolitics’). However, more settled residents may be open to diversity, difference and more cosmopolitan versions of society (Neal et al. 2013), migrants themselves. What is critical is to make visible the different circulations of power in which the mobility and migration of more/less marginalised people occurs.

Certainly, then, the emotions of belonging are a central aspect of in/security. Waite et al. (2014, 315), researching undocumented asylum seekers’ precarious labour, propose the

concept of insecurity as being about the 'capacity to hurt', in terms of both the ability '*to be or feel hurt*' (original emphasis) and also the perceived capability of groups/individuals to cause hurt to others. The concept is therefore relevant across R-AS migrating to the UK, and also more settled communities into which they arrive, critically foregrounding the emotional dimensions of both structural and social boundary-drawing. In terms of the former, multiple insecurities are produced through protectionist government policy, while state managerialism increasingly organise exclusionary civic hierarchies around rights to residence, welfare support and employment (Mountz 2011) that translate into emotional realms – feeling hurt.

Meanwhile, understanding social in/security involves paying attention to feelings in the context of cultural and spatialized norms and values around belonging: mapping those feelings of in/security (eg. trust, despair, reliance, confidence, timidity, doubt) and the ways and spaces in which they are produced and circulated (through affection, closeness, hierarchy, distancing etc.). This incorporates socially constructed norms around who is deserving of support (who should be made secure); *and* urges appreciation of interdependency and intimacy, expectations of reciprocity and resilience, and what are appropriate responses to being offered support of different kinds². That is, emotional belonging is never outside political and economic spheres, rather it is *simultaneously* embedded in culture (Ahmed 2004a).

Further, emotions themselves are socially and culturally constructed, they cannot be reduced to shared understandings of specifically labelled emotions, nor particular emotions assumed to constitute a particular form of social relation (Ahmed 2004b). The analytic utility of emotional geographies is in its attention to the range of emotions in social relations and how they do different kinds of work in different contexts: anger may be processed through violence or lead to positive action for justice; grief embodied in one person may draw concern and sympathy from another, or prompt (self)exclusion from others. Literature argues

² There are pertinent debates regarding an ethic of care here, which require greater attention than is possible in this paper.

that emotions are embodied and dynamic, situated in and relational across space, and 'social practices by default' (Everts and Wagner 2012; also Smith et al. 2009).

In this research, I specifically understand the concept of emotion with regard to how the physical and cognitive are intertwined, and thus emotion as being at the same time individual, socially circulated and spatially contextual. This is not to ignore how bodies sustain and transform each other through creating and sharing affects, via pre-cognitive relations between physical bodies and things (Gregg and Seigworth 2011). Indeed, this paper considers affect as a crucial element within a broader continuum of emotions-and-affect, conceptualising non-linear, messy processes through which affect and emotion overlap (Kobayashi et al. 2011). In trying to *make sense* of belonging and intercultural relations, the research is concerned with how conscious thoughts mutually co-construct emotional responses and behaviours (Conradson and Latham 2007). I use this frame to grasp the ways in which *be-longing* plays out across ontological and psychological selves. Belonging is about more than being materially and legally secure, but also about being recognised (Strang and Ager 2010), to which this paper now turns.

Intercultural encounters and the quest for recognition

Issues regarding encounter are integral to thinking about belonging and in/security, together with debates regarding the politics of recognition. In an Australian context, Noble and Poynting (2010) show how majority white social anxiety around intercultural relations and the racialization of the 'Arab other' lead to acts of everyday incivility, that enact and are experienced as denial of (minority) being, not recognising (their) existence and humanity. In dialectical opposition, an 'affirmative politics of recognition' (Fraser 2000) is based on minority-driven demand for ethnic and/or cultural rights, enacting and experienced as sustained in-group security. Concomitant 'positive action' policies are supported as necessary to redress social and spatial injustices – and critiqued for further entrenching injustice through (strategic) essentialism and colonially entrenched modes of state

recognition (Coulthard 2014). The point here is that both negative and affirmative politics of recognition are grounded in only-difference, and construct reductive models of belonging, attached to notions of citizenship as fixed, a status to be achieved, and inherently exclusionary.

However, Waite et al.'s (2014) discussion of insecurity as the 'capacity to hurt', considered above, explores a common recognition of what it means to feel hurt, albeit in different ways and through different regimes of power. This resonates with Probyn's (2005) suggestion that, although emotions are culturally constructed, we should risk conceptualising *emotionality itself* as a universal³. This is not to deny or flatten out difference, yet can move us beyond only-difference. Paying attention to emotions and emotionality, then, may shift how we appreciate intercultural encounters; through concurrent difference-and-similarity instead of oppositional and reductive dualisms*.

