

The role of superdiverse home country cities in helping migrants negotiate life in superdiverse host country cities

Abstract

Global cities and megacities are locales where (super)diversity is experienced in a condensed form. Their social textures are in permanent evolution; they are constructed, deconstructed, and reinvented by their constantly changing inhabitants. Cities constitute spaces where largely identical lifestyles, ‘modes of behaviour’, and ‘patterns of thought and feeling’ (Giddens and Sutton, 2013: 206-220) can be experienced. In the migration literature, superdiverse *host* country cities, primarily of the global North, are often investigated as destinations of migration, whilst the role of superdiverse *home* country cities, from which migrants arrive and which are often situated in the global South, is rarely considered. This paper draws on findings from a qualitative study on understandings of integration of highly educated Indian migrant women living in the UK, and mainly in London, who prior to moving to the UK had resided in socially, culturally and demographically highly diverse Indian or other cities. It is argued that pre-migration residence in superdiverse cities shapes the ability to negotiate superdiverse host city spaces. In particular, exposure to superdiverse social environments in India in everyday life and the need to deal with them greatly enhances the propensity for acquiring such mental states and pragmatic skills and approaches that can later be used, at least partially, in other superdiverse contexts.

Keywords

City; highly educated; metropolis; migration; superdiversity; urbanism

1. Introduction

Brickell and Datta (2012) posited that the relationship of migrants with spaces as lived and embodied realities of everyday life has not yet been given adequate research focus. Some branches of literature such as transnational urbanism and translocalism do indeed consider simultaneity of material and immaterial connection with spaces and places. Yet, in general they remain grounded in host society and host country city existence. Thus, home country spaces and places, and most importantly that of the city, evade much of the attention of such scholarship, or simply take secondary place among the various types of affiliations of migrants with the same spaces in host societies.

Home is a particularly fluid concept with historically evolving meaning. From the basic idea of being linked to the physical dwelling place of the house (Cuba and Hummon, 1993), home has gradually shifted from being merely a fixed physical space to a more complex multi-dimensional construct (Bowlby et al., 1997), which can ultimately include intricate relationships to both objects (Tolia-Kelly, 2004) and humans (Nowicka, 2007; Datta, 2009). As such, home can be relocated both spatially (including transnationally) and in terms of time (Rouse, 1991; for a more detailed review of the conceptualisation of 'home' in the literature and by the participants in this research, see Author, forthcoming). Yet, these more responsive constructions of home have usually not been adopted by nation states' policymakers. Instead, the oversimplified binaries of 'home country' and 'host country', or 'country of origin' and 'country of destination' have been used to make distinctions between foreign migrants and 'locals' in established, nation-centred policy discourses. Despite the increasing number of studies unsettling these dichotomies, such categorisations have heavily impregnated the transnational migration literature that still importantly uses the optic of methodological

nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). Although the author acknowledges the fluidity of the concepts of *home* and *host*, this article uses the notions in a restricted sense, solely to render the arguments advanced in the paper easier to follow. Thus, for the purpose of the article, ‘host country’ refers to the country where the migrant currently resides (the UK for the participants of this research), while ‘home country’ stands for the country of origin (usually that of birth), as well as countries that may have preceded the current one (in the case of multiple transnational migration trajectories).

This empirically grounded paper investigates the momentous role that *home* country cities play in the dynamics of construing and navigating *host* country city life by transnational migrants. It draws on perceptions of thirty highly educated Indian migrant women living in the UK, and primarily in London, on negotiating such diversities and thus creating meanings. The theme is studied through the analytical optic of superdiversity. As such, the article invites researchers to shift their attention from the abundantly investigated superdiverse *host* country city context towards superdiverse *home* country city spaces. At the same time, as a great number of these cities are situated in the global South, it is argued that superdiverse spaces in the global South, which have received much less attention than their counterparts in the global North, must now be the subject of deeper consideration.

In doing so, the paper purports to make important contributions mainly to the superdiversity and transnationalism strands of the migration literature. First, it aims to link various domains of the literature on superdiversity focusing on global south *locales* characterized by high levels of diversity, which are typically metropolitan areas. Second, it aims to enrich the transnationalism literature as it illuminates the importance

of the lived city experiences of international migrants pre-migration, in particular, as reflecting on the role of navigating superdiverse home country city spaces on host country city life could enhance our understanding of the dynamics associated with transnational migration. Third, the article offers empirically grounded perceptions of highly educated women migrants on the way they negotiate the aforementioned superdiverse realities.

To embed the discussed idea in the wider literature, the article begins with a brief overview of the most relevant strands of the migration scholarship. These comprise the areas of superdiversity (with special regard to superdiversity in relation to the global South), transnationalism, translocalism, and urbanism / the city. Next, the methodological approach of the underlying research will be outlined, forming the basis for the postulations in this paper. This will be followed by two sections dedicated to the differences and similarities of home and host country superdiversities, respectively, grounded chiefly in the participants' narratives. Finally, a perceived strong link between being exposed to, getting used to and negotiating home country city superdiversities and the ability to do the same in the host country superdiverse city context will be suggested.

2. Literature review

The article engages with various strands of the migration literature such as superdiversity, transnationalism and translocalism, with a special focus on the city and lived urbanism. This section revisits relevant aspects of these stances in an attempt to embed the empirically informed insights of highly educated women migrants on navigating diversities that are present in home and host country city environments.

