Manchester – local and global, place and space

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Abstract
I draw upon a range of theoretical perspectives to explore the interrelationship of the global and the local in spaces and places of Manchester. The social psychological concept of the Dialogical Self is central to this paper. I present a summary history of Manchester migration and contemporary British social commentary. I reflexively employ my experience as a migrant to Manchester and draw upon my participants’ narratives of their migration to Manchester. I offer critical and creative responses in considering the interweaving of physical, psychological and social space and place in Manchester. Particular physical inscriptions evidence an interplay of the global and the local. In racialised areas dialogical negotiations between self and other co-create symbolic resources in the fabric of place. I explore how psychological and social spaces created through dialogue may be embedded in place by processes of appropriation and/or subversion. I offer this paper in the spirit of dialogic contestation of meaning that remains essentially open.

Introduction
Within the geographical frame of Manchester, England, I will explore and analyse social meanings inscribed in the physicality of this post-industrial multicultural city. Utilising a lens of migration, I will consider how these inscriptions may reference local and global intersections that contribute to the creation of particular places and spaces in the city. In exploring this material I will braid together three strands of knowledge: theoretical understandings, the contribution of my participants’ narratives of their migration to Manchester and my reflexive use of my experience as a migrant to Manchester. I will present my critical analyses and creative responses in relation to the local and the global, space and place in Manchester. In racialised areas of Manchester I explore how dialogical negotiations between self and other co-create symbolic resources in the fabric of place. My aim is to balance breadth and depth and therefore whilst identifying smaller parts, I concurrently endeavour to maintain a sense of an overall whole. In conclusion, as this area of enquiry is complex and variously interconnected, I regard any points of arrival as further points of departure. I offer this paper in the spirit of dialogic contestation of meaning that remains essentially open.

Knowledge bases
The three bodies of knowledge drawn upon in this research include various theoretical perspectives; my experience as a migrant to Manchester; participants’ narratives of their migration to Manchester. In exploring this area, I found that juxtaposing, comparing and
contrasting theoretical resources with a critical engagement with local phenomena helped me to avoid either tripping over reified concepts or getting lost in disembodied global theorising. To position this paper, I will present a brief overview of the three bodies of knowledge that are employed:

**Theoretical perspectives - the Dialogical Self**


Bakhtinian dialogism includes understandings of a speaker, a listener and the relationship and/or interactions between the two (Holquist 1981, 1990). In a dialogic interaction participants co-create meaning and narratives, which are repeated, and further co-created, in other dialogical relations. This circulation of dialogues Bakhtin names ‘polyphony’ or ‘heteroglossia’ (Morris 1994, p249). Along with these Bakhtinian concepts Hermans (2001a, 244) employs James’ notions of the extended self, where ‘I’ contributes a sense of continuity, identity, individuality and personal volition and ‘me/mine’ extends the self to empirical elements in the environment.

In bringing together these concepts Hermans developed an understanding of a ‘distributed, multivoiced self” (2001a, p245) that is constructed and re-constructed through encounters with others. Dialogue is understood as open, unfinalised and personal. This concept of self is de-centred and composite, and as such transcends dualisms of ‘inner’ and ‘outer’. ‘I’ is not stable, nor fixed and I-positions may be evoked through relations with others. Who ‘I’ am, is determined by how ‘I’ am addressed by others. Issues of power, agency and voice are intrinsic to dialogic negotiations. Addressivity and response imply spatial positioning and the dialogical self is therefore conceptualised as spatial. The dialogical self is understood as accommodating a multivoiced multiplicity of I-positions that are situated in an imaginal landscape, which is interwoven with physical space. Meaning making involves dialogue and movement between I-positions. Objects may be constructed through dialogically co-created understandings or meanings appropriated from the circulating polyvocality in the surrounding social world.

Hermans’ (2001b) explication of the Dialogical Self accommodates notions of multiple identities and interconnecting cultures that I have found to be particularly relevant to an understanding of migration. I find that the openness of the concept of the Dialogical Self functions at the level of a meta-theory, and this openness enables me to engage with analytic flexibility and sensitivity in my exploration of complex contemporary social, cultural and psychological phenomena. In this paper I am particularly interested in how dialogical relations and particular I-positions shape, and are shaped, by a physical context where global and local discourses are inscribed into the fabric of that material environment.

