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Nigerian London: remapping space and ethnicity in superdiverse cities

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'The negotiation of space in the city is a continual dance of tolerance
and intolerance, acceptance and violence, visibility and invisibility....'

(Orsi, cited in Boutros 2010:120)

Abstract

This paper explores the idea of 'superdiversity' at the city level through
two churches with different approaches to architectural visibility: the
hypervisible Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and the invisible
Igbo Catholic Church, both in North London, guide our exploration of
invisible Nigerian London. Although Nigerians have lived in London for
over two hundred years they live beneath the radar of policy and
public recognition rather than as a vital and visible element of
superdiversity. This paper argues that we can trace the journeys
composing Nigerian London in the deep textures of the city thus
making it visible, but this involves remapping space and ethnicity. It

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2
3 argues that visibility is vital in generating more open forms of urban
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5
6 encounter and, ultimately, citizenship.
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8 **Key words:** visibility, urban space, ethnicity, superdiversity, Nigerian
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10 London.
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12 13 14 15 16 **Introduction**

17
18 Superdiversity, the 'increased number of new small and scattered,
19
20 multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically
21
22 differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over
23
24 the last decade....' (Vertovec 2007:1024) is now an established
25
26 descriptor of UK society generated by the 'new migrations' of the last
27
28 fifteen-years. Conceptions of superdiversity combine, contest and
29
30 fragment ethnicity and migration status, thus opening a space to
31
32 develop more sophisticated notions of ethnicity in urban contexts as
33
34 this paper suggest. Superdiversity extends dominant conceptions of
35
36 multi-racial and multi-ethnic Britain beyond hypervisible South Asian
37
38 and African Caribbean migrant-settler populations, and rightly offers
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40 this more complex picture as a critique of the nation-state's policy
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42 framework for the management of multi-racialism. But it does so
43
44 without addressing visibility or the specifics of urban space.
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3 The (nation state) scale of the analysis of superdiversity sustains the
4 problematic of 'integration' as a truncated politics of multi-racialism
5 promoted in government policy and research agendas, and overlooks
6 productions of superdiversity at more local-scales. However, it does
7 disrupt settled ideas of ethnic territories in the city. Understanding
8 places like Brixton in London as African Caribbean are subverted by
9 new migrations, which are not apparent on the surface of place:
10
11 Brixton is African as well as Caribbean. This paper argues that despite
12 acknowledgement of superdiversity it hasn't yet been empirically
13 explored or its spatial-theoretical implications fully developed. It
14 suggests that we need to think about the micro-dynamics of
15 superdiversity in the fabrics of the city where it is made, registered
16 and lived. With one hundred and seventy nine nationalities and three
17 hundred languages superdiversity is deeply imbricated in London, in
18 co-productions of everyday lives and urban architectures. The paper
19 argues that in order develop more sophisticated conceptions of
20 superdiversity we need to better understand its everyday registration
21 in the city. This involves adjusting our conceptions of the relationship
22 between ethnicity and urban space so as to foreground both mobility
23 and visibility. These theoretical adjustments open the way to
24 conceptualizing and securing new forms of urban citizenship that are
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3 more openly engaged with the diversity of Otherness composing
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5 contemporary city life.
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11 The problem with scaling superdiversity to the city-level is that it is not
12
13 registered in ways that can be straightforwardly apprehended and
14
15 mapped. Superdiverse ethnic-migrant presence has multi-registration
16
17 points: in bodies, in clothing, in performances, in forms of commerce,
18
19 in flows on money, in artifacts and buildings. These conduits of ethnic
20
21 production and registration can be summarized as human and
22
23 architectural fabrics, objects and social-technical processes. Some of
24
25 these are more visible on city landscapes than others. But even
26
27 hypervisible registrations conceal. Elaborate mosques' hypervisible
28
29 announcement of religious presence in the city conceals equally
30
31 important information in ethnic-migration-Islamic-orientation.
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38 Remittance flows have low visibility in the balance sheets of virtual-
39
40 technical space and high visibility in distant lifestyles, which are
41
42 invisible from the city generating them. Visibilities are complicated and
43
44 not just about what we see: seeing is anyway a skilled social practice
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46 (Jenks 1995:10) and in racially hierarchized societies, inevitably
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48 racialized.
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Visibilities involve complex dynamics of seeing and being seen, often embedded in the diffused power of surveillance (Tagg 1988): in who watches and who is watched? Mosques are not just architecturally hypervisible: they embed notions of dangerousness, which place them in the spotlight of (state-sponsored) urban surveillance. Hypervisibility equally generates the urban blind spots we can call invisibility, what is there but not seen, unimportant because it is not regarded as a threat or problem. In this sense African London is as invisible as Muslim London is hypervisible. Surveillance, of course, is only one layer of visibility: there are media visibilities which shape, but not determine, what we know and thus see; and there are visibilities of everyday urban engagement, as citizens navigate pathways through the city they visually take in a fraction of the landscape and interpret it with the tools available to them. These three prisms – surveillance, mediatized images and everyday visual navigation of urban landscape – provide the framework for thinking about visibilities. At opposite ends of the spectrum hypervisibility and invisibility both deny humanity and complexity (West 2001).

