Complex Belongings: Racialization and Migration in a Small English City
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Abstract

The article explores how long-term residents in a small city with rural links in the East of England related to new migrants at a time of changing patterns and increased volume of migration. Based on in-depth interviews and observations in 2005-6, the article shows dynamic, complex and nuanced constructions of belonging and governmentalties of belonging. Long-term Peterborians felt proud that their city attracted migrants and became more multicultural. Many saw this as a normative aspect of being modern. Yet, the arrival of migrants also led to tensions and reinscribed the racialization of Peterborough’s ethnic minorities, articulated through the theme of neighbourliness. Through the figures of ‘uncaring migrant neighbours’ and ‘ruthless Pakistani landlords’ migrants and ethnic minority Peterborians were portrayed as refusing injunctions to care for the neighbourhood and the nation. Ethnic minority Peterborians were positioned ambivalently as hosts of and -at times- targets of racism by new migrants.

1. Introduction: Why does migration to a small English city matter?
This article explores migration in the early 2000s to Peterborough, a small city in the East of England. It focuses on how long-term residents viewed new migrants and got along with them. While many migrants liked Peterborough and were planning to stay, they did not feel accepted by long-term residents. Neighbourliness was a key theme in long-term Peterborians’ narratives on migration and the re-inscription of ethnic minority Peterborians’ racialization. The article draws out the different narratives through which these racialized relations were re-inscribed in response to changes in the city’s neighbourhoods due to high levels of migration.

Peterborough is a small city with close rural links. Rurality in the English context, unlike in some other countries, symbolically marks white English ethnicity (Cloke 2004; Garland and Chakraborti 2006; Neal 2009). The arrival of a diverse group of migrants in a short space of time challenged this, triggering intense debates about multiculturalism, migration and racialized identities in Peterborough. The article explores these complex issues on a local level. However, these issues were of national significance as unprecedented numbers of migrants arrived in areas of the country, beyond the established metropolitan destinations of migration (Kyambi 2005). In an influential article Vertovec (2007) argued that since the mid-1990s migration patterns, previously characterized through the experience of post-colonial Caribbean, African and Asian migrants, had significantly changed. Migrants arrived from a far more diverse range of geographical and national origins with diverse skills and stratified
residence and social rights. This led to a condition of ‘superdiversity’.

At the same time, the Labour government at the time increasingly discarded multiculturalism as a policy framework as ‘too confusing’ (CIC 2007:3), promoting instead a social cohesion and integration agenda emphasising ‘shared values of the wider political community’ over cultural pluralism (McGhee 2005:165).

Alongside these governmental objectives however, popular modes of negotiating ethnic difference existed in everyday life. Stuart Hall characterized as ‘multicultural “drift” – the increasing visible presence of black and Asian people in all aspects of British social life as a natural and inevitable part of the “scene” – rather than an “alien wedge”’ (Hall 1999:188). In a similar vein, Gilroy conceptualized conviviality as a form of societalization from below, where racial differences appear ordinary rather than determining structures of sociality (Gilroy 2005:438). Both authors note that these processes are uneven: large parts of the country have not been affected by multicultural drift, which appears to be specific to metropolitan areas.

Therefore exploring the ‘local micropolitics of everyday interaction’ (Vertovec 2007:1046) in a range of locations can enhance our understanding of relations between long-term residents and new migrants, shedding light on ‘(n)ew forms of conviviality’ as well as ‘articulations of bigotry and racism’ (Keith 2007). We know little about these experiences, particularly outside of metropolitan areas. The ‘situated descriptions of social
life in process’ (Back 2009:203) have significance beyond the local, informing theoretical debates on the politics of belonging.

2. Methods and Choice of Study Location

Peterborough was chosen as a study location because it encapsulates some of the new, under researched patterns of migration: Firstly, in the early 2000s the East of England was the region with the fastest growing migrant population after London. Within the region, Peterborough became a main destination for migrants. Secondly, the city’s ethnic composition was already complex: Eastern European refugees and Italian workers settled in the aftermath of WW II and Pakistanis in the 1970s. Despite a degree of ethnic diversity, multiethnic conviviality was not well established when new migrants arrived in the early 2000s. Instead, many long-term Peterborians held notions of sociality based on ideals of rural neighbourliness, emphasizing ethnic homogeneity (see below). Thirdly, the new migrations were characterized by a diversity of countries of origin, skills levels, migration statuses, migration experiences and forms of racialization.