**Theoretical perspective – space, place and self**
When a migrant initially arrives in what is a new location, the surrounding space may be in Auge’s (1995) terms a ‘non-place’. Space may gradually become a symbolised inhabited place as everyday practices reconstitute relations into repeated symbolic events, shared memories and/or co-created myths. Dixon & Durrheim (2000) suggest that a notion of place is important in locating identity and creating and sustaining a sense of self. They challenge conceptualisations of self and identity that are disembodied and not located. They hold that place cannot be regarded as a mere container. Whilst acknowledging the danger of normalising sedentarism at the expense of other lifestyles such as nomadism, Dixon & Durrheim (2000) hold that place is crucial in autobiographical remembering. They suggest that place is imaginatively constituted through language and this contributes to an identity of belonging. Ague (1995p120) following a similar line of argument succinctly states, “It is no longer possible for social analysis to dispense with individuals, nor for an analysis of individuals to ignore the spaces through which they are in transit.” I find that consideration of the role of imagination in creation of place engages notions of individual and group agency in transforming space into place. It may be that initial imaginative responses if repeated become formalised into social practices. If the practices are repeated in the same space over a period of time, the practice and the physical space may gradually acquire interrelated meaning creating a place imbued with and reflecting group and individual meaning. Concurrently, the physicality of space may be gradually continually modified to concretely reflect the particular meaning of individuals who constitute the group, making what was initially a ‘non-place’ into a visually symbolised place that reflects the meanings circulating at that time.

Theoretical perspective – Manchester’s migration history

As a particular social space within which its inhabitants interact, Manchester has a long history of migrations. Various peoples moved through or settled in the area. The town developed around exchange of goods and marketing. Roman settlement is dated from 70AD to 400AD, followed by Angles and Saxons, Scandinavian people and the Normans in 1066 (Connell,1998). As overseas trade developed from 1500 onwards, Manchester correspondingly grew. As the British Empire expanded so did migration to and from the colonies. Manchester’s Black History deeply implicates the town in the slave trade (Noble & Sonne, 2003).

Manchester was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century. This generated employment opportunities and agricultural and economic migrants responded (Marcus, 1974). Many of these migrants were from Ireland. Manchester has a particular place within the context of British history in relation to the struggle for the rights of the working class people and campaign for reform (Tucker,1972). In 1870 there was a mass meeting in St Peter’s Fields (Manchester), which culminated in violent clashes between the people and authorities. The ‘Peterloo Massacre’, as this became known, was a key point in the growth of a working class consciousness (Marcus, 1974). Manchester like many other British cities was heavily bombed in World War Two. The need for labour for rebuilding resulted in increased migration from Europe, Asia and the West Indies.

More recent migrations are characterised by various political and economic upheavals in the world, as well as global economic and educational migrations. Historically and in its contemporary culture Manchester contains many strata, which may intermingle, intersect
and/or remain separate. Manchester has a particular ‘gritty Northern’ character that is regarded by Mancunians to be in sharp contrast to the more salubrious South of England.

Theoretical perspective – contemporary British culture

From a wider perspective of contemporary British culture in general, current radical social changes in Britain are acknowledged. For example in 1998 in response to concerns about racial discrimination and disadvantage the Runnymede Trust, an independent voluntary funded policy research organisation that focuses on an equal, just and successful multi-ethnic society, commissioned a think tank. The aim of the resultant Parekh Report was as follows (2000, vii): “…to analyse the current state of multi-ethnic Britain and to propose ways of countering racial discrimination and disadvantage and making Britain a confident and vibrant multi-cultural society at ease with its rich diversity”.

The Parekh Report (2000) identified an increasing fragmentation of communities due to the breaking down of ancestral class hierarchies, traditional economic classifications and occupational distinctions. It also identified a concurrent increase in migration in many forms to Britain. It attributes the processes of fragmentation and increase in migration to the political and capitalist processes involved in global transfer of finances, goods and information. Similar to the Parekh Report (2000), Modood (2005) accommodates an understanding of British cultural change and adaptation, but he suggests that contemporary British cultural practices are usually internally diverse and they may contain and omit practices that may be authentic, adapted or mixed. He suggests that British cultural identities may be reflected and/or projected between home, host, self and other. Similar to Modood, the findings of the Parekh Report (2000) accommodate an understanding of cultural change and adaptation, but the Parekh Report looks beyond this to identify a ‘new’ individualism. The Parekh Report suggests that this new individualism is pervasively influenced and mirrored by global media. The suggestion is that a personalised hedonistic ethic circulates and is normalised through a competitive entrepreneurial ethos. The Parekh Report indicates that this generates a moral relativism that erodes fundamental social norms and values and further contributes to the fragmentation of local or socially identified communities.

I suggest that, if the individual and the social are not regarded as mutually exclusive polarised binaries, a ‘new individualism’ could present an opportunity for a new type of individual ethical agency and relatedness within a continually evolving social context. Issues of agency, active voice and understandings of asymmetries of power are intrinsic to a conceptualisation of ‘self as a society’ (Hermans 2004). In this conceptualisation individual and social are intertwined and co-created through dialogue between ‘I positions’ and with others. Unbridled entrepreneurism and personal hedonistic ethics elicit particular asymmetries of power, particular active voices and particular silencings. Power dynamics between and within individuals and groups oscillate and move in continual processes of change and becoming, destruction and creation.

My experience as a migrant to Manchester.

