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British Asian Youth, Urban Protests and Local Belongingness

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Abstract: The local space has a constituting impact on the construction of identities and the feeling of belongingness particularly of the descendants of migrants. In this paper I discuss the ways in which local spatial experiences are implicated in the process of identity formation of British Asian youth in Bradford. The youth, experience, demarcate, and utilise the local space for their self-definition. The discussion considers the contextuality of the positioning of those youth within the culturally, socially and territorially marked urban space. The youth define their belongingness according to their experiences of and within this local space. Their understanding of locality incorporates various though intertwined articulations of socially, culturally and emotionally marked spatial space. The boundaries of those localities are blurred or overlapping. They are constructed by the youth in context, as are their identifications with different notions of locality. This is at times expressed through territorialized local politics and actions.

Keywords: Youth, Asian, Britain, Local, Belonging, Protest

Britanya'daki Asyalı Gençlik, Kent Protestoları ve Yerel Aidiyetler

Özet: Yerel mekânın özellikle göçmen kökenli gençlerin aidiyet duyguları ve kimlik inşaları üzerinde önemli bir etkisi vardır. Bu makalede yerel mekân deneyimlerinin Britanya-Asyalı gençlerin kimlik oluşum sürecini nasıl etkilediğini tartışacağım. Gençler yerel mekânı deneyimlemekte, sınırlarını belirlemekte ve öz-tanımları için kullanmaktadırlar. Tartışma bu gençlerin kültürel, sosyal ve bölgesel olarak belirlenmiş bir mekân içinde bağlamsal konumlanmalarını da içermektedir. Gençler aidiyetlerini bu yerel mekândaki deneyimlerine göre tanımlamaktadırlar. Onların mekân anlayışları farklı ama iç içe geçmiş sosyal, kültürel ve duygusal öğelerle yüklenmiş ifadeleri kapsamaktadır. Bu mekânların sınırları bulanıktır ve birbirleriyle örtüşürler. Bu farklı mekânlar ve mekânlarla özdeşleşmeler gençler tarafından bağlamsal olarak inşa edilirler. Bu durum bazen bölgeselleştirilmiş (*territorialized*) yerel politikalar ve eylemler yoluyla ifade edilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gençlik, Asyalı, Britanya, Yerel, Aidiyet, Protesto

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Introduction

On the days of 7th to 9th of July, 2001 Bradford, one of the impoverished northern 'Mill towns' with a relatively large Asian population, had witnessed violent clashes¹ between the police and the Asian² youth. The youth claimed to defend their neighbourhood from the extremist right groups: The National Front (NF) and the Combat 18. According to some accounts the NF threatened to march through the Manningham area that is widely known as the 'Asian area'. This and a counter march organised by the Anti-Nazi League, for which people had already gathered in the town centre, were banned by the Home Office. Hereupon the police tried to disperse the group. The angry outburst was set off when the news about a racist attack on an Asian man in front of a bar reached the crowd. A group of young South Asian men left the gathering in an attempt to support the attacked young man. According to the press reports this was the starting point of the conflict developed between South Asian men in the city centre and the police. More than 500 partly masked, stone throwing, mainly Asian male youth, built barricades with burning cars against the huge police presence in riot-gear. The youth claimed to protect 'their neighbourhood' against the 'far right groups who are racist'. Also other northern towns such as Oldham and Burnley experienced disturbances, but the protests in Bradford were considered as particularly violent³. The protests took three days. This occurrence had a determining impact on the self-perception and subjectivity of the youth in Bradford.