2.1 *Superdiversity*

International migration has intrinsically altered the make-up of host country societies. With the growth in both scale and pace of international and internal migration, already diverse societies have become even more diverse. ‘Diversification of diversity’ (Hollinger, 1995) has become a basic attribute (Padilla et al., 2015), if not the norm, of many host societies and cities. The notion of superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) came into being to recognise the compound and overly diverse realities caused by ‘a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced’, particularly in terms of ‘recently emergent demographic and social patterns’ (Vertovec, 2007: 1024). The concept has been generally used in at least three distinct ways (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015: 542-543): as a descriptive tool, a methodological framework, and as a more pragmatic, policy-oriented approach. The descriptive aspect of superdiversity raises awareness of and acknowledges the highly diverse and constantly changing features of the demographics of certain societies. Superdiversity, as a methodological tool, calls for reconsidering the often used ethno-focal or national analytical lens. It argues for giving more prominence to other variables such as legal statuses or social inequalities that can emerge as similarly powerful tools in shaping individual realities, and thus can enhance understanding of more complex social settings. In relation to the pragmatic aspect of the concept, Meissner and Vertovec invited policy stakeholders to take cognizance of the highly diverse social realities, and to devise social policy tools accordingly (2015: 543). The concept of superdiversity has been used in various areas such as economics (e.g. Ram et al., 2012), law (e.g. Shah, 2009), education (e.g. Cogo, 2012), and health studies (e.g. Phillimore, 2011); however, it has become particularly influential in migration studies.

At its inception, the concept of superdiversity was applied to places situated in the global North. When Vertovec (2007) proposed the concept, he saw London as an eminent example of superdiversity. In the last decade, the idea of a superdiverse framework to assess increasingly complex social realities in an ‘age of migration’ (Castles et al., 2013) grew rapidly and has been gaining ground in research concentrating on societies in the global South, as well. As Arnaut (2012) pointed out, for a long time ‘development’ was the prime theoretical tool of research on the global south from the global North. He explained that, ‘while “development” was essentially geared towards managing the other from a distance – or even keeping the other at a distance – diversity rather deals with the (immigrated) other within’ (Arnaud, 2012: 59).

A substantial part of the superdiversity literature of the global South investigates the nexus of superdiversity and sociolinguistic studies. Velghe (2011) for example studied the instant and text messaging local practice of a South African town using ‘super-vernaculars’, while Cavallaro and Ng (2014), and Sim (2017) viewed the social and linguistic landscape of Singapore as increasingly superdiverse. Virtual superdiverse spaces have also become the focus of much exciting new research such as that of Varis et al. (2011) who studied the use of the Internet as a par excellence superdiverse milieu, as used from Beijing, China. Although, as Arnaut and Spotti (2015) argued, superdiversity could complement well the existing postcolonial sociolinguistic and anthropologic stances related to diversity, fierce criticisms of the concept have also emerged. For example, Ndhlovu (2016) argued that theorizing through superdiversity for these social settings was deceptive, as the quintessentially Euro-American concept bore the attributes of the hegemonic dominance of the global North, and the use of it ‘invisibilized other alternative epistemologies, particularly those from the Global South’

(Ndhlovu, 2016: 28). He called attention to the fact that migration was not a novel phenomenon that could be appropriated for the global North, but is exemplified in the considerable mobilities of people in the global South, such as in Africa, in pre-colonial times. These mobilities have either not been recorded or were reduced to movements falling outside the canonised typologies of people movements, such as human mobilities labelled ‘nomadic’ movements (Ndhlovu, 2016: 34). Also, important international migratory movements created particularly diverse demographics in other areas of the global South, as well. Turner and Khondker (2010: 176) recounted that in the city of Dhaka (Bangladesh) people of different ethnic origins, professions, and religions lived next to each other as early as the 18th century (Ndhlovu, 2016: 35), and possibly even before. It is interesting to observe that the direction of migration for many merchants seeking new business opportunities was from the global North towards the global South.

Bigger cities are often the very locales where superdiversity can be experienced in a condensed form. As Brickell and Datta put it,

cities become sites of encounters with those who are different from oneself and they provide spatial contexts in which specific attitudes and behaviours towards others are produced and practised. Attitudes such as these towards ‘others’ are shaped by the triviality of conducting everyday practices of living and working, by “building bridges of cooperation across difference” (Sandercock, 1998) (2012: 16-17).

Superdiverse cities are thought to have emerged as a consequence of settlement of immigrants in these locales. Research on superdiverse places (in both the global North and South) often view these places as ‘end-stations’ of human mobilities. By doing so, people’s mobilities *from*, and also *between* superdiverse cities, are often overlooked.