Markova (2003a, p253) identifies the problem particular to cultural situatedness: “Culturally shared knowledge and the ways in which we habitually communicate make us
oblivious to differences and to inconsistencies in perception and experience.” A person born and brought up in Manchester, situated in British culture, would comprehend Manchester and migration according to that cultural perspective and lack awareness of inconsistencies that might be apparent to a migrant. I was a migrant to Manchester from Southern Africa in 1980 and came to my English ‘homeland’ to find that I was an ‘alien’ and a ‘migrant’. Growing up in Southern African, I witnessed the abuses of power of colonialism as well as unbridled Nationalism, and these have sensitised me to particular cultural issues and political dynamics. As a migrant, I brought with me a particular culturally shared knowledge but I had no group in Manchester with which to share that culture. As the Mancunian culture was presented to me through dialogue with my colleagues and patients, I adapted and learnt. Throughout the process of this research I have iteratively re-examined my own experience as a migrant to Manchester. As a feminist researcher I recognise the need to scrutinize my perceptions and experience as well as to interrogate my habitual communications and inconsistencies in an ethical endeavour to account for my interpretations and analyses. McLeod (2001, p195) regards that research is a personal activity in that it challenges assumptions and seeks understanding through meaningful relationships with participants and he states: “...the experience and identity of the researcher always influence the ‘findings’ that are produced.” As I seek to clarify my particular knowledge of migration to Manchester, I am aware of engaging in internal dialogical processes that require positioning and re-positioning between here and there, and now and then.

Participants’ narratives of their migration to Manchester.

In seeking participants for my research I was aware that migration happens for many reasons and experiences of migration are diverse. The experience of being displaced, of having one’s culture contested and habitual social practices dis-located can cause stress and psychological pain. I made an ethical decision to only interview people who were not experiencing any obvious current distress due to migration. My participants were settled and had a home and employment of some kind. There was no need to actively recruit participants as people readily came forward and agreed to participate. Most of the contacts were serendipitous. Some were through word of mouth and others from chance encounter, for example at a ‘Black History’ lecture. Some participants had been in Manchester a long time and some were new arrivals; men and women, younger and older people agreed to talk to me. Several participants were involved in the arts. This could be attributed to Manchester City Council’s support of the Culture Industries as part of its urban regeneration policy, as well as my own interest in the arts. All of my participants were very articulate and had strong opinions that they readily shared with me.

Melucci (1997) discusses individual and collective identities in terms of power dynamics operating through opportunities and resources that may be available. He suggests the manner in which information and opportunities may be accessed, transmitted and processed can precipitate multiple bonds of belonging and a proliferation of social positions, associated networks and reference groups. My participants reported various opportunities, resources and exclusions in Manchester. My participants told me of situations that involved translating languages, cultures and roles, sometimes from moment to moment, as they positioned and re-positioned themselves in the surrounding social environment. Ravoor told me that he had come to
Manchester as a teenage refugee from Uganda, but had not been able to situate himself within the Mancunian culture and had experienced a sense of alienation until he had the opportunity to travel in India where he discovered a sense of ancestral cultural belonging. By contrast, Nina said that she was born in Scotland and had left due to racism and the lack of a Black community there. She said that she came to Manchester to explore and understand her heritage through involvement with Manchester’s vibrant Black Music scene. In coming to Manchester, Mrs D reported an experience very different to Nina’s. She told me that she had left Poland, her community and her culture to migrate to Manchester after World War 2. As a ‘foreigner’ she said that she had experienced ostracization and exclusion both on an individual and social level to the extent that ‘foreigners’ were regarded as ineligible to marry a ‘local’ or acquire a mortgage for home ownership. Sean, a post-graduate student from Shanghai, had only in been Manchester for three months at the time of my interview with him. He stated in his interview with me that he knew what to expect from Manchester before he arrived because he had researched it on websites. He told me that he anticipated leaving at the end of the academic year. As an educational migrant, Sean entered and left rapidly. His experience of migration may have precipitated new I-positions through multiple contacts and a proliferation of reference groups, but he did not address deeper issues of migrant social belonging as his national affiliation was to China and his clear aim was to return to Shanghai. In contrast to Sean, Nyen told me that being born in Manchester of Chinese immigrant parents, he only knew Chinese culture through Western education. He explained to me that through challenging and contesting people’s assumptions of his origins he articulates his understanding of his British-Chinese identity. Sai, at the time of the interview, was new to Manchester, having recently moved from South England where her parents had migrated to from Hong Kong. She spoke to me of multiple identities due to people’s expectations that she would be ‘Chinese’ although she was born and had grown up in England. Dafad was born in Sudan, of Egyptian origins. He explained to me that he had espoused the culture of the Mancunian West Indian community but he concurrently fiercely retained his Coptic Egyptian African social identities. He positioned and re-positioned himself variously and strategically. Darius, explained to me his complex generational migration history that spanned Palestine, Ireland, Egypt, Lebanon and Italy, yet he firmly described himself as ‘Italian’. He told me that he prided himself on avoiding receiving Italian stereotypes by paradoxically performing as more British than the British. Gina told me about her complex life history of moving around the world, although she positioned herself as ‘European’ and ‘Portuguese’. At the time of the interview, she said she was in Manchester because of the financial support for the arts but was anticipating moving on soon as she regarded that Manchester’s interesting post-industrial grittiness had been spoilt by inner city regeneration initiatives.