In this paper I will discuss how local spatial experiences are implicated in the process of identity formation and the sense of belonging of British Asian youth in Bradford. At the beginning I will provide brief basic information about Bradford and the historical dimensions of protests, campaigns and conflicts of the city, within which the unrests in 2001 need to be examined. After framing the methodology that is employed, I will give some accounts of the controversial public and political debates about the occurrences along the governmental reports, produced after the protests. In the main part of article I will discuss the ways in which the youth construct their identity and develop their sense of belonging to the local space. This involves the construction of community as a social space which is closely related to the spatial space of neighbourhood both embraced by the overall socio-cultural

¹ The occurrences are widely known as 'race-riots'. This definition of is very irritating, since it was not a clash of 'races' but a resistance against racism. As Gilroy (2002) suggests, they were at the most, and if at all, 'racism riots'. Therefore, I use the term 'race riots' that is widely used to describe the occurrences in inverted commas because this term does not reflect the actual meaning of the issues. I will also employ alternative terms such as 'violent protests', 'incidents', 'unrests' or 'disturbances'.

² Asian refers here to people of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin or ancestry.

³ For more on the disturbances see Arun Kundnani 2001, 2002, 2006; Bagguley and Hussain 2008.

space of the city. I argue that the violent protests in summer 2001 were an expression of belongingness to and identification with the local space defined as community, neighbourhood and city.

The identity construction of the youth is profoundly influenced by their experiences of local social, cultural and political practices. At the same time, however, they are the agents of local processes of transformation. They shape, re-shape and define the boundaries of their local space, as neighbourhood, as imagined community and as the city. In turn, their experiences of local space have wide-ranging influences on their self-definition as a whole. Accordingly local space constitutes a central figure in the identity construction of British Asian youth. They define their belongingness according to their experiences of and within the local space. The space is constructed by the youth in context, as are their identifications with different notions of locality. Their understanding of locality incorporates various though intertwined articulations of socially, culturally and emotionally marked spatial space. This is at times expressed through local politics and actions such as the violent protests in 2001.

My position is based on two considerations: First; those protests were a legitimate form of political protest challenging racial injustice. They also were the expression of growing frustration and anger against marginalisation. Thus they were a legitimate form of resistance against racism and exclusion. This standpoint is supported by a number of theories put up by scholars. As Stuart Hall (1981), suggests, contrary to the representations of the dominant discourses and the media, 'riots' are not just an 'irrational outburst' but occur on small or wider scales as political protests when no other official way exists (see also Benyon, 1987; Castells, 1983). As 'subaltern' local subjects the youth form their positioning against exclusionary and marginalising hegemonic discourses (Hall, 1981). Accordingly, a space that is produced can be decoded and interpreted by the local subjects. The ways in which the youth that I have interviewed code and interpret space is expressed impressively during a focus group interview:

Interviewer: What is it that you like or don't like in Bradford? You said; one thing is living in your own community.

Bilal: The other thing is that we were born here innit. I was born in Bradford.

Iqbal: No, like ... what he said earlier on that we were born here.

Carlito⁴: He loves his country! He loves Bradford!

From this perspective the violent protests in 2001 can be viewed as an expression of opposition and resistance to racist discrimination and exclusion.

⁴ All names are pseudonyms. Carlito is a self chosen pseudonym by that young man.

But also they can be seen as an appropriation of space that is an expression of belonging to the local space.

This leads to the second consideration: The protests were a way of claiming public space as an opposition against marginalisation and exclusion. Thus the violent protests can be understood as a way of expressing belongingness by appropriating intimate local space. In that case it is more than protesting against own marginalisation or a rejection of the existing order of the society. Furthermore it can be seen as claiming power over the local space. As Stéphane Dufoix stated in relation to the disturbances in Paris in 2005, 'Rioters and police fight over the definition of the space or the territory – a space that is non-public and non-private over which the groups gain authority violently' (2005, p. 2).

Within this framework I will explore how the youth demarcate, experience and utilize the local space for their sense of belonging. The discussion will consider the contextuality of the positioning of those youth within the culturally, socially and territorially marked space as neighbourhood and as community.

Methodology

This article is supported by empirical data collected during a fieldwork in Bradford between the years 2001 and 2005. In whole the author spent six months in the field from which the first three months were spent in a youth centre, working voluntarily as a youth worker. The sample of the research comprised twenty three youth between the ages 16 to 23 and five youth workers, who were recruited mainly from two youth centres in different districts.