Such mobilities can be both inter-country (international) movements, and intra-country (internal) movements. International migrations between superdiverse cities can have many vectors, as these can include mobilities (i) within cities of the global North, (ii) within cities of the global South, (iii) from cities of the global South to cities of the global North, and (iv) from cities of the global North to cities of the global South. Also, although the superdiversity literature focuses mainly on international mobilities, intra-country movements can produce superdiverse environments, as well. Although Vertovec used superdiversity primarily in relation to international migrations, he recognised the concept's possible applicability to 'internal migrants and to those individuals who do not move at all' (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015: 546). As bigger cities of the global South are growing in number and gaining weight on both local and global echelons, it is essential to consider them in more depth. However, this must be not only as 'end-station' places where superdiversity can be witnessed, either due to internal or international migration, but also as superdiverse places from which international migrants move to equally superdiverse locales, especially as a great number of international migrants have already lived in such superdiverse cities in their home (or another) country before moving to their (current) host country.

The notion of superdiversity used in this article is not so much concerned with the nature or existence of superdiverse environments as with the practicalities closely linked to navigating such milieus. In this sense, it enquires into interactions of the numerous variables subsumed under the category of superdiversity and their impacts as a framework on everyday life practices and encounters of transnational migrants while still living in their home country city.

2.2 *Cities / Urbanism*

In the abundant literature on superdiverse host country cities, cities frequently appear as localities where superdiversity acts as a powerful framework for creating, shaping, recreating, and discarding aspects of corporeal and subjective lives of both ‘natives’ and migrants. The city has been historically seen as a lived and imagined space that emerges as the outcome of compound and constant reshuffling and cementing of economic, social, cultural, and political power (Yeoh, 2006: 150). Bigger cities, ‘global cities’ (Sassen, 1991), or ‘mega-cities’ (Castells, 1996) are bigger geographical locales that have developed into global nodes of trade, certain types of services, and innovation, instead of relying only on the traditional attributes of urban industrialised areas, such as manufacturing. Their population is therefore tangibly linked to global economic forces and financial power (Castells, 1996). Besides these aspects, bigger cities are also home to extremely diverse demographical topographies, with an extraordinarily composite social, cultural, and financial, etc. configuration. They are thriving multicultural settings where (super-)diversity is part of everyday life and is viewed as normal, particularly by newly arrived migrants. As they are

situated within the intersections between place and displacement, location and mobility, settlement and return, cities are critical to the construction of migrant landscapes and the ways in which they reflect and influence migratory movements, politics, identities, and narratives (Brickell and Datta, 2012: 16).

Transnational urbanism - an approach that uses the combined optic of transnationalism (to be discussed below) and the need to put urban spaces under the spotlight as an acknowledgement of their emerging significance in people’s lives (Conradson and Latham, 2005) - considers urban spaces as nodes of power and providers of socio-

spatial habitats with ‘distanced yet situated possibilities for constituting and reconstituting’ (Smith, 2005) transnational social connections. The key focus of transnational urbanism remains on social embeddedness and social connections, and transborder practices are generally initiated in/from host societies. A relatively recent approach within this strand of literature investigates the impact of space, in particular urban space and the city, on host society incorporation experience (Brettell, 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). Bommers and Radtke (1996) studied migration patterns in German cities of various sizes and the way the respective local governments dealt with the organisational and welfare issues emanating from in-migration. Rex (2013) also focused on large host country cities, as these were thought to be situated at the most optimum, ‘meso’ organisational level to address issues and develop policies related to immigrant integration. As these studies scrutinise host country cities, they overlook pre-migration histories of life in similar localities, and their possible influence on incorporation in host country cities. There is a need to acknowledge the intricate relation between place and the impact of transnational migration on host societies (Rogers, 2005: 406), including the influence of migrants on urban spaces (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2009). Places are embodiments of the local with their ‘material, embodied, and corporeal qualities ... where situatedness is experienced’ (Brickell and Datta, 2012: 6).

2.3 *Transnationalism*

International migrants who settle in host country cities do not only appropriate the different spaces that cities may offer, however. They also engage in activities, processes and practices that extend across nation-state borders, which since the 1990s have been increasingly referred to in the migration and migrant incorporation literature as transnationalism (cf. Basch et al., 1994; Faist, 2000a, b; Glick Schiller et al., 1992;

Itzigsohn et al., 1999, Kivisto, 2001, Levitt, 2001). Transnationalism has been viewed as a heuristic tool, in particular as it embraces the idea of looking beyond nation-state borders, the canonised analytical lens in migration studies for decades (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003), and acknowledging the plurality of migrants' affiliations. Although the key concept of transnational social space is thought to be a space that crosscuts nation-state borders, much of the research corpus still studies those transnational practices of migrants that are directed towards spaces, places, entities and persons that are outside the host country, typically in the home country. Hence, despite the simultaneity of transnational acts and affiliations, there seems to be a vector for such processes, at least in the literature. Its starting point is at the location where the migrant has a physical presence, typically in the host country, whilst the vector points away from such place of residence, usually towards the home country (or previously inhabited places outside the home country). Thus, literature on transnationalism fails to take adequate note of the opposite direction, where practices, mental approaches and attitudes are transnationally leveraged from home to host countries. Although scholarship on transnationalism often focuses on transnational activities of migrants living in cities, its optic has been recently critiqued by transnational urbanism (e.g. Smith, 2005, and later trans-localism (cf. Brickell and Datta, 2012). These geographical approaches view transnationalism as a 'deterritorialized' concept that concentrates primarily on processes evoked through transborder social connections (Glick Schiller, 2005) and monetary exchanges (Brickell and Datta, 2012).