My participants presented me with rich, full and very divergent accounts. The narratives that my participants created I regarded to be life stories in flux in which their dialogical selves engaged in processes of positioning and re-positioning in the various imaginal and physical landscapes. I recognised that their narratives would continue to be re-worked and re-told as events occurred in their lives and that co-created meanings were provisional. My participants presented me with a particular coherence at that time, and as their lives unfold some I-positions may disappear whilst others may develop and coalesce. No grand unifying narrative was possible, for at a different stage in their lives or talking to a different person they may have presented a very different narrative. Hermans & Kempen
(1993, p98) describe the dialogical self as “…in the middle of a highly dynamic field of criss-cross dialogical relationships among possible positions, subjected to influences from all sides.” Within the co-created context of the interview situation, each participant offered me a particular temporal and physically located perspective on migration and cultural negotiation in Manchester.

Critical and creative responses: space and place.

Multi-cultural Manchester has a long history of migration, of people being displaced in many ways, cultures contested and social practices dis-located. Global and local dialogues in space and place are inscribed into the fabric of the material environment and these physical contexts shape I-positions and dialogical relations within Manchester. In a self-conscious endeavour to engage with this fluidity of post modern Manchester, I explored various areas of Manchester that are particularly marked by migrations, historical and contemporary. I present some of the images and my critical and creative responses to these fragments of space and place, and I draw upon my own I-positions as well as pertinent extracts of participants’ accounts. The manner of identifying material traces and inscriptions was serendipitous and I espouse various positions and contradictory arguments, in a spirit of dialogic contestation of meanings that remain essentially open.

A corner of Manchester

Hermans & Kempen state: (1993, p166) “our imaginations about people, objects and situations are side by side and interwoven with the perceptible things and situations we find ourselves in”. To explore this statement further I considered a seemingly inconsequential corner of Manchester where artificial flowers had been stuck in the wintry ground and a blue spring flower had grown up between them.
At this insignificant corner, I reflected upon the dialogical negotiations of personal, local and global representations that this representation evoked for me, and the resonances it set up in me. For example:

*I recalled a woman in South Africa putting artificial flowers in her drought stricken garden and using her precious water ration to wash the dust off them. An English aunt had sent me, as a child in Zimbabwe, a book of English Flower Fairies. I reflected on the spring flower and I wondered if there was imaginary space in Manchester for a flower fairy. I remembered a plastic water-lily given to me in Zimbabwe. It was made in China. I had asked why artificial flowers were made there wondering about the processes of production and economic consumption they silently bore witness to. As Fine Art students in Cape Town my friends and I regarded artificial flowers as anathema. We enjoyed collecting the most ghastly ones we could find. I wondered if the flowers in the corner of Manchester represented someone’s similar bizarre sense of humour.*

As I considered my immediate responses to the artificial flowers, I was aware of how I positioned and re-positioned myself in various imagined geographic landscapes, whilst espousing various I-positions in relation to certain dialogues. I recognised the vast web of dialogical negotiations of meanings that informed those inconsequential artificial flowers. Kac (2004) holds that dialogue involves careful scaffolding and structuring of temporarily anchored signs in a process of negotiation of meaning. Using the dialogical triad of ‘I’ ‘Alter’ ‘Object’ (Markova, 2003b) I mapped the possible interconnected webs of dialogue. This exercise made me aware of the possible vastness of an infrastructure of meanings, I-positions and dialogues that supported my reception and immediate responses to the flowers. The person who put the flowers there would have their own. Had I met and been able to talk to that person about the flowers, certain of my and her triadic constructions might have been employed, and others excluded, in a triadic dialogical negotiation and co-construction of satisfactory mutual understandings. I became aware of the potentially vast webs of dialogue that silently circulated around those unassuming flowers.

Zavala (1990, p87) regards that the Bakhtinian triadic model of communication enables social heterogeneity to be visible “...the dialogical word affirms that nothing is conclusive, that everything is directed towards the unspoken and unpredicted new word”. Bachelard (1969, p134) holds that imagination can make the familiar strange and he suggests that if looked at through the “…thousand windows of fancy, the world is in a state of constant change”. In contrast to a focus on considerations of dialogical newness and constant change, Merrifield (1993) espouses a Marxist position in which he privileges the spatial materiality of place. He holds that place, in representing social processes, becomes ‘imbued with meaning’ through ‘everyday place-bound social practices’ (ibid p520). Bakhtinian explications of dialogical negotiations assume an intrinsic connectedness between the temporal and the spatial (Holquist1990). In a similar vein Benson (2001, p6) sensitively articulates an idea of ‘place-time’ based upon personal experience:

*I use the idea of place-time to indicate that in personal and collective memory certain places are inexorably constituted as those places by their connection with,*
and embodiment of, certain moments in experiential time. Experiential time is time as a person experiences it and has paces of ebb and flow that don’t map onto the rigid regularity with which clock time is arranged to pass. Our sense of the familiarity of places is intimately connected to the idea of place-time.