In 2005-6, ethnographic observations and interviews with 15 key informant and 40 in-depth biographical interviews (40 minutes to 2 hours) were carried out. Audio-recorded interviews were fully transcribed. Where interviews could not be audio-recorded, field notes were taken. The key informants included workers and volunteers at advice centres, community centres,
local media, educators, councillors, employers, trade unionists, police, and neighbourhood associations with knowledge of migrations. Twenty biographical interviews with long-term Peterborians (ten from ethnic minorities: Pakistani, Romani, African Caribbean, and Italian and ten white British Peterborians) and twenty biographical interviews with migrants and refugees (Portuguese, Polish, Lithuanian and Czech Iraqi Arabs, Kurds and African nationals) were undertaken. The sample covered residents of diverse geographical areas of Peterborough, though due to the concentration of migrants in some neighbourhoods, these were over-represented. The sample was gender and age balanced (the ages ranged from sixteen to eighty, with refugees and migrants among the younger age groups up to 50) and covered a range of skills levels and employment situations among both settled and new arrival populations (see Erel 2007 for a detailed breakdown). Interviewees were recruited through a range of entry points (colleges, community organizations, churches, advice centres, personal contacts, etc.). The team of interviewers consisted of the author and two local researchers. The author and one research assistant were migrants to the UK. While it is possible that this made some respondents careful in disclosing negative views of migration, overall interview partners saw the research as an opportunity to register their views and many did talk about their negative views and experiences of migration. One interviewer was a white British long-term Peterborian man. While interpersonal relationships are important in contextualizing research relationships, the openness of interviewees cannot
simply be read off the demographic characteristics of the interviewers. Instead, these are complexly negotiated in the interview situation. Thus the author and the migrant research assistant were young women who appeared as non-threatening, good listeners. Interviewees were approached as people who could tell us about what it means to live in Peterborough. The audio recorded interviews were complemented by informal interviews, observations and some focus groups over a period of 9 months from December 2005.

This paper explores the narratives of long-term Peterborians about their relationships with and views of new migrants. I focus in particular on the theme of neighbourliness and locality, as this emerged as a key category through which long-term Peterborians made sense of new migrations. These narratives were complex: most long-term Peterborians presented grievances and a sense of unfairness around migration alongside feelings of pride and pleasure in Peterborough’s economic success and new multicultural face, for which migrants were seen as symbols. Long-term Peterborians articulated alliances and exclusions along the lines of ethnicity and migration flexibly and situationally. These narratives do not transparently reflect facts but rather articulate ‘a tangle of desires, resentments and grievances’ (Back 2009:206).

3. Recent migrations to Peterborough
Peterborough is a town in Cambridgeshire, the East of England with an estimated population of 161,000 in 2006. An ancient cathedral town, Peterborough has experienced many social changes. It has particularly grown since it was declared a New Town: from 1970 to 1988, the city's population doubled from a starting point of 68,000 and developed a range of employment opportunities in the service sector. The early 2000s saw a new phase of expansion with plans for an additional 22,000 homes and 18,000 jobs by 2012. Peterborough’s economy has been growing and is predicted to grow in the next 20 years. Peterborough’s gross value added (GVA) amounts to £16,941 per head of population compared to £13,779 in the East of England (Positively Peterborough Business Statistics). In 2005 economic growth was 6.9 per cent, the highest in the UK (where it averaged 5.5 per cent). Yet, there are also pockets of deprivation: Peterborough has seven wards in the 20 per cent most deprived in England (GPP 2004:33).

In the 2001 census, approximately 10 per cent of Peterborough’s population identified as ‘other than white’, of which Pakistanis were the largest group (4.5 per cent) (Head 2004). The East of England has the largest number of Romany traveller caravans of any UK region (Dunn 2005:82). Yet, this ethnic diversity had not been foregrounded as an important feature of Peterborough’s identity and interview partners often characterized the arrival of new migrants in the early 2000s as an abrupt change. At the time of fieldwork, in 2005-6, migration was
highly visible and vehemently debated, as could be seen from articles and readers’ letters in the Peterborough Telegraph. Since 2001 Peterborough had been a dispersal area for asylum seekers. According to Councillor Holdich\textsuperscript{4} in 2005, 4000 asylum seekers lived in Peterborough. At the same time there was an increase in levels of migrant workers in the area. Police estimated that there were 16000 migrant workers and their family members in Peterborough\textsuperscript{5}. Key informants estimated that since the 1990s, 5000 Portuguese migrants had arrived in Peterborough. This group of Portuguese migrants was multi-ethnic, including twice-migrants from former Portuguese colonies. Another significant group was from Eastern Europe. This group encompassed stratified migration status and multiple trajectories: until 2004 when the UK opened its labour markets to Accession Country nationals, Eastern Europeans in Peterborough had held heterogeneous legal status and social rights, some had been asylum seekers, some held temporary work visas, while others had overstayed these. By 2005, employers in the East of England saw these migrants as essential for the hospitality, agricultural and horticultural industries (Dench et al 2006:15). I have found that despite the differential rights and migration trajectories of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants long-term Peterborians rarely distinguished between these groups. As Isabel King\textsuperscript{6} (white British key informant, advisor) put it, ‘everybody is lumped together’, especially when long-term Peterborians voiced grievances over perceived unfairness.
At the time numbers of migrants could not be accurately counted (cf. Dench et al 2006). Yet, at all discussions among policy makers I attended, a strong concern over the correct number of migrants and asylum seekers was expressed, indicating the extent to which migration was cast as a problem in need of surveillance, control and management. This came to national attention when local public service providers complained that the national government’s underestimate of migrant populations caused severe strain through local under resourcing (cf. BBC News 14 May 2007; Daily Telegraph 14 May 2007; Daily Mail 17 October 2007).