All together twenty three individual in-depth interviews and three focus group discussions with Muslim Asian male youth were conducted. In addition five youth workers from different youth and community centres were interviewed individually. Participant observation and field notes were taken as complementary data. In this article some sections of the collected data, as far as it was applicable, is used.

The selection of the sample was led by the question of the socio-political and possible cultural motives behind the violent protests. Therefore the focus of the sample explicitly on young males was, nonetheless, not a particular objective but rather, an effect of the given circumstances in the course of the violent protests, which were carried out predominantly by young Asian men. In view of that, the choice of the sample rests on the assumption of politicised racial identifications of those youth who constituted potential or real actors in the protests. Even though the majority of those who took part in the protests were Asian and almost exclusively male, my focus in the research

was less on the enquiry of masculinities of Asian/Muslim/Black youth but rather, on an analysis of identity construction on the intersection of categories such as 'race', ethnicity, religion and nationality. This comprises the question of the ways in which the youth develop their sense of belonging to the local space. Undoubtedly, cultural identities are always intersectional and gender is an integral part of the identity. Moreover, all concerns around nationality, citizenship, violence and the dealings with the police engage, among others, the question of gender. However, this article cannot allocate the required space for a thorough analysis of the questions above⁵.

In the following section I will provide some information about the setting to draw a frame within which the Asian youth construct their identifications.

The 'other' Bradford

Since the beginning of the emigration from the South Asian countries in the 1950s, Bradford developed into a city with the third largest South Asian population in the UK (Goodey, 2001). The 2001 Census indicates that there are nearly 88,500 people of South Asian origin in Bradford. Muslims (mainly of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin) make up a number of over 75,000, which constitutes 16 per cent of Bradford's total population (Phillips, 2006; Phillips et al., 2007). For instance, in the Manningham district where I recruited some of the interviewees, Muslims of Pakistani origin comprise the largest ethnic group at over 60 per cent of the population (City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 2001). South Asians, of Pakistani origin have the youngest population compared to white, black and other ethnic minority groups. The number of young people between 16 and 24 years with Pakistani / Muslim background comprises nearly 20 per cent of this population (2001 Census).

The total unemployment rate among the same age group in Manningham is over 35 per cent (City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 2001). Considering that over half of Manningham's population is of Pakistani origin, it can be safely assumed that there is a high unemployment rate among the South Asian Muslim youth. These numbers reflect the existing social problems that the young residents of Manningham – the site of the violent protests in the summer of 2001 – have to deal with.

There is also a historical dimension within which the unrests in summer 2001 need to be placed. Indeed Bradford's history is marked by protests, campaigns and conflicts. During the early 1980s youth movements played an important role for the Asian and Black communities in Bradford (Bagguley

⁵ For more controversial discussions on themes such as Asian masculinities, gendered religious identities, etc. see for example Claire Alexander 2005, 2004 and Marie Macey 1999.

and Hussain, 2008; Samad, 1992). For example the Asian Youth Movement (AYM) was established in the wake of the disturbances in 1976. The AYM was an organisation across ethnic and religious lines. Similarly, the campaign to free 'The Bradford 12' is considered as one of the most powerful social justice campaigns of the 1980s. *The 12 Asian and Black youth* were members of the 'United Black Youth League' who were arrested and charged for possessing explosives and conspiracy after they had taken to the streets to confront the threat of a racist attack on their community.

Towards the end of the 1980s, as Muslims in Bradford became acknowledged as a 'community', secular organisations such as the AYM were replaced by ethnic or religious affiliations. 'This, desecularization of Asian youth politics is extremely important and has syncretically influenced other progressive and secular Asian youth cultural activities' (Bhatt, 1997, p. 127). The *Honeyford Affair* in 1984 and the campaign against Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 can be seen within this political atmosphere in Bradford (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008). However not all protests against discriminatory or racist practices, were necessarily religiously motivated. In June 1995 several hundred people protested against improper police conduct that was assumed to be racially motivated. This was noted as 'the first significant violent protest by sections of the Pakistani community' (see Bagguley and Hussain, 2008, p. 53; Bhatt, 1997; Samad, 1992).