In contrast to perceptions of interconnectedness of temporal and spatial, Bostad (2004) identifies various disconnections of time and space that he demonstrates as being particularly evident in the global electronic spaces available today.

I suggest that in the materiality of a specific place, particular local and global practices and meanings are represented which may variously connect or disconnect, temporally and/or spatially. The everyday representations may reflect a social heterogeneity that is a consequence of virtual transfer of global culture and actual physical transfer through migration. Representations become visible but also continue to constantly change as the global intertwines with the local, as spaces open or close and place is created or reduced to no-place.

Physical, mental, social and contemporary capitalist spaces

Identifying an artificial separation, Lefebvre (1991) calls for a rapprochement between physical space, mental space and social space. Thinking about the processes that produce space and place, Merrifield (1993) takes a particular political and historical perspective. He holds that everyday conflicts, contestations and negotiated meanings shape contemporary capitalist space and that these are seemingly temporarily halted and shown in traces or residues in place. I find that espousing the notion of a dialogical self as a conceptual tool, I am able to draw together physical, mental, social and contemporary capitalist spaces and consider these as an interrelated whole. Parts may be separated for particular analytic purposes, but they may also be synthesised and interrelated within an overall whole.

If social relationships and mental spaces are reflected in the material fabric of place, through attending to communication implicit in the forms of the place, I can enter into a dialogic relationship with place. I can notice how a particular constellation of representations in a place position me and I can begin to unpick and identify the heteroglossic strands of dialogue circulating and inscribed in the place.

My walk through Manchester –2006

I walked through Manchester and took photographs of fragments of space and place as they caught my eye. I will present my critical and creative responses to these serendipitous snapshots. Where human figures were included, I digitally altered appearance out of respect for privacy.

Britain has never been unified nor conflict free. Wave after wave of ‘others’ has produced ethnic and cultural hybridity. Stuart Hall (1992) refers to ‘our mongrel selves’. British hybridity is compounded by the mass migrations of globalisation. Many people of the former British Empire have come ‘home’ yet significantly the ‘Empress’, a pub in North
Manchester, is boarded up, although she still bristles floodlights, security cameras and satellite dishes. ‘Maliks’ next door, protected by ram-raider shutters, sells fridges that encroach on the Empress:

![Figure 2: the Empress](image)

In the post-industrial decline first and second generation Asian people had diversified into entrepreneurial business ventures, perhaps some like Malik’s. Ravoor commented on the experience of first generation Asian migrants, who had mainly worked in the factories and found England difficult to integrate into. He identified lingering resentment:

... the struggles they went through in trying to adapt to a culture that in the first instance incredibly... alienating themselves... for example you find the first generation tried to you know integrate, but it was not allowed to ... they were given you know sort of modest accommodations, ghettos, in many cases, and unfortunately some of those still continue. If you look at Oldham some of the communities where they live, it is appalling! So when one tries to unfold these things you understand why there is such resentment and it is saying : well look we are now British citizens, we’ve been living here, we were born here, for god’s sake! Why should we have to go through what our parents went through, you know? We are paying the taxes! We want something that is on an equal level.

Kwik Save, a chain Supermarket, has a ‘Fresh Halal Meat’ sign alongside its usual shop sign advertising its ability to accommodate specific religious requirements to promote its sales and clientele:
Dafad remembered the days in Manchester when it was difficult to find ‘foreign foods’ in contrast to the plentiful and diverse supplies that one can obtain now in Manchester and that bears witness to global exchange of goods and people:

... I used to go behind Debenham, there used to be a nice store it is still there but it is degraded now you know. And you know and you can find some spinach and then... Rusholme start again, Rusholme during my time yet wasn’t exist. But again...there was a shop, Armenian, and he’s been here a long time. He’s died now you know and his shop is closed. And he used to have you know...um...Greek food, and our food as well broad beans and sort of things like this...

A Bus queue of people of many nationalities stands in front of ‘International Bargains’: 
‘Many one pound lines’ obviously refers to the bargains within the shop but in an imaginative reading evokes my awareness of how migrants can be regarded as of little ‘worth’ in Britain. This photograph was taken in a very poor, high crime area where many refugees and asylum seekers have been housed and where exploitative employees hire people illegally to work long hours for little pay. Nina commented on polyvocal dialogues that perpetuate ‘racism’ and fear of the other:

*N… why the hell is the government adopting the whole angle on immigration cos that is… it is … you know…that is generating fear!*

*P: yes!*

*N: fear in people’s minds.*

*P: yes!*

*N: and creating fear where maybe none existed so you have these kind of self re-enforcing systems with the media, the government and the public where you kind of whipping up all this kind of anti-immigration, anti-asylum seeking sentiment, when actually people have got… if they were told… you know it is what information is presented to people, and the thing about if you are always just talking about negative stuff and you are never talking about positive aspects of immigration and the benefits to… to… Britain and to British culture and then it is obvious that a lot of people have a lot of fear around people that look different to them and behave differently to them…*

In contrast to the very poor migrant area, in central Manchester executive accommodation has been built in redundant space behind the retained facade of the Victorian Wholesale food markets. The facade no longer provides portals for communication, and commercial exchange of local produce, instead they now form a protective enclosure for executives of electronically communicated global businesses.