Visual traces of others' lives accumulated through daily city navigation are important in how urban citizens navigate and understand their cities and those with whom they share them. Recognition and

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2
3 resentment begin from the signs of otherness inscribed on the city's
4 (human and built) surfaces. However, as my mosque example hints,
5
6 and this paper will show, visual apprehension of ethnic co-presence is
7
8 only a starting-point for deeper understanding of superdiverse cities.
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10 Apprehensions such as recognition, understanding, knowledge
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12 generation and theorization with which visual forms generate complex
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14 and sometimes contradictory dynamics are equally important. The
15
16 relationship between ethnicized migrant presence in the city and the
17
18 visual traces that carry that presence need to be teased out of the
19
20 fabric of the city. As the cultural critic John Berger (2008) so wisely
21
22 says, the relationship between what we see and what we know is
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24 never settled.
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36 This paper explores fragments of everyday urban superdiversity
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38 through two empirical capsules, which presented themselves in the
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40 slip-stream of a research project on the salience of religion in the
41
42 making of urban migrant lives ¹. The Universal Church of the Kingdom
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44 of God (UCKG), which has a high number of new Angolan migrants and
45
46 the Igbo (Nigerian) Catholic Church, both in North London, ground
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48 fragments of new migration and London's superdiversity. In terms of
49
50 ethnicity the 2001 census shows that the area around both churches
51
52 has a similar profile: just over 70% white and between 13% and 14%
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3 black or black British. The Africans we are interested in are invisible in
4
5 the way these figures were collected. Also congregations are not
6
7 necessarily local. Presenting the Universal (Angolan/mixed) Church for
8
9 contrasting styles of worship, subjectivity production and visibility on
10
11 the urban landscape, this paper focus on fragments of Nigerian London
12
13 glimpsed through the Igbo Church and suggests ways of exploring
14
15 them. Contrast is not comparison, its is intended to unsettle, to imply
16
17 constant emergent coproduction of ethnicity, subjectivity and urban
18
19 landscape and so sustain 'Africans' and 'Nigerians' as contingent
20
21 contextual open categories. And while this paper focuses on Nigerians
22
23 I want to keep the mixed-black/Angolan congregation of UCKG in the
24
25 frame for its contrasting approach to worship and architectural
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27 visibility.
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38 **The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God**

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40 The UCKG is a migrant Pentecostal Church. It has a large settled and
41
42 new migrant congregation and has itself migrated from Brazil. Its
43
44 congregation is 90% black comprising long and more recently
45
46 migrated African Caribbeans and Africans including Angolans routed
47
48 through Portugal. The 'church' – a term denoting the building and its
49
50 congregants in collective worship - occupies what was once part of the
51
52 1930s chain of Astoria Cinemas, which later became a famous rock
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3 concert venue, the Rainbow Theatre, where Jimi Hendrix, Frank
4
5 Zappa, Deep Purple and other 60s stars played. The building is
6
7 hypervisible on the local urban landscape, its posters advertising its
8
9 themed meetings – ‘13 ways to change your luck’, four meetings a day
10
11 seven days a week – visibly mark the business of god.
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18 Its ‘meetings’ – the corporate term preferred to ‘services’ - are
19
20 business and show business. Pastors in corporate casuals stand like
21
22 security guards. The service begins when the Bishop leaps onto the
23
24 stage and the piped music crescendos. The theme on one of my visits
25
26 was ‘excuseitus’, blaming others for adverse circumstances. Passages
27
28 from Deuteronomy leavened the power-point presentation on personal
29
30 responsibility: the Bishop’s style suits the auditorium architecture. The
31
32 congregants are mobile and vocal. The ‘chain of prayer’ is underwritten
33
34 with standing orders into the UCKG bank account. Mid afternoon
35
36 weekday services attract 100 plus, Sunday evenings 700-800 and the
37
38 Pentecost over 2000: the church is a force in local African migrant
39
40 lives, and thus a significant node in African London.
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51 **The Igbo Catholic Church**

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53 Less than a kilometer away on the North side of Finsbury Park station
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55 the Igbo Catholic Church is as invisible as the UCKG is hypervisible. It
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3 lies on a recycled, once Irish, migrant route through the city. It's low
4
5 visibility comes from being 'nested' inside a 'mainstream' Catholic
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7 Church, which is itself inside a plain neoclassical building originally
8
9 intended to serve non-conformist religious worship – two layers of
10
11 concealment which point to the difficulties of reading urban landscape
12
13 for ethnicity and migrant presence. Its visibility comprises its web
14
15 presence and the bodies that stand outside once a month at the
16
17 beginning and end of services. Nested churches, an artifact of high
18
19 London real estate values and declining congregations make efficient
20
21 use of space designated for religious worship and share church
22
23 expenses. Sunday mass attracting 50 – 80 black and white
24
25 congregants is followed by a second, 3 hour, service on the second
26
27 Sunday of each month when the Igbo Catholic Church timesharing the
28
29 building, brings 200-300 young Igbo congregants, a South Eastern
30
31 Nigerian Diaspora people centred on Rivers State together constituting
32
33 a shifting time-limited capsule of Nigerian London. The elderly Irish
34
35 priest in the mainstream church acknowledges the vitality new
36
37 migrants bring to his parish. He says: 'I bury the Irish and baptize the
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39 Congolese'.
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53 In contrast to the mainstream Catholic service the Igbo celebration of
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55 mass is kinesthetic, informal and interactive. Congregants are mobile
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3 and vocal during the service, people drift in and out; children are
4
5 passed around. Congregants and priests alike text and make phone
6
7 calls during the service. Services are punctuated with drumming,
8
9 dancing and singing. Women wear the brightly colored wrappers and
10
11 elaborate head- scarves they may not wear every day in their work as
12
13 teachers and nurses; men wear lounge suits or robes and trousers.
14
15 Church Wardens circulate, greet and hover, distinguished by their
16
17 green sashes. And the service is in the Igbo language. The Igbo priest
18
19 says you are closer to God in your first language. He told me in one of
20
21 our interviews:
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29 No it's not purely about language. Theologically we preach the
30
31 same Jesus. But I think the difference would be in terms of
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33 modality, how it's run, the attitude, you know we worship god by
34
35 not standing or kneeling and praying. We add some flavor to it
36
37 like clapping or dancing, so that's the difference. The people
38
39 miss the history of it. That's why they come in here they want
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41 to clap their hands, they want to dance, they want to shout. So I
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43 think that's, if I will call it a theological difference, the message
44
45 is all the same.
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48 At Pentecost another layer, of pan-Africanism, surfaces: congregants
49
50 from Zambia, Uganda, Togo and Congo mount rival choirs and dances
51
52 and the service switches between Luganda, Lingala, Kadodo Ewe,
53
54 Tilobe and Igbo. After service is socializing and networking in the
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3 church basement: beer, soft drinks and food are pulled from boxes
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6 and bags and the party begins.
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10 **Built and Social Architectures**

