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**Citation** (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

**Wilkinson, C (2017) On the same wavelength? Hyperdiverse young people at a community radio station. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 20 (9). pp. 1251-1265. ISSN 1464-9365**

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## **On the Same Wavelength? Hyperdiverse Young People at a Community Radio Station**

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This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council [ES/J500094/1]

## **Abstract**

This paper uses a case study of youth-led community radio station, KCC Live, based in Knowsley, neighbouring Liverpool, UK, to explore which styles of voice belong in the soundscape of KCC Live, and how young people in this 'ordinary' social space view the 'other'. I extend the term hyperdiversity to a discussion of how youth voice on the airwaves can involve the prioritisation of certain local cultural representations, and the silencing of others. I am also interested in young people's perception towards 'out-groups' (people from other towns within Liverpool, and Merseyside more broadly). This notion of out-groups considers identity as a system of categorisation, in which boundaries are used to distinguish localities, creating binary distinctions between 'us' and 'others'. This paper finds that engaging hyperdiverse young people in meaningful interactions around a shared interest, in this case community radio, stimulates the development of relationships across categorical differences.

**Keywords:** community radio; hyperdiversity; Liverpool; sonic geographies; young people

# **On the Same Wavelength? Hyperdiverse Young People at a Community Radio Station**

## **Introduction**

This paper presents a portion of data from an 18 month ethnographic research project, which unearths how hyperdiverse young people at community radio station KCC Live, in Knowsley, UK, explore their self-identifications and their identifications with others. This paper concludes that engaging young people in meaningful interactions around a shared interest, in this case community radio, in a safe place (KCC Live) stimulates the development of relationships across categorical differences. This is important as the result of exposure to the unfamiliar is tolerance of diversity (Anderson, 2004).

Young people are growing up in an increasingly diverse world (Sichling, 2017). ‘Diversities’ are the multiple features of societies, including origin, language, ethnicity, gender, age and class (Padilla, Azevedo & Olmos-Alcaraz, 2015). Diversity has become a symbol of openness and fairness, however it has been condemned because it is instrumentalist; reinforces normativity; and dissipates politics (see Vertovec, 2012). Vertovec (2007) introduced ‘superdiversity’ to account for new dimensions of diversity emerging out of post-Cold War migration and mobility patterns. Superdiversity not only encompasses ethnicity, but also social, cultural and linguistic variables that influence the differential composition, social location and trajectories of different groups (Vertovec, 2007). More recently, Tasan-Kok et al. (2014) introduced the term ‘hyperdiversity’ to address the complexity of diversity. Hyperdiversity describes urban populations characterised by multiple ethnic, age and class differences, and other forms of difference consequent on culture, social organisation, and religious belief. Hyperdiversity differs from diversity and superdiversity as it identifies individual difference (Tasan-Kok et al., 2014), acknowledging that people who appear to belong to the same group express different lifestyles, attitudes and activity patterns.

I use hyperdiversity herein to accommodate the “multiplicity of differences that may cohere around any one person”, recognising that social distinctions are formed through “multiple and interpenetrating axes of difference” (Jacobs & Fincher, 1998, p. 9). I advocate the lens of hyperdiversity to shift the gaze from race, ethnicity, class and gender, towards accent and identity – even within one ethnic group. This paper contributes to geographical work on hyperdiversity by providing an example of a micro space, KCC Live, characterised by quotidian negotiations of difference, and exploring how this propagates/contests the reproduction of ‘otherness’. It thereby responds to Peterson’s (2016) call to explore how hyperdiversification can complicate feelings of belonging.

In what follows, I contextualise discussion of hyperdiversity in literature on sonic geographies, and young people and community radio. I then introduce KCC Live, followed by an outline of the methodology, before reflecting on negotiations of everyday diversity at KCC Live. I conclude by arguing for the importance of engaging hyperdiverse young people in safe environments around a common goal, in order to promote tolerance and, better still, acceptance of difference.

