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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Neo-assimilationist citizenship and belonging policies in Britain: Meanings for transnational migrants in northern England.

Abstract

The overall aim of this paper is to contribute to debates on the relationships between citizenship and migration in the UK context in the light of recent changes in UK immigration policy. In particular, it focuses on the question of what an increasingly neo-assimilationist state articulation of national belonging means for transnational migrants living in Britain. The paper begins by charting the evolving nature of citizenship conceptualisations in Western neoliberal contexts and illustrates how Britain has responded to this shifting landscape. The context is one of enhanced 'migration securitization' wherein the state implies that the integrity of the nation state and its security can only be assured if migration flows and migrants themselves are closely controlled and monitored. This has led to Britain attempting to bolster the formal institution of citizenship (with its attendant rights and responsibilities) and tie it more explicitly to notions of belonging to the nation. Through research with national/regional policy officials and migrant organisations this paper firstly examines the political landscape of citizenship and belonging in Britain as it relates to migrants. Secondly, it draws on research with African transnational migrants in northern England to explore their senses of belonging and ask whether these cohere with the described state discourse or whether their feelings of belonging exist in tension with neo-assimilationist policies designed to promote a core national identity.

Keywords: citizenship, belonging, transnational migrants, neo-assimilation, migration securitization.

1. Introduction

The inspiration for this paper comes from two sources related to citizenship and belonging in Britain. The first was a depressingly familiar irritation at Phil Woolas[1] upon his recent suggestion that would-be citizens of Britain will hasten their feelings of belonging to their new nation through learning the revered practice of forming an orderly queue; "the simple act of taking one's turn is one of the things that holds our country together. It is very important that newcomers take their place in

[1] Phil Woolas was the Minister of State for Borders and Immigration in the UK until the change of Government in May 2010. This research for this paper was undertaken *before* the General Election on May 6th 2010 so is primarily a commentary on the policies of the Labour Government up to this date, although I discuss the evolving immigration, integration and citizenship policies of the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government where relevant and helpful.

queues whether it is for a bus or a cup of tea" (Telegraph 2010). The suggestion that belonging to Britain partially revolves around understanding the art of queuing as a quintessential element of Britishness ostensibly appears as dismissible as the infamous Norman Tebbit 'cricket-test' of 1990[2]. At the time Tebbit's comments were seen as an attack on multiculturalism; yet this is a shadow that continues to be cast on contemporary integration and cohesion debates with recent concerns intensifying around an arguable 'crisis of multiculturalism' (Back *et al.* 2002, Kundnani 2007, Modood 2008, Cameron 2011).

This links to the second point of departure for this paper; the inspiration I draw from those fellow academics interpreting statements like Woolas' as indicative of the British Government's retreat from multiculturalist idiom and its embracing of an increasingly neo-assimilationist policy climate around immigration, citizenship and belonging (e.g. Joppke 2004, Kofman 2005, Tyler 2010). My own evolving thinking on this topic is in the context of research with migrants in Britain who embody transnational and stretched belongings (Waite 2009, Waite and Cook 2010). How do such migrants respond to policy environments where, "continued loyalty to one's place of origin is inimical to membership and belonging in the society of settlement" (Nagel 2009, p. 405) due to, "increasingly vociferous demands for undivided loyalty and affiliation to national cultures and polities" (Kofman 2005, p. 464)?

The main aim of this paper is to focus on the question of what an increasingly neo-assimilationist state articulation of national belonging means for transnational migrants living in Britain. As such, the paper will first chart the evolving nature of citizenship conceptualisations in Western neoliberal contexts and illustrate how Britain has responded to this shifting landscape; in part by increasingly incorporating notions of *belonging* into the policy landscape of citizenship. Parts 2 and 3 of the

[2] In April 1990 Norman Tebbit controversially suggested a 'cricket test' (whether people from ethnic minorities supported the England cricket team or the team from their country of origin) to be a good barometer of whether migrants have integrated and are truly British.

paper examine this area of citizenship, and then belonging, through incorporating the insights of key informants in the research. Second, in part 4 the paper explores whether transnational migrants' own senses of belonging cohere with the discussed state discourse or whether their feelings of belonging exist in tension with neo-assimilationist policies designed to promote a core national identity.

The paper draws upon findings from a larger research project that explored the experiences of African migrants in Britain, France and South Africa; this paper comes from just the British element of the research carried out during 2008/09. The study was comprised firstly of seven key informant interviews with regional and national policy officials, migrant organisations and community representatives, and secondly, biographical interviews and focus groups with African migrants[3]. Parts 2 and 3 of the paper include insights drawn from the four key informant interviews who were selected to represent different parts of the citizenship and migration landscape; one from a national migration enforcement agency, one from a regional migration partnership organisation; and two from national migrant advocacy organisations[4].