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13 And so in both of these churches through bodies, language, music,
14
15 rhythm and dress new syncretic performances of migrant selves as
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17 London-based African Catholics and Pentecostals - significant
18
19 productions of raced, time-layered, migrant ethnicities - are
20
21 generated, making the mosaic of superdiverse London in ways that are
22
23 unevenly visible in microcosms of urban landscape, in the fabrics of
24
25 these recycled buildings. Production and registration of these
26
27 microcosms of superdiversity is the announcement of migrant
28
29 presence in the city: 'it is through their religious displays that urban
30
31 people announced in their own voices the heterogeneity of cities' (Orsi
32
33 1999:48). The architectural announcement from UCKG is louder than
34
35 from the Igbo Church: so here are two volumes at which Africans
36
37 announce their presence in the city. Do these differences in volume
38
39 and visibility matter? To whom might they matter? They matter
40
41 because urban superdiversity is made in precisely these
42
43 announcements. Whether it matters to African migrants and other
44
45 urban citizens remains to be investigated. They might shape how non
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47 African Londoners think about their city. They might shape how African
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3 Londoners feel about the place through which their journeys are
4
5 routed. For theorists of superdiversity, visibility pinpoints where the
6
7 social architectures of superdiversity are generated, and so visibility
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9 matters for these reasons. It doesn't tell us all that we need to know
10
11 but reveals places for further investigation.
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18 Built architectures provide an entry-point to social architectures. Social
19
20 architecture builds on Lefebvre's (2000) and de Certeau's (1988)
21
22 ideas about space as textured by the social lives, social relationships
23
24 and social processes it coproduces. Like buildings individual and
25
26 collective lives have plans guiding their construction: activities,
27
28 relationships, moral universes, and ways of being in the world.
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32 Exploring the social architectures of superdiversity in Angolan and
33
34 Nigerian London involves drilling into the micro-fabrics of urban
35
36 superdiversity. Of course these social architectures exist and compose
37
38 fragments of urban fabric whether or not they are visible: in this
39
40 narrower sense visibility is irrelevant. But in making these African
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42 social architectures known as part of the city, becoming part of
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44 knowledge about the city, visibility is important in alerting researchers
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46 and urban citizens that there is more to their city than at first appears.
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3 The UCKG adopts an interventionist approach to congregants'
4 personal, work and family commitments in offering alternatives to
5 migrant family life, accommodation (for some) inside the church, a
6 social life and its own systems of church and personal advancement. It
7 specializes in general human troubles with a migrant spin - finance,
8 violence, relationships and aspiration - and hint at migrants' often -
9 precarious relationship with the city. UCKG's offer, and its congregant
10 response, suggests the difficult dynamic new, multiply routed, African
11 European migrants have with formal (state) and informal structures
12 that mediate their presence in the city. Social architectures say as
13 much about the city as its migrants.
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33 Christina who is of mixed Angolan and Portuguese heritage and in her
34 early twenties joined UCKG in Portugal as a child. The family's move to
35 London when Christina was nine years old coincided with the 'arrival'
36 of the HQ of UCKG in North London providing connections in the new
37 city. Christina's relationship with the church developed at the age of
38 19 in a tangle of interpersonal difficulties and violence.
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48 They have got services every day of the week and the church is
49 open 24/7. And they have pastors who live inside the church and
50 they all have their functions. They've got jobs that they do.
51 Everybody has their tasks. ...I used to come for prayers on
52 Mondays, pray for financial life. On Wednesdays I used to come
53 for bible study and to grow more spiritually, to learn more about
54 God. Thursdays I used to pray for my family. And on Fridays it
55 was deliverance. Saturdays you come to evangelize and clean
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3 the church ... it was everything. It was my life. You don't have
4 time for your family. You don't have time for your studies
5 because you are always in church... I just thought 'I am going to
6 be a minister. I am going to go round the world and preach the
7 word of god'... you bring all your money.
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12 Christina sold what she had - her CDs and books - and donated the
13 money to the church. In her early twenties at the time of this interview
14 she had reduced her involvement thus lessening its impact on her life.
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22 The migrant difficulties the Igbo Church addresses are those of an
23 established and more prosperous congregation as well as young
24 Nigerian Londoners and new migrants in need of help. Its priest
25 describes himself as a 'missionary' by which he means:
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32 ... Conversion in all ramifications... It's not just come to my church.
33 It's channeling your mind... helping to build the whole self. Be
34 educated, do your works, get married, stay off crime, stay off
35 drugs, be useful to yourself, be a good ambassador and then to
36 help you achieve all these things; there is a model, there is Jesus.
37 So that is actually the work of a missionary, being in prisons
38 helping people, you know... I think that's the height of my
39 missionary work; sitting with criminals, listening to them and
40 helping them and trying to change them.
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52 Conversations with the priest and a group of young women
53 congregants (aged 13-15) suggest that the church provides a
54 mechanism for living as Igbo-Nigerians-in-London: a guide for parents
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3 in how to live and rear children in values they recognize, respect and
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5 want to transmit – ways of living as migrants in their own language
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7 and reinvented traditions. Church is where the young girls meet and
8
9 practice their Igbo. The priest suggests that Catholicism sustains

