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Diversity in place: narrations of diversity in an ethnically mixed, urban area.

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Abstract

This paper explores the implications of representations of places as 'diverse', particularly for those who live in them. Arising from an interdisciplinary research project, the paper takes one neighbourhood in Manchester (Cheetham Hill) and explores some of the narratives about it produced by residents and those who have a 'professional' stake in the area. These are put in the context of public narratives of the area, as well as Census data. The paper examines how different types of data generate different stories and how different methodological approaches can produce varied understandings of place, which have implications for how a place comes to be known and for the potential impact on the distribution of resources. Cheetham Hill is known as 'diverse', or even 'super-diverse', but the paper examines how this label serves to obscure lived experience and inequalities and can reveal ambivalences over the ethnic difference and urban living.

Keywords: diversity, race, multiculture, urban, policy

Word Count: 9,052

Introduction

This article explores the ways in which 'diversity' (and 'super diversity') are understood and called upon in accounts of urban areas characterised by residents from a range of ethnic backgrounds. It questions the different ways that diversity is given meaning, and examines the forces that shape different understandings of such places. Research on race and ethnicity is often oriented around place(s) – whether to explore spatial variations of inequality or as sites through which to explore the lived experience and production of race. The conceptualization of urban spaces as 'diverse' or 'super-diverse' has been seen as advancing understandings of the mutual constitution of race and place. Much of this work is founded on the idea that the concept of diversity can disrupt representations of both the urban landscape and of minority groups as unchanging and homogeneous. We argue that, whilst at one level this is true, the language of diversity can in practice be unnecessarily flat. It is often used in ways that apply to many situations, without actually revealing the more complex textures of situated social relations and their relation to place. In addition, in practice, the language of diversity tends to focus attention on ethnic difference, rather than considering other differences or inequalities which may have more salience.

In this paper, we draw on the example of Cheetham Hill, an area of Manchester that is a popular site of social research and one that has been presented as the most diverse neighbourhood in the UK by national media and local authorities. We illustrate how diversity talk about Cheetham Hill often emphasises particular facets of a place at the expense of others. Thus demonstrating how simplified portraits of a place can be produced that ignore some forms of difference and misrepresent lived experience. We employ a multi-method and inter-disciplinary approach to obtain a multi-textured sense of place. In doing so, we question how the label of diversity acquires multiple meanings and makes visible (or not) certain forms of difference in its articulation.

If we are to explore the complexity and multiplicity of urban spaces, there is a need for methodological pluralism and interdisciplinarity (including insights from geography, politics, sociology, social statistics and anthropology) (Bracken and Oughton 2009), which can in turn challenge ontological and epistemological divisions (Finney, Clark and Nazroo, this issue). There is no singular mode of knowing place or single authoritative account of a place. This paper employs a range of methods used across different disciplines which can draw out how an area becomes known for ethnic diversity. It explores different methods – drawing on quantitative data, ethnography, interviews and public consultation in the form of a 'pop-up shop' – to track how diversity is known and understood at both policy and local levels, as well as how we as researchers can piece together an interdisciplinary jigsaw that begins to describe a specific area. This paper is part of a Special Issue that provides new insights into the relationships between ethnicity and place from the perspective of a broader concern with understanding ethnic inequalities in the UK. It is based on work that has been conducted within the Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE).

The paper begins by reflecting on the multi-faceted accounts of place which are formed through various practices and forms of representation (Lefebvre 1996). We explore how, within the scholarly literature, from a range of disciplinary approaches, the concept of diversity has attempted to capture the multiplicity of place At the same time, diversity is ultimately a subjective phenomenon and therefore one that challenges us to think about what and who is made visible in differing, and often conflicting, articulations of diversity and place. Bringing together local area statistics and qualitative interviews with residents and people professionally engaged in the area, with attention to how histories of place are produced, we detail the multiple and conflicting ways Cheetham Hill has come to be regarded as diverse. We consider how certain ways of knowing come to dominate by playing into popular tropes of difference. In the process, we consider how diversity talk can risk

emphasising certain features of localities at the expense of others and can efface some layers of difference, including sections of the local population. The paper offers a unique contribution to research on place and diversity within the broader fields of race and ethnicity studies by questioning the application and meaningfulness of the concepts of diversity and superdiversity and their ability to capture the complexities and multiplicities of urban multiculture in ways that are inclusive.

Diversity and the complexities of place

Urban places such as Cheetham Hill cannot be summed up in a singular representation. Whilst this may be true at some level for all places, the sheer complexity and changing dynamic of the identities, social relations, representations, and practices realised within urban spaces such as Cheetham Hill resist easy categorisation and conceptualization. For Lefebvre (1996), space is formed through various forms of practice and modes of representation. It is not produced in a singular or unitary way, but rather through competing political struggles over the form, meanings and possibilities of space. Lefebvre (1996, 194-5) argues that key to the realisation of the 'most positive' conception of the right to the city is, 'the right of citizens and city dwellers, and of groups they (on the basis of social relations) constitute, to appear on all networks of communication, information and exchange.' As policymakers, residents, planners and statisticians all proffer their own accounts of place, it is via such struggles that places acquire meaning (Alexander 2011).Yet there exist no definitive and determinate narratives of place, only an emergent and never resolved 'simultaneity of stories so far' (Massey 2005, 9).