These arguments connect to broader debates on civic geographies, regarding the ways in which people *feel* associated with an 'assembly of others', with 'some sense of placed-ness involved' (Philo et al. 2015). Meer and Modood (2014, 666) outline the importance of reconciling how minorities and citizenship are cast 'both within and beyond local encounters and politics'. Similarly, Smith and Winders (2008) evidence the multiscalar place-making of Latino/a immigrants to the USA through social reproduction and investments in place. Pertinently, Wright (2015) discusses heterogeneous belongings that come about through 'feeling-in-common', through the complex interplay across and between actors, materials and places, and engendered through re/creating solidarities through practices of living with other people, places and things. This resonates with Butler's (2004) notion of liveability, in which lives are more than survival, but that which is possible, and Wright (2015) emphasises the potential for hopeful geographies and new ways of 'being human'.

³ Though this needs further debate; eg. considering people on the autism spectrum or with specific kinds of 'personality disorders'.

In this vein, Koefoed and Simonsen (2012) discuss the complex denial and/or recognition of national identity and belonging among Danish Muslims, taking ethnicity as an axis of difference that is complicated in emergent and contested ways across space and place. Drawing on Honneth's (1995) concept of the need for intersubjective recognition, they outline 'the quest for recognition'⁴ as centred on confirmation from other humans, foregrounding *societal* coherence as requiring mutual recognition enacted across differentiated spheres. These spheres are: the private, based on emotional support through practices of mutual concern, which builds selfhood as someone whose needs are recognised; the legal, based on cognitive respect and equal treatment for citizens under the law in which rights are mutually granted; and the 'sphere of achievement' wherein social esteem is built through being valued for abilities and skills within specific fields or communities.

Such multi-sited quest for recognition crucially works across the political and emotional, *without* conflating political with public and emotional with private space, disrupting a politics of recognition as normatively elided with participation in public sphere and belonging to the nation-state. Indeed, feminist geographers have long critiqued distanced, rational models that re-iterate citizenship as a singular and fixed instrument of state governance, or as only pertaining to public (and emotions to private) places. Instead, feminist work argues for the need to explore mundane geographies and informal practices alongside wider institutional and societal dimensions of contact, foregrounding everyday, embodied experiences of citizenship – how it *feels* (eg. Fluri 2012; Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006; Staeheli and Nagel 2006). Specifically, Ho's (2009) work on emotional citizenship highlights residency and recognition as ruptured by the emotionality of migration, and the ways in which citizenship power relations are represented, experienced and negotiated across a range of sites.

This paper, then, emphasises intercultural encounters as process. Especially resonant here is Horschelmann and El Refaie's (2013, 444) comprehension of 'relational citizenship' as

⁴ Koefoed and Simonsen are careful in differentiating this from politics of recognition: rather this concept (after Honneth 1995) is used as an analytical tool, and to encapsulate how coherent identity-formation *always* involves a social and public dimension, beyond group specific or cultural identity.

'already practised' by people across space and time. This understanding circumvents universalising assumptions, tying specifically into the inter-scaling of belonging involved in encounters across and beyond local and national sites. Moreover, Horschelmann and El Refaie stress 'lines of connection and disconnection', that emerge and are fluid through 'performances of citizenship identities'. These are hybrid identities and political allegiances, rather than nation-statehood status possessed or excluded from. It is from such positioning and thinking that this paper progresses.

Methodology

This paper draws on a series of interviews conducted within a wider participatory action research (PAR) project conducted in Newcastle, north east England, with the West End Refugee Service (WERS, named at their request). WERS are a local voluntary sector organisation who offer support to R-AS, and raise awareness of asylum issues among the general public (see www.wers.org.uk). WERS are reliant on volunteers, bringing more settled local residents and R-AS into direct contact. WERS' ethos is grounded in enabling service users to progress at their own pace, prioritising one-to-one working and personal support.