2.4 *Translocalism*

Translocalism, 'rooted transnationalism' (Katz, 2001), or as Mitchell (1997) called it 'grounded transnationalism', has its focal point on physical places or locales. The

concept gained increasing prominence in geographical research on transnationalism (cf. Freitag and von Oppen, 2010, Grillo and Riccio, 2004, Katz, 2001, McFarlane, 2009, Smart and Lin, 2007). For Oakes and Schein, translocality is a concept that

deliberately confuses the boundaries of the local in an effort to capture the increasingly complicated nature of spatial processes and identities, yet it insists on viewing such processes and identities as place-based rather than exclusively mobile, uprooted or “travelling” (2006: 20).

As such it provides for a ‘simultaneous situatedness ... of human agency and mobility through variegated spaces and places across nations, regions, cities, neighbourhoods, buildings and bodies’ (Brickell and Datta, 2012: 7). Places are specific physical venues where social encounters between both migrants and non-migrants take place (Brickell and Datta, 2012: 6). These encounters are negotiated by migrants through previous migration histories, particular mental approaches, and individual markers of difference such as ethnicity and gender (Silvey and Lawson, 1999).

3. Methodology

This paper draws on findings of my research on understandings of integration of highly educated Indian migrant women living in the United Kingdom, and mainly in London. My primary aim with the said research was to explore the way the participants constructed the abstract idea of integration in the UK. The interviews, however, revealed an aspect of the interviewees’ pre-migration life history which had left a profound mark on the way they navigated their life in the UK: the fact of having lived in remarkably diverse cities before moving to highly diverse cities in the UK. Exposure to

superdiverse spaces that cities can offer and the need to negotiate them were seen by many as formative. This article expands on this idea by foregrounding the importance of giving adequate consideration to transnational migrants' home country city lives, often in the global South, and their impact on navigating everyday realities in their host country cities.

To gain sufficient data, thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants in 2013, and later analysed with the qualitative research software NVivo 10. The research is based on constructivist ontology that emphasizes that realities are constructed, shaped, altered, and reconstructed by the very social actors inhabiting such realities (Weber, 1962). The realities so construed are continually mediated through observation, interaction and reflection (Matthews and Ross, 2010: 25). The epistemological approach of the research follows the interpretivist stance, as it 'prioritises people's subjective interpretations and understandings of social phenomena and their own actions' (Matthews and Ross, 2010: 28). Knowledge, based on this epistemology, is produced through attempts to apprehend individual subjective realities. Certainly, the researcher applying such an epistemological stance cannot remain entirely detached in knowledge creation, since by collecting meanings of everyday life, she is 'entering the [participants'] everyday social world' (Blaikie, 1993).

Approximately half of the interviewees were recruited through personal social networks formed through academic and linguistic studies, sport and other free time activities, such as a book club. To identify the remaining half of the participants, I used the technique of snowball sampling to gain access to a wider and possibly more variegated group of people. Interviews were held in person and in some cases through Skype. The

places where the interviews were conducted included coffee shops, restaurants, libraries, a town hall building, a cultural centre, university office, a Sikh Gurdwara's *langar* hall, and also a participant's home.

All the participants were women. All of them were born in India but were living in the UK at the time of the interviews. All but one were highly educated, having obtained tertiary degrees from educational institutions in India, the UK, or elsewhere. Further markers of difference, such as age, entry route to the UK, length of stay in the UK, and profession, were also of importance when the research sample was designed, as the plan was to include participants in more or less equal proportions of these variables to gain a more balanced research sample (for information on the main relevant data of the participants, see Annex no. 1) [1].

Most importantly, all the research participants had lived in bigger cities before their arrival in the UK. Most of them came directly from such big Indian cities as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Amritsar or Lucknow, while others had already experienced international migration outside of India, where they lived in similarly big cities before they embarked on their newer migration journey. For example, one participant had lived in New York for a decade before migrating to the UK. Another interviewee established her life in the Netherlands when her family moved there in her teenage years, and later, in her twenties, she decided to move to London. A third participant recounted that they had relocated to the city of Karachi, Pakistan after her marriage, where they spent considerable time before coming to the UK, while another woman had lived in Dubai, also for a significant time, due to her husband's work. Following their migration to the UK, the majority of the participants had been living in

London (n=24), or other bigger urban locales that they felt were ‘similarly diverse’ to London, such as Cambridge (n=3) and Peterborough (n=1). One person lived in a town in the Birmingham suburban area (n=1), and another in Colchester (n=1). Therefore, the majority of them moved *from* bigger cities that could be seen as superdiverse *to* bigger cities that were viewed as similarly diverse. However, superdiversities of the home country and the host country(ies) are not the same. Although both home and host country cities were considered superdiverse, their superdiversities were felt, lived and construed in distinct ways.

4. Considering Home and Host Country Superdiversities

4.1 Different Superdiversities in Home and Host Countries

I have described as superdiverse spaces both the Indian home cities and the host city of London, where most of the participants were living at the time of the interviews, as well as, based on the participants’ perceptions, Cambridge and Peterborough. These cities were considered as superdiverse based on their nature of incorporating numerous diversities that interact and recreate constantly evolving urban social patterns. As they share the core logics of superdiversity, they are comparable to each other (Meissner, 2015). Nevertheless, these cities’ superdiversities are not identical. Their distinctiveness is construed and may be understood chiefly against historical and contextual backdrops, by ‘appreciating the contingency of contexts’ (Meissner, 2015: 563).