*A city with rural links*

While its size and composition mark Peterborough as urban, many interview partners emphasized its close links to the rural. Many migrants’ workplaces in food processing were in surrounding rural areas. The villages surrounding Peterborough were seen as desirable places to live, so that some interview partners saw the city’s decision makers as biased, claiming that by living in these tranquil villages they personally avoided social problems associated with migration. In contemporary England ‘while the marked opposition between the geographical spaces of urban and rural is broken down, the imagined opposition between the social significances of urban and rural are being maintained and in some ways enhanced.’ (Cloke 2004:21). Here, I refer in particular to notions of rural English neighbourliness based on an
ideal of a caring, neighbourly community that protects against social isolation and ontological insecurities precipitated by shrinking welfare states in a fast changing, globalized economy. These ideas of neighbourliness draw on dichotomized discourse of the rural idyll and the rural crisis (Neal 2009). A key theme in the image of the rural crisis has been the fear of a loss of English identity. Currently this is articulated as a threat from globalized capitalism (Ware 2009), for which migrants were frequently seen as the most visible symbol in Peterborough. Increasing visibility of migrants in localities associated with rurality challenges representations of a racialized clear cut rural-urban boundary. The article explores how, in a city with rural links, both convivial and more conflictual modes of everyday life develop in response to new migrations. The next section argues that notions of neighbourliness centrally articulate belonging and the complex relationships between long-term Peterborians and new migrants.

4. The governmentality of belonging

This article taps into theoretical debates about the politics of belonging (Crowley 1999; Hage 1999; Yuval-Davis 2006). It interrogates how different claims to belonging are articulated and negotiated through different criteria for, and boundaries of, belonging. Notions of belonging not only relate to whether migrants are recognized as a legitimately part of the locality, but also influence their ability to realise their social rights (cf. Crowley 1999). I suggest exploring belonging as a matter of degrees
rather than dichotomizing belonging and unbelonging. Following Yuval-Davis I distinguish analytically between different levels of belonging: ‘The first level concerns social locations; the second relates to individuals’ identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings; the third relates to ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and others’ belonging/s.’ (2006:199). Here I explore how the first level, i.e. the social locations of ‘long-term resident’ and ‘migrant’ relate to the third level of judging claims to belonging. I show that the arrival of new migrants to Peterborough has reignited debates about the appropriate normative ethical and political value system by which long-term ethnic majority Peterborians judge the belonging of ethnic minority long-term Peterborians.

This specific focus contributes to research on the impact of new migration on earlier waves of immigration (cf. Jiménez 2008) and can help to refine our understanding of ‘superdiversity’ (Vertovec 2007) by providing an in-depth exploration of how migrants from a diverse range of countries and with diverse residence stati interact with an ethnically heterogeneous group of long-term residents.

Migrants are positioned through different modalities of belonging to the nation: they may well be encouraged to develop and express ‘passive homely belonging’ yet, are rarely seen as entitled to enact ‘governmental belonging’ (Hage 1998), in the sense of legitimately having an opinion about who should be allowed to belong. In her analysis of policy and cultural texts, Fortier argues that the notion of neighbourliness is central to the
contemporary governmentality of belonging and multiculturalism in the UK. In the mid 2000s, Labour government policy constructed the neighbourhood as the privileged site for developing a sense of belonging to a local multicultural community that should align with allegiance to the national community. Yet, policy documents offered a ‘neighbourly embrace’ to ethnic minorities and migrants only conditionally: firstly they were expected to engage in ‘“meaningful interchanges” (...) fulfilling the promise of multicultural intimacy to “foster understanding and respect” (Home Office, quoted in Fortier 2007: 110-111). Secondly, ethnic minorities should gain neighbourly love through ‘appropriate behaviour’ (p.111), demonstrating that their emotional investment into the locality superseded transnational loyalties. This required ethnic minorities to mix with white British neighbours. In contrast, when ethnic minorities interacted with, and cared for, members of their ethnic group this was problematized. It contradicted the ‘injunctions of caring citizenship’ (Fortier 2007:112) to actively and affectively participate in sociality with their white British neighbours. Fortier understands this as a twist on the multiculturalist demand for recognition. In this case, the national community claims that ethnic minorities refuse them recognition so that ‘the injured is the wider local -national community whose offer of friendship, respect, and tolerance with intimacy is construed as rebuffed by an unneighbourly ethnic minority.’ (Fortier 2007:112). Fortier’s argument that neighbourliness is employed as a tool in the governmentality of multiculturalism frames the discussion of the
empirical research where neighbourliness emerged as a central theme in long-term Peterborians’ narratives. While her argument does not explicitly address the differentiated positioning of long-term ethnic minorities and new migrants, others have argued that the arrival of new migrants is important for understanding how existing ethnic minorities are positioned and racialized. Thus, for the rural US, Jiménez (2008) argues that the steady inflow of migrants from Mexico is an important contributing factor to the continued racialization of second, third and fourth generation Mexican Americans. Despite being US citizens, they are often labelled as (potentially undocumented) migrants. In this case ‘racialized foreign status’ (2008:1560) is invoked to exclude and subordinate Mexican American citizens. In rural England, Garland and Chakraborti (2006) find that the arrival of asylum seekers has mobilized exclusionary and racist attitudes towards long-term ethnic minorities, even if they were not of the same ethnicity. This article contributes to these debates albeit in a situation where migrants and long-term resident ethnic minorities are of different ethnic background. In the following analysis of my empirical findings, I show that long-term Peterborians’ discussions about the inclusion of migrants into the neighbourhood reconstitute the relationship between ethnic minority and ethnic majority long-term Peterborians, re-inscribing their racialized status through nativist arguments (cf. Jiménez 2008). The next section explores how long-term Peterborians deploy the notion of neighbourliness, investing it with their own meanings, partly in accordance with, partly in resistance to the governmentality of belonging.
5. Neighbours