The wider PAR project ran for four years, and evolved across the organisation's range of support services, acting on different issues as identified by staff, volunteers and service users. One discrete activity was a qualitative interview survey, to fulfil a particular audit requirement related to WERS' befriending scheme. This scheme is facilitated by an employed Volunteer Co-ordinator, and audited by the UK Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) bi-annually. To retain registration with MBF, organisations must undertake self-evaluation; WERS had previously reported statistics to MBF, regarding numbers of people involved in befriending. In Oct. 2013, staff and volunteers discussed a need, and their desire, for more discursive reporting to better capture the complexities of the scheme, and understand both its benefits and challenges. Thus a qualitative interview survey was

developed within the PAR. Two research questions were agreed, asking how cross-cultural relationships between R-AS and more settled residents may develop through sustained encounters in local places; and to what extent WERS enables progressive relationships among these groups. This paper addresses the former; the latter is addressed in a report to MBF.

Eight interviews were held with 14 individuals in a three month period 2013-14. Six were with befriending pairs together, over a third of matched pairs at the time; in these interviews I joined meetings arranged as part of usual befriending practice. Two interviews were with individual befrienders alone, both of whom had several years' experience of befriending (one was unmatched at that time, the other befriending someone who did not wish to participate in the interview). All participants had a minimum of one year's experience in the Scheme; no new pairs opted to take part. Given the emotional and sensitive nature of starting befriending, this was not surprising. All befriender participants were British, which reflects the majority of WERS volunteers, though the scheme does have volunteers from other countries, including refugees themselves. It is also important to highlight that people volunteer from diverse ages, socio-economic positions and backgrounds.

In line with WERS' ethos and issues raised in the discussions leading to the interviews, it is imperative that participants and their voices are central to reporting (see also Cahill 2007 regarding PAR imperatives). Mim is a 40+ year old woman paired with Rebecca, 60+, and they had been befriending for 'just about' three years at the time of the research; Rebecca had previously befriended twice in the scheme. Nyanna, 30+, and Helen, 20+, are two women who had been befriending for 18 months; Nyanna previously had another befriender for six months. Syrus is a 30+ year old man who was paired with Mike, 60+, three years previously. Bob, 40+, and Thom, 60+, had been befriending for two years. Issal is a 30+ year old woman paired with Fiona, 20+, just over one year prior to interview. Shohreh, 40+, and Fran, 30+, are two women who had been befriending for 'nearly two years' at the time. Jon is

a 60+ year old man, in a second befriending relationship of two and a half years at the time of interviewing; he remains in contact with his previous befriender. Jane is a 60+ year old woman who had previously befriended twice, and she remains in close contact with one of these women.

Where pertinent (given word limits), short excerpts of dialogue between befriending pairs are represented below. In practice, interviews started with researcher's questions, but debate often developed between pairs who were clearly comfortable talking with one another. Indeed, the richness of the conversations cannot be conveyed in print, nor the body language, facial expressions, quality of interaction and tone of voice. Affect and emotions were felt by all of us, and those experiences are both sub-consciously and consciously part of my analysis too, without presuming that emotions travel simplistically across cultures or between bodies.

A key point here is that participants at times made sense of how they felt, as they talked about previous events and experiences. At other times, discussions in interview themselves became emotional, and participants later reflected on those emotions. That is, they often came to terms with, through cognitive processes, thoughts *and* feelings. As an academic, I process all of this in analysis and writing, also thinking about my own embodied sense of research encounters. While I experienced pre-cognitive 'atmospheres' moving between and affecting bodies (Hasse 2012) in the research, the paper is necessarily situated where embodied feeling is brought to consciousness. It is precisely this *making-sense*, and how conscious thoughts mutually co-construct emotional responses and behaviours (Conradson and Latham 2007) that I am concerned with here.

Further, MBF reporting and re-registration, WERS' organisational ethos, and participant and researcher backgrounds and beliefs are caught up in the partial knowledges being presented. I emphasise Torre et al.'s (2008) framing of research encounters and *contact as method*. Such an approach explicitly considers issues of power, foregrounding questions

about privilege and tension through research settings and process, to engender nuanced and complex knowledges (Pratt 2007). I need to be transparent about my role, the wider PAR and MBF requirements (although fuller excavation of the issues would require a methodological paper in itself). To be clear, the data below are specifically from the discrete interview survey, but analysis is informed through the longer PAR; importantly, analysis undertaken from an interview project alone would have been quite different to that discussed below. There are epistemological issues involved in making claims to knowledge and wider societal relevance from this small sample size, and difficulties in capturing here the multiple PAR activities. The aim is to present such positionality in making situated knowledges, as a rigorous and relevant approach (after Haraway 1988).