The multiplicity that Massey refers to has been reflected through a growing interest in 'diversity'. Notions of 'diversity' and 'super-diversity' have assumed primacy within the disciplines of social policy, urban planning, geography, sociology, and migration studies over

the past decade – seen as a means of capturing the increased ethnic, linguistic, national, religious and immigration status differences that typify the populations of western metropolises (Vertovec 2007; Berg and Sigona 2013; Hall, 2015). Within this academic movement, and reflective of wider political concerns around integration, migration and ethnicity are totemic within conceptions of 'diversity'(Glick Schiller and Schmidt, 2016; Schmidt, 2016). Accompanying this 'diversity turn' (Berg and Sigona 2013) has been a focus on urban space as a locus of diversity from a range of disciplinary perspectives. The city, its neighbourhoods and streets offer a site through which, it is felt, the intricacies of urban life and ethnicities can be captured (Gidley 2013; Knowles 2013; Jensen 2016). Indeed, in lieu of more precise analytical terms, the ethnic heterogeneity of places themselves is signalled through a shorthand descriptor: labelled as 'diverse' or 'super-diverse' (Vertovec 2007). Within this literature, it is argued that accounting for situated forms of diversity disrupts traditional understandings of a relatively static urban landscape occupied by discrete, bounded, culturally distinct and internally homogeneous ethnic groups (Keith 2005; Vertovec 2007; Gidley 2013; Knowles 2013). This is necessary, it is suggested, precisely because of how differentiated the UK population has become, 'with reference to net inflows, countries of origin, languages, religions, migration channels and immigration statuses, gender, age, space/place, and practices of transnationalism.' (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015:542). However, recognising urban spaces as diverse or 'super-diverse', presents its own set of challenges. For Knowles (2013, 652), superdiversity must also address questions of 'visibility or the specifics of urban space', as the presence of superdiversity, 'is not registered in ways that can be straightforwardly apprehended and mapped.' The question of recognition is not simply a matter of rendering diversities visible but also interrogating the 'diversity stories' that are produced. This is particularly pressing given the representational histories within which the presence of racialised and ethnic 'difference' in the city has been constructed often

in negative terms- notably as a 'threat' (Keith 2005; Glick Schiller and Schmidt 2016). As will be illustrated below, Cheetham Hill has indeed been subject to such reductive and stigmatizing discourses. Diversity exists variously as 'narrative', 'social fact' and 'policy' (Berg and Sigona 2013; see also Jensen 2016). It needs to be seen as a subjective rather than an objective phenomenon that, just like place itself, is open to contestation. Olwig (2013, 477) calls for 'the importance of examining diversity in relation to specific points of view, or perspectives, rather than empirical facts.' The meanings and significances 'diversity' assumes in specific settings cannot be assumed but must be identified and accounted for. There are particular challenges of capturing this, which this article seeks to explore.

Labelling a place – or population - as diverse does not end the contestations of representation. If places like Cheetham Hill exist through different stories how do we record and reconcile different and potentially incommensurable viewpoints in our understandings of the place and the social relations with it? Who is it that gets to speak for a particular place? This is not simply a question of detached, academic interest. The representations through which places come to be legible matter significantly, reflecting and generating particular modes of inclusion and exclusion. As the state seeks to allocate and rescind resources, as housing and health providers try to provide appropriate services, and as claims to place-based identities and belonging are made, the relative visibility or invisibility of particular individual and collective experiences as constitutive of place enables or constrains their rights to citizenship (Knowles 2013; Hall 2015; Glick Schiller and Schmidt 2016). Glick Schiller and Schmidt call for greater attention to be paid to how, 'categories of difference and concepts of diversity exclude people from consideration as city-makers and agents of restructuring and rearticulating a city.' (2016, 7). Who gets to count within conceptions of 'diversity', on what terms, and for what reasons then become key questions inherently loaded with power.

This article is concerned with accounting for the various ways in which stories of diversity manifest and co-exist. Through drawing on mixed methods, it also reflects upon the ways in which different technologies of knowing generate differing insights. As Keith reminds us, 'it is essential to consider the technologies through which city space itself is analysed, how both perspectives and narratives of the city are produced' (2005,12). The interest in urban diversity has necessitated a growing focus in a range of disciplines on the methodological and analytical approaches taken, as accounts of urban places are produced from various 'vantage points' (Gidley 2013, 365) – varied experientially, purposively and epistemologically. Here, the means and analytic categories through which accounts of place are produced alternatively allow and occlude particular visions (Hall 2015). This raises a series of questions: are methods such as surveys or Census data equipped to deal with the complexities of 'super-diverse' places? Can they keep up with the temporalities of mobilities, the ambiguities of group identities and identification as well as the spatialities of ethnic difference and its lived experience (Berg and Sigona 2013; Gidley 2013; Hall 2015)?