Many have studied the superdiversity of London. First Vertovec (2007) proposed this concept in his often-cited article about superdiverse London. Following that a great number of scholars scrutinized London primarily through an ethno-centric lens or by

using ethnicity as a marked organizing principle. For instance, Wessendorf (2014) gave account of the everyday conviviality that could be experienced in a superdiverse London neighbourhood. Knowles (2013) wrote about the invisible ‘Nigerian London’, as she called it, a space defined by ethnicity which was present for over two hundred years but remained under the radar. Although there are many valuable outputs of the superdiversity literature focusing on London, it is striking that the superdiversity of bigger Indian cities is less frequently researched. This section of this paper will therefore attempt to address this gap in the literature by considering superdiversities that can be encountered in bigger Indian locales.

As one of the participants put it, ‘India is as big a world as Western Europe. It is as different, various parts of India are very, very different’ (Radha). India is vast, incorporating people of various ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious backgrounds, different social, legal and financial statuses, educational levels, etc. Historically, India has experienced innumerable mass movements of various groups of people and, more recently, of individuals. These people either came from outside or moved within India. These human mobilities have shaped the outlook of India and its bigger cities, to which many of the more mobile individuals and families relocated. For Lakshmi, ‘[India] is very diverse. And in my view, in India, there have been all sorts of people have invaded and come and we have accepted everyone. We stuck by our culture, but we have accepted everyone’.

The extraordinary diversity of India is at the same time visible-audible and hidden to the eyes. Some interviewees mentioned that like a great number of fellow Indians they were actively multilingual. It was not uncommon for an ordinary Indian person to speak more

than one, sometimes even half a dozen languages (Gauri). Linguistic plurality played out in the participants' everyday lives, where distinct languages were used to communicate with different persons or in different situations, which phenomenon has been widely studied by sociolinguistic scholars (e.g. Annamalai, 2001, Mohanty, 2006). This active multilingualism was contrasted by Jyoti with what she saw in London or in the UK, since 'if you are living in London or you are living in the UK, people speak one language, but in India every locality has a different language'. Differences also manifest themselves in physically recognisable ways. Sitara explained,

Indians are your colour; Indians are African colour. ... India is the only place in the world where you have European skin to African skin. In between Chinese looking people, Thai looking people and every look in the Middle Eastern, because it is all mix. There is a village in Gujarat and everybody looks... they are of African descent, they have African hair, African features, but they are Indians. Again, because India is very dense, in the middle there is a very dense jungle. There are people who live there, they look exactly like aborigines. ... And if go to Himachal, similar, Kashmir, people are very fair skin. ... Blue eyes, green eyes. India doesn't have any particular look.

Although much of the migration literature focuses on international migration, internal migration remains a particularly important factor in shaping the make-up of India's cities. Even the research participants, in some cases, had difficulties in describing their ethnic affiliation due to the many internal migratory moves of their ancestors (including from the newly established state of Pakistan after Partition, as Sushila said). To my question, which Indian state she was from, Radha answered in a quizzical and witty way, 'God knows'. Movement to cities could bring about truly diverse environments, and not only from ethnic, linguistic, cultural or other visible and audible points of view.

It could also produce considerable reconfiguration of socio-legal status in the already variegated populace. For example, in her article on the connection between internal migration and citizenship, Abbas (2015) shed light on the precarious legal status of those who move from one Indian state to another, and in particular to bigger cities. According to her, this occurs mainly due to misuse of power at local levels, which practice seems to be both uncontrolled and uncontrollable by higher, state-level authorities. She states,

it would seem that unlike international migrants, internal migrants ought to have the same legal status as others in the receiving society since they too possess juridical national citizenship. In developing countries, however, weak institutions make documentation of legal status uneven, and often inaccessible to the poor (2015: 3).

The socio-political standing of individuals and families is often connected to their financial background. It was a recurrent remark of the participants that gaps in financial positions were observable in a more pronounced way in India than in the UK. Bhavi said, 'I feel in India the rich–poor divide is much wider [than in the UK]'. Also, some interviewees touched upon the perceived more profound differences between Indian 'rural' and 'urban'. In a comic but insightful comment Radha highlighted the different mental approaches of her urbanite parents when visiting a remote Indian village.

My parents, I took them to one place and they behaved like bloody foreigners when I said, I did look at them and I had to apologise to my friends in the villages please ignore these idiots coming from the urban town.

It is conspicuous from the interviewees' recollections that there are plenty of deep-cut cleavages in the social tissue of India. By way of their existence and their interactions with each other, such diversities often form spaces that could be labelled as superdiverse.