I also want to be clear not to position more settled residents as the giving, empowered actors in the scheme, or R-AS as only passive, without agency or unable to reciprocate. Certainly, staff, volunteers and service users are unhappy with the problematic terms of 'befriender' and 'befriended', though an alternative has yet to be agreed. This paper uses the terms with caution, cognisant of the differing circulations of power and mobilities they are embedded within*.

Emotional geographies of belonging

Building securities and gaining recognition

This research finds belonging to be complicated, active and emotional, emerging through the befriending scheme as people implicitly and explicitly attempt to make sense of and secure their place in the world. This is evidenced across all participants in differentiated ways, depending on their position; common is the desire to belong, and be *seen to belong*, as a member of society.

For R-AS, this desire to belong is an emotional aspect of daily life in quite specific ways: fearing claim refusal and deportation, a pervading sense of exclusion from mainstream

society, marginalisation in employment, and sometimes outright racism in local neighbourhoods (see also Lewis et al. 2014), complicated by the anxieties of arrival and asylum claim-making. R-AS outline central concerns around gaining language skills to enable employment *and* become part of local community. They stress how they attempt and produce security, by drawing on formal and informal networks and practices. Physical and emotional security interweave here. At one level, material security depends on speaking English to find paid employment and meet biological needs (paying rent, bills, buying food), but R-AS are also intent on being recognised across private, legal and achievement spheres, showing agency within a 'quest for recognition' (Koefoed and Simonsen 2012). Steps taken to develop new positions and opportunities are often challenging:

Nyanna *why I went to refugee service first time [...] I say is OK I'm homeless ... forget about being homeless forget about food but ... I will be very very upset I don't get college ... can you help me get college I want to learn English ... and when I get place [at college] I was so so happy ... because I need this for job and for living here you know? and then they ask me if I can have befriender and I say yes of course ... useful to have befriender ... I was expecting someone older and not someone with a lot of study but with ...*

Helen *a real job [both laugh; Helen is a university student]*

Nyanna *and we both like about study ... I like study so she encourage me*

* * *

Issal *I have ESOL⁵ every morning and now also I do work program ... so because for work program I have to do also ... [goes to drawer and gets out a certificate for a first aid course] I have pass course with interpreter*

Fiona *well done hey that's great [looking at it; big smile] so is this separate from college?*

⁵ English for Speakers of Other Languages: classes are offered by a local further education college.

Issal yeah different from college ... for the first aid ...sometimes do one day course in community centre here

* * *

Mike because Syrus has worked really hard to get numeracy and literacy ... at college he's done all the right courses and was a bit of a star pupil at technical college where he did his welding

Syrus yes I get more qualification here for building job ... job important to living here and community [...] make friends with job not staying indoor

Such quests for recognition, then, imagine specific geographies, while emotions matter across ontological and psychological registers. R-AS explicitly discuss building connections with people in Newcastle as tackling social isolation in the present and as important for the future. Mim is increasingly involved at her son's school, offering to cook, and being invited to cook, for social events. She also encourages her children's involvement as central to their inclusion and recognition:

Mim Musaf is good at football ... yes he likes football he plays with the school team and the local team as well ... every Saturday we go to the pitch near our house for training and then match on Sundays ... has many friends now

Rebecca he's several times got a cup for being man of the match ... and the girls are doing very well at school

Mim my daughter elder one she is a very busy lady ... doing her A levels ... and today after classes finish she go straightaway to the [name of] Centre and do voluntary work ... she does voluntary work there every week ... and me too I do voluntary work there

Meanwhile, as evidenced above, befrienders have the role of validating these efforts and achievements. Indeed, befrienders' motivations to volunteer are predominantly grounded in desires to 'support others'; they describe English language and local knowledge as helpful skills, wanting to 'do something' and 'be useful'. This can be tied to a quest for recognition in

the sphere of achievement, being in turn valued for their abilities and building their own self esteem:

Thom and what I was interested in ... and one of the things I thought that I could offer ... whoever ... was learning English ... that was the thing I thought might be helpful

* * *

Rebecca and I think a certain confidence in my own ability that I could do it that I had something to offer ... I do have a counselling background I know this [befriending scheme] isn't counselling but some of those attitudes and skills I thought might be helpful

The point here is that befrienders need to be needed, they themselves desire recognition. This is intertwined with befrienders' desire for more inclusive community and place, embedded in a more fluid sense of belonging and openness to diversity (Neal et al. 2013). There is a strong discourse among befrienders around building '*stronger local community*', foregrounding precisely the societal coherence through intersubjective recognition that Honneth (1995) outlines:

Helen I also like to ... be part of a community of people [...] that came from being a university student here and knowing only other university students [...] so I was that person who was new to Newcastle once ... and I had that problem I didn't know where to get things or get things done ... it's about a sense of investing in a place because you live there too and you want it to be a good an inclusive place to live

Belonging, then, relies on reciprocity – and this is precisely what makes the emotional geographies of belonging so complicated.