Thus, the violent protests in 2001 need to be seen within this historical context that provides the sense of local belongingness that is expressed by the youth. However the responses to those protests have been less abrasive than to those in 2001. In fact the last violent protests had a determining impact on the Asian community regarding, politics, segregation, policing and alienation (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008).

Responding to 'the riots'

These protests and the search for the causes set off an intensive controversial debate about the city and its Muslim Asian population with particular reference to the youth's alienation and disloyalty (see for instance Alexander, 2005; Bulet and Reid, 1998; Goodey, 2001; Phillips, 2006). Governmental reports, which are produced in the wake of the violent urban protests focused on 'community cohesion' as a means to overcome alleged alienation and disloyalty of British Asian youth. For example, Denham report –drawing on the analysis of the previous reports– noticed a strong 'territorial mentality' (2001, p. 11) among young people. Territoriality can be understood through the cultural relationship between the individual and the collective. However, instead of recognizing the potential of a localised sense of belonging as a

possible core of community cohesion, those reports consider this as a *problem* leading seemingly to segregation and alienation. Moreover, a strong sense of belonging to a localised, ethnic, cultural and religious community is presented as an obstacle for community cohesion.

Alam and Husband have also observed a 'strong sense of identity linked to place and urban territory' (2006, p. 48), however unlike the official reports they acknowledge the dynamic quality of this belongingness, which they express tellingly as follows:

When talking, individuals can switch their focus from moment to moment and zoom up and down this territorial trajectory, all the while making their own linkages to being Bradfordian, Pakistani, Muslim, male and ultimately individual. ...[I]t is impossible to fail to recognise their experience of Bradford as home and as a viable – and in some cases, only – place to be. Three generations of residence, and their ubiquitous physical presence in the architecture, business and public face of this city, make realistic and legitimate their sense of belonging (Alam and Husband, 2006, p. 49).

Frequently in an unreflexive way, community becomes 'an explanation rather than something to be explained' (Alleyne, 2002, p. 608). On the discursive level, community is often seen as a scapegoat for the problems of ethnic minorities. But at the same time community is expected to deliver solutions to those problems. On the one hand ethnic minority communities are represented as dysfunctional and need to be dissolved; while on the other the urge for community cohesion suggests homogenised communities (see, for example, Cattle [2001] and Denham [2001] reports).

There is, thus, a mutual relationship between the conjunctures that influence 'the community' and the British Asian youth's representations. In that sense, the dominant discourse around the protests in 2001 is primarily set within the framework of 'self-segregated' communities who lead apparently 'parallel-lives' in 'ghetto-like enclaves' (T. Phillips, 2005, see also Cattle, 2001 and Denham, 2001). The idea of community is linked with discourses on cultural difference that subsume people into fixed and homogeneous communities.

The youth invest community with other meanings that starkly contrast with the external projections onto their community. Community, for the youth, is relational in spatial and temporal terms. That is, the youth negotiate their position within the boundaries of the community, continuously reshaping its margins. Bradford with its various communities stands for an intimate space that the youth appropriate as theirs. Belongingness is defined through requisition of the local space. In a focus group interview the youth described their views about the Asian community in Bradford:

Bilal: (...) it is that; we live in an ethnic minority innit and that's the best thing about Bradford. The communities are all together and that's it.

Carlito: We are united, all these Asians together.

Interviewer: What do you mean by united?

Carlito: It's nice living together innit with people of the same origin.

Local space, in this context, can be produced, loaded with meaning and translated by the local subjects. Hence identity constructions are ingrained in the concepts of locality. The accounts of a grounded sense of belonging of the British Asian youth to Bradford apparently contradict with the discourses of alienation and exclusion that builds the detrimental common argument of the reports (see also Alam and Husband, 2006).