*Figure 5: façade*
In an area of the city that has seen increased settlement by the Asian community, the Jewish community who had previously settled there has largely moved out. A Mosque has been built on derelict ground. It is surrounded by traditional Mancunian domestic architecture. Rigid fencing has been erected around the Mosque. I find myself wondering if the Muslim community or the local Council did this. Is the fencing to keep the Muslims in or the non-Muslims out?

Figure 6: Mosque

These physical inscriptions suggest complex negotiations in how self and other are positioned. Papastergiadis (2000) suggests that with globalisation terms like ‘stranger’ and ‘citizen’ are problematised. Migrants are no longer so readily polarised into ‘exotic stranger’ or ‘dirty foreigner’. Mrs D commented on her early experiences in a Mancunian neighbourhood where she was clearly regarded as a ‘foreigner’:

Mrs D: Yes. But the life was quite hard for ......I suppose......for all European people here, and I suppose for everybody as well...(laugh)
P: Post-war Britain....?
Mrs D: because the traditions are just ......
P: ......so different?
Mrs D: .......so different... They didn’t have an easy life because English people were a little bit cautious as well. If a man was going out with a girl the parents weren’t very happy about it. I’m......I’m not surprised ...because... English people didn’t know so much then about foreigners as they know now...
Racialised places in Manchester

Certain places in Manchester have become racialised i.e. Asian, Chinese, Black. The different places have different characters and reputations have grown around the racialised places. Sai as a comparative newcomer to Manchester, at the time of the interview, reflected upon her perceptions of Manchester. She said she had been told to avoid certain areas in Manchester:

S: um… it seems to be very diverse…um… there’s obviously certain areas like Chorlton which seems to be a lot more diverse you can just go there in an afternoon and you will see a lot more people from different backgrounds and they are quite happy. Other places I haven’t visited but I have been told it’s very white and very working class and there can be some racial tension in certain areas and I have been told to avoid certain areas ... so I haven’t visited them so I don’t know...

One of these areas of ‘racial tension’ was home to Dafad. Despite his different origins, he had integrated with the community and prided himself on being greeted with the West Indian ‘one love’ greeting:

D: …you know old ladies… I feel proud about this and proud about myself. I achieve the goal of… ‘one love’ they call it. Even… We have a phrase here called ‘One love” …you know?
P: yes?
D: …one love and touch the hands, you know together like this they don’t shake hands but they touch the hands and they say “one love” you know... Is a way you adapt yourself to them and they adopt you they accept me, so it is very wrong to say “this is Asian community” and “this is Moss Side Black community from West Indian or Black African” and sort of thing like this. Still Britain I think they have to make things homogeneous together...
P: yes, yeah...
D: still they are making things separate...

Physically the different places have particular identifying characteristics. In an ‘Asian’ area, a proliferation of exotic signs and colours jostle for attention across traditional British architecture. Exotic goods sparkle in windows and spread out onto the pavements. ‘China town’ by contrast is primarily a business community. Manchester City Council erected a faithful replica of a Chinese Arch. A Tea House planned as a place for social exchange was relegated to one corner of a Car Park. Beneath its neon lights China town has a more introverted façade, but interior spaces overwhelm with a bizarre juxtaposition of consumer goods evidencing global flows of goods and capital.
In relation to the issue of segregated areas, Gina suggested that people from specific origins found it easier to settle in Manchester, than somebody from Europe:

G: So you don’t really fit in whether you’ve got...you may have the social outlet: a café, but you don’t really have the kind of... surrounding ... surrounding mentality and...you know... fit in socially. I always find it quite strange that is a sort of on-going positive discrimination policy about Asians Chinese Blacks etc etc but Europeans, people from Continental Europe always sort of seem to be in a grey area.
P: yeah it is as though there is not a sub-group for them to belong to...isn’t it?  
J: No...because we are expected to blend in because we are all Europeans, But you can’t really avoid the fact that there is a difference, you know... a difference in culture and a difference in seeing things...