The view that traditional methodological approaches are potentially blunt instruments in the face of increased diversity has led to an increasing emphasis on the importance of qualitative methods or multi-method approaches, particularly involving ethnography (Berg and Sigona 2013; Gidley 2013; Olwig, 2013; Hall 2015). Certainly, an emphasis on lived experience and situated practices are central to grasping such complexities. However, part of the vitality and richness of many urban places is the co-existence of accounts that different methodological approaches can elicit, as surveys, documentary analysis, interviews and observation all enable varied stories to emerge. The textured and layered accounts of place that qualitative approaches allow must be brought into dialogue with more official, quantitative approaches to 'diversity', which in the breadth of their scope are able to provide a different, detailed, description of an area. Following Hall (2015, 23), and bringing a range of urban narratives

produced about Cheetham Hill together, the paper attempts an 'analytic alignment of the authorized techniques for making migration and diversity officially visible in the city, together with the frequently less visible practices of "being super-diverse".

Michael Keith calls for a 'perspectival movement' which requires methodological and disciplinary pluralism to capture the 'messiness of the contemporary city' (2005, 11-12) Capturing 'diversity' more effectively is not solely about the research methods used but what those methods are asked to do. Here interdisciplinary approaches can help to 'understand multiply determined situations in the world.' (Bracken and Ought 2009, 371). As Olwig states, 'If diversity is viewed as a matter of perspective, it is a relative, not an absolute phenomenon. It is therefore necessary to question from which perspective the existence of "multitude", "difference" and "variety" is determined' (2013, 477). In attempting to generate more multifaceted accounts of places like Cheetham Hill, it is clear that a range of expertise is required that can shed light on geographical, sociological, political, historical, cultural and economic dimensions. In this paper we draw upon mixed methods and interdisciplinary framings to explore how the concept of diversity is understood. The following section will outline some of those methods, before proceeding with an account of Cheetham Hill.

Methods and research context

In order to understand the various forces shaping understandings of diverse places we draw on a range of sources and research methods, including historical analyses, local area statistics and qualitative interviews with residents and people professionally engaged in the public, community and voluntary sectors in Cheetham Hill. Taking on this range of sources and methods allows us to think about how different perspectives about a place are produced. We can, for example, explore how descriptions of populations' ethnic mix vary and challenge some of the broader claims about population sizes that are made with apparently no empirical

basis, as well as consider how residents' experiences compares with how people working in the area talk about diversity and its significance.

The questions addressed by this paper were initially raised during our analysis of qualitative research interviews that were conducted in two phases in Cheetham Hill. The first phase of interviews was conducted in 2013-2014 with people working directly or indirectly on issues about race and ethnicity or on activities that addressed local ethnic minority needs. This included 21 civil servants, community activists, voluntary workers, and public and third sector professionals. Although some were voluntary, we refer to them in the text as 'area professional' interviewees for ease of reference. They were largely not resident in Cheetham Hill. The second phase of interviews took place in 2015-2016 with ten residents. Additionally, we also convened a three-day 'pop-up' research event in an empty retail unit on the main high street in Cheetham Hill that attracted over 150 people. As part of this event we noted conversations with residents, made observations, and collected written comments left by residents on a series of displays that were intentionally meant to provoke responses to particular questions. Displays included a timeline of key local, national and global events. Residents were encouraged to comment on events or add things they felt were missing. On another wall was a gallery of photographs of local shopping streets and housing and again residents were asked to comment on these. Finally, a large roll of blank paper allowed for freer responses to our research on what residents thought about the way the area had changed during the time they had lived there. This research is part of a larger study which replicated these methods in three other neighbourhoods across the UK (Butetown in Cardiff, Govanhill in Glasgow and East Ham in Newham). The research sought to explore changes in the ways that race and ethnicity are managed in the policy and community arena and changes in how they are routinely experienced.

In terms of quantitative data, we have largely used the Census because it is widely understood to be the most reliable survey recording data on ethnicity and is available at ward level. Census data therefore provide a useful overview of the neighbourhood and allow us to challenge some of the claims made about place. Whilst qualitative research suggests that responses to survey questions about ethnic identification may be partial and shaped by responses to what are fixed, inadequate categories (Harries 2017), the Census is perceived to be a reliable survey because people respond to ethnicity questions in a consistent way (Simpson et al 2016), and because there is only a 3% non-response rate to the question on ethnicity (ONS 2012). Ethnicity has been recorded on the Census since 1991 and, although the categories have shifted somewhat, having access to three Censuses (1991-2001-2011) allows us to look at change over time (taking account of ward boundary changes). Census categories of ethnicity need to be understood as the outcome of political contestations over ethnic identity. The Census gives visibility to some groups (for example Bangladeshi) whilst effectively invisibilising others. Many ethnic and national backgrounds are hidden by composite categories (such as 'Black African' or more, recently 'Arab'), whilst others are merely covered by the 'any other ethnic group' category. The categorisation offered by the Census is also an unhappy mix of national/continental and racialised categories. In addition to Census data, we have used local survey data on language use, carried out within Cheetham Hill by a team of linguists at the University of Manchester. As we will discuss below, the Census, and other quantitative surveys can give a level of both breadth and detail that qualitative studies struggle to achieve. However at the same time, qualitative studies can explore the lived experience of different ethnic groups as well as accounts of how categories are seen and reviewed. Mixed method research can therefore lay these different accounts over each other, but this also requires negotiating the tensions between them.