Belongingness and the Local

The link between transformations of territories and changing spaces of identity has been repeatedly expressed (Hall, 1992). Accordingly, identities are being discussed from a perspective that takes into account the various aspects of the local space (Castells, 1983). The local has been recognised as the new space of cultural, social and political productions and struggles (Castells, 1983; Hall, 1992). 'Local and regional cultures have also come to be revalued (...), and there is now a renewed emphasis on territorial locations as poles of identity, community and continuity' (Robins, 1991, p. 24).

Hence identification and the sense of belonging are more and more articulated on the basis of local space instead of the national. Although, as Hall suggests (1992) national identities are as important as before in terms of citizenship rights, the emphasis has moved towards local, regional and community identities. Accordingly, the concept of community in its various definitions seems to constitute the cardinal point in the discourse about young Asian identities, particularly in the wake of the violent protests in 2001.

'The community'

Academic literature provides a variety of definitions of community (Alleyne, 2002; Castells, 1983; Cohen, 1985; Nancy, 1991; Pahl, 1970 to mention but some). According to Brian Alleyne (2002) earlier notions of community were displaced in time and space, obsolete, only existent in places remote to the 'modern West'. It was assumed that the modern western society was marked by the existence of individuals, while the pre-modern 'Rest' lived in communities.

Communities exist in urban spaces of modern societies maintaining themselves through social networks. These networks are not to be understood necessarily as defensive. According to Alexander et al. (2007) they are

fundamental for 'personal communities', which in turn cannot be easily overlaid onto predetermined and static ethnic groups. A personal community challenges 'the reach for cultural and linguistic homogeneity which underpins state-imposed nation-community "from above", and its public rituals, and necessitates the recognition of community "from below" and its private performances' (Alexander et al., 2007, p. 786). Through the social and cultural appropriation the city transforms into a personal community.

In this context, the sense of belongingness to a community ought to be understood as a positioning. Accordingly, it can be said, that this constitutes the antithesis to the essentialising elements of the community discourse in the governmental reports. Essentialist discourses imply a fixed vision of community. Moreover, belongingness understood as positioning undermines the recent focus on 'community cohesion' within the official rhetoric in Britain. This homogenizing idea pins people within 'locked' communities. Community however is something that lives and transforms throughout space and time with and through its members. Conversely, they have a substantial impact on the formation of identities of people who define themselves as belonging to that particular community. Accordingly communities live with the representations of the people who draw the margins of difference and who are constantly on the move, changing positions within and across the boundaries.

The constructedness of the community is an important dimension of the concept (Alexander et al., 2007; Back, 1996; Cohen, 1985). Communities are discursive constructions (Back, 1996) transforming constantly according to the meaning that their members assign to them. They are very much determined by the identification of their members with them, or with certain aspects of them. For the youth the city of Bradford represents the Asian community. In that case the boundaries of the Asian community are set within the overall territory of Bradford city. In that context some have reported that previously the name of Bradford was changed to 'Bradfordistan', by the youth implying that it is an Asian-Muslim city. By claiming the city as theirs regardless, of other ethnic minorities and regardless of differences and conflicts within and between 'the communities', the youth construct Bradford as a single harmonious (Asian) community.

Interviewer: What is specific for you in Bradford?

Ifikhar: For me it is the community where we live. Everyone is friendly; I think that is actually a big thing if you live somewhere. I think if the community is friendly then that place will be a nice place to live in.

This implies a different perception and a different sense of belonging to the community than the reports have suggested. Here, emotional attachment to the local space and the community that is linked with that space plays a significant role in the construction of identities and the sense of belonging (see also Fortier, 2005; Barker, 2004). It is not a belonging to a geographical or a physical space but to a local community, symbolising *home*. This of course incorporates a social control in many areas of life of the young people, for example in the choice of a marriage partner, as the youth expressed elsewhere. Consequently, social control, that is one of the constituting aspects of a community, is continuously reproduced. Internal disruptions, disharmonies and social-personal constraint seem to be accepted as the price for personal network that provides, (or expected to) support, care, safety, loyalty, friendship but also protection against explicit racism. This is what Les Back (1996) calls 'the harmony discourse' where the people claim a community free from tensions and emphasise harmonious relationships between the inhabitants.