4.2 Similarities in Home and Host Country Superdiversities

Despite the many dissimilarities of the distinct superdiverse places and spaces, some similarities in home and host country superdiversities are discernible, especially in relation to cities. Some attribute these similarities to *urbanism* as a unique way of life. Nearly a century ago, Wirth already tried to pinpoint those features of 'great cities' that can make urban life greatly similar:

The dominance of the city, especially of the great city, may be regarded as a consequence of the concentration in cities of industrial and commercial, financial and administrative facilities and activities, transportation and communication lines, and cultural and recreational equipment such as the press, radio stations, theaters, libraries, museums, concert halls, operas, hospitals, higher educational institutions, research and publishing centers, professional organizations, and religious and welfare institutions.
(1938: 1)

When defining urbanism, Giddens and Sutton highlighted the inherent aspect of city life that influences 'not only habits and modes of behaviour but patterns of thought and feeling', giving birth to distinct 'lifestyles and personality type that characterise modern cities' (Giddens and Sutton, 2013: 206-220). This is in line with the participant Gauri's remark, 'there is not much of a difference in terms of the urban life in India or the life here'. Through this observation, she unconsciously acknowledged that the city was

more than a mere physical place but also a space that could construct and mould ways of thinking and lifestyles, whilst being shaped by these latter. Others, for instance Sassen (2001) or Glick Schiller et al. (2006), put emphasis not so much on urban lifestyle but on *urban scale* (Brenner, 1999) with its particular power hierarchies and configurations that may account for similarities when creating transnational social fields in different bigger cities (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007: 144) of home and host countries. This argument is underpinned by Dipti's comment, 'I am quite easy at being at home, as long as it is a big urban city'. Although the scale of the host cities may have a marked impact, nevertheless, interestingly, some participants saw other smaller English towns such as Cambridge or Peterborough as equivalently superdiverse locales. Leela described the diversity of Cambridge that she experienced when moving there.

[I]n Cambridge you have got a lot of mixed population of students, so you don't really feel that it is a British town. ... it is more of a touristy kind of place' or 'if you go around maybe in the town it is no like, again it is not like very British kind of a place, there are all kinds of mixed people. So I think even that makes a difference because you are not, you are kind of, you are different but then everyone is different around you, so it didn't matter for me.

On the other hand, Maya construed her home city, Delhi, as a cosmopolitan space which in her estimation was basically not too dissimilar to London. She said,

living in Delhi which is very cosmopolitan and you see foreigners there as well. And I don't think, okay yes culturally you might have differences like, I don't know, religiously or something, but otherwise generally the rules are the same I think that

we've been taught by our parents, manners and all of these, which was same I think, it's not so much different.

She viewed cosmopolitanism as both a mental approach and practical skills and behaviours for dealing with cultural differences in everyday life in Delhi's diverse environment, by abiding by universal codes of behaviour. What she instinctively subsumed under the notion of cosmopolitanism could be construed as a specific facet of cosmopolitanism, often referred to in the literature as cultural cosmopolitanism (cf. Vertovec and Cohen, 2002; Delanty, 2006). Interestingly, she instinctively stressed those factors that had been agreed by a great number of scholars as the main markers of cultural cosmopolitanism such as openness, presence of diversity, and need and willingness to navigate such diverse environments. For instance, in his seminal work, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, Ulf Hannerz (1996) defined cosmopolitanism as 'an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other ... [entailing] an intellectual and aesthetic stance towards divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity' (p. 103).

According to him, this 'personal ability to make one's way into other cultures [is done] through listening, looking, intuiting, reflecting' (Hannerz, 1990: 239). The 'very cosmopolitan' city of Delhi, as Maya termed it, like many other cities around the world in both the global North or South, has been undergoing deep societal changes due to a variety of factors, and in particular mobility. The arrival of new inhabitants with highly diverse ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, legal, class and other backgrounds reconfigures the social and cultural tissue of the city. This leads 'to the erosion of the very notion of a bounded conception of the social' (Delanty, 2006: 35). The city and its society thus becomes pluralized, hybrid, or, in other word, superdiverse, and such

superdiversity needs to be managed by its inhabitants on a daily basis. As a 'mode of managing meaning' (Hannerz, 1990: 238) or a 'mode of engaging with the world' (Waldron 1992, cited in Vertovec and Cohen, 2002), cosmopolitanism is grounded in the recognition that different cultural and ethical systems co-exist, these are interdependent (Beck and Sznaider, 2006), and in order to create and recreate meanings, individuals need to 'draw selectively on a variety of discursive meanings' (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002: 26).

Cities, however, can also be viewed as domains of consumption of the modern industrial products of capitalism (Castells, 1983). Cosmopolitanism therefore also requires the mobilization of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) 'through which people gain social status through cultural practices (forms of consumption or lifestyles) enabling them to demonstrate taste and judgement' (Young et al., 2006: 1688). These features have been gaining in significance in a seemingly ever more barrier-less, well-connected, hence globalised world. Mass culture is increasingly globally homogenised, which allows consumers in different cities in various parts of the world to have similar consumer experiences. Arundhati recounted this globalised experience, mediated by the Bollywood film industry.

Because I was in an urban environment, especially in a city [Mumbai] where Bollywood actors and actresses live, you are more open to Western ideas. So that is why I think I was more Western anyway compared to the rest of the Indians.

The 'Western ideas' that she alluded to could be equated with manifestations of 'consumerist cosmopolitanism' (Calhoun, 2002). This is thought to be a form of cosmopolitanism that is apparent from a global homogenization of aesthetic tastes, for

instance in music or in the cinema and fashion industries, and thus which could be seen as the outcome of capitalistic consumerism practiced at a global scale (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). Nevertheless, ‘consumerist cosmopolitanism’ should be differentiated from cosmopolitanism, even though cosmopolitanism also has a global undertone, as it could be viewed ‘as globalization from within’ the individual, as an ‘internalized’ disposition (Beck and Sznaider, 2006: 9).