In the section that follows, we give a description of Cheetham Hill, which has been a place of

focus for researchers from a range of disciplines. We have been particularly interested in analyses of the area's migration history and how this has shaped its identity and physical structure. In our research, we were interested in how the lived experience of race and ethnicity has shifted over time in a place known as a 'migrant gateway', precisely because this history has allowed for particular modes of racialisation to emerge in articulation with place. This history of migration was the common theme across all the sites in the larger study and central to their selection. All four sites are today identified with diversity, however, Cheetham Hill has gained a national reputation for being the most diverse area in the UK. In the following section we start by discussing how this reputation has emerged and track some of the narratives that have circulated around the idea of diversity in Cheetham Hill.

Diversity in Cheetham Hill – the numbers tell a tale

Cheetham Hill is a neighbourhood ward in north Manchester with a population of 22,562 according to the 2011 Census. It is, as its name suggests, on a hill. At its base, it borders the city centre and the main arterial road running through its middle takes one up the hill, leading northwards and away from the city. The hill is often described as representing upward mobility, with its lower end associated with higher levels of deprivation and top end associated with increased wealth, larger housing and greener spaces, what Engels referred to as 'the breezy heights of Cheetham Hill' (Engels 1845). These days, this association does not sit quite so easily because, whilst much of the lower end is still made up of a large industrial warehouse area and Strangeways prison, recent regeneration programmes have built high-end apartment complexes on what was poor-conditioned housing and wasteland, in what has been rebranded as the 'Green Quarter'. And, often overlooked is the vitality of the industrial area, which, according to the Cheetham Ward Report makes up the highest concentration of businesses in Manchester, outside of the city centre (Manchester City Council 2012). The

neighbourhood ward as a whole has undergone several waves of regeneration over the years (see Rhodes and Brown in this issue for a discussion of this history). Whilst much of the housing in the most densely populated area is still Victorian terracing, during the 1970s and 1980s several estates comprised largely of small maisonettes were built. The area has remained a focus of Local Authority regeneration and urban renewal schemes, which have attempted to stimulate external investment in the area. This has resulted in a large Tesco supermarket in Cheetham's centre and a drive-to retail park area along the main arterial route that connects the city centre with north Manchester.

Cheetham Hill is therefore incredibly multi-faceted in its physical make-up. However, as we shall show, whilst the label of being 'diverse' is frequently attached to Cheetham Hill, this is usually solely because of the ethnic and/or religious diversity of its residents. Manchester City Council's Ward report for Cheetham Hill opens its description of the area: 'Cheetham is a vibrant and diverse North Manchester ward which is home to residents from a wide variety of faiths, cultures and nationalities' (2012, 4). Here, as with much common usage, the term diversity refers to the range of ethnicities, nationalities, religions and cultures found among its population, rather than other differences which might be significant, such as income, housing, education or employment. Census data support the notion that there is indeed ethnic diversity in Cheetham Hill. Figure 1 for example compares the proportion of ethnic groups within the populations of England and Wales, Greater Manchester and Cheetham Hill.

[Insert Figure 1: Comparison of ethnic composition between England and Wales, Greater Manchester and Cheetham (2011 Census)]

As with other places labelled diverse in the UK, the greatest shift over the last three Censuses has been amongst the population identifying as white. Although the white British population is increasing in Cheetham Hill, as the area becomes more densely populated, the proportion

of people identifying as white British fell from 43 percent in 2001 to 29 percent in 2011[1].

Despite this fairly significant change, the majority of Cheetham Hill's residents self-identified in 2011 as coming from only two ethnic origins: White British (29 per cent) and Pakistani (28 percent). This is illustrated in Figure 2, which compares the composition of populations in Cheetham Hill from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Censuses.

[Insert Figure 2: Change in ethnic composition of Cheetham (1991, 2001 and 2011 Census)]

The data on ethnic origin should be seen in the context of other issues around arrival and settlement - the local population is not static. According to the 2011 Census, 56 per cent of the population of Cheetham Hill were born in the UK (a drop from 69 percent in 2001[2]) whilst 27 percent reported that they had been resident in the UK for less than 10 years. There are very different rates for different categories. For example over 60 percent of those recorded as Bangladeshi were born in the UK, compared to only a little over 20 percent of Black Africans. As mentioned above, Cheetham Hill in common with the rest of Manchester, is a growing population, with population density[3] rising from 28.77 in 2001 to 48.3 in 2011. It also has a young population – 25% were under the age of 16 in 2011, of which only 14 % are white British.