Part 4 of the paper focuses on the experiences of African migrants themselves. Although migrant participants for the larger research project came from four African communities; Sudanese, Somali, Kenyan and Zimbabwean[5], this paper is based on research with just Somali and Kenyan migrants in order to more sensitively frame the salient differences and similarities between these two nationality groups. The participants live in sizeable urban locations in the Yorkshire & Humber region of northern England. These locations were chosen due to the relative paucity of studies of African migrants in this region in comparison to other metropolitan areas. As such, the urban locations are

[3] The key informant interviews, the focus groups and a portion of the biographical interviews were carried out in English whilst the remainder of the biographical interviews were conducted in the first language of the participant with an appropriately trained interpreter.
[4] All of these key informants were senior personnel in their respective organisations.
[5] These four African communities were selected based upon their countries of origin being former British colonies or protectorates and their numbers and settlement patterns within the Yorkshire and Humber region.

large enough to be home to a number of nationality and faith-based community groups, but of course at a lower density in comparison to London. Kenyan migration has a long standing history in the UK; originally this population in the UK contained mostly students but due to unrest in Kenya post-1980 more families moved for employment and settled in the UK, with certain urban areas in Yorkshire and the Humber known to be key destinations (IOM 2006a:12). The history of Somali migration is also lengthy (Somali seamen came to work in the British Merchant Navy from the early 20th century) with a high occurrence of three generation families in the region. This population constitutes the majority of Muslim families in this study's sample and was also chosen for its diverse migration paths. Somalis originally moved for employment (industrial work in the 1950s/60s), followed by increasing numbers coming as refugees from the 1990s onwards (due to civil war) to more recent waves of secondary migration from other EU countries that have swelled numbers over the last 10 years (IOM 2006b).

The project carried out 20 biographical interviews within 10 families of Somali and Kenyan origin; one parent and one child generation interview in each family, but the focus of this paper is only on the parent/first generation migrants (see Waite and Cook 2010 for further intergenerational analysis). Three focus groups were also conducted within the two communities, organised by gender and age where appropriate. All of the first generation participants in this study have lived in Britain for at least five years[6], with the longest period of residence being 40 years, and their ages range from 40-60s. The first generation migrants have come to Britain via a range of migration paths; refugees, family joiners following a lead migrant's successful asylum application, students who later receive work permits, economic migrants coming to fulfil specific labour market opportunities such as health workers in the NHS, and via EU citizenship gained through an asylum application on the continent followed by secondary migration to the UK. As such the participants

[6] This was to eliminate very new migrants from the sample; 5 years was deemed to be a reasonable length of time to experience life in new communities and the broad policy environment.

have a variety of residency and citizenship statuses; these will be elaborated upon where relevant in the following paper[7].

2: Citizenship into 21st century Britain

A significant part of the story of evolving citizenship conceptualisations is related to migration as this has had profound effects on citizenship as both an institution and a practice. As Stasuilis (2008, p. 134) states, "migration is a force that splinters, spatially disperses and complicates citizenship". Migration trends pose a challenge to traditional Westphalian notions of national citizenship that were originally envisaged as a set of exclusionary rights that established claims to collective resources in territorially-bound nation-states (Isin and Tuner 2007). As Isin (2002) has argued, in this historic sense citizenship was a mark of belonging and commitment to a specific place and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship were performed in this rooted civic context. The migration of people fractures this assumption. Enhanced movement of people across the globe has increasingly questioned the integrity of a bounded nation-state with its corollary notion of bounded citizenship.

It is such questioning that led many scholars in the 1990s to suggest that citizenship is losing its importance as a political concept due to patterns and processes of globalisation and migration. Notable here is Soysal (1994) who suggested that 'postnational citizenship' increasingly exists for migrants as their rights depend much less on a nation-state's articulation of citizenship. Although Soysal's central thread of postnational citizenship has provoked much critique (e.g. Hansen 1998, Schuster and Solomos 2002), the thesis heralded a stream of literature exploring the experiences of citizenship among migrants in a quintessentially globalised era. In recognition that neither migrants'

[7] The data is referenced in square brackets to retain the anonymity of the respondent. Key informant codes are as follows; national migration enforcement agency (KI1), regional migration partnership organisation (KI2), national migrant advocacy organisations (KI3, KI4). In the quotes the abbreviation R refers to 'respondent' and I to 'interviewer', and three square bracketed ellipsis dots are used to indicate that a few words have been edited to remove repetitions or to clarify the meanings of confused speech.

social, political and economic existence nor the practices of states are any longer contained within state boundaries, literature in this field became increasingly refracted through transnational and diasporic optics. A consensus that the nation was increasingly de-territorialising across state boundaries led to the emergence of concepts such as 'flexible citizenship' (Ong 1999), 'instrumental citizenship' (Ip *et al.* 1997), 'multi-layered citizenship' (Yuval-Davis 1999, 2000) and 'hybrid citizenship' (Stasuilis 2004).

Such literature, although distinctive in certain regards, all challenges "an older topography in which territoriality was dominant" (Amin *et al.* 2003, p. 6) and draws upon the central notion of citizenship being rescaled above the nation-state (Desforges *et al.* 2005). Citizenship is arguably now increasingly defined and articulated through engagement with different scales of political authority and with a range of other social identities. We therefore see, for example, notions of 'global citizenship' and 'European citizenship' and the regular appearance of new transnational citizenships based on ethnic, cultural or religious identities promoted by diasporic communities or faith groups. Such multiple and transnational citizenships were once anathema to the nation-state system but are now increasingly common place; for instance there are now many examples of dual or multiple citizenships where membership is shared between two or more nation-states (Baubock 1994, Bloemraad 2004).

Some of the literature that follows Soysal's postnationalism appears to place citizenship in this period of global interconnectedness on an almost 'ethereal plane' (Stausilis 2008) above nation-states and territories. Extensive migration is suggested to have caused citizenship to have become an unbounded concept that is variously postnational, postmodern and de-territorialised. Such de-centering of the nation-state from the practices and processes of citizenship, however, has provoked much criticism (Kofman 2002). Stasuilis (2008) argues that citizenship is indeed being loosened and pluralised with migration, but stops short of concluding that this means we must abandon the ties

between citizenship and a bounded nation-state. A more accurate imagery perhaps is to think about the "pluralisation and respatialisation of citizenship" (Stasuilis 2008, p. 134) through the lens of transnationalism without disregarding the influence of the nation-state. Jones and MacLeod (2004) similarly argue that although new forms of transnational relational networks have become increasingly important in recent years, they suggest the persistent significance of territorially bounded places in constituting the realities of contemporary citizenship.