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13 London-Igboness:

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16 Religion is not dying out. And I wonder if actually if religion will
17
18 ever die out in the Igbo culture because religion is part and
19
20 parcel of the life set up. It's buried in the language all the names
21
22 are religious. You rarely get an Igbo name that is not routed to
23
24 either god or goodness... So it's not dying out. Except that there
25
26 are a few influences that tend to channel peoples attentions to
27
28 other things. But eventually you see them come back. Once they
29
30 pass that (teen) age, they come back once they are twenty-five,
31
32 you see them gradually coming back. There are some numbers
33
34 of them coming back either to marry in the Igbo church or
35
36 because their parents put pressure on them. They see religion as
37
38 a family thing...

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41 This brief exploration of social architectures suggests London-based
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43 Igbo Nigerians in dialogue with other Africans, with their moral
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45 universe, (Taylor 1992) with the templates for being persons in the
46
47 world, with normative frameworks guiding social relationships, social
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49 activities and ways of living. Existential and collective
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51 (racialized/ethnicized) selves are thus made in particular places in the
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53 city in relationship with specific gods and modalities of worship, albeit
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3 in invisible ways. Thus the church - as a building, as a set of
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5 consociations between congregants and as a set of moral and
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7 normative structures – literally produces (some) migrant lives in
8
9 superdiverse London. And yet the time-place conjunctions of this
10
11 church are invisible. How should we think about invisible place making
12
13 and weak architectural registration of Igbo presence in the city? This
14
15 question is best addressed through the other forms of visibility with
16
17 which religious architectures coexists.
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26 The rest of this paper centres on Nigerian London and addresses other
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28 layers of visibility: in official data, productions of knowledge and social
29
30 policy. The arguments made about Nigerians in London apply equally
31
32 to Angolans and other Africans too. They are equally invisible despite
33
34 the architectural visibility of the UCKG, suggesting that architecture
35
36 can only a starting point in uncovering the layers of visibility with
37
38 which it is coproduced.
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46 **Nigerian London**