Statistical representations have persuasive power in describing areas. As Werbner, considering earlier representations of the area points out: 'numbers constitute powerful symbolic representations in modern democracies […] numbers mean grants, allocations, electoral influence, prominence' (1991, 333). They can also set the scene for popular

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[1] This does not alter if we control for ward boundary changes. By mapping the 2011 Census data onto 1991 ward boundaries we know that the sizes of the population changes only slightly and does not alter the percentages of each ethnic group.
[2] The question on length of residency was not asked in 1991and 2001.
[3] Population density is the number of people in an area per hectare.

representations of areas, which play an important role in establishing reputation. The publication of outputs from the 2011 Census prompted fresh attention to the area. Cheetham Hill Road was identified by the *Daily Mail* as 'Britain's most diverse street', whilst the local *Manchester Evening News* proclaimed it as 'one of Britain's most diverse streets'. As we shall see, this is a claim often repeated by people working locally in the public and community sectors. The *Mail* article goes on to state that 'nearly half, an incredible 48 percent, of all residents in the district, which has historically been home to migrants from accros [sic] the globe, revealed that English was not their main language'. Language is commonly invoked as a marker of diversity, as we shall discuss. The *Mail* article continues with a familiar abbreviated history of the area 'Although Cheetham was originally a town in its own right, its garment districts, cheap rents and links with the cotton industry have made it the go-to place for generations of Jewish, Irish and south Asian migrants' (Crossley 2013). In common with the media coverage, in our interviews with local policy makers and service providers, statements about the status of Cheetham's diversity often include reference to the area as a historical 'gateway' for migrants. There has indeed been a significant history of migration, with Irish and Jewish migration to the area particularly well-documented (see Frangopolo 1969; Walker 1982; Werbner 1979; Williams 1976; Williams 2010) and local heritage talks and walking tours also chart this history. However, in our conversations with area professionals, few details of migration flows are given, and the tensions and diversity within and across groups of migrants are rarely acknowledged. There is little recognition of the different linguistic groups, nationalities, statuses and sects that, for example, encompass 'Jewish' or 'Asian' migrants. As Schmidt (2016, 53) has argued, such ahistorical and decontextualized understandings of 'diversity' inhibit our ability to apprehend it in the present. Statements made in interviews and local policy documentation draw on a stitched together potted history of migration flows to the area. These brief and somewhat crude

narratives are presented as 'facts' and typically start with Irish and Jewish migration and end with migration from Pakistan or, occasionally with the additional mention of the increase in migration from the somewhat vague category of Eastern Europe since the mid- 2000s.

> I know that it was a key point for Irish people and I know it was a key point for Jewish people. I know that as time has gone on there are now – I think there are more nationalities in Cheetham Hill than there practically are than anywhere else in the UK (Manager of cultural centre).

> For the last 200 years, Cheetham Hill has been a key arrival point for migrants entering the City, including: Irish migrants in the mid nineteenth century; Jewish migrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; and migrants from the Commonwealth countries in the mid twentieth century. Cheetham Hill remains an extremely diverse area today (CLES 2012).

Estimated numbers of languages spoken in an area is a second common trope through which diversity is understood. Indeed, this was a common point of reference for area professionals and can be found in local policy documents as well as media representations. On any given day one can hear estimates ranging from 64 to 150 languages spoken in the neighbourhood. In an interview, two community centre workers claimed there are 'over 150 languages spoken in this area…. probably more.'

This refashioning of language statistics is common in local accounts of diversity. The community centre estimate of over 150 languages may have derived from a widely publicised survey that estimated there to be 153 languages spoken across the whole Manchester region (Matras and Robertson 2015). It is very difficult to make good estimates of language use at a

neighbourhood level (Matras et al 2016). The same group of linguists also carried out a school survey in primary and secondary schools in Manchester, including in Cheetham Hill, and recorded 48 different languages spoken across all participating schools. If these were all spoken in Cheetham it would be a sizeable number, but certainly lower than local claims. Local estimations may also have been influenced by a Channel 5 documentary series set in Cheetham Hill, and released during the course of the fieldwork, entitled 'No foreigners here: 100% British'. The premise for setting the documentary in the area was, they stated, because 'Cheetham Hill is the most multicultural area of Britain'.

> Here in Manchester's Cheetham Hill 84 languages are spoken in just two square miles. From whatever colour, race or religion, everyone here is proud to call themselves British (No Foreigners here: 100% British, Channel 5, 2014).

The focus on language use highlights a more general ambivalence around discussions of diversity, which will be discussed more fully in following sections. An area's ethnic mix can be an object of pride and celebration, yet referring to diversity may also be a code for expressing concerns about the problems that might be associated with ethnic difference, migration and poverty, such as pressures on local services (Vertovec, 2007). Language has a particular symbolic status in this ambivalence over diversity. Multiple languages can suggest rich cultural diversity which might be celebrated, yet at the same time, speaking other languages can imply – often wrongly – that individuals cannot speak English, further suggesting a failure to integrate and a burden on local services (Alexander et al. 2007; Byrne 2016). This ambivalence will be discussed in the next section.