There is another important element to this brief charting of changing citizenship conceptualisations that emerges in Western neoliberal contexts in the 21st century. Soysal's postnationalism ideas critically appeared before the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA that heralded what many commentators refer to as a new era of state-led securitisation (Furedi 2002, 2005, Butler 2004). Soysal's arguments broadly hinge on the postulated *reduced* significance of the nation-state, but the terrorist activities of the early part of the 21st century (e.g. USA in 2001, Bali in 2002, Madrid in 2004, London in 2005) have led to many Western neoliberal states *re-asserting* their roles around an interventionist security agenda. Within the last decade 'security' has emerged as a central preoccupation of many governments with the associated term of 'securitization' being commonly employed (Buzan *et al.* 1998). States are increasingly creating a broad 'security continuum' (Bigo 1994) that stretches from terrorism to action against crime and includes migratory flows (Walters 2004, Amoore 2006, Staeheli and Nagel 2008). Many states are therefore promoting the maintenance of security as their principal contribution to the functioning of society; and immigration policies are inextricably entwined in this agenda. Within the British context the United Kingdom Borders Agency (UKBA[8]) is at the forefront of this securitization agenda and the 'tracking' of migrants is central to their work:

[8] The UK Border Agency is an agency of the Home Office. It is a global organisation with 25,000 staff - including more than 9,000 warranted officers - operating in local communities, at the UK's borders and across 135 countries worldwide.

I think terrorism clearly has an impact, and the public's perception of terrorism has a very significant impact because the public and ministers want to know that people coming into the country are coming in with positive intentions to contribute to society not the intention to damage society. [KI1, national migration enforcement agency]

In many countries citizenship had arguably become a somewhat 'thin' concept in the latter half of the twentieth century (Joppke 2004). Yet a consequence of enhanced 'migration securitization' amid the more general securitization agenda outlined above has been the attempt to bolster the formal institution of citizenship (with its rights and responsibilities) within the immigration landscape and tie it more explicitly to notions of civic integration and *belonging* through social cohesion policies (see section 3). At a broad brush level, states argue (or at the least, imply) that the integrity of the nation state and its security can only be assured if migration flows and migrants themselves are closely controlled and monitored; and citizenship policies are emerging as important elements of this control agenda (Gilbert, 2007)[9]. It is this active *managerialist* approach to migration (Kofman 2005) that has increasingly been characterising British immigration policies as the UK border security and immigration system has recently undergone the biggest shake-up for 45 years[10] (CLG 2008: 10) to leave a system of control and surveillance that is graphically depicted through the quote below:

They [British government] provided inflated assurances that migration could be kept under control in a highly detailed way. That when people were admitted into the country they'd know their names, they'd know their biometrics, they'd know exactly where they were going to be living, they'd be directed towards particular jobs with very specific employment

[9] It is important to point out that attainment of full British citizenship (naturalisation) is not achieved by all migrants; either because the migrant doesn't fulfil citizenship requirements or they actively choose not to pursue the lengthy (and expensive) British citizenship acquisition (see section 4). Yet the broader policy of 'pathways to citizenship' is closely linked to immigration policies as it covers all the different immigration statuses subsequent to point of entry. This leaves a landscape of control and monitoring of migrants up to potential citizenship acquisition being implicated when the state talks of pathways to citizenship.

[10] The two most significant policies of this shake-up are the new Points Based System and the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Act 2009.

contracts, they'd be kept under high levels of surveillance while they were here and the minute they stepped out of line then the state would reach in, grab hold of them chuck them out. The circumstances in which they would be allowed long-term residence would be highly policed, highly controlled. [KI3,national migrant advocacy organisation]

We are therefore in the position in Britain, as Kofman (2005, p. 464) succinctly states, where "the nation-state continues to frame the exercise of citizenship and difference for migrants" due to citizenship being increasingly differentiated by mobility and associated hierarchies of transnational status (Gilbert 2007). Such 'neoliberalization of citizenship' (Sparke 2006) leaves UKBA as an organisation primarily focused upon tracking, surveillance and enforcement:

You can try and understand migration better but they [UKBA] are not really an organisation that is into understanding migration. They worry more about enforcement. [KI2, regional migration partnership organisation]

We are clear that if the deal is you come and you have a period of study or work, that's something we will <u>enforce</u> where we possibly can so if we meet people through our regular visits, people who are not meant to be here we'll take action to deport them. [...] I think there's a balance to be struck between increasing the freedom to be able to travel and making sure that the people that travel into the UK are coming with the right intentions and following the deal when you come in, which is that you come in on terms that are agreed before you do so and you leave again. So I think <u>it's not just the coming but it's also the going that matters</u>. [KI1, national migration enforcement agency, my emphasis]

Several of the key informants in this research were concerned that such a focus on enforcement was symptomatic of the scaling up of migration management from civil society to a much more centrist

state involvement that leaves one key informant characterising government discourse as "*xenophobic, bureaucratic, public relations management style*" [KI4, national migrant advocacy organisation][11]. This key informant observes:

> *It is said [by government policies] that British society has no capacity at the level of civil interactions to be able to generate policies and solutions to the inevitable frictions of migration. And that everything has to be handled by a highly centralised system. Paradoxically this doesn't provide the assurance that the government felt that they were providing, it actually hikes up the paranoia when people are being told, you know, identity cards and Crimestopper telephone numbers to report 'suspicious people' and so on. [...] We basically call for civil servants and policy makers to resist the paranoid control agenda, and to insist that there are other social objectives that need to be pursued through immigration policy, other than just mechanisms for arresting and detaining and deporting migrants. [KI3, national migrant advocacy organisation]*

Within such a policy and institutional context, British citizenship for migrants is becoming ever-more *conditional* on fulfilling multiple rules and conditions of entry, work and residence. Britain has constructed a vast edifice of civic stratification (Kofman 2002, Morris 2002) which streams migrants into specific categories and awards differential rights and contingent access to citizenship; even those migrants not intending/unable to undergo naturalisation feel the monitoring and control agenda of the Government acutely. Such immigration policies are thought to complicate the landscape not only for people working in the field but also for members of the public:

[11] Echoing this assertion of a xenophobic surveillance environment, is a recent May 2011 report by the UKBA Chief Inspector John Vine which reports that UKBA receives a substantial 2,100 allegations of potential immigration offences per week from members of the public; demonstrating significant appetite among a population fed on immigration fear to report perceived transgressors (see http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/independent-chief-inspector-publishes-report-on-intelligence/)

> *It's hard enough for people who are professionals to understand the intricacies of the different levels of status and the different groups. The public are never going to grasp it. All they see is people living here who didn't used to live here and they look a bit different, they speak a bit different. [KI2, regional migration partnership organisation]*

An integral part of the resurgence of citizenship in a post-9/11 migration securitisation era has been the extent to which *belonging* has been increasingly linked to citizenship; and it is to this relationship that the next section now turns.

3: The demand to belong

The notion of belonging[12] has recently become politically salient in Britain as ideas of *citizenship* have increasingly mobilised the concept. The previous section's outlining of an era of 'migration securitisation' is critical here. As Anthias (2006, p. 17) suggests, "[c]urrent debates around borders, security and social cohesion have reinforced the importance of engaging critically with the notion of belonging and its centrality to people's lives as well as political practice". It is such a political landscape of securitisation where the relationship between citizenship and belonging comes sharply into focus. We are at a particular historical juncture in Britain where the state is increasingly stipulating that "migrants may enter and settle on condition that they fulfil specific obligations and *ways of belonging*" (Kofman 2005, p. 454, my emphasis). Hence we have been witnessing the Labour Government's assertion that strong national belonging for migrants is critical to their settlement, integration and participation in civic life (Laurence and Heath 2008). The strategy of 'managed migration' therefore emerged because the Labour Government was increasingly preoccupied with

[12] Definitions of belonging vary due to it being invoked in many realms (Mee and Wright 2009), but belonging is perhaps most commonly described with regard to a 'sense of belonging' and an exploration of 'feelings of being in place'; for example Anthias (2006, p. 21) says that belonging is about the ways in which, "social place has resonances with stability of the self, or with feelings of being part of a larger whole and with the emotional and social bonds that are related to such places".

notions of national identity and social cohesion; and the early signs since May 2010 are that the new Coalition Government is continuing with a broad framework of restrictive managed migration in their efforts to enhance integration and counter perceived segregation (see, for example, BBC 2011). Events such as the urban disturbances in northern England in 2001 are seen as critical threats to national security. There has been policy-maker concern that such destabilising events are occurring due to the fragilities of nationhood (Lewis and Neal 2005) and migrants feeling senses of *non*-belonging to the nation which lead to an erosion of social cohesion and the blocking of good relations between diverse people resident in same place[13]. It is important to note of course that the demand for social cohesion (which as a term, rather like integration and segregation, has multiple political and scholarly meanings ; Phillips 2007, Simpson et al 2007) is also directed towards deemed marginalised and disenfranchised citizens (who may or may not once have been migrants themselves) and not only newcomers; but my focus in this paper is on the implications of the demand to belong for first generation migrants.

The harmonious 'rubbing-along' of diverse peoples within the same communities/neighbourhoods is of course a broad definition of multiculturalism. Yet many commentators suggest that we are now witnessing Britain, with its historic commitment to multiculturalism, *retreating* from such a policy position and instead pursuing neo-assimilationist agendas (e.g. Home Office 2002, 2003, 2005, see also Sveinsson 2010 and Cameron's (2011) recent pronouncement that 'multiculturalism is dead'[14]). Britain's concern regarding the integration and cohesion of its diverse populations appears to be manifesting in a set of policies designed to promote a core national identity around a set of

[13] This is despite the comprehensive refuting of Trevor Phillips' infamous 'sleepwalking into segregation' statement in 2005 by researchers such as Finney and Simpson (2009) who report an increase in ethnic mixing, greater tolerance in social attitudes and more mixed-ethnicity friendship groups among diverse communities in Britain since 2001.

[14] Berkeley (2011), of Runnymede Trust, usefully points out that Cameron's pronouncement is unhelpful not least in how it confuses the policy agenda of multiculturalism (interpreted by Cameron as the promotion of separate religious and ethnic identities at the expense of common values) with the grounded understanding of multiculturalism for most people; which is that it allows for the recognition of different identities in a shared political space within a framework of human rights.

irreducible values that are deemed to be emblematic of British society. And with regard to migrants, it is *citizenship* that is frequently being placed centre stage in the state's desire to cultivate national belonging and good relations amongst its communities (Isin and Turner 2007). Indeed, some commentators go further than this and argue that citizenship policies in Britain have been explicitly *designed* precisely *in order* to govern populations (Tyler 2010).