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48 As the Igbo Church alerted us, Nigerian London comprises multi-
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50 dimensional invisibilities. Nigeria was a British Protectorate from 1891
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52 until independence in 1960: Nigerians deposited by the Trans Atlantic
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54 slave trade have lived in Britain for over 200 years. The main influx 3
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3 dates to the period after independence and reflects a demand for
4
5 higher education among elite Nigerians who began arriving as
6
7 students. Many delayed their return because of the Civil War (1967-
8
9 1970) and lack of opportunities for professionals and entrepreneurs.
10
11 Thus Nigeria lost to the UK (and the USA) its professional and
12
13 entrepreneurial classes. 'New migrants' (Kyambi 2005) arriving from
14
15 1980 and captured in the 1994 Labour Force Survey and from 1990
16
17 and captured in the 2004 Labour Force Survey added further layers to
18
19 longer-settled Nigerians in London. Data from the 2001 census and the
20
21 Labour Force Surveys suggest that 78% of the 88,000 Nigerians who
22
23 live in the UK live in London (Kyambi 2005) making it the UK's most
24
25 Nigerian city. This figure discounts undocumented migrants and UK
26
27 citizens of Nigerian descent (Hernandez-Cross et al 2006, cited Hein de
28
29 Haas 2006), both factors that would raise this figure.
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41 While we expect a fuller snapshot of Nigerian (and African) London as
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43 analysis of the 2011 census data unfolds there is little data currently
44
45 available. We know from a recent DfID study (Hernandez-Cross et al
46
47 2006) of the UK-Nigeria remittance corridor that an estimated \$5
48
49 billion US in remittances in cash and electrical goods are repatriated to
50
51 the South East and South West of Nigeria, confirming the Yoruba and
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53 Igbo character of Nigerian London. We also know that Nigerian London
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3 is geographically scattered through Hackney Central and Dalston,
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5 Lambeth, Newham, Southwark, Lewisham (Deptford) and Woolwich
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7 with outliers in Essex. We know that there are differences between
8
9 layers of migrants. New migrants of the last fifteen years are a young
10
11 population: 90.9% are below forty-five. New migrants have lower
12
13 rates of employment than settled Nigerians: 61.2% are employed
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15 compared to 72.9% for settled migrants. They are more likely to be
16
17 unemployed: 10% are unemployed compared to 5.1% for settled
18
19 Nigerians. There are more new Nigerian migrants (15.3%) in
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21 education than settled migrants (5.2%) and only 37.4% of them have
22
23 higher qualifications compared to settled-Nigerians (50.7%). As far as
24
25 low-earners (below half the median wage) are concerned new Nigerian
26
27 migrants (18.5%) fare worse than settled migrants (14.2%) but better
28
29 than the UK average (21%) (Kyambi 2005:86), suggesting their socio-
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31 economic profile may incline them towards better employment
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33 opportunities. Despite time-layered differences Nigerian London is
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35 educated, employed and earning better than the UK median wage.
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48 Nigerian London is invisible in popular and official estimates of social
49
50 problems. Being 'problematic' of course constructs visibility through
51
52 disapproval. Unlike Bengalis, Nigerians are not accused of integration
53
54 failure; unlike African Caribbean and South Asians they are not
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2
3 associated with poverty or inner city riots; and unlike Muslims from
4
5 other parts of Africa, South Asia and the Middle East, Nigerians are not
6
7 associated with terrorism, despite Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab -a
8
9 Nigerian student - who boarded a flight from London to Detroit in 2009
10
11 with explosives strapped to his legs. Nigerian London lies below the
12
13 radar of public notoriety, official data and social policy. Consequently
14
15 Nigerian needs do not demand address. These invisibilities corroborate
16
17 the Igbo Catholic Church's strategy and coexist with the hypervisibility
18
19 of Muslims.
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28 Nigerian London is also invisible in analyses of race and ethnicity in
29
30 Britain (Harris 2006:2), which focuses on numerically more significant
31
32 South Asians and Caribbeans. Harris' authoritative study of the
33
34 Southern Nigerian Yoruba in London, Carey's (1956) *Colonial Students*,
35
36 Craven's (1968) *West Africans in London* and Killingray's (1994)
37
38 chapter on *Africans in the United Kingdom* sum up the research
39
40 output. And, as these titles suggest, they rarely warrant separate
41
42 attention from other Africans who anyway feature more prominently in
43
44 the literature on 'development' (Zack-Williams and Uduku eds. 2004).
45
46 An electronic search through in the Journal Ethnicity and Migration
47
48 (JEMS) produced a few articles on Ghanaians related to work,
49
50 community and therapy. A search of Ethnic and Racial Studies brought
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3 only two results: Charles Ukeje and Wale Adebani's (2007) analysis
4 of Yoruba and Ijaw nationalism in Nigeria and Steven Vertovec's
5 excellent paper on superdiversity.
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13 Pentecostalism (Harris 2006:4) opened a narrow investigative window
14 onto Nigerian London. Harris' (2006:5) study of the Cherubim and
15 Seraphim Church, reveals that Yoruba church members saw
16 themselves as a nascent national elite, 'agents not victims of
17 disadvantage' thus disturbing the dominant interpretation of black
18 migrants in Britain as poor, deserving sympathy or hostility. In this
19 study we glimpse the elite of a post independence state equipping
20 themselves with the educational tools for self-governance, implicitly
21 cast as the disadvantaged victims of the postcolonial state from which
22 they had so recently liberated themselves and as exotic members of
23 alternative religious congregations. Jane Ifekwunigwe's (1999) lyrical
24 poem on mixed British-Nigerian identities draws Nigerian migrant
25 presence along the narrow trajectory of identity and belonging. In
26 sum, scholars of race and ethnicity have contributed to the invisibility
27 of Nigerian London.
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53 In summing up so far I note the following. Probing a 'hidden' church
54 exposes a rich site of migrant life. These social architectures are
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2
3 obscured by - official, popular and academic - neglect of Nigerian
4 migration so that Nigerian London lies buried in the surface of the city.
5
6 The invisibility of the church and Nigerian London are co-produced and
7
8 Nigerian London does not become a constituent of the city's
9
10 superdiversity. Instead official, popular and academic attention more
11
12 fiercely scrutinizes other groups of (new and settled) migrants
13
14 sustaining their hypervisibility: a distorted record of the city emerges.
15
16 Can Nigerian London become visible without also becoming a problem
17
18 or an object of resentment? Is religion an appropriate window onto
19
20 Nigerian London?
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31 **God's City: Religion as a Window onto Nigerian London**