### **Sonic geographies and hyperdiversity**

Uniting the conceptual lenses of sonic geographies and hyperdiversity is important to look ‘within’ a particular group to uncover “the contested values, the precarious balances” (Matless, 2005, p. 747) of place-based identity. A body of foundational sonic geographical work has explored voice and belonging (Matless, 2005; Boland, 2010). Considering the Norfolk Broads, Matless (2005, p. 761) confers how local people are “unselfconscious sounding fauna”, conveying the region. Matless’ (2005) key argument is that certain styles of voice belong to particular landscapes. Boland (2010) supports this, laying emphasis on place, phonology and race to consider the extent to which the Scouse (Liverpool) accent affects the construction of

local identity. Boland (2010) employs Matless' (2005) term 'sonic exclusion' to explore the role dialect plays in determining who is/is not a Scouser. Boland (2010) concludes that those who hold the suitable dialect are considered to belong, whereas those with a vocal considered out of place are sonically excluded.

Hyperdiversity scholars have also studied language and belonging (e.g. Kayaalp, 2016; Piller & Takahashi, 2011; Sterzuk, 2015). Sterzuk (2015) reflects how, traditionally, Canadian universities promoted a monolithic and racialised 'standard' English. However, efforts to limit linguistic heterogeneity in higher education (what Matless, 2005 and Boland, 2010 may term 'sonic exclusion'), are at odds with the hyperdiversity of everyday life. Exploring the cultural and language strategies of immigrant youth to negotiate inclusion and exclusion, Kayaalp (2016, p. 134) finds that some young people "feel foreign" in schools in their host country. Piller and Takahashi (2011) argue that the key challenge of the social inclusion agenda is the promotion of inclusive language ideologies and language practices that value diversity. The crux of this argument is that a sense of belonging is negotiated through language. Although diversity literature has focussed on multilingual settings (Kayaalp, 2016; Malsbary, 2016), diversity within any one language (in terms of accent and dialect) has largely been ignored.

Cultural geographers increasingly approach the sonic realm in its affective and emotional, as opposed to representational, capacities (Gallagher, 2016; Revill, 2016). Calling for a geography of voice and a politics of speaking and listening, scholars (Kanngieser 2012; 2014; Gallagher, Kanngieser & Prior, 2016) have begun to explore the diverse characteristics of voices (including tone and volume), their affective and ethico-political forces, and how they *make* public spaces. Conceptualising sound as affect recognises that "sound does not just connect things; it changes them" (Kanngieser, 2015, p. 81). Revill (2016) has recently drawn on ideas of political agency to animate the processual making of sonic space as socio-material

relationality. Following Revill (2016), this spatiality of cutting, redistributing and (re)making, which is embedded in processes of reflection, refraction, echo, recognition, amplification and muting, animates an ontologically productive politics of difference.

Human geographers have attended to the situated nature of sound's affectivity within particular social-political-material contexts, such as the home (Duffy & Waitt, 2012), cafes (Boyd & Duffy, 2012) and streets (Simpson, 2017). Few studies of sonic affect have focused on radio. This is surprising as sound is critical to radio programming, from the subtle intonation of a voice, to the aural representation of diversity (Johnson, 2015). One exception is Kogawa and Kanngieser's (2013) discussion of convivial radio in Japan. The authors argue that the micro-radio movement provides a compelling site for exploring the intersections of affect, politics and communication, because of the communicational multi-directionality it sets into play. Further, Arkette (2004) considers how different radio stations incorporate diverse modes of presentation. For instance, Radio 3 demonstrates "presenters, in respectful tones and subdued inflections" conveying their musical knowledge, meanwhile, Jazz FM showcases the "full-bodied and breathy voice of the presenter" (Arkette, 2004, p. 165). Contrastingly, Capital and Virgin DJs talk and make jokes amongst themselves, attempting to "dispel the image of radio as a unilateral disembodied voice" (Arkette, 2004, p. 165). Arkette (2004) calls listeners to join in forming their acoustic communities, rather than considering radio an ambient landscape. Hyperdiversity provides a useful lens through which to explore everyday spaces in which sonic affect operates.