Citizenship was therefore particularly used in the sunset years of the Labour Government as a tool to galvanise and encourage migrants' feelings of belonging to a unitary nation. The demand to belong to a singular national identity was the unambiguous message, and the citizenship and immigration discourse made it implicitly clear that the British Government saw migrants as a group who may embody diluted senses of national loyalty due to transnational and diasporic belongings. The Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Act 2009 under Labour built on the Green Paper 'The Path to Citizenship' (Home Office 2008) and both were couched in notions of 'Britishness' (Ward 2004). The Act and document encompassed a suite of policies around citizenship that demonstrated a more centrist, civic direction of policy and encapsulated the demand for *loyalty* to Britain (Joppke 2004) in the hope that this enhanced social cohesion (Rimmer 2008):

> *Only the migrants who are prepared to commit themselves to a sort of pre-defined notion of 'Britishness' will be allowed to stay in the long-term. [KI3, national migrant advocacy organisation]*

Hence hopeful new British citizens have to fulfil English language requirements, take a citizenship test and undergo a citizenship ceremony with an allegiance oath. The message was clear – national citizenship is the route to belong to Britain (Fortier 2005), and a sense of shared national belonging was increasingly demanded of particularly new (but also some established) citizens in the interests of community cohesion. Galvanising a sense of shared national belonging and promoting 'good

relations' among community members is also a concern of the new Coalition Government with their mooted ideas such as the introduction of National Citizen Service, a new national 'UK day' and 'Big Society' projects. These ideas must, of course, be seen in a neoliberal framework of aggressive public service cuts and the 'utility' to the state of greater public involvement in front line service provision (see also Jessop 2002 on neocommunitarianism within governance). Rhetoric on 'good relations' and community cohesion should further be critiqued in the light of emerging literature from the geographies of encounter field (e.g. Laurier et al 2002, Amin 2006) that explores notions of prejudice in encounters and questions whether socially lubricating *conduct* between people always shapes underlying *beliefs* in broadly defined 'positive' or cohesive ways (Valentine 2008, Valentine and Waite 2011).

The emphasis of citizenship has thus shifted from a framework of rights to one of responsibilities and obligations where migrant rights have become conditional upon acceptance of national values and loyalty to the state (Kofman 2005). The responsibilities inherent within citizenship are clearly articulated here:

> *I think the really key factor is understanding what being a citizen of the UK means and what the responsibilities are. [KI1, national migration enforcement agency, my emphasis]*

The mapping out of these responsibilities became ever clearer in Britain through the aforementioned 'The Path to Citizenship' (Home Office 2008). The document detailed the concepts of 'probationary'[15] and 'earned citizenship' and it was made explicit that migrants should *earn* the right to progress between the stages of this pathway; a perspective that is echoed here:

[15] Sveinsson (2010) notes that 'probationary citizenship' is actually a contradiction in terms as citizenship in liberal democracies confers certain rights, so if these are lacking it is no longer appropriate to talk of citizenship. 'Probationary citizenship' would thus amount to second-class citizenship which is generally regarded as a violation of human rights.

It's a way of being able to establish a path to citizenship. Anything that makes it clearer, anything that clarifies the route to citizenship, a path to citizenship has to be a good thing and if we believe that making an economic contribution to the country is important and that can get you a speedy right to citizenship or volunteering - you know another important link into citizenship, making a contribution to communities - I think they're good things and I agree with them. Anything that lays down the path and helps people understand how to achieve citizenship. [...] It also gives you the chance to double check that the people that we're granting citizenship to are people who have behaved well while they've been here thus earning their right to citizenship. [KI1, national migration enforcement agency, my emphasis]

The last part of this quote that dwells on the *behaviour* of would-be citizens is linked to the underlying sentiment in 'The Path to Citizenship'; the assumption that potential citizens are undeserving and suspect by default thus justifying as *reasonable* the requirement for them to prove their worthiness and commitment to Britain (Sveinsson 2010). The above ringing endorsement of Labour policy is unsurprisingly heavily critiqued by other key informants in this research who were concerned that excessive managerialism within the new citizenship policies was designed to exclude and expel rather than to include and integrate; a hoop-jumping landscape littered with banana-skins ready to trip up would-be citizens:

The business of becoming a British citizen has become one of selection and policing and monitoring migration flows; increasing the capacity of the decision makers to say no, increasing the range of tests that are going to be imposed on migrants and increasing enforcement powers. If they say no to you at any part of the stage, then irrespective of the fact that you might have brought your family over and that your kids have been in school for the last 4, 5, 6 years, then that's it, you know, you've reach your limits and you're expected to leave the country. [KI3, national migrant advocacy organisation]

A particularly vexatious element of the Path to Citizenship document for critics was the proposal for prospective citizens to earn an accelerated route to citizenship through demonstrating 'active community participation':

> *This business of assessing participation levels is now part of the state sanctioned business of becoming a British citizen. The participation of the migrant is going to be commented on - migrants need to be able to demonstrate that they are making a positive contribution. [...] Everything becomes over politicised at every single stage, both from the point of view of the migrants but also from the perspective of the people who are supposed to be over-seeing it, voluntary organisations and so on, but nobody really even knows what it is. [KI3, national migrant advocacy organisation]*

There was consternation that new citizens were being asked to prove their worth above and beyond what is required of British citizens, concern as to how active community participation will be assessed, and also alarm that appropriate allowances weren't going to be made for people who are already heavily consumed in family and work spheres (MRCF & MRN 2010). The post-May 2010 new Government recently announced, however, that it is not in favour of Labour's policy of making migrants 'earn' British citizenship through compulsory voluntary work. The coalition Government clearly wishes to distance itself from the so-called 'active citizenship' part of Labour's policies, but an overall framework of tough and restrictive immigration policies (aggressive attempts to reduce net immigration and potential routes to permanent residence/citizenship) seem here to stay, at least in the short to medium-term. The focus in this section has been on how the political 'demand to belong' to the nation has become increasingly stitched into the fabric of contemporary British citizenship discourses. The next section will move on to exploring whether this demand to belong resonates for one of the main groups the policy discourse aims to influence; transnational migrants.