Ambitious belonging

Initially, this desire for inclusion among befrienders may be grounded in an affirmative politics of recognition in line with broadly liberal epistemologies, with the attendant risk of

reiterating essentialist constructions of otherness tied to diversity rhetoric (Coulthard 2014; Ho 2009). Yet the research finds that any such patronising or reductive notions of difference quickly dissipate. Rather, an ambitious belonging*, across all participants plays out through encounters. It is ambitious *as hopeful*, simultaneously desiring and articulating new connections to place and others (after Wright 2015); these are liveable lives in Butler's (2004) sense of that which is possible. It is also ambitious *in its fragility*, there is always also the possibility of being denied recognition.

The need for a befriending scheme in itself attests to wider structural and social inequalities, and the broader PAR project evidences multiple institutional denial. In addition to dispersal policy⁶, negotiating unknown and confusing bureaucracy is deeply frustrating for R-AS: from Home Office regulations, to day-to-day life regarding bills, housing, banking, public transport, education and so on. All participants describe living in the UK as extremely stressful for R-AS, with much befriending time spent working through obfuscated and often exclusionary structures:

Thom *and sometimes you've [to befriender] had a solicitor letter or ... a bill about the gas or water ... so if you're not quite sure we read that through and try to make sense of it don't we?*

* * *

Shohreh *because coming to new country everything is new ... and so I have problems to learn what to do what I need to do ... schooling kids and benefits and everything ... and I have a lot of problem with housing ... they gave me a very cheap and damaged house ... it was very cold ... the roof had damage ... and WERS and Fran help me go back and forward with housing office to get things better*

In addition to structural barriers, local spaces that might afford contact do not necessarily translate into positive encounters (Valentine and Sadgrove 2014). In their desire to make

⁶ Asylum seekers must reside where the Home Office locates them, under the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act; they must regularly present themselves to Border Agency officials ('sign on') to evidence their compliance.

Newcastle a more inclusive place to live, befrienders are both hopeful and aware of the everyday incivilities performed among majority society through encounters with difference (Noble and Poynting 2010), and the fragility in challenging prejudice. For example, Jon talked about experiencing right wing views in line with an anti-immigration rhetoric, yet stresses his neighbours as generally ‘*very nice people they are good people*’, who know that he brings clothing and household items to WERS, and they often donate generously. Such social relations are complex:

Jon just last week I had an awkward conversation with a man who was dropping donations off ... oh this isn't for those eastern Europeans stealing our jobs is it? [the man said] ... and I died a little inside and I didn't ask and how do you know that? Where's the statistics? Have you just put down a copy of the Daily Mail? But it's difficult and I just talked a little bit about asylum seekers' needs [...] so exclusionary things are said ... but often people are really supportive when they hear people are needing help

The fragility in ambitious belonging resonates with the capacity to hurt (Waite et al. 2014): the ability ‘to be or feel hurt’ and the perceived capability of groups and individuals to cause hurt. All befrienders say that their involvement leads to conversations with family, friends and at work, in which they challenge prejudice as an alternative to dominant discourses of fear and exclusion – because they are aware of the hurt being done to R-AS. Befriendees themselves attempt to address being hurt by joining the scheme. Such acts of hope, I argue, attest to the possibilities for other emotional connections across society. While we must be wary of scaling up from specific encounters to the societal level (Matejskova and Leitner 2011), what emerges through this research is that ambitious belonging, in its broader social dimension, involves a *praxis of engagement*. These intercultural relations are not fleeting encounters in public spaces, nor prosaic negotiations of workplace or schools. Befriending pairs specifically commit to spending time together, and, through this engagement, the potential for more nuanced understandings of each other as multi-faceted individuals can

arise. The paper now turns to consider the spatiality of such ambitious belonging in more depth.