32
33 The two churches suggest religion is a rich source of migrant life
34
35 making. I suggested that religion exposes fundamental aspects of
36
37 urban social fabric in the production of (ethnicised) subjectivities and
38
39 their moral universes in addition to social practices and everyday lives
40
41 that extend beyond formal religious worship. And, as I shall show
42
43 later, religion reveals important aspects of migrants' relationship with
44
45 the city: it draws some of the cartographies of Nigerian London.
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53 Religion has become an important source of knowledge about the
54
55 production of urban ethnicity (Peach 2006, Modood et al 1997). For
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4 example intersections between religion and ethnicity reveal South
5
6 Asian 'encapsulation' and 'social closure' producing distinct patterns of
7
8 ethnic residential segregation in East London (Peach 2006). Modood et
9
10 al (1997) show that religion is vital in framing British South Asian
11
12 identities sustaining theoretical elaboration of urban ethnicity. But this
13
14 literature indicates an important point about religion: Islam is
15
16 prioritized (with some attention to Pentecostalism). Widely assumed as
17
18 problematic, Islam has become hypervisible: Christianity, assumed as
19
20 unproblematic, normative and white is rarely a way of exploring urban
21
22 ethnicities.
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31 Religion has elaborated our understanding of migration rather than
32
33 ethnicity (Harris 2006, Hagan and Ebaugh 2003:1145, Kraus 2011,
34
35 Hunt and Lightly 2001) and this is obviously central in understanding
36
37 superdiversity. Pentecostalism, for example, is shown to be a resource
38
39 in undocumented migration (Hagan and Ebaugh 2003:1145):
40
41 facilitating planning, travel, and ready-made support-structures in new
42
43 settlement. Religion reveals the migrations of 'reverse mission' in
44
45 which Europe becomes the Dark Continent in a re-appropriation of
46
47 missionary practices that once flowed in the opposite direction, thus,
48
49 itself becoming a motive for migration. Religions are acknowledged
50
51 sites for translocal living and local and translocal civic engagement
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3 (Levitt 2001, 2003, 2007, Koser 2003); all issues that have a bearing
4
5 on the elaboration of superdiversity. Transnational social fields are
6
7 generated through religions: Catholicism is a globally calibrated social
8
9 system connected by traveling clergy (Byre 2001, Casanova 1994
10
11 cited Levitt 2003) and a resource in transnational living. Religion
12
13 operates in dynamic webs of shared meanings across different social
14
15 contexts (Levitt 2003). These approaches are, however, centred on
16
17 translocality and new syncretic *ethnic identities*, a narrower
18
19 understanding of ethnicities, not extended to their registration in local
20
21 everyday life and superdiverse productions of city space.
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31 Islamic religion is understood as a window onto migrants' city making
32
33 in architectural form (which side steps ethnicity). A number of authors
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35 (Gale 2005, de Galembert 2005, Jonker 2005, Manco and Kanmaz
36
37 2005, McLoughlin 2005 and Biondo 2006) provide analyses of
38
39 European urban population's relationship with Islam through mosque
40
41 construction in Italy, the UK, Belgium, Holland, Germany and France.
42
43 Ignoring other religions this secures Islam's hypervisibility. It rightly
44
45 notes that mosques register the presence of migrants of Islamic faiths
46
47 in the public spaces of the city: 'The mosque not only expresses the
48
49 presence of a local Muslim community, it also represents the evolution
50
51 of Islam from the private to the public sphere' (Cesari 2005:1018).
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Visibility (along with ethnicity) is not discussed but implied in the notion of 'public', although, as I argued earlier, being public doesn't itself confer visibility. In our study of religion we found 'public' mosques in Hamburg concealed in car parks, and at the back of discos: all muted announcements of Muslim presence in the city.

This literature focuses on struggles between European Muslims and planning authorities, which are read as symbolic of the (marginal) terms on which Muslims can pursue European settlement. Thus the visual is read as symbolic of a set of political conditions, standing for something beyond, for geographies of resentment and understandings of ethnicity that are not elaborated. Overarching geographies of resentment and exclusion may obscure important if small dynamics of *inclusion* and *local connection* as well as overestimate the significance of religion in migrants' everyday lives. This adds grist to the view that migrants' live parallel lives, which are important matters for investigation, not simply read from urban architecture. The relationship between religious faiths, the architectures of its public registration, the often-invisible social architectures with which built architectures weakly correspond and the social salience of all of this in apprehending and understanding superdiversity are not as easily settled as these mosque debates suggest.

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6 The significance of religion in understanding urban superdiversity is
7
8 inescapable: even Christianity, which is anything but normative and
9
10 white, is significant. According to the 4th English Church Survey (2005)
11
12 44% of London church congregations - a mixture of new and settled
13
14 migrants and locals - are black at a time when the privatization of faith
15
16 and personal gods are replacing collective worship in so-called 'secular
17
18 cities' 4. The traveling faith of new migrants is widely acknowledged to
19
20 bring new life and energy. Religious faith and its re-cycled
21
22 architectural manifestations are a crucial part of the fabric of cities
23
24 (Orsi 1999:43-4,54): places where the city is generated and reworked.
25
26 Religion marks adjacent social worlds (Orsi 1999) as the Igbo Catholic
27
28 church shows. Churches display the tactics migrants adopt in
29
30 superdiverse cities; they register the 'balance between revelation and
31
32 self effacement, display and concealment' (Orsi 1999:49). And this
33
34 makes them rich sites for enquiry into new migrations, ethnicity and
35
36 urban superdiversity.
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48 **Spatialising Superdiversity**