*Spaces of Conviviality and ‘Banal Cosmopolitanism’*

Many long-term Peterborians saw the arrival of migrants as a sign of the city’s economic success and desirability, of which they were proud. Sarah Dixon, a young mother and chairperson of a residents’ association was very vocal about problems she associated with migration (cf. below) but conceded that ‘it’s a good thing that Peterborough is going with the times. Life is changing and migrants are part of the new world and one needs to accept this’ (field notes). In these accounts, the presence of migrants was equated with Peterborough becoming multicultural, which was seen as a normative aspect contemporaneity. It demonstrated that, rather than being ‘left behind’ national and international developments, Peterborough is part of them. The emergence of restaurants serving ‘food from around the world’ was frequently mentioned as a positive consequence of migration. These restaurants represent spaces of ‘banal cosmopolitanism’ (Beck and Cronin 2006:40) where ethnic difference is incorporated through consumption. This cannot simply be read as validating difference, as it is often part of processes of othering and oppression (hooks 1992). Yet, this instantiated long-term Peterborians’ views of ethnic difference as pleasurable rather than problematic. Ethnically diverse cultural products can confer an aura of sophistication which city leaders
may try to mobilize to ‘attract capital and to market their city as a globally recognised brand’ (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009:187).

Ralph Cooper, an educationalist explains that although Peterborough,

has always been a multi-cultural city (…). Over the past five years there has been a growing promotion and recognition by council, people in charge, that this is Peterborough. (…)

Because obviously there are people in Peterborough who see that as a problem (…). What we’ve tried to do is turn it around (…) to celebrate it as a strength, diversity as a strength. (White British, key informant).

The leaders of the city strove to market Peterborough as a multicultural place with economic potential. The introduction of an annual multicultural summer festival was part of promoting the city. For many long-term Peterborians the festival indeed constituted a pleasurable experience centred on the consumption of ethnically diverse food, cultural products and performances.

This appreciation of pleasurable aspects of ethnic difference through consumption was in tension with a desire for a stable, unchanging community; often the same person held both views. For example complaints about the public visibility (and audibility) of ethnic difference were pervasive, as Isabel King put it: ‘So yeah, I think that you hear a lot of people say “Whenever I walk through the city centre all I hear is foreign voices”.’

Less conspicuous forms of conviviality also existed where ethnic difference became ordinary: many migrants formed good
neighbourly and collegial relations, friendships or love relationships across ethnic boundaries. Kamilah Nasar, an Iraqi refugee doctor and mother of two values the practical and emotional support of her neighbours and friends:

I have a lot of friends, they are the English people. I like them. Even my boys living nicely in their school, having a lot of English friends. We don’t get any problems – good neighbours, good relations with the neighbours also.

She appreciates these good relations in particular ‘because I am always hearing from the other immigrants they have a lot of problems but really I do not have.’ More often, migrants had an ambivalent relation with long-term Peterborians, often generically described as ‘English people’: ‘English people for me, they are really friendly and yes, some of them are a little bit -and if they don’t like these migrant people (…) but they don’t do anything to you, they don’t say anything to you but you just can feel it.’ (Daina Vidas). Indeed, Daina Vidas, a young Lithuanian worker, found long-term Peterborians’ dislike of migrants ‘normal’, arguing that migrants should only be accepted on condition of their economic self-sufficiency: ‘[English people] are afraid of these people who are coming here and not working (…) but we are not afraid of those people who are working and paying accommodation, paying everything’. Walenty Nowak reinforces this sense that acceptance is conditional, emphasising the need for migrants to fit into culturally specific expectations of appropriate sociality:
For example, [our neighbour] (...) was afraid because there was other people in the house and we are - But when I have talked with her and smiled to her and just about what the weather is now, just also English main theme of talking (laughs). Yeah, but just simple words, yeah, and a smile and she is now and she is meeting me and she always waves. (...) Now she is not afraid of living close with Polish people.