4: Feelings of belonging among transnational migrants

How does the previously described prescriptive citizenship pathway and growing expectation for undivided loyalty to national cultures and polities fit with transnational migrants' feelings of belonging? It is often the case that transnational migrants have multi-positioned relationships to different locales on account of their migratory journeys from a source to a destination area, the likely network of social, symbolic and material ties retained to their homelands, and the newer sets of social relations formed in a current place of residence. Migrants are therefore commonly observed to experience *simultaneity* in their feelings of belonging to different places (Wilson and Peters 2005) as a result of being 'here and there' and 'straddling worlds' (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003). In recognition of these potentially complex sets of relationships across at least two locales, it is suggested that migrant groups embody a, "shifting landscape of belonging and identity" that is, "tied to a globalised and transnational social fabric rather than one bounded by the nation-state form" (Anthias 2006, p. 25, see also Massey and Jess 1995). Some of the Kenyan migrants in this research described such experiences as 'inbetween-ness':

> *"Because merely being here and working here, living here – I'm British, but still I have very strong feelings that I belong there [Kenya] ... so I'm between." [Kenyan, father]*

> *"I say maybe transiency, I feel in between. It's half way through." [Kenyan, mother]*

These respondents have lived in the UK for fairly lengthy periods of 6 and 9 years, yet they still feel strong emotional attachments to Kenya. Such narratives that partly promote country of origin identities echo Ehrkamp's (2006) findings that Turkish migrants in Germany feel 'cynical and resistant' towards unilateral expectations of assimilation. This taps into policy makers' fears;

anxieties that such distanciated senses of place-attachment will necessarily compromise the ability of transnational migrants to feel strong affinities to host nations (Werbner 2002). Yet it is questionable whether such transnational ties unequivocally eliminate *all* senses of belonging to country of residence (see also Hickman *et al.* 2008):

> *R: Being Somali, that's who you are, that's really what you are - Somali. [...] Being British and living here - it's a different thing. Well if you see, my life, I think it belongs more to England than Somalia. I think that that's important to me because my children are English. [Somali, father]*

It is interesting in the above quote that the respondent uses 'British' when describing an 'official' identifier, but slips into using the term 'English' when describing senses of belonging that are perhaps more meaningfully constructed and less oriented around unitary state discourses with respect to national (British) identity. Staeheli & Nagel (2006, p. 1612) found in a U.S. context that the, "multivalent nature of home – incorporating material and metaphorical spaces – did not weaken attachment to the United States for many respondents. Rather, it seemed as though the multiple locations of home in some ways enriched respondents' sense of Americanness." Sveinsson's (2010) research likewise revealed no inherent contradiction in belonging to more than one place as this should not be necessarily seen as a rejection of the host society and its values but rather the possibility of embracing both host and sending societies.

Further, attachments can be formed at a variety of scales in a host society aside from the national level and throughout different aspects of identities. This research, for example, revealed that Somalis particularly claim Islamic identities in preference to racial, ethnic or national identities. Such asserted Muslim subject positions allowed attachments to place-based faith communities in the UK even if there is an active problematisation of prescribed cultural membership of hegemonic and top-

down notions of 'Britishness' (i.e. an identity perceived by some to be refracted primarily through 'whiteness'). Stretched and plurilocal attachments can therefore be seen as being reconcilable and compatible with notions of simultaneous territorialised belonging for some (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006); but localised belonging frequently fails to intersect with top-down notions of unitary 'Britishness'.

Feelings of non-belonging can emerge not only from stretched belongings conflicting with state demands for undivided national loyalties, but also through more prosaic feelings of exclusion in everyday spheres. Indeed, Anthias (2006, p. 21) says that, "[A]sking 'where do I belong?' may be prompted by a feeling that there are a range of spaces, places, locales and identities that we feel we do not, and cannot, belong to. [...] To belong is to share values, networks and practices and it is not just a question of identification." These respondents elaborate:

> *R: We do feel fairly foreign. We don't feel like we belong.*
>
> *I: Are you made to feel foreign by people here?*
>
> *R: I think it's more us than them. You feel you are foreign. Non-verbal or verbal. You just kind of feel it. [Kenyan, father]*

> *As much as I would like to see myself as a British person, the wider society doesn't see me as that as well. Yeah, but when they see me walking the street, you know they say 'oh, there's another foreigner', 'a refugee', that's how the community labels you, that's the impression, 'another Somali, another refugee'. [Somali, mother]*