Emotional citizenry

Embodied geographies of difference and similarity

Befriending encounters occur in everyday spaces – local cafes, parks, shops, homes, leisure sites etc. – where informal interaction is enabled and normalised. The research finds that these mundane places facilitate the above mentioned praxis of engagement through emotional and embodied encounters. Encounters progress through individual personalities and the circumstances of each pair, in which practical activity, conversation and emotional bonding intermingle. Relationships unfold iteratively, and commonalities are discovered without subsuming difference, through shared experience and bonding:

Fiona so I really enjoy coming I'm happy that we've got a good relationship ... and I like sometimes when it's very busy and sometimes like today ... when it's quite quiet [...] I think we have fun ... we've done all sorts of things like dance routines with Bee [befriender's daughter] and making things ... I often get some [country of origin] food to eat which is nice ... and sometimes actually often I get food to take home as well which is nice [laughs]

* * *

Fran we did have epic outings to Tynemouth to the beach [laughs] [...] and that became a favourite place we went for picnics on the beach ... and that consisted of large pans of biryani and loads of things to sit on and cricket stuff for the kids and ... it was always a major expedition [smiles] and we had to get the car right down to the beach to unload everything all the stuff and had lovely times there ... so that's a special place for us

A key emotional conduit for forging these connections is humour: humour was evident or explicitly mentioned in all interviews:

Helen and also we've both got a wicked sense of humour ... that's come over time ... daft things like so one of the ways that I interact with a lot of my friends is taking the piss out of them ... and I now tease Nishti ... in a way that I wouldn't have felt comfortable doing eight months ago

* * *

Bob [name of Vol Coordinator] ring me you know ... she say if you need anything or you worry ... tell me if you not happy with him [nods and winks at Thom/befriender] ... and I will send another one [both laugh]

Thom yes you mock ... but there's been real time spent together and you ... develop a real bond with each other ... I look forward to meeting and ... when you've been away [to Bob] there's a hole in my life [both smile and laugh]

* * *

Jon sense of humour that's so important ... different cultures but it always amazes me that ... the commonality with humour ...the underlying thing that can connect us ... you do have to be careful what you say of course ... I mean with anybody at in certain situations ... some people might find certain things upsetting [...] you could tell the joke if you were sure ... that the context and the person is OK with that and you can laugh about it ... so with humour too there is a culture or ... personal thing that you have to be able to read and be careful with

The point here is that *connections are built in* these encounters; difference may remain through contact between already constructed bodies of others (Ahmed 2004b), yet people are at the same time both natural and cultural beings. What is shared is a materiality of the body, though this is embodied in socially mediated ways, whose similarities and difference 'do not passively coexist but interpenetrate, and neither is ontologically prior or morally more important' (Parekh 2000, 239). Indeed, participants discussed going for walks, to football matches, to the cinema, dancing, shopping, and cooking food as shared activities, central to emotional bonding and developing meaningful relationships. Food is often pivotal in the scheme (see Fiona above), especially regarding how befriendeds insist on hosting befrienders. R-AS discuss being '*proud*' and '*happy*' to cook a dish '*from my country*'. This disrupts the problematic giver/receiver power relations of befriending, and it highlights difference and enables shared senses and experiences, while connecting the local to elsewhere (see Johnston and Longhurst 2011).

Another key theme through the interviews is the unanimously shared frustration and anger with state and institutional exclusion of R-AS, from different positions. Crucially, in the everyday geographies of doing activities to address structural barriers, emotional bonding also occurs, with shared concerns and experiences emerging. While there is often an expectation on both sides that befriender will help befriender with bureaucracy and practical aspects of day-to-day living, all interviews deconstruct such assumptions, for example:

Jane getting broadband sorted out that was quite difficult ... the process of doing that that was quite a bonding thing ... and I felt very unsure about it and it was ... it was important to get the right deal for her and that's not something I was good at ... that was a steep learning curve for me ... and she knew a lot of things about that [...] my usefulness was about doing some research and she did some research and we discussed it together and tried to make a decision together ... and then I ordered it online because she couldn't at that time

Through such mundane *and* complicated emotional bonding, these encounters build upon civic geographies, alternative ways of intervening in the world (Philo et al. 2015), with the potential for meaningful shifts that can be translated into a 'general positive respect for – rather than merely tolerance of – others' (Valentine 2014, 78). Moreover, beyond respect for others, this research finds a complex, intersectional understanding of *difference-and-similarity**. Through ambitious belonging, these embodied geographies of encounter are both shaped by difference, and replace essentialist constructions of resident/immigrant and bounded models of national citizenship. Encounters in the scheme may reiterate difference through 'histories that stick', with difference determined through already constructed bodies of others (Ahmed 2004b), *but also* enable interconnectivity across difference and similarity in their felt dimensions. Here, the role of emotionality is critical, in its immediacy and ongoing embodied reflection.