Some accounts in the literature portrayed moves from home country to host country as effortless, based on previous experiences in home or other countries. For instance, Beaverstock (2005) described the case of British inter-company transferees who relocated often and who thus developed a certain ‘cosmopolitan cultural distinctiveness’, through which they could ‘extend their habitats from the world cities into their other locations’ (Hannerz, 1996: 129, cited in Yeoh, 2005). To summarise: among other things, the perceived similarities in negotiating urban settings gave the participants a feeling of being at ease in their new, home country bigger city environment.

5. Impact of Lived Superdiversity in Home Country Cities on Life in Superdiverse Host Cities

In most cases, life in a new environment entails new ways of communicating and interacting with others (Brickell and Datta, 2012: 6). Likewise, it brings about new behaviours and manners, also expressed as physical manifestations (Brickell and Datta, 2012: 6). Internal migrants who often come to the city from rural areas or smaller towns

would probably detect these new modes of expression. For international migrants, however, it is assumed that new environments may be fairly distanced from their previous ones, and therefore certain ‘coping strategies’ (Kothari, 2008) in place could greatly help transition from old to new. A basis for adapting to new methods of interacting and behaving could be grounded in previous corporeal and subjective existence in similar places and spaces, such as in bigger cities. As already mentioned, most participants in the research came from bigger urban areas and most of them from superdiverse metropolises. The highly contextual and particularly fluid superdiversities of bigger Indian cities were locales that needed to be navigated by the migrants on a daily basis. Berry wrote that in places ‘where massive population contacts and transfers are taking place ... particularly in Asia, where half of the world’s population lives in culturally diverse societies, people experience daily intercultural encounters and have to meet the demands for cultural and psychological change’ (2005: 700).

Exposure to these kinds of social settings both generated and necessitated specific mental and emotional approaches by the participants, even though superdiversity was often lived and construed by them as the norm. It was seen as an ontology of their everyday lives, a type of ‘commonplace diversity’ that ‘is not problematized, but it is just part of everyday life’ (Wessendorf, 2010: 26). The use of strategies to navigate city life can be particularly conducive in new social settings in a host country. Also, bigger cities at the same time allow and necessitate the creation of similar ways of life and lifestyles, a certain form of urbanism, according to Giddens and Sutton (2013: 206-220). Urbanism, in its turn, played a role in how immigrants re-established their ways of life and lifestyles in their new country.

It is argued that pre-migration residence in superdiverse cities shapes the ability to negotiate superdiverse host city spaces. In particular, exposure to superdiverse social environments in India in everyday life and the need to deal with them greatly enhances the propensity for acquiring such mental states and pragmatic skills and approaches that can later be used, at least partially, in other superdiverse contexts, such as in London. Despite the potential in gaining more knowledge on the way people negotiate life situations in superdiverse spaces (both pre- and post-migration), pre-migration superdiverse histories remain largely unexplored in the literature.

6. Conclusion

As Levitt and Jaworsky (2007: 142) posited, scholars have increasingly recognised that migration could not be considered solely from a host-country perspective. Indeed, the study of home or other country experiences in migration studies is not a novel phenomenon. Ethnographers, such as for instance Marcus (1995) in his seminal work dating more than two decades back, Appadurai (1996), or more recently Burawoy (2003) have long embraced the idea of moving out from host environments to conduct research at all locales of transnational social fields (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). In line with the above statement, to understand more how understandings and practices of everyday life in *host* countries are construed and performed by migrants, it is essential to investigate what happened *before* arrival in the host country, in particular, since ‘the nature of embeddedness ... depends on previous culture and history’ (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007: 144).

My investigation was primarily focused on the role of home country bigger cities, as condensed spaces of superdiversity, in relation to the participants' host country life experiences. I contend, it is important to give adequate weight to these places and spaces, especially as 'localities are still crucial to understanding experiences of migration and movement' (Brickell and Datta, 2012: 7). Participants in my research had lived in extremely diverse bigger Indian cities or other metropolises outside India before moving to the UK. To mediate these types of social and geographical spaces, participants needed to assume certain mental and emotional approaches, or 'coping strategies' (Kothari, 2008), whilst these approaches that were often subconsciously adopted in their turn shaped their everyday lives. Likewise, the logic of urbanism, a kind of lifestyle and framework for everyday life, permeated the participants' day-to-day existence. Their pre-migration life histories in these locales most probably played a key role in how the immigrant interviewees re-established, construed and negotiated their existence in their new country. The research participants enumerated several distinct forms of superdiversity, such as those based on ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, identity-related, as well as racial or even class-based ('rich-poor divide') differences. However, they did not explicitly engage for instance with diversity in legal statuses, despite its paramount significance (Abbas 2015). Also, other, less conspicuous forms of diversity, such as those linked to possessing and participating in transnational networks, or even aspirations and achievements (Çağlar and Glick Schiller, 2018) were not mentioned. These diversities are obviously lesser visible to the eye, which may account for the participants' lack of engagement with them.