These feelings of (non)acceptance and (non)belonging may be further shaped by more tangible experiences of exclusion. It is well known that citizenship and immigration statuses can shape experiences of inclusion/exclusion through migrants being streamed into specific categories and

receiving differential rights and contingent access to citizenship. A particularly vulnerable group are asylum seekers and refugees (Dwyer 2005, Brown 2008) and participants in this study who came to Britain under this migration pathway (most of the Somali sample; and as indicated in the above quote, Somalis are often *perceived* as asylum seekers by the wider population even if they are not) tended to feel more social exclusion than migrants who came as students, economic migrants or family joiners (most of the Kenyan sample). Yet it would be misleading to suggest that such experiences were *only* manifest in the lives of the Somali asylum seekers and refugees; sadly discrimination and prejudice were encountered in some guise by most participants in this study and variously articulated feelings of non-belonging emerged[16]. The arenas in which this was encountered crossed employment spheres, educational places and everyday neighbourhood spaces. The perceived 'reasons' for discrimination varied from skin colour to religious association and to more general feelings of being identified as the 'other' with the associated presumption of non-belonging. This quote from a Kenyan participant reveals such racialized fear and prejudice (Naber 2006) derived from his different skin colour and accent:

> *What I want to say is that there are very subtle reasons, it's not overt, it's covert. When I speak and my colour, so those are two levels you know. A man who wants to be biased against other people has a way of looking for ways of excluding others. [Kenyan, father]*

Several respondents chimed with the above suggestion of covert prejudice being experienced in mundane and everyday ways. Migrants said that feelings of non-belonging can be communicated to them by majority population groups in quite subtle ways; perhaps just through the way people look at them. Particular feelings of exclusion were reported by Somali Muslim participants in this

[16] Similarly, Sveinsson's (2010) research involving 11 small-scale community studies found that most migrants experienced widespread prejudice and discrimination through deskilling, exploitation and unequal treatment in the labour market.

research to be a result of Islamophobia and the damaging effects of such religious intolerance since the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. and the 7/7 London bombings (Staeheli and Nagel 2008):

> *Some people are ignorant. When I used to work at the bakery some people asked why I wear it [a headscarf]. What is to do with them? The clothes I wear don't stop me doing a job. 'Maybe it is too hot for you?' they say. People are ignorant. They judge without knowing you. We should be free to do what we want. But when it comes to work your appearance is seen as different because of the scarf. [Somali, mother]*

Ahmed (2004) engages with the emotions of cultural politics to show that the British nation is portrayed as an object of love; a discourse that citizens and residents of Britain alike are expected to subscribe to. Those not able to engage in this emotional discourse of national belonging (not desiring to due to transnational belongings, not being 'allowed' to due to persistent messages of exclusion, or a combination of both), perhaps most often migrants and people of 'difference', may therefore experience the emotions of non-belonging and dislocation that are encapsulated through the above series of quotes. The important point to emerge is that feelings of belonging are unlikely to be dictated entirely by the individual claiming to belong, but will also be influenced by that claim of belonging being recognised or legitimated by a wider community; as Anthias (2006, p. 19) says, "[T]o belong is to be accepted as part of a community".

This section has so far shown how Somali and Kenyan migrants' stretched belongings can lead to an unwillingness and/or inability to subscribe to a singular notion of 'Britishness'; this may combine with experiences of prejudice and discrimination which can compound feelings of dis-location from both local spaces and national polities. How do these potential multiple exclusions shape the way migrants come to negotiate the practices and processes of citizenship? Over the last decade, the policy environment around immigration has made it quite clear that citizenship acquisition, and the

journey towards it, should be a unifying experience that enhances a sense of belonging to Britain. Does this in fact play out in the lives of participants in this study? Here there is a notable difference in sentiments between the Somali and Kenyan participants in this research due to different migration pathways. Many of the first generation Somali participants entered Britain under the asylum route before gaining refugee status, and later British citizenship. This group of migrants therefore spoke of the significant security that comes with naturalisation and the legal protections of citizenship that led them to feel less vulnerable to infringements of immigration law (see also Staeheli and Nagel 2008). Many of the non-asylum route Kenyan respondents in this research, however, demonstrate a relatively unemotional engagement with citizenship; some disregard the importance of applying for citizenship as long as a work permit and leave to remain are assured, whilst others pragmatically apply for British citizenship for the travel ease and access to visas it affords them:

> *At the moment I have Kenyan citizenship. As long as you have a work permit it doesn't make any difference. [Kenyan, mother]*

> *The British aspect of us is a convenience thing. I mean we all want British passports not because it's all wonderful but because of the conveniences that it gives you. I don't want to be stood on long queues in New York because I'm from Kenya so if I can help it let me get a British passport where I don't have to negotiate to go to the Embassy. [Kenyan, father]*

Such an instrumental approach to the acquisition of British citizenship chimes with Mavroudi's (2008:307) notion of 'pragmatic citizenship' that, "highlight[s] the strategic element of migrant/diasporic citizenship acquisition that enables and allows for multiple feelings of belonging that are positioned at particular times/spaces for particular reasons". Pragmatic citizenship may be driven and shaped also by the feelings of non-belonging detailed above which leave some Kenyan

respondents separating the holding of a British passport from actually *feeling* they belong to Britain; an outcome that stands in stark contrast to what the Labour Government hoped its policies would have achieved:

> *I really don't see myself as being British at all and I have lived in Britain for 6 years but I really strongly don't see myself as British. I mean you can live here and stuff but you can never really be truly British and you'll always be reminded that. [...] While I'm here even if I got a British passport and people ask me what I am I'd say I'm still a Kenyan because that's who I am, I am a product of where I'm from, I'm Kenyan. [Kenyan, father]*

British naturalisation is therefore viewed by most Kenyan respondents in this study as distinct from feelings of belonging to the nation, or 'Britishness'; "*Yeah according to nationality I'm British, but I'm still Maasai*" *[Kenyan, mother]*. The earlier parts of this paper showed that state neo-assimilationist discourses link citizenship to understandings of belonging to the British nation; Kenyan respondents in this research in particular reveal that such understandings are rather narrowly construed in terms of their everyday lives and most feel unwilling and/or unable to emotionally subscribe to a national polity in the way the state has urged.