Kamilah, Daina and Walenty all possess the linguistic, educational and cultural skills to understand and reciprocate English norms of sociality, as well as fulfilling other criteria for conditional acceptance, such as being well educated and economically self reliant (cf. Garland and Chakraborti 2006). However, not all migrants fit in with the expectations of their English neighbours. It was more common to find forms of conviviality among migrants of different backgrounds. Some migrants noted that white British were rarely involved in these emergent convivial forms of sociality: ‘There is a rejection, unfortunately’ Jorge Santos, a young Portuguese migrant felt. He elaborated that long-term Peterborians may interact with migrants, but often in a way that reinforces ethnic boundaries:

... I won’t say that if you talk to them they’ll turn their face away, no, they won’t. But you’re not part of their group, and that’s clear, straight away. (...) they don’t talk with you about what they would with another English person, they ask, ‘Where are you from?’ ‘Oh, I’ve been there on holiday.’ And
those are the people that actually bother sitting and talking to you.

In this section I have argued that long-term Peterborians value migrants’ presence as a sign of their city’s desirability and economic success. The visibility of migrants in the city’s streets and neighbourhoods is evaluated ambivalently, though. It signals that the city is becoming multicultural, for many a sign that it is part of the modern world. In this sense, migrants’ presence, equated with multiculturalism, is seen as pleasurable and exciting. Concurrently, however, to some long-term Peterborians migrants’ presence signals a loss of neighbourliness. It is these conflicts and tensions to which I will now turn.

The uncaring migrant neighbour

As elsewhere in the UK, the shortage of affordable housing, especially council housing (in 2006 the waiting list was 8000), is a contentious issue that is presented in popular discourse as bound up with the arrival of asylum seekers. Under the dispersal programme, the National Asylum Support Service housed asylum seekers in run-down council estates with hard to let housing stock. These were at the outskirts of the city difficult to reach by public transport and many asylum seekers felt socially isolated and particularly vulnerable to racist verbal abuse and violence. Thus, once they were recognized as refugees and had the opportunity to choose their accommodation many left these areas
to move into more multi-ethnic neighbourhoods nearer the city centre. These neighbourhoods, until then considered by many as ‘Pakistani’ neighbourhoods, began to change with the arrival of refugee tenants, mainly single men from Middle Eastern and African countries.

Around the same time, migrant workers also settled in these neighbourhoods. For both groups of newcomers these multiethnic neighbourhoods constituted interethnic ‘communities of shared risk’ of racist attacks (Garland and Chakraborti 2006). Some migrants also had a sense of cultural closeness through e.g. shops selling foodstuffs they were familiar with. There were also practical considerations, e.g. many of the Pakistani landlords, in contrast to others, only required one month’s rent as deposit – as opposed to the commonly demanded three months rental deposit - and rents were cheap.

However, white Peterborians’ complaints about the unneighbourliness of migrants became so widespread that the council and the New Link Centre felt compelled to address these (see below). The list of complaints was long and many white British residents were very vocal about these. Sarah Dixon, a white British full-time mother in her thirties cares for her neighbourhood in her roles as a school governor and chair of the residents’ association. She explained her unease to me in detail. Her arguments were typical of those voiced by many long-term white British Peterborians:

You don’t know who your next door neighbours are any more. You don’t know their language, or even what
language they speak. As they tend to move on after a few months, you can’t get to know them to establish neighbourly relations. They don’t know how to use the recycling bins which causes congestion of rubbish as the rubbish collectors do not collect bins that contain the wrong contents. They have several cars to a house and use up too much parking space. They repair their cars in the street. They don’t use the shops that white English people use. Therefore these established shops close down. Especially the older English people used to walk to their corner shop and talk to the shopkeeper every day. Now that these shops have closed down English people feel more isolated. On the other hand, shops owned by migrants are unfriendly to English people. Migrant workers’ lifestyle of long working hours has created different needs, e.g. along one main road many take-away restaurants have opened, but there is no adequate provision of dustbins so all the rubbish from the restaurants ends up in the street. Migrant workers don’t behave in a neighbourly way, they don’t say hello when they meet their neighbour in the street. They play loud music, use their front gardens to sit in, they come and go at all times of the day and night, without consideration for their neighbours. (Field notes)

Sarah Dixon’s interview was particularly detailed and comprehensive, but the views it expressed were no exception and long-term white Peterborians often expressed that they felt that
migrants ‘don’t try to fit in’ and ‘do not mix’. The normative expectation that newcomers should adapt to local norms was voiced to me again and again in the motto: ‘When in Rome do as the Romans’. Indeed, in these ‘banal’ neighbourly intercultural encounters, white Peterborians expressed their claim to governmental belonging through enforcing their idea that migrants needed to earn the right to belong through adapting to white Peterborians’ expectations of good neighbouring. White long-term Peterborians successfully presented their own, culturally and ethnically specific views on good neighbouring as universal and claimed them as normative criteria for belonging.