49 **1. Urban Landscape**

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51 Noting the limitations of superdiversity earlier as not imbricated in
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53 urban space, it is important to rethink our understanding of the
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2
3 relationship between ethnicity and urban landscape as a step towards
4 the multi-forms of migrant-ethnic-registration that constitutes
5 superdiversity. Departure points are provided by Amin and Thrift
6 (2002) and Swanton (2010) who have explored some of the ways in
7 which ethnicity is imbricated in everyday urban encounter. Taxi
8 proximities (Amin and Thrift 2002) and 'road rage' (Swanton 2010)
9 capture cities as 'sites for intensive ethnic mixing' as 'local micro-
10 cultures of inclusion and exclusion' (Amin and Thrift 2002:291) in the
11 'racisms of assemblages' and their 'fuzzy racial summaries.... rapid
12 practices of perception and judgment' (Amin and Thrift 2002:460).
13 Bodily interactions in moments of everyday casual encounter take race
14 and ethnicity into the fabric of the city itself making it part of the
15 urban visual economy (Swanton 2010:450).
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38 While these analyses work better in accounting for human-interactive
39 than built city fabrics, they offer insights on the discrepant
40 performances architectures sustain, like those that erupt around
41 churches at the beginnings and ends of services as moments of public
42 interface. Their limitation lies in in their treatment of fleeting
43 encounter as urban-spatial-racial-experience disconnected from other
44 moments and places in which race and ethnicity are salient in city-
45 making in more prolonged ways. Their urban racial incidents are
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3 coproduced within a wider connected/disconnected city grammar of
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5 race/ethnicity in dialogue with other surfaces of encounter and
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7 architecture.
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13 Amin and Thrift's analysis however opens a space for further questions
14
15 and a better, emergent and provisional, mapping of the relationship
16
17 between race/ethnicity and urban space than other approaches. It
18
19 provokes questions such as what contextualizes the encounters they
20
21 discuss? What other registrations of race/ethnicity are coproduced?
22
23 Are there connections between them and what are they? What other
24
25 iterations of ethnicity imprint the same urban surface and ambiguous
26
27 architectural manifestations and how should we think about them?
28
29 Their analysis needs to be extended to urban connective tissue and
30
31 space: while it is mobile it is not joined-up.
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41 Questions such as these inaugurate deeper and broader analysis of
42
43 urban landscape and architectural manifestations and performances.
44
45 As the Igbo Catholic Church shows, urban landscape is an unreliable
46
47 guide to urban social morphologies. Urban landscape is always
48
49 duplicitous. The issue is how to penetrate its duplicity? How to better
50
51 see what doesn't necessarily present itself to the eye but is never the
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53 less still there?
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6 This is neither a matter of reading the surface better nor uncovering
7
8 truth beneath the surface as Marxist cultural geographers suggest
9
10 (Berger 2008). Landscape is better understood as a shared, lived-in
11
12 world (Merleau-Ponty 1969:256): not the surface on which dwelling
13
14 takes place, but dwelling itself. Ingold's (2000) notion of surface as
15
16 deeply textured by human activity and objects of material culture
17
18 (including architecture) is useful. With it I want to suggest that the
19
20 urban surface is a deep surface for excavation and discovery: it can
21
22 reveal invisible lives in the city and points to the importance of
23
24 research into the little 'discovered' urban citizens comprising
25
26 superdiversity.
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36 Excavating this urban surface for its invisible substance, its human and
37
38 concrete fabric and fabrications is the challenge we face. Nigerian
39
40 Catholics along with other city dwellers make their city, but they do so
41
42 subtly, alert to others, in ways that demand exploration. How do
43
44 Nigerians 'do' migration in this city along these crucial (religious)
45
46 borders between urban social worlds? New research agendas
47
48 addressing these questions will make Nigerian superdiverse London
49
50 visible, just as new ways of mapping intersections between ethnicity
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3 and urban space also reveal them as I show in the section following
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5 where migrant lives are mapped onto city space as journeys.
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10 11 **2. Journeys – mapping Nigerian London**

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13 Migrants' local and translocal travel practices (journeys) reveal both
14 their cities and themselves (Knowles and Harper 2009, Knowles 2011).
15
16 Journeys involve forms of improvisation and planning, way finding and
17 the navigation skills - practical knowledge of the world – required to
18 navigate deep urban surfaces (Ingold 2000). Journeys around and
19 between cities offer the possibility of exploring the co-scripting of
20 landscape, movement and biography in urban migrants. Churches are
21 not privileged city audit points, but I have shown that they reveal
22 fragments of Nigerian London, and are thus a viable point of entry into
23 journeys passing through them. The pages following suggest what
24 these journeys might be, demonstrate the effectiveness of migrants'
25 journeys as an analytical tool for excavating superdiversity in the city,
26 and raise questions for further research.
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48 Journeys routed through the Igbo Catholic Church are drawn by the
49 matrix of routes connecting the church to other places and by the
50 movements of congregants themselves. The Church is connected to UK
51 Catholicism through the diocese of Westminster and through this to
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3 the Papal authority in Rome and its global networks. This exists in
4
5 parallel to a second set of connections to Rome through the Nigerian
6
7 Catholic church. The Igbo catholic priests are missionaries operating
8
9 from their diocese in Warri, in SE Nigeria, as well as being part of the
10
11 diocese of Westminster. Igbo congregations and ministers thus
12
13 operate two routes. Firstly to the (UK) parishes in which they worship
14
15 and to the diocese to which those parishes belong, and secondly to the
16
17 Igbo congregation nested in North London and connected by its
18
19 missionary priests to the diocese of Warri. These church-drawn routes
20
21 coexist with municipal ones. Parishes span the boroughs of Hackney
22
23 and Islington, which organize garbage collection, education and so on.
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33 Congregations generate a series of routes on top of those drawn by
34
35 church and municipal geographies, routes navigated between the
36
37 church and where they live, or have lived. These incorporate new
38
39 allegiances with the (traveling) Igbo Church, partly anchored in Warri,
40
41 and time-sharing with other Catholic congregations in Finsbury Park.
42
43 Congregants' journeys traverse NE London and Essex: few still live in
44
45 Finsbury Park. Church and related cultural activities – like Igbo
46
47 literature and dancing promoted at Sunday services - involve the
48
49 extension of routine journeys such as visits with friends, family, work
50
51 and leisure. Church services also consolidate professional, friendship
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3 and family networks, which are important in this aspirational,
4 congregation of teachers, nurses, lawyers and doctors.
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7
8 Igbo Nigerians also navigate personal translocal journeys between
9 London and South Eastern Nigeria for family visits. At Christmas
10 congregants return to Nigeria to be with non-migrant relatives or meet
11 those routed to the US.
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19
20 This matrix of migrant journeys along with those we haven't traced,
21 and those that are not routed through this church, make Nigerian
22 London. While this is largely invisible, fragments are registered on the
23 urban landscape in various places if we treat the surface as a place for
24 careful investigation of migrant-ethnicities. These journeys overlay
25 those of Irish migrants who have long since moved to other parts of
26 London leaving traces of their journeys in pubs and churches. The
27 routes of one set of migrants provide the ground across which more
28 recent arrivals travel too, as is often the case in UK cities.
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46 **Conclusion: Visual Registration of Multi-Ethnic Presence**