Place, self and other

Dixon & Durrheim (2000) regard that the manner in which self and other are placed forms the basis of an imaginative construction of place. Ravoor came to Britain from Uganda. He told me that he experienced a deep and existential sense of incompleteness until he went to his ancestral India. There he found a part of himself that he could not previously articulate in Africa or Britain:

...for me at that time period it was great because I was going through I suppose a real identity crisis being young and being brought up here, you know.... I had a kind of nostalgia, which was about my Indianness. ...but never having opportunity to have gone there...... and I felt that I needed to travel as well and had to kind of see India, and again I mean I was so lucky that I was able to do that in my own vocation and to go absolutely everywhere and see each and every different location and city...
Benson (2001, p62) argues that a dialogic understanding of the self as “essentially relational in organisation” means that “… describing it adequately must always include those aspects of the world towards which self has been or is selectively directed”. People who are second and third generation British born may regard their primary identification to be with Britain. Nyen is a contemporary artist living and working in his birthplace, Manchester. Much of his artwork addresses issues of cultural identity:

*N: This is a piece of work called “The Temple of Ultimate Knowledge” and basically they are books that I have collected on Chinese culture and other bits of culture like artists I have admired or who had somehow learnt through cultures. And this is probably my ultimate knowledge of Chinese-ness. And it is learnt through western perception obviously so I am very much pointing at that.*

Lefebvre (1991, p110) acknowledges that: “Every social space is the outcome of a process with many aspects and many contributing currents.” Manchester as a socially plural place generates inter-personal dialogues and negotiations involving diverse meanings, places and practices and the Mancunian physical landscape reflects, receives and contributes certain symbolic resources and inscriptions within the on-going dialogues. Place can become imbued with local and global meanings that are reflected in physical, social and psychological ways. These have an implicit and explicit effect on spatial practices of daily life, on interpersonal relationships and on constructions and re-constructions of I-positions. The British Empire has ended, and despite the advance of social pluralism there are still traces of Imperialist mentality and stereotypes of ‘Otherness’ circulating in Manchester’s polyvocality. As dialogic processes of co-construction of meaning unfold, ‘I’ and ‘Alter’ are necessarily multivoiced and autonomous, yet ‘I’ and ‘Alter’ are also inter-related through the very nature of dialogic encounters in the co-creation of meaning.

Hegemonic representations and local encounters

Sean said he knew what Manchester was like before he arrived there, because he had researched it on the Internet. This caused me to wonder how official websites represented Manchester and I decided to explore those electronic spaces.
On an official website I found the Manchester Coat of Arms and the condensed meanings it contains were carefully explained: The antelope and chain represents the engineering industries, red roses are traditional representations of Lancashire; the three stripes represent the three rivers of Manchester; the terrestrial globe is covered in bees which are symbols of efficient industry and are used around the city as an emblem of Manchester; the ship represents trading relations. (It is of interest to note that the official website does not cite the Mancunian Black History identification of the ship as the type used in the slave trade in which Manchester like many other merchant cities was implicated.)

On the website I also found that the formal hegemonic representations of space showed Manchester’s bridges and canals -suggesting accessibility and connectedness. The canals point to Manchester’s history of trade and shipping. The Town Hall was shown with its aspiring spires and set apart space, indicating a place of order, thought and deliberation. In a city centre square a statue of Queen Victoria shows her as a mature matriarch cloaked with authority, hierarchical power and invested leadership. A statue of a Roman General refers to the first known civilised settlement of Manchester. These representations of space are modern in character instancing stability, structure, and authority. Manchester’s culture is variously represented: pub, football, music scene, imported European style cafes. Reconstruction, and regeneration are shown but derelict post-industrial spaces are not included and there is no reference to Manchester’s factories and mills where people grubbed out an existence in appalling conditions. Mrs D’s Polish husband spent his working life in the factories and their marginalization as migrants, like the slave ship in the coat of arms, are occluded in the hegemonic website representations of Manchester.

Lefebvre (1991) believes that there is no stable relationship within Capitalism between concept, perception and daily life. My excursions into Manchester and into Manchester’s official website corroborated this view. Fisher (2003) observes that whilst global information may be immediate, it is not necessarily mediated and therefore it does not necessarily convey meaning. When Sean got lost riding his bicycle through a bleak and inner city council estate the information he had gained via the Internet was no use to him. The council estate would not be used as an official representation of Manchester but his direct experience of it opened to him the lived reality of many of the poorer and multiethnic Mancunians’ social worlds: littered streets, broken glass, burn out cars, shops shuttered against ram raiders and endless rows of bleak council houses sporting satellite dishes.

Much of what I hear and see in Manchester is fragmentary and seemingly lacking in overall coherence. Yet, despite a sense of apparent instability between aspects, constellations of meanings do emerge, both for myself and in my participants’ narratives. Zavala (1990) recognises that multileveled forces of power and knowledge co-exist in complex communicative structures and unstated experiences that a community shares. She suggests discourses are refracted through forms and other media resulting in new creations and continued social heterogeneity. Benson (2001, p62) states succinctly:

Self is about meaning and is…dialogic in structure. It emerges from relations with others and continues to be maintained by them even when representations of these
others have become internalised players in the on-going conversational structure that is self.

Global spaces and local places

Complex communications and refracted dialogues are articulated in spaces left by Manchester’s traditional textile trade. Asian retail outlets selling contemporary as well as traditional clothing have proliferated. European mannequins in a shop window display saris. It may be that the mannequins were used for expediency. But they also suggest an interconnectedness in a culturally syncretic space.