That is, a candid reckoning with the embodied and emotional opens out to more diverse and intersectional politics of recognition as context-specific: in which people validate or are

looking for validation as raced, gendered, classed, aged, sexualised, politicised and/or emotional selves. This importantly challenges the usual slippage from recognition to definitive inclusion/exclusion, a slippage increasingly problematic in a hyper-mobile world wherein identities are often constructed in communities as webs of intersecting groupings (Erskine 2008). While gaining formal citizenship is central to many R-AS' legal struggles (and celebrated by all at WERS when achieved), solidarities are also enacted in which people recognise one another as nuanced individuals embedded in complex, *liveable*, lives. Put another way, these embodied geographies are not limited to the mundane sites in which they take place.

Inter-scaled geographies of encounter

Importantly, the everyday places of befriending are experienced in relation to other places, across scale. For example, some befrienders had previously worked outside the UK and made direct links between these experiences and their actions in Newcastle. Jane worked with UNICEF in Turkey on a parenting programme, and wants to extend the '*warmest welcome*' she received there to people coming to the UK. Mike feels it is important to bring knowledge gained working overseas as a medic to bear in Newcastle. Several befrienders themselves were multi- or trans-placed, with a more fluid sense of belonging embodied in emotional lives (see also Askins 2014; 2015). Moreover, volunteers without such direct international experiences outline some sense of being globally connected:

Fran actually the kick for me to do something was ... was when all of the Arab spring stuff was happening ... and I remember very distinctly having a conversation with friends about how awful the violence and the regimes were and ... what can we do? ... and you know actually there's very little we can do ... and we had this conversation about how so many people are unable to live in their own countries and actually one of things that we can do is in Newcastle ... so that connection with what's happening elsewhere and not parachuting off but doing something here

R-AS articulate very differently positioned ideas around international connections through difficult narratives of family separation and longing for 'home' alongside belonging in the UK. Such inter-scaled connection can be understood through the concept of cosmopolitan citizenship, which outlines the complex entanglements of everyday lived realities and citizenship obligations and rights across a variety of spaces (Dickinson et al. 2008). Yet the emotional dimensions of these obligations and rights, in the multiplicity of diverse interpersonal contact, seem to push at something more. Certainly, the emotions of the encounters in this research are particular to the befriending context, with difficult emotions of migration, distance and separation ricocheting through everyday lives and befriending relations:

Fiona you told me last week you were annoyed didn't you because you were trying to book flights ... to go back and see Bee's dad [Bee is Issal's daughter who is present] but they've gone up again in price?

Issal yeah because all the time my daughter crying want see daddy ... because he don't come no papers here ... he in [different country, not of origin] ... sometimes speaking telephone ... sometimes Bee crying crying want to see my daddy ... no good my mind when children crying

Fiona because you're on your own it's hard work as a single mum

Issal very hard for me ... sometimes I sit crying not easy for me ... before have family have mum dad they help you ... everyday here have problems sometimes I so tired and crying

[Issal is crying, Fiona puts a hand on her knee, Bee leaves room]

International dis/connections here prompt or perhaps demand embodied responses - cosmopolitan citizenship rights and obligations seem less relevant than *responding as a person*. The research regularly evidenced moments in which relations emerge in moments of bodily enacting: shared (albeit sometime awkward) silences, gentle hands on knees or arms, gestures of contact and empathy, smiles, nods; bodies present and reactive to each other.

Such contact can be understood as affecting, emergent, and belonging as the world (Wright 2015), while in/securities of both R-AS and more settled residents shift; not unaffected by dominant policy and media narratives but also influenced by ongoing personal experiences and situations. As other geographies simultaneously work through affective relations in local places, participants reflectively and proactively (have to) grapple with and make sense of them. These complicated, emotive encounters need to be understood through their inter-subjective dimensions, without losing sight of structural inequalities.

Emphasising the felt primacy of encounters, then, as also spatially mediated across scale, leads me to suggest the notion of *emotional citizenry* - as exceeding dominant norms and national scales of citizenship. Citizenry is usually understood as 'a body of people', and here it signals the ways in which individual bodies and emotions are caught up in the wider body politic, yet also prompt interdependent relations beyond formal and legal constructions, inflected through broader emotional practices of belonging and citizenship (see also Ho 2014).