Limitations in diversity talk

In this section, we consider what descriptions of 'diversity' *do*, paying particular attention to what they do *not* tell us. This is important because, although there is little consensus on what is meant by diversity, and rarely any use of concrete evidence to back up the claim, the repetition of the status of places as 'diverse' means that they come to have the weight of a 'social fact' (Berg and Sigona 2013). In spite of the emphasis placed on the diversity of languages and nationalities in the area, local narratives, particularly from area professionals do not go beyond abbreviated histories of place and somewhat randomly selected statistics. There is also a tendency to emphasise only a handful of faiths or so-called faith *communities*. This fails both to recognise the range of language, nationality and cultural practices within 'faith communities' as well as ignoring those who fall outside the main faith groups. We can see this illustrated, for example, when area professionals talk about the Cheetham Festival. The festival is an annual celebration of multicultural diversity and attracts people from outside the area to tour different cultural sites. These sites however centre on a few locations, primarily attached to faith centres (exceptions include the Irish World Heritage Centre and the Ukrainian Cultural Centre). In the festival we see diversity as description that resembles a branding of place potentially intended to neutralise fears over migration and present us with a unique sense of place which is to be celebrated (Harries 2017). Ironically, these claims to uniqueness are undoubtedly familiar to anyone doing research in other places labelled as 'diverse' – certainly across all four of our research sites we hear the same things, in rather undifferentiated terms. This is interesting in and of itself because diversity claims to offer distinctiveness, yet its representation often becomes a paint-by-numbers activity obscuring those who live in, produce and shape the place in interesting and dynamic ways. Significantly, in Cheetham Hill, two groups that are rarely mentioned by local professionals, are the Roma and Black African populations. The Roma population, largely located towards the bottom of the hill fail to appear in the accounts. It is perhaps a population that is easier to

ignore because of the unwieldly way Roma are categorised in survey data and low Census response rates (Grill 2012). Nevertheless, Cheetham Hill has one of the biggest Roma communities in Manchester and Romani is spoken in local schools, although hugely underreported in school language data (Matras et al 2016). A similarly invisible group in diversity talk is that which identifies on the Census as black African despite being the fastest growing local population since 1991. Lacking the visible 'built and social architectures' (Knowles 2013: 656) of other groups means the presence of Africans in the area goes unrecognised in a way that neglects their belonging within the city. In Cheetham Hill, visibility in the physical landscape may again play a part here. The growing numbers of African Evangelical churches are harder to find than longer standing churches, mosques and synagogues. They inhabit empty warehouses set back off the main road towards the bottom of the hill.

As we have shown, there are narratives about the diversity of Cheetham Hill although, in practice, descriptions are often limited to a few well-worn generalisations. Ethnic diversity certainly has some allure, particularly for practices of consumption (Shaw et al. 2004). Area professionals were keen to stress that diversity is a positive thing but struggled to explain in what ways beyond using words like 'richness' and emphasising the range of food shops, restaurants and takeaways on offer. Alternatively, the limited sense of diversity is drawn on to emphasise a kind of humanistic wholesomeness of place, in which the numerous differences mean either everyone is able to 'get on' or at least that everyone likes and dislikes each other in equal amounts. Berg and Sigona warn that such 'equivalence of differences…threatens to flatten the very diversity it ostensibly celebrates and acknowledges' (2013, 353). Such equivalences were evident in the account of those professionally employed in Cheetham Hill:

In some senses I suspect that [Cheetham Hill's] so diverse it's quite hard to pick on any one group (laughs), you know what I mean, there isn't an obvious stand-off between this group and that group. (Advice worker)

What is missing is any critical reflection of people's lives. We are given no sense of the inequalities that shape different groups' experiences – although there are substantial differences in access to social housing, private rental and home ownership, and in educational attainment. Analysis of Census data shows that the highest proportion of people in Cheetham Hill with qualifications at Level 4 and above are those who identify as Black (34%) and Other (33%) compared with those who identify as Asian (28%) and white British (28%). However, the white population in Cheetham are more likely to be in higher managerial and professional occupations than all other ethnic groups, and less likely to have never worked or be long-term unemployed. Flat descriptions and celebrations of diversity can also mask the different experiences of residents in terms of how they are racialized and experience racism. This can affect mobilisation against and recognition of racialized inequalities (Berg and Sigona; 2013). A member of the local regeneration team attending a public event hosted by [authors] at the university reflected:

That [talk on racism] was quite a useful reminder for me, I think, because you tend to think Cheetham is very diverse and its people do tend to get on fairly well, I think. So we don't tend to think of Cheetham as being a hotbed of racism and stuff like that, but actually… it doesn't mean it doesn't go on (Member of regeneration team).

Thus the label of 'diverse' suggests a positive quality, but does not adequately reflect the complexity of place, nor peoples' lived experiences of difference. As Jensen argues, 'National and local policies on immigration and urban planning constitute external and rather

static perspectives on places, whereas the internal perspective of those who might actually inhabit the places focus on their use, experience and sense of belonging' (2016, 84-5). For some area professionals, the focus was on commercial activity, determining a particular perspective on issues around regeneration, economic strategies and investment in community resources.