Overall, this section has illustrated that attempts to galvanise feelings of belonging to Britain for transnational migrants are perhaps a little more complicated than the Labour Government imagined; and that the new Coalition Government also appears to be imagining according to early indications. A centrally imposed notion of Britishness seems not to have the desired effect of encouraging unitary emotional belonging to the nation (Ahmed 2004) among transnational migrants in this research due to complex sets of relationships across at least two locales and mundane prejudice leading to feelings of non-belonging at a variety of scales. The concluding section will

suggest that this context frames the often troublesome relationship that transnational migrants in Britain have with 21st century imposed articulations of Britishness.

5: Conclusion

This paper has explored what the UK's immigration and citizenship policies and their increasingly neo-assimilationist articulation of national belonging mean for transnational migrants living in Britain. The paper began by charting the evolving nature of citizenship conceptualisations in Western neoliberal contexts and illustrated how Britain has responded to this shifting landscape. A large part of this story is set against the backdrop of enhanced 'migration securitization' amid a more general post-9/11 securitization landscape that has resulted in widespread societal *fear* (Furedi 2002, 2005); not only against external threats, but also implicitly framed as a fear of encounters with 'different' individuals. The state argues, or at the very least implies, that the integrity of the nation state and its security can only be assured if migration flows and migrants themselves (as emblematic of such 'difference') are closely controlled and monitored. Extensive immigration policies are a key manifestation of the securitization agenda, and in Britain this is tied to attempts to bolster the formal institution of citizenship (with its attendant rights and responsibilities) and make more explicit links to notions of belonging to the nation. An active *managerialist* approach to migration (Kofman 2005) has therefore come to characterise British immigration policies as the state is increasingly preoccupied with forging national identity and social cohesion. Implicit within this neo-assimilationist agenda is the Government's incorporation of notions of *belonging* within the policy landscape of citizenship. The message is that certain 'ways of belonging' for migrants are critical to their settlement, integration and participation in civic life. Although a discussion in this paper of policy *effects* in respect of new and evolving policies is necessarily partial; the insights of the key informants in sections 2 and 3 of the paper are beginning to illustrate that these policies are breeding an environment that sometimes borders on the paranoid and appears to implicitly suggest

a separation of 'us' from 'them' (Staeheli and Nagel 2008) with an associated fear of the 'other'. This has seamlessly led to successive Governments' claims that migrant populations need to be closely monitored and managed.

The UK state desires transnational migrants' senses of belonging to cohere with state discourse; to feel an uncomplicated attachment to the nation and subscribe to a unitary British identity. Yet the findings of this paper, in part 4, demonstrate that transnational migrants' feelings of belonging often exist in tension with neo-assimilationist policies designed to promote a core national identity. Transnational migrants commonly experience *simultaneity* in their feelings of belonging to different places (Wilson and Peters 2005) as a result of being 'here and there' and 'straddling worlds' (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003). This leaves them unable to unilaterally identify as 'British' or to feel singular emotional belonging to the nation (Ahmed 2004). Compounding this is the mundane prejudice and discrimination routinely experienced by the Somali and Kenyan migrants in this research which often leaves senses of exclusion from local spaces and associated alienation from imposed notions of Britishness. In terms of naturalisation and engagement with the neo-assimilationist overtones of citizenship acquisition; most Kenyan respondents in particular view formal citizenship pragmatically (if they desire it at all) and feel either disinclined or unable to emotionally identify with a national identity in the way that Government citizenship policies urge.

In sum, and following Ho (2009), this paper urges greater theoretical attention to the ways in which citizenship – and, to which I would also add; belonging (Waite and Cook 2010) - are constituted through emotions. In particular, scholars should not only explore how migrants' emotional subjectivities emerge in response to citizenship governance (Ho 2009, p.789), but also countenance the possibility that transnational migrant emotional subjectivities may develop *in spite* of state neo-assimilationist invocations of national belonging within overarching frameworks of 'neoliberal citizenship' (Sparke 2006). The governance of transnational migrants has been shown in this paper

to be challenging for successive Governments. From the perspective of the state's preoccupation with cultivating national belonging in the interests of promoting integration and social cohesion; transnational migrants can be seen as troublesome in that they embody distanciated belongings. Their resulting tenuous links to national belonging arise because transnational migrants often don't *wish* to emotionally engage in a national project of unitary Britishness due to their transnational positionalities, and/or they may feel *debarred* from such an identity due to persistent social exclusions at the everyday scale. This paper has shown that the climate of paranoia surrounding the integration of migrants in a securitization era (Butler 2004) leaves a mismatch between the emotional belonging the state *wants* transnational migrants to feel to the nation, and that which participants in this study *actually* feel in terms of their multi-scaled and multi-positioned belongings.

Yet a final point of this paper is that although current state rhetoric around citizenship and belonging is in discordance with many transnational migrants' grounded experiences; such differently situated belongings should not be perceived as a *threat* to social cohesion. The current Government would do well to retreat from the emergent 'neuropolitics' (Isin 2004) of the 21st century and embrace a more inclusive and relaxed acceptance of migrants' translocal belongings. These feelings may not cohere with current state discourse that requires strong senses of national belonging, yet they contribute to - rather than detract from - the grounded reality that multiple belongings enable transnational migrants to feel a certain 'comfort' (Noble 2005) of living in Britain. This in turn leads to what Giddens (1990) calls 'ontological security' or an emerging trust and integration in one's surroundings and communities; something the British Government is surely working towards as an end-game.

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