However this homogenisation of the community by its members, even if imagined cannot be equated with the understanding of the homogenising hegemonic discourses about 'Asian communities'. Rather this ought to be understood as a mode -perhaps a different way- of *cohesion* that is not dictated from above but which comes from below. Hence, loyalty to the local community, even though created by social bonds and mutual solidarity, is maintained not necessarily on the basis of harmony and acceptance. It is, rather, an act of 'delicate balancing mechanisms, cross-cutting ties, pressures and gossip [that] serve to create cohesion out of conflict' (Pahl, 1970, p. 103). Hence belongingness to the community is maintained despite conflicts and contradictions.

Neighbourhood

The notion of community involves another controversial concept – the neighbourhood – in the context of belongingness for British Asian youth in Bradford. Neighbourhoods are the spaces of daily social experiences as spatially defined territories. The youth define the boundaries of 'their neighbourhood' contextually. This point is described best by Kearns and Parkinson with the words: neighbourhood 'does not bring about "nearness" – rather it is the other way around' (2001, p. 2104). Thus, 'nearness' – that I would here express as belongingness – does not only grow in the spatially bounded spaces. In this context, Arjun Appadurai (1996) suggests, that positioned communities and their potential for social reproduction are best described with the term neighbourhoods. Similarly the youth construct their neighbourhood not within given spatial confines limited to particular localities but more as a

space with blurred and contextually changing borders. Accordingly, for the youth neighbourhood can indicate their immediate locality but it can also integrate other 'Asian neighbourhoods' – for example, Manningham or the entire city of Bradford. This is illustrated by one of the youth:

Sajid: See, Bradford is a multicultural society. We all know that we all live in here. Bradford town, majority of it is Asians, it is mixed with whites but the majority is Asians. And that is our town.

This as mentioned above can be seen as an expression of a sense of belongingness to Bradford as opposed to the alienation discourses that the reports suggested in the wake of the urban protests. It can be seen as a mode of identity construction as Asians and above all identification as 'Bradfordians' through and along local space. To live in a multicultural society and 'to get on well' is endorsed by the youth. Racism and segregation are considered to be the results of a lack of communication. Noticeably, contrary to the governmental reports, segregation is not considered as something that is caused by only one group but as a problem which concerns all communities. The experienced discrimination on the grounds of residential address has detrimental effects on the feelings of belongingness.

Karim: Living in an Asian community you feel safe... 'cos all is like a close knit community, they all stick together; something happens, all get together. All care about each other. I like living in Bradford.

Now after the disturbances they experience discrimination precisely for the same reason against which they have protested. That is, the initial attempts prior to the disturbances to stop far right groups from entering 'the Asian neighbourhood' (and seizing 'the town') have the effect of further marginalisation of the inhabitants precisely of the same neighbourhoods.

The official and public reactions to the violent protests deteriorated the problematical social situation of the youth in Bradford by criminalising and demonising representations of the protests. This combined with discrimination and residential segregation worsened the situation of the Asian youth in the job market. Similarly, Paul A. Silverstein and Chantal Tetreault (2006) have observed that the situation of the French youth of North African origin turned in the course of the disturbances in France into a vicious circle where segregation becomes an obstacle in getting jobs and reproducing unemployment, which underwrites, in turn, the stigmatisation of the neighbourhoods in the first place. That is, efforts to stop explicit racism turns against the Asian youth in the form of implicit racism. Although this so called 'Post-code racism', is not a new phenomenon (see for example Phillips et al., 2002), yet the disturbances have an exacerbating effect on the situation.