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48 This paper has shown that everyday city-level analysis of
49 superdiversity requires a remapping of space and ethnicity, tracing
50 migrant-city making through deeply textured urban surfaces as
51 journeys. Journeys connect local and translocal space thus working at
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3 different scales, connecting small fragments of Nigerian London,
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6 Angolan London and so on, thus adding to the complex maps that
7
8 reveal the superdiverse city, otherwise invisible in social policy and
9
10 race scholarship.
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16 Approaching connections between migrant-ethnicities and urban space
17
18 through journeys acknowledges the contextual, contingent, ad hoc,
19
20 improvised nature of both urban ethnicities and space. It is a form of
21
22 conceptualization that maps easily onto methods of empirical
23
24 investigation, thus avoiding the abstraction of superdiversity from its
25
26 social contexts. It also allows the mapping of specificities that avoids
27
28 essentialising and generalizing either ethnicities or space so
29
30 challenging the ossification of urban space in formulations such as
31
32 'China town' and 'Little Italy' keeping space open, fluid and emergent.
33
34 It does the same for ethnicity. While I claim in this paper to be tracing
35
36 some of the contours of Nigerian London, mapping journeys allows for
37
38 discrepant and infinitely varied versions of London-Nigerian-ness. The
39
40 journeys I trace are Igbo, Catholic, professional and pass through NE
41
42 London in 2011. Migrant journeys are ethnicised, classed time-space-
43
44 biographical productions that potentially unpack the aggregation of
45
46 lives that 'Nigerians' or even 'London-Nigerians' involves. Thus the
47
48 journey provides a sensitive investigative tool with which to map the
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3 less visible constituents of superdiversity. I have also suggested that
4
5 Christian religions are a rich audit point from which to map these
6
7
8 journeys because they reveal the social architectures of urban migrant
9
10 lives and subjectivities.
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14
15 Tracing journeys requires some visible registration points. The city
16
17 both conceals and displays superdiversity. The two African churches in
18
19 this paper show this. They are hypervisible and invisible gathering-
20
21 points along two shifting networked routes through the city made by
22
23 the invisible African migrants that navigate them. Journeys passing
24
25 through the Igbo Church leave traces in the deep textures of the urban
26
27 surface producing the human fabric, social architectures and routes
28
29 composing Nigerian London and superdiversity whether or not they are
30
31 visible. Urban landscapes provide a shifting archive of human action,
32
33 time layered journeys and modes of being that both obscure and
34
35 articulate lived experience (Daniels, cited Tilly 1994:25). In this
36
37 respect visual manifestations of urban superdiversity are irrelevant.
38
39 The visual traces of others' lives, social systems, preoccupations and
40
41 journeys are all around us, whether or not we acknowledge them.
42
43 Does visibility, coproduced in urban landscape, in public policy, in
44
45 academic research and in official data actually matter?
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3 There are at least two reasons why it does. Firstly low visibility
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6 superdiversity reflects badly on cities. Strategies of display and
7
8 concealment express a relationship with the city as a migrant-
9
10 receiving context in addition to preferred modes of migrant self-
11
12 presentation. Invisibility reflects city migration politics marking it as
13
14 inhospitable in the navigation of immigration rules and procedures, in
15
16 securing jobs and housing, in hostility and violence on the streets and
17
18
19 negative media treatment.
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25
26 Secondly, active co-presence between urban citizens involves
27
28 registering traces of the other. As Michael Keith elegantly expresses it,
29
30 we need both a 'vocabulary and a lens through which the spatial is
31
32 made available' (Keith 2005:62). Urban spaces in which superdiversity
33
34 can be visibly articulated sustain active co-presence of urban citizens
35
36 in proximate worlds. Tracing the routes composing Nigerian London,
37
38 making them more visible, understanding Nigerian migrants' routes
39
40 through the city and their connections with other places; Knowing how
41
42 Nigerians 'do' migration in the city along these crucial borders
43
44 between social worlds provides such a lens. The feedback loop
45
46 between visual apprehension and knowledge of other's routes through
47
48 the city make us fellow travellers. It provides the basis for
49
50 acknowledgement, recognition and respect, capacities for navigating
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3 co-presence that would greatly improve life in superdiverse cities in
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5 providing the impetus for, and curiosity about, the other and an
6
7 impulse to make connection, however slight. Feeling empowered to
8
9 mark a visible presence in the superdiverse city is an important step
10
11 towards active civic engagement and rights to the city however
12
13 difficult this journey through the territories of resentment might be.
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20 21 Notes

- 22
23
24 1. The research project from which the material for this paper was
25
26 derived was funded under the NORFACE Religions Programme
27
28 and was a three-city (London, Hamburg and Oslo) investigation
29
30 of religion as a social force among young people in these three
31
32 cities, titled 'The Architectures of Contemporary Religious
33
34 Transmission'. The data presented in this paper is a by-product
35
36 of that research and not its central focus. This is intended as a
37
38 theoretical not empirical paper.
39
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41
42
43 2. The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God denied us research
44
45 access. The data we have comes from attending their public
46
47 'meetings' and interviewing a group of young people who had
48
49 left or greatly reduced their commitments to the church.
50
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53 3. Nigeria is part of a swirl of in and out migration. Its estimated
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55 140 million population, 90 million of which live on less than \$1 a
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3 day is a source of new migrants across Europe, the Gulf and
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5
6 Southern Africa (Hein de Haas 2006). And Nigeria is a key
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8
9 destination among West African migrants making it both a
10
11 sending and a receiving country.
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13

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