Sarah Dixon’s quote addresses the migrant neighbours’ perceived misbehaviours and calls on the council to govern and plan more pro-actively. The pragmatism of Sarah’s approach articulates a Gramscian common sense: it renders intelligible and defines the horizons of intelligibility of relations between long-term Peterborians and migrants. It constructs a common sense by identifying appropriate recipients of care and those whose actions refute the injunction to care for the neighbourhood, and implicitly, the nation. The repeated association of migrants with overcrowding, the failure to maintain private-public distinctions and with excessive rubbish - in particular migrants’ failure to maintain the proper boundaries between dirt and cleanliness - builds on racist tropes that have been well established in Britain since the 19th century (Cohen 1994).

However, the quote also expresses Sarah’s wish for warm neighbourly relations that grant her recognition on her own
cultural terms. Her frustration about not knowing her neighbours highlights her sense of vulnerability to social isolation and her unfulfilled desire for community. To emphasize this, Sarah invokes the figure of old English people - at another point in the interview, Sarah refers to young English women feeling intimidated by migrant men. By invoking gender and age, her narrative emphasizes the vulnerability – to social isolation, physical and sexual intimidation. The migrants’ are imagined as groups of young men rather than individuals, whose failure to greet their neighbours, noisiness, use the front garden (rather than the back garden), exemplifies their refusal to affectively invest into the neighbourhood, and by extension into the nation; a refusal that ‘injures’ the white British Peterborians.

The ruthless Pakistani landlord

Most migrant workers lived in Multiple Occupancy Housing, i.e. houses where rooms were shared between individuals or sometimes families. This fed into a moral panic among white Peterborians, as Margaret Fisher, a key informant working with new arrivals and long-term residents explained:

White residents are upset that new arrival people are being put into houses (...) where they fear they are going to be exploited, they are going to be charged high rents, overcrowded. And their anger really is with the landlords, not with the migrant communities.
White Peterborians scandalize these landlords’ profits as morally illegitimate: ‘If you can buy a house, if you buy on a mortgage and you can get five people in there, £350 a week coming in, thank you very much, that’s a nice little earner isn’t it.’ (Key informant, long-term Peterborian white British male, 60s).

While the council received many complaints from white neighbours of Multiple Occupancy Houses, in most cases these turned out to be unfounded. However, the point I want to make here is not about the veracity of overcrowding or exploitative living conditions. What interests me here is how these stories about the ruthless landlord functioned to moralize and racialize this conflict, by attributing the responsibility for the neighbourly problems largely to Pakistani landlords. The argument that landlords were ruthlessly exploiting their tenants helped to underline their lack of care for others in the neighbourhood. The alleged exploitation of tenants became one element in constructing the Pakistani landlords as self-interested. Pakistani landlords were constructed as disrespecting the white British neighbours by not showing regard for the problems arising from alleged overcrowding. In this moral panic, Pakistani Peterborian landlords were portrayed as resisting the ‘injunctions of caring citizenship’ (Fortier 2007:112) by withholding their care from their white British neighbours and not emotionally investing in the neighbourhood, presented in these stories as emblematic of the nation.

These discourses concurred in marking out both migrant worker tenants and Pakistani landlords as irresponsibly occupying and using the neighbourhood.
Of dustbins and riots

The council and the New Link Centre took seriously the recurrent complaints by white British neighbours about migrants as uncaring neighbours and initiated a campaign to educate migrants about local norms. A city councillor explained:

Because our cohesion problems in the town, since the riots we had 2-3 years ago [see below], have been more around what do you put in this dustbin, and we have printed what you put, we’ve got a three bin system. And we printed them in ten different languages fifteen different languages. Because one of the things we found that the indigenous population do not like is basically the different lifestyles. If you put the wrong thing in the wrong bin, it stays outside, stays on the street, just builds up around it, makes their whole area look a mess. And we’re working, we’ve got this thing called New Look, working with New Link to try and get round the residents associations and organizations that the indigenous population are in to give advice and assurance. And then from that, we do home visits to new arrivals to try and say look, this is what you put in the bin, please put some curtains up, please cut the grass, please don’t drive that car without a licence. All the things that I’m sure you know are at.
This campaign identified migrants as in need of education about local norms of neighbourly behaviour, reinforcing and legitimizing white long-term Peterborians’ governmental belonging, i.e. their rightful claims to normatively judge the criteria for belonging.