This empirical paper investigated the impact of *home* country city existence on the way transnational migrants negotiated their post-migration *host* country city life. The study

is based on insights gained from narratives of thirty highly educated Indian migrant women living in the UK, and mainly in London, on navigating such diversities and thus creating meanings. The issue has been explored through the analytical tool of superdiversity, a research optic that has been significantly less employed in relation to migration research on the global South than in relation to the global North.

The article strives to make a significant contribution to the superdiversity and transnationalism literatures. Firstly, it connected various strands of the relevant literature on superdiversity with a prime focus on the global South. Secondly, it aimed to enrich the literature on transnational migration by highlighting the importance of experiences gained through negotiating home country city spaces on post-migration host country city lives of transnational migrants. This idea in particular also requires us, by borrowing Çağlar and Glick Schiller's (2018) poignant argument, to 'challenge the assumption that the lives and practices of people who move to a city from other countries [cities] are subject to categorically different dynamics from the "majority" and/or "natives"' (p. 5). Thirdly, the article shares empirically-informed insights by highly educated women migrants on the way they navigate such superdiverse spaces.

There still remain numerous, closely connected themes that this research has not explored. In particular, there still is a dearth of information on the role of global South cities not only as 'senders' of migrants but also as 'destination' places for geographically mobile humans. This issue could be investigated through an intra-country migration optic, given that numerous countries in the global south experience a particularly high rate of internal migration, including from city to city. Likewise, this topic could also be studied through the lens of transnational city to city migration, still

within the global South. Also, knowledge on North to South (i.e. the opposite focal direction of much of the established migration literature), city to city migration and the way migrants make sense of the move in relation to their city experiences is scarce, except maybe in relation to labour migration of expatriates. Some other lines for future inquiry could include the interrogation of differences in navigating the city space by those who have not directly migrated from already diverse metropolitan areas but come from middle-sized towns (although see Heil 2014 on leveraged practices of the use, sharing and appropriation of public spaces by migrants from Senegal to Catalonia in Spain; or Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018 on migrant ‘emplacement’ to three middle-sized towns in Turkey, Germany and the US), or smaller rural locales. As a final suggestion, further research, that is equally associated with this article’s main topic, could centre around post-transnational migration experiences of those people who have arrived from notably more homogeneous home societies and cities. More empirical data on the suggested motives could further our knowledge on the way migrants construe and negotiate their lives in superdiverse cities.

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Annex no. 1: Main data of the participants

Name	Age group (years)	Educational background (country)	Length of stay in the UK (years)	Legal status upon entering the UK	Pre-migration place(s) of residence in India (or elsewhere)	Place of residence in the UK
Arundhati	20-30	BSc (India), MSc (UK)	0-5	Student	Mumbai	London
Mandeep	20-30	BSc (India)	5-10	Family	Amritsar	London
Gurpreet	20-30	BSc (India)	5-10	Family	Jammu	London
Devika	20-30	BA and PG Diploma (India)	0-5	Labour (short-term)	Delhi	London
Gauri	31-40	MBBS (India)	0-5	Labour	Bangalore	London
Navdeep	31-40	close to BA (but stopped studies in last year of degree)	11-20	Family	Amritsar	London
Jyoti	31-40	MA (India)	5-10	Family	Delhi	London
Nafia	31-40	MSc (UK)	11-20	Intra-EU migrant	Mumbai, Rotterdam	London
Fareeda	31-40	MA (India)	0-5	Labour	Delhi	London
Leela	31-40	BA (India), MA (UK)	5-10	Family	Jammu	Peterborough
Bhavi	31-40	MBBS (India), MRLGP (UK)	5-10	Student	Bangalore	London
Ravleen	31-40	BA (India), PG Diploma (UK)	11-20	Student	Chandigarh	London
Dipti	31-40	BA (US), MBA (UK)	0-5	Student	Mumbai, New York	London
Madhuri	31-40	BA (India)	5-10	Family	Hupli (smaller town)	London
Maya	31-40	BA (India), MA and PhD (UK)	5-10	Student	Delhi	Colchester
Asha	41-50	BSc (India), PG Diploma (UK)	20+	Family	Various, incl. town in Mumbai suburbs	Town in the Birmingham suburbs
Preeti	41-50	BA (UK)	20+	Family	Nainital	London
Soraya	41-50	BA and PhD (UK)	20+	Student	Mumbai	Cambridge
Poomima	41-50	PhD (India)	5-10	Family	Delhi	London
Sushila	41-50	MBBS (India), MD	11-20	Family	Mumbai	London
Radha	51-60	PhD (India)	20+	Student	Calcutta, Dubai	Cambridge
Vimala	51-60	PhD (India)	0-5	Family	Calcutta	Cambridge
Amala	61+	MA and PhD (India)	20+	Family	Urban Uttar Pradesh	London
Sitara	61+	MA (India)	20+	Other (Visiting family member)	Chandigarh	London
Darshana	61+	MA (India)	20+	Other	Delhi	London
Shashi	61+	MA (India), PhD (Australia)	20+	Family	Urban Uttar Pradesh	London
Lakshmi	61+	MA (India)	20+	Labour	Delhi	London
Manjula	61+	BA (India), MPhil (UK)	20+	British citizen by birth	Mumbai	London
Nasira	61+	BA (India)	20+	Family	Lucknow, Karachi	London