> So both on the diversity point of view, you know, it's fairly rich and also the activities, the social activities, the events, the commerce, the trade, all those things, it's a real melting pot (Local Authority Official).

The metaphor of 'melting pot' used here is suggestive of an understanding which can obscure differences between and among different groups.

In much diversity talk it is possible to see area professionals actively countering possible negative discourses around migration, in their attempts to improve outward facing representations and attract investment. This was most pertinently illustrated when we ran our three-day pop-up research event on Cheetham Hill high street. In that event, we included a historical timeline of local, citywide, and national events dating from the early 19th Century to the present day, which visitors were invited to comment on and add to. Some members of the local Council complained that the inclusion of 'negative things' would 'tarnish the area'. References to urban unrest, including the anti-Jewish riots of 1947, the publication of a popular book about gangs in Cheetham, local anti-deportation protests, and the series of arrests under new counter-terror legislation in 2009 were deemed as too negative. This intervention could be seen as a form of brand protection and shows how some advocates of diversity talk can feel disturbed by more politically contentious or disruptive issues. However, this positive spin was not consistently held, demonstrating how diversity as a concept has an ambivalent texture. Alongside its representation as a site of celebration,

Cheetham Hill is constructed as a challenging place of work and local people are constructed as creating that challenge. In discussion with area professionals, they often raised questions of cleanliness and respectability. Cheetham Hill is at once presented as 'exotic' and 'interesting' and yet dirty and harbouring behavioural problems – including uncivilised behaviour:

> The key issues are in Cheetham…it's crime and grime really… There are cultural….
> [tapping table with finger nervously] and historical reasons around the issues around
> bins and recycling and waste and stuff like that. So we have an area where we have…..
> new arrivals, we have different languages spoken and we have a culture, really, where
> people don't use the bins in the way they're supposed to (Member of regeneration team).

In this quote, the challenges facing the area are reduced to cultural and language issues and those factors in themselves are sufficient to explain 'crime and grime'. This is reiterated in policy documentation and other interviews, which outline the priorities and challenges that an unspecified diversity presents. Here for example a housing officer compares housing estates in the following racialised terms:

> X estate has a different demographic, a lot of long-term white residents and doesn't
> have the social problems and behaviour problems as 'ghetto' estates (Notes from a
> conversation with a white housing officer).

Implicit in these accounts is that the problem lies with the ethnicity of the residents, rather than inadequacies in council services, such as rubbish collection. This fuels a form of 'territorial stigma ' focused upon the conjoined 'stigmata' between deprived places and racial and ethnic difference (Wacquant 2008) contrasting with residents' perspectives which were frequently focused on problems of large-scale dumping, lack of council intervention and the rodent problems associated with only fortnightly collections of household food waste. The

battle over the responsibility for rubbish becomes significant in the context of austerity where community centres in the area struggle to find funding to address ethnic inequalities in education, health and unemployment, but are funded to promote cultural education on rubbish removal.

The lived significance of diversity

Residents' perspectives present a different set of challenges and priorities. Cheetham Hill remains a popular place to live because of its location, transport links and because of people's ties to community, even though residents' understanding of community does not always match that of city housing and development teams (see Finney et al. in this issue). Looking at the interviews of residents alongside those of area professionals, we get potentially conflicting understandings of place. Often conscious of the ways in which they (as residents) are portrayed as producing the challenge, residents instead construct the problem in reverse and hold public institutions and services accountable. They suggest that institutions do not care about people living in the area and instead that "[they] leave us here to rot" (a resident at the pop-up research event). Critically, if we look beyond the pathologised descriptions of new migrants, which resemble the typical rhetoric that dominates public debate on immigration, the salience of diversity appears limited. For many of the residents we interviewed, questions about diversity or the multicultural fabric of the neighbourhood are met with little interest. Instead a focus is the demise of the area, which is particularly symbolised by the closure of public buildings.

> [Cheetham Hill] is *closed*. In every area there should be public buildings otherwise you feel closed off from the spaces around you (Resident).

The old library is lying derelict and former public buildings are now in private

ownership (Resident).

Indeed, with deep concerns around poverty, unemployment and poor social and leisure

facilities, diversity talk is often merely a background noise in the daily lives of residents.

Public sector and community workers celebrate the 'diverse' range of takeaways; yet these

are talked about disparagingly by residents because they have replaced local independent

shops and cafés closed after the construction of a large Tesco supermarket. Issues that

dominate the narratives of residents include: increasing reliance on foodbanks; increases in

educational attainment that are not matched with employment rates (an issue backed up by

statistical evidence); the lack of sufficient school places locally; the loss of a local police

station; and parents' complaints that they are told by health and social care professionals that

they do not get their children to exercise enough in an area where there are few leisure

facilities and green spaces.

That is not to say that elements of diversity talk do not feature in the narratives of residents,

or do not matter. However, often when diversity does feature it is to acknowledge the

potential protection that it offers against racism, particularly in light of increasing levels of

Islamophobia (reported especially following the November 2015 shootings in Paris), or

conversely around institutional racism experienced in local schools and other public services.