However the central point that needs to be emphasised here is, that, not segregation is the cause of social exclusion and racism but racism is one of the main reasons for segregation (Phillips et al., 2002). From this perspective, living in an ethnically White dominated neighbourhood is considered as threatening, while living in an ethnically 'homogeneous' Asian neighbourhood – even if it is imagined – is linked with protection, care and safety. One of the youths expressed this in following way:

Karim ... if you live in a white community you always get picked on by white people. They smash your windows or they put paint on your house, and everything, and your family get scared. That doesn't happen in the Asian area. (...)

Thus the dichotomy between White and Asian is among others created through the binary positioning of latent 'danger' or assumed 'safety' along spatial lines. It is in this tense interaction between 'sameness' and 'difference' that the relationship between consciousness, territory and place is articulated as a most important premise for the construction of belongingness (Gilroy, 2004).

Consequently, the expression of belongingness to the Asian community or rather to the Asian neighbourhood is, among others, a response to a real or potential external threat in the form of implicit or explicit racism. Social, imagined and spatial space is integrated into the construction of community, in which community and neighbourhood become interchangeable. This vision is best described in Appadurai's accounts. He suggests that the term neighbourhood [is used] to refer to the actually existing social forms in which locality, as a dimension or value, is variably realized. Neighbourhoods in this usage are situated communities characterised by their actuality, whether spatial or virtual, and their potential for social reproduction (Appadurai, 1996, p. 178).

Hence, neighbourhoods are positioned communities. In that sense, the youth's sense of belonging to different 'scales' of community is not merely, because they live in an immediate spatial proximity and share the local space but primarily, because of shared meanings, common experiences and histories.

Race and Space

At times, in the face of a racist threat, the boundaries of 'we' may include not only the 'Asian' but also 'Black'. The overarching notion in articulating identification and belongingness to the local space is expressed with that all encompassing notion of 'community'. Consequently, community not only involves various dimensions of imagined space such as neighbourhood and

the city but is also constructed as an independent variable on the coordinate axis of 'race', ethnicity religion and class. In this context, community involves an ethnic and 'racial'/ethnic consciousness of being Asian and being 'Black'. As Gilroy states, at times, it may 'become hard to distinguish the subjectivity based around "race" from feelings of neighbourhood, region and locality' (2002, p. 33).

Kaleem: [After the riots] I think we have, probably, got closer as a community ... because there was a common goal there you know. Everyone was aiming toward one thing and that was that these Nazis were coming in, who don't like Asian people, who don't like black people, who were really extremists. And the Asian people were all together to fight against these people, to keep racists out of our neighbourhood. And they had a common goal which brought them closer to each other

Bradford defined as an 'Asian community' comes to represent the boundaries in relation to racism and discrimination. This results often in a binary division between whites and Muslims/Asians/black. This, in turn, constructs the identification with those categories based on the shared experiences of racism and exclusion. Thus appropriation of the city -even if it is via protests or disturbances- with an imagined demographic Asian majority bears the desire for power over the space (Castells, 1983). As the whole city is imagined as an 'Asian neighbourhood' the practice by the police to push the protestors to the 'Asian area' had an escalating effect on the protests. As one of the interviewees described:

Sajid: Asian youth, they won't even be smashing or doing anything in the actual Bradford town but what happened was the police pushed them down to - you know White Abbey Road [the road that leads to Manningham that is defined as 'the Asian neighbourhood'] where it exactly happened. And [raises his voice] that's when the Asian youth started thinking; 'look why are they pushing us out of our own town? Why is this happening for?

This conduct of the police is interpreted as setting the boundaries of the Asian area within the limits of the district of Manningham. In that sense the police challenged the acquisition of the city as an Asian territory. This stirs feelings of exclusion and powerlessness by the youth. It is the concern over the loss of a fictional Homeland (*Heimat*) to which the youth address their feelings of belongingness. Thus the appropriation of the local space as 'our town', that needs to be defended against rightwing attacks, can be understood as positioning through local spatial lines.