![Figure 9: mannequins](image)

One of the mannequins has lost her hands and another her head. I find that this representation positions me variously in conflicting discourses in relation to complex multi-cultural and religious dialogues.

Fisher (2003) suggests that global discourses occlude many aspects of social life in the localities they transverse but conflicts and disjunctures precipitated in a locality cause ‘cracks’ to form in the global hegemony. In the cracks different systems of thoughts co-exist and become sites for an exchange of ideas, and a subversion and eruption of new spaces. Lefebvre (2002) puts forward a different view by suggesting that when an existing place no longer serves its original purpose, it may be re-appropriated for a different use. I suggest that both these processes can be seen in a locality such as Manchester. A global discourse of consumerism is manifested in high street brand name shops and shopping malls, which have replaced many local firms and historical businesses. These are, in Auge’s (1995) terms, ‘no-place’. But just behind these no-places, abandoned industrial and trade spaces are sites for new kinds of local and often blatantly subversive spaces. For example, a sculpture was commissioned to show the interrelationship old and new in an area of inner city regeneration.
A fragment of commercial building was retained and a post-modern industrialised dragon looped through it. Visual references to industry and musical instruments point simultaneously to Manchester’s history and the role of Black and Street music in the contemporary culture industry of Manchester. The ambiguously sexualised forms reference Manchester’s well-known tolerance for a variety of sexual practices. The ubiquitous umbrella is humorously self-evident in city notorious for rain. This formal artwork appropriates an old physical space and a new cultural space. It offers a representation of local public Mancunian discourses whilst concurrently it points to global syncretic processes. This sculpture presents particular views of Manchester and by so doing also limits a spectator’s response to it. In contrast to this somewhat monological formal sculpture, in the same area a window in a derelict business premise had been informally appropriated.
In one viewing it could appear as an arbitrary dumping of consumer waste. Read in another way the collection of objects reference many local and global issues: an old photograph of a couple is stuck alongside Barbie who is fused to a motherboard behind dying roses and a home made cross. This composite association of images may point to issues of parenting, aging, fear of aging, loss and death. A broken legged baby doll is strapped into a real life Barbie doll’s shoe and is leered at by a bodiless illuminated clown’s head that has appropriated a bottle that has a label inscribed: ‘Life against war culture, against war destruction, against the arms…’ Prettily painted glasses are empty. A narrative constructed around these images could focus on the plight of a damaged child who is vulnerable to being preyed upon by a perverted joke of bottled life and values that offer empty comfort. A red plastic Buddha is a cheap and trite commodification of an ancient belief system. An abandoned mirror ball dully captures dislocated fragments and the candle is out. Enlightenment, meaning and belief are abandoned in a corner.

This window represents for me a wacky, creative, humorous and satirical response to life and social dynamics that I associate with Mancunians: an undaunted ‘Northern’ spirit that acquiesces, tolerates, and finally subverts. I find that in this abandoned space, different systems of thoughts are juxtaposed and by co-existing in their heterogeneity become sites for an exchange of ideas. The window represents a concrete example of what Bhabha (1994, p7) in cultural terms refers to as an ‘in-between space’: a space of ‘intervention’ that enables re-vision, re-description and re-inscription.

Conclusion

In addressing the complex and interrelated themes of the global and the local in the dialogical spaces and places of Manchester I have drawn upon a range of theoretical perspectives. Whilst employing the social psychological concept of Dialogical Self as a meta-theory, I have also included inter-disciplinary concepts of space and place to expand my observations and analyses. Historical and situated understandings of Manchester’s migrations have been considered alongside contemporary British social and cultural commentary. In exploring this area I have reflexively employed my experience as a migrant to Manchester and drawn upon my participants’ narratives of their migration to Manchester to expand my critique and analysis. Within contexts of interwoven global and local dynamics and forces, I have explored and identified many kinds of daily social practices that operate in various spaces in Manchester. I have offered critical and creative responses to dynamics of space and place in Manchester. Through an insignificant corner of Manchester, I have explored and presented considerations of physical, mental, social and contemporary capitalist spaces and how these positioned me variously in various imaginal landscapes. Photographs taken during a walk through Manchester were used to illustrate particular inscriptions in which global and local dialogues interplayed and extracts from my participants’ accounts were provided to extend those dialogues through further examples of concurrent multivoicedness that operates in this city. Thinking about racialised places in Manchester opened for consideration how dialogical negotiations between self and other may co-create symbolic resources and inscriptions in the fabric of place as hegemonic representations and local encounters intertwine in global spaces and local places. In exploring how dialogical negotiation may (re-)form culture in the location of Manchester, I have identified processes of appropriation and/or subversion. These
processes may, through dialogic interaction, embed psychological and social exchanges in a place. In conclusion, I regard any points of arrival in this complex and variously interconnected area of enquiry, as further points of departure and I offer this paper in the spirit of dialogic contestation of meaning that remains essentially open.

References


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