R3: I don't want to use the race card but because as a Muslim area, Muslim community,

you find people don't listen.

R5: They're so ignorant really.

R3: A lot of the parents don't know how to complain because they feel I think maybe a

little bit intimidated by the system. And then the ones that do, nothing gets done.

(Group of Muslim women in conversation with author)

Residents do also respond in some way to broader narratives about diversity. Residents are, for different reasons to area professionals in the public sector, also under pressure to counter the negative depictions of the neighbourhood in which they live. One visitor to the pop-up shop noted, "Just hearing the words 'Cheetham Hill' conjures up an image of crime and hardship" and several others left notes and told us in conversations that it's not a bad place or, "It's not the black hole people say it is". When in interviews we provoke questions about diversity of the area, there is almost always an immediate response to defend the area through emphasising that multiculture is a good thing. This suggests that ethnic diversity is broadly perceived as problematic in the public imagination, despite the way it shapes the marketing of places. Indeed, while for some officials 'diversity' is drawn upon to downplay problems of racism and racialised antagonisms (Jones 2013), counter statements from residents are again, however, often linked to the ways in which diversity offers a sense of protection from racism:

It is a multicultural environment. I like that. It makes me feel comfortable, not like a stranger (resident).

These descriptions, given alongside experiences of living with racism, remind us that living in Cheetham Hill is more nuanced and contradictory than the diversity talk of area professionals often suggests. What is more, taking the interviews as a whole, it is clear that the boundaries of diversity that are imagined through their articulation with *a* place make little sense in understanding people's lives. Residents' lives are not restricted to Cheetham, nor is Cheetham only populated and shaped by its residents but also by businesses, developers, consumers and passers-by. Residents have city-wide, national and global attachments that get lost in the emphasis on places rather than the people and relationships of which they are comprised as representing diversity.

Conclusion

This paper has posed important questions about the implications of understanding places as diverse, particularly for people who live in them. It started from the position that diversity is a subjective rather than an objective phenomenon and is therefore open to dispute and multiple representations (Olwig, 2013). Indeed, it is the multifarious nature of diversity that we have argued requires careful scrutiny because ways of knowing and conveying diversity carry repercussions for different populations depending on the terms on which diversity is negotiated and given power. This included taking into consideration who makes these claims and granting attention to which forms of diversity are recognised and how terms of visibility are secured. Indeed, whilst the concepts of diversity and superdiversity have been employed to suggest that they can disrupt essentialised and homogeneous understandings of place, we have highlighted how, in practice, diversity is typically used in ways that are too simplistically deployed to meaningfully reflect lived experience. The application of the concept of diversity thus often, perversely, flattens the landscape of the very places that we seek to understand, leaving out the subtle nuances that make up urban multiculture and omitting possibilities of tracing the texture of difference beyond relatively crude ethnic categories. Taking Cheetham Hill as a lens through which to explore how diversity is narrated, we have illustrated how *diversity* over emphasises certain facets and 'groups' at the expense of others. We have shown, for example, how popular media and policy representations embrace the concept of diversity but sometimes exaggerate the data on which they make their claims. Consequently, for a place like Cheetham Hill where the label of diversity is used so liberally, distinctions can be drawn between who and what is made visible or invisible in its application. These distinctions are only properly made clear by drawing on a range of sources and perspectives as we have done.

By employing a multi-method and interdisciplinary approach we have been able to examine how diversity operates in multiple forms- simultaneously as 'narrative', 'social fact' and 'policy' (Berg and Sigona, 2013). Furthermore, we have illustrated how these different forms often conflict with each other and are experienced as relative rather than absolute phenomenon – which in turn has implications for the extent to which people are included and afforded rights and representation as citizens. Beyond examining how diversity is applied as a description, we have also paid attention to what these descriptions do (and what they fail to do). Bringing different methods together has enabled us to challenge the ways in which diversity assumes an ontological reality within the local policy imagination. Claims made under the label of diversity have little salience to lived multiculture but nevertheless come to represent powerful portraits because they play into popular tropes of difference and the pragmatic, technocratic impulses of local governance . Here such claims represent a form of disciplinary power through which diversity and diverse places are known. These claims too often revolve around constructions of places like Cheetham Hill as sites of dysfunctional cultural otherness or alternatively of ethnic and racial harmony and the locale for exotic forms of consumption. Within such accounts, other forms of difference are often effaced and narrowly determined, racially and ethnically based conceptions of diversity misrepresent lived experience. When exploring local people's experiences of 'diverse' places we find a preference for a different sort of language to capture its complexities. Not one that denies diversity nor presumes its negative connotations, nor the facets of identity upon which it is based. Instead, we require a more nuanced vision of multiculture, one capable of 'representing situational versus reified forms of identification' (Jensen 2016, 96). The above necessitates an embrace of a broader conceptualisation of diversity, which displays 'an openness towards a great variety of possible forms of differentiation and belonging, and the ways in which they may be brought into play in social life' (Olwig 2013, 472).

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