Stressing the intercorporeality of encounters as process, emotional citizenry moves beyond citizenship as a fixed category. This integrates the emotive discourses in which 'prevailing notions of nationhood and citizenship [...] powerfully shapes the social space available to refugees' (Strang and Ager 2010, 589), with how intercultural encounter simultaneously encapsulates a multiplicity of social meaning and relations. Through befriending, citizenry is already enacted, open to diverse positions and desires to belong; befriending pairs are performing the relational citizenship described by Horschelmann and El Refaie (2014). Living together does not entail formal rights to residence, and the relationships developed through befriending do not necessarily translate into wider societal support of such formal, legal rights. However, this paper argues that emotional citizenry, practiced as an interdependent relation, can be understood as part of a process of reframing rights beyond the formal sphere (see Stammers 1999 on 'living rights').

Emotional citizenry: from encounters to living together

This paper has been setting out the ways in which emotional citizenry is already performed, across inter-scaled belonging, through 'lines of connection and disconnection' and fluid, hybrid identities and political allegiances (Horschelmann and El Refaie 2014). Such citizenry is engendered through local spaces though not place-bound, and enacted via desires to belong and quests for recognition (Koefoed and Simonsen 2012). The multiplicity of intercultural encounters and sites evidenced through the research supports Neal et al.'s (2013) call to pay attention to 'more interactive negotiations of multicultural' in the everyday, while mindful of structural exclusions *and* how these realms interact. Indeed, a focus on emotions and space, as mutually co-constructing social relations, productively opens up a range of tensions*: across ethnic segregation and romanticised notions of 'cohesion'; socio-cultural difference and similarity; institutional and personal relations.

It is precisely in considering the emotions of intercultural encounter, I argue, that attention is drawn to how diverse residents can discover each other as multifaceted and interdependent; as individuals with simultaneously different and potentially shared positions, practices and desires. Through happiness, sadness, frustration, care, anger, concern and so on, interpersonal contact in everyday spaces hints at the potential for more profound social relations. That is, emotions are central to realising Noble's (2009, orig. emphasis) call to distinguish 'between recognition as (I am this, you are other), and recognition *with*, the mutual, collective fashioning which comes out of shared practice', to better understand 'complicated entanglements of togetherness-in difference' (ibid.).

Thus teasing out the intimate as caught up in wider geopolitics is vital to academic and policy understanding of belonging, contact and citizenship (see also Pain and Staeheli 2015). Citizenship is normatively produced as an exclusionary concept, with rights and belonging to a fixed status of nation-statehood gained through political struggle. This research's focus on emotions is not intended to be complicit in depoliticizing social justice for

R-AS, but to *repoliticise everyday and interpersonal interactions* as interwoven through broader (state) politics. Emotions and the local scale are important in a broader politics of citizenship, and how befriending may (or may not) be part of a wider political process of living together.

WERS, and many voluntary sector organisations across the UK and the world, are committed to challenging inequalities and *recognising with* local communities. Furthermore, the praxis of engagement that people bring to such organisations enable intercultural relationships that are otherwise unlikely to develop, or progress in such intricate ways. Such activity is vital at the neighbourhood scale, and this paper suggests reframing its worth in policy and academic debates, paying serious attention to emotional geographies. This is central to the repoliticising mentioned above; it is not to absolve states and governance processes from responsibilities under various international laws, or in terms of their moral duties.

Certainly, more study is required regarding the ways in which emotional citizenry may play out in other situations, to explore the concept's wider applicability. The empirical material offered here poses questions as to the extent to which interpersonal interactions may anticipate change across scale; participants discuss challenging prejudice among family, friends, colleagues, but tracing the lines across already practised citizenry and wider discourses and structural shift is difficult. Yet such academic work is required to usefully connect with policy debates around social cohesion, integration, multiculturalism and multiculturalism, and how government, voluntary sector and individuals might better support living together in 21st century super-diversity.

ENDNOTE * While not explicitly framed as such, the paper and wider project takes a post-and-anti-colonial perspective, attested to by this writing strategy of recurring footnote.

'Intercultural' is used despite its problematic suggestion that any one culture can be originary/fixed/homogenous. Trans- or cross-cultural seem no better, rather I emphasise

here the intention of intercultural as *intersectional*. The ambitious notion of belonging is likewise aligned to ambivalence; the paper endeavours throughout to refuse, subvert and fuse-through dualisms and binaries, to sidestep politics/counter-politics of denial/recognition. The epistemic and existential im/possibility of colonial divisions (after Bhabha) is instead gestured here.

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