This is closely related to Back's idea of community construction in the British context: the 'Asian community discourse' is one in which a particular territory is marked by the insiders as well as by the outsiders as the 'Asian area'

(1996, p. 111). Hence, “community” is constructed and projected onto an area and is not a self-evident product of the local social system’ (Back, 1996, p. 120). This, according to Back, also includes the notion of political agency and resistance to racism in those areas. This is exemplified by the violent protests in the summer of 2001.

The appropriation of space is also a way of expressing locality awareness (Pahl, 1970). Accordingly, the material space such as the territory of the city seems to be transformed into social space - that is community - which in turn shapes the identification of the youth and their sense of belongingness to Bradford. In that sense, community, as Cohen puts it, ‘exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of “fact”. (...) the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them (...)’ (1985, p. 98).

Identifications and belongingness, thus, are among others products of spatial and virtual constructions of local space. The youth define and appropriate neighbourhood, community and the entire city contextually. Their daily sense of inclusion and exclusion and their experiences of solidarity, protection and danger within these spaces play an important role. In this context, Hall (1996) observed a similar situation in relation to black youth in London. He states: ‘[T]hey look as if they own the territory. Somehow, they too, in spite of everything, are centred in place: without much material support, it’s true, but nevertheless, they occupy a new kind of space at the centre’ (Hall, 1996, p. 114).

Thus the violent protests in summer 2001 ought to be placed within this perception of space and the sense of belongingness that this evokes. It can be understood as a meaningful act and a ‘record of the spatial production of locality’ by the local subjects (Appadurai, 1996, p. 180). By demarcating their social and spatial boundaries the youth define their ‘locality as a structure of feeling that is produced by particular forms of intentional activity’ (Appadurai, 1996, p. 182). This socially, culturally marked local space played an important role in the justification of the violent protests.

Conclusion

Locality, for the youth, is invested with meanings that are contextual and determined by the interaction of time and space. Community, neighbourhood and the city are the key concepts that play a significant role in the identification process of the youth. The youth position themselves within the contextually defined space according to their culturally, socially and politically shared experiences.

Dominant discourses of Asian Muslim community (particularly in the wake of the disturbances) exemplified in the governmental reports are often accompanied by criminalised and homogenised representations. Contrary to those discourses identification with the imagined or real local Asian community serves as a source for the community cohesion that the reports have suggested repeatedly.

For the youth, there are no clear defined boundaries of the community or the neighbourhood. The relation between these spaces is crosscut in such a way that they represent general tendencies rather than impermeable divisions. The neighbourhood as the space of their social and cultural practices, though situated within the spatial proximity, is not limited to that immediate locality. Rather, their identification and loyalty often also engages Asian neighbourhoods in different areas of the city. The city of Bradford, despite its heterogeneity in terms of its ethnic/religious/'race' and class categories, is a 'marked territory' by the youth. In the face of racial threat or discrimination the city is imagined as a territory of Asian/Muslim/black, community. Community is frequently articulated as an all-encompassing notion that includes also all non-white people of Bradford. That is, in view of an 'external' threat 'our community' may include temporarily none-Asian minorities. Thus it can be suggested that the local Asian community is constructed contextually as an existing real community but also at times as an imagined community.

These interpretations of community are invested with meanings which draw on history but also on daily experiences specific to black and Asian British youth. Therefore, the space that is marked by the youth needs to be seized and protected from external threat such as the far right groups and the police, which they experience as threatening. Hence the protests can be interpreted as a result of asserting power over the space. In that sense affiliation to the local space can be seen as forms of articulation of identifications by appropriating the territory. Belongingness then is positioning within the culturally, socially and territorially marked space. This in turn, clearly shows youths' feelings of belongingness and loyalty to the appropriated space as opposed to the dominant discourses of disloyalty and alienation to the British society. Consequently the violent protests in summer 2001 have to be positioned within this context. This ought to be acknowledged by the authorities instead of creating alienation by discriminatory and exclusionary discourses. Also recognition of and respect towards cultural differences is essential to create opportunities for a better social cohesion. This can only be realised through appropriate policies in areas such as education and jobs.

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