While the neighbourhood provided a sense of safety from racist attacks to migrants and refugees, this is not to say that conflicts were absent or were not racialized. Let me just give two examples of conflicts that were explicitly articulated with reference to ethnicity and governmental belonging to the locality. Almost all interviewees referred to actual - or barely averted - riots in the early 2000s: tensions flared up as fighting in the streets on several occasions. Some refugees, mainly young men from the Middle East, were seen as engaging in flirtations with Pakistani young women or formed partnerships with them. This prompted some Pakistani young men to assert their ownership of the neighbourhood. This was articulated through the notion of ‘protecting our women’, and controlling the sexuality of young Pakistani women. Another line of social divisions was articulated by anti-Muslim and anti-refugee racism. The experience of migration brought many of the Eastern Europeans for the first time brought them face to face with ethnic diversity. ‘So seeing the Pakistani and seeing the Kurdish people, Muslims, it’s rather exotic for us, yeah. Living with them, just closely with them, it’s not easy. So (...) sometimes [Polish] people are aggressive towards the [Muslims]’ (Walenty Nowak). Some, though by no means all, Eastern European migrants, managed these
encounters through claiming and performing superiority, based on their identification as white Christian and their more secure legal status as European Union citizens with the right to reside and work in the UK:

The tensions that I've observed are usually between migrant workers from Eastern Europe and asylum seekers who they perhaps feel are lower down the ladder in terms of what they merit. (...) So, I have to be honest, I have seen, (...) some kicking under the table let's say' (Nicole Lewis).

In some cases, this has turned to verbal and even sometimes physically violent attacks. Taufiq Ahmad, a young professional Asian Peterborian recounts such an attack on a young Muslim woman who was threatened with a gun that deeply shook him:

In Peterborough on (...) Road. And she broke down in tears and I had to call the cops. And she didn’t report it but she was scared. A two year old boy witnessed that. (...). And the other guy was saying “Shoot her, shoot her”. (...) they were actually hurling racial abuse at her. Paki, Paki, although she’s an Arab. And she was wearing a head scarf. And guess who were they? They were not British, they were white, but they were white East Europeans.

The UK migration regime and employer attitudes currently position migrants from the EU-Accession countries as the ideal migrant who can contribute to the country's development. This
group of migrants is frequently portrayed as desirable, skilled and hardworking (cf. Dench et al 2006). One aspect of this positive evaluation of this group of migrants is their classification as white and Christian and the assumption that they are therefore culturally close and easily integrated. In a focus group African refugees stated that recruitment agencies ‘prefer to employ (…) Eastern Europeans. They said that the agencies would rather employ an Eastern European, who was not competent, or doesn’t know any English.’ (Field notes 21 June 06). Migrants, recruitment agencies and advisors in interviews frequently emphasised that many employers prefer Eastern European migrants because they perceive them as ‘having better English, [being] more reliable and [having] more skills’ (Isabel King). In this context, whiteness affords Eastern European migrants privileged access to jobs compared to other migrants, though mainly at the bottom rungs of the labour market. Analysing the post-war Eastern European migration to the UK historically, McDowell (2008) suggests that depending on the UK labour market needs at particular moments, Eastern Europeans were constructed as more or less assimilable into the category of whiteness, and emphasizes the malleability and conditionality of this inclusion into whiteness. I read such acts of racism against ethnic minorities and non-European migrants as part of a strategy by some Eastern European migrants to explicitly perform whiteness in order to strengthen a claim to be included into the category of whiteness.
White long-term Peterborians’ responses to new migrants repositioned long-term ethnic minorities, in particular Pakistani Peterborians. One important aspect of this was a differentiation between Pakistani Peterborians as ‘ruthless landlords’ and new migrants as ‘uncaring neighbours’. However, this repositioning of Pakistani Peterborians also involved blurring the boundaries between the categories of migrant and ethnic minority. This became evident in two types of recurring stories. Firstly, since the 1970s Pakistani Peterborians had mainly settled in a few inner city neighbourhoods. From the early 2000s, Pakistani Peterborians began to move to more desirable ‘better housing with gardens etc.’ (Ralph Cooper, Key informant, education). In these previously white leafy, middle class suburbs, some had an unwelcoming reception and were classified as recent migrants to the UK:

But of course then, when they do move out of their traditional areas, you’ve got the indigenous population saying oh, asylum seekers! (…) I do think the Pakistani (…) population did feel that they were getting the blame for others coming in. Because people couldn’t tell the difference (key informant, long-term Peterborian white British male, 60s)

The widespread notion that new migrants to the UK were unfairly benefitting from resources to which they themselves had
not contributed (cf. Rhodes 2010, Ware 2008) was employed to label Pakistani Peterborians, too, as illegitimate new arrivals to the neighbourhood. The second narrative strand reconfiguring relations between white British and Pakistani Peterborians thematized moral claims to exclude from the locality. On one hand, some white British Peterborians invoked the long established Pakistani community in Peterborough as proof of the city’s ethnic inclusivity. On the other hand, the discourse of the ruthless landlord and the gendered tensions and fighting among Middle Eastern and Pakistani young men were often cited as instances that exclusionary attitudes were particularly discernible and widespread among Pakistani Peterborians. Melissa Wilks, a white British advisor was ‘very much surprised about the overt racism by ethnic minorities. Some Pakistani British people have very hostile views of newcomers and think the newcomers are taking away their resources’ (field notes). Donna Lawrence, a white British voluntary sector worker reflected:

Probably this is only my naiveté, but I couldn’t understand that people who are themselves often seen as outsiders would want to exclude newcomers (...) I was shocked that people who probably experienced the same discrimination previously are themselves discriminatory towards new arrivals. Especially in the countryside, if you go outside of Peterborough, people there wouldn’t differentiate between a settled ethnic minority and a newcomer. They would think that neither of them belongs in this country.’ (Field notes)
Donna explicitly challenges any form of ethnically based exclusion. Yet, particularizing and problematizing Pakistani Peterborians’ exclusionary behaviour, risks instantiating a division between long-term Peterborians entitled to confer or withhold legitimate belonging, and those who are racialized and therefore not entitled to do so.

6. Conclusion
This article has looked at how, occasioned by new migrations, ‘forms of togetherness take on radically new coordinates and relationships to place and time’ (Back 2009: 203-4) in a small English city. In how far is Peterborough’s experience typical or unique? In some respects, this can only be answered by further studies with a wide geographic range. Yet, this study suggests that notions of neighbourliness and the reconstitution of relations between long-term ethnic minority and majority residents are key themes for studies on migration and belonging in other geographical contexts in the UK.

The article has contributed to theoretical debates on the politics of belonging a situated analysis. It shows that despite different social locations, both ethnic minorities and recent migrants claim belonging and emotional attachment to Peterborough. The social locations of ‘migrant’ and ‘ethnic minority’ are internally differentiated by factors such as the length of residence, citizenship status, racialization, migration experience, class and gender. These factors intersect in complex ways and are mobilized in negotiations over normative criteria for
judging belonging. These normative criteria are subject to fierce debates. By drawing attention to the contestation over the criteria and boundaries of belonging, the article has shown that the very categories of ‘long-term resident’ and of ‘migrant’ are not simply descriptive but subject to struggles. This shapes specific governmentalities to regulate the rights and modes of participating in the neighbourhood and the nation.

For many long-term Peterborians migrants’ presence symbolized the city’s economic success and desirability, turning the city more multicultural. They valued this as a sign that they, too, were part of the modern world. Long-term Peterborians participated in forms of ‘banal cosmopolitanism’, manifested in the enjoyment of ethnic difference through sampling restaurants ‘from around the world’. Some were also involved in creating convivial forms of cross-ethnic sociality with migrants. Yet, such conviviality was most discernible among migrants from different countries. Governmental policy on multiculturalism at the time offered ethnic minorities and migrants a neighbourly embrace, conditional on their performance of a caring citizenship. Long-term Peterborians mobilized these governmentalities of belonging in local racialized moral discursive repertoires.

Responses to migrants’ arrival in Peterborough reconstituted the relationships of ethnic minority and ethnic majority long-term residents. This process involved the differentiation between Pakistani Peterborians (as ruthless landlords) and migrants (as uncaring neighbours). Both figures were blamed with refusing the injunctions of a caring citizenship,
thereby rendering the figure of the white British Peterborian as ‘the injured’. Pakistani Peterborians were doubly repositioned vis-à-vis new migrants: firstly in some everyday encounters, Pakistani Peterborians were re-categorized as newcomers with lesser rights and entitlements, secondly, their performance of governmental belonging, through excluding migrants, was routinely de-legitimized. Thirdly, Pakistani Peterborians found themselves occupying ambivalent spaces, both hosts and neighbours of migrant newcomers but also at times the targets of racism by migrant newcomers as well. Migrant newcomers engaged in closer relationships with long-term ethnic minority Peterborians, not only creating spaces of safety from racist attacks (cf. Garland and Chakrabarti 2006) but also new forms of sociality across ethnic boundaries. Yet, these processes are contradictory: some new migrants articulated their belonging to Peterborough through anti-Muslim, anti-Pakistani or anti-refugee racism. Research needs to critically examine ‘how community is moralised and politicised’ (Back 2009: 212), paying attention to the ways in which local and national politics of belonging articulate, in positioning ethnic minority and majority long-term residents as well as migrants.

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The article focuses on long-term Peterborians but also draws on migrants’ perspectives to contextualize.

Given Peterborough’s expansion as a New Town, it is interesting to note that most Peterborians had an experience of internal migration. Here long-term Peterborians are defined as those who have lived for ten years or more in the city.


All interviews have been anonymized, these are pseudonyms.