### **Young people, community radio and hyperdiversity**

Until now, the space of community radio has been neglected in hyperdiversity literature. Herein, I argue that community radio is an important space through which to explore hyperdiversity, as meaningful and repetitive encounters between young people can occur in

this micro space. Scholarship has explored how participation in community radio can enable young people to “locate themselves more fully in the social and cultural fabric” of their locale and neighbouring areas, and to build productive networks (Baker, 2007, p. 587). Further, young people can discover new forms of networking and collaboration using convergent media forms (Bloustien, 2007). Participation in such media practices also makes possible a greater sense of inclusion in social, familial and cultural activities (Bloustien, 2007). Thus, through community radio, young people are negotiating marginalisation by developing communities and founding new ways of belonging. Perhaps at odds with this, owing to its pluralisation, hyperdiversity complicates feelings of belonging and community (Peterson, 2016) and is associated with decreasing senses of cohesion (Palmboom, 2015). Further, hyperdiversity might lead to social exclusion, as individuals segregate themselves from others who belong to a different class, ethnicity or lifestyle (Fincher et al., 2014). However, as Peterson (2016) argues, because diversity is negotiated at the neighbourhood level, meaningful encounters in micro spaces (as is a community radio station) can make communities more cohesive.

Other writing is concerned with the specificities of the learning environment engendered by youth media participation. Chávez and Soep (2005, p. 409) introduce the concept “pedagogy of collegiality” to describe the process through which young people work alongside peers and adults with shared purpose. They argue that if such partnerships are successfully conducted - connecting young people to their peers, adults, and community members, young people can create their own cultural representations. As Kranich and Patterson (2008) argue, constructive relationships between young people and adults, resulting from participation in media projects, can generate authentic opportunities for leadership roles for young people, community-wide. Though not writing on community radio, Malsbary (2016) finds that hyperdiversity in schools shapes and situates young people’s opportunities to learn. That is, young people’s repertoires of practice enable them to bridge and cross borders that are new to them (Malsbary, 2016).



This segues with a small body of work (e.g. Bloustien, Peters & Luckman, 2008; Podkalicka & Staley, 2009; Wallace, 2008) which is concerned with radio as a means to (re)connect young people with education and employment. This work exemplifies how, through gaining valuable media skills, young people become empowered as active citizens. Hopkins (2011, p. 196) tells how media organisation Youth Worx aims to assist estranged young people into socially productive pathways, making “personal, pro-social connections with the world around them”. Podkalicka (2011) highlights ways in which Youthworx is important as an access point to increased geographical mobility, offering a means for young people to explore the city beyond the constraints of their local suburbs. This is relevant to debates on hyperdiversity, as it is argued that when people expand their networks of ties, they identify more strongly with each other and become more active in their neighbourhood (Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

### ***Implications for research***

This paper uses hyperdiversity as an analytical lens through which to explore feelings of belonging and ‘otherness’ in the micro space of KCC Live. Through uniting hyperdiversity with the lens of sonic geographies, we are able to explore aural representations of diversity. Further, this paper explores the local and spatial practices through which belonging is negotiated (Harris, 2014) and provides an insight into the ordinary processes by which young people get along in the hyperdiverse micro space of a community radio station. By focussing on how feelings of belonging are enacted in this space, this paper explores negotiations of difference in ordinary lived experience.

### **Tuning in to KCC Live**

KCC Live was founded in 2003 as an enrichment and work experience radio station, based at Knowsley Community College. In 2009, Ofcom<sup>i</sup> awarded KCC Live a five-year licence to broadcast on 99.8FM. This licence was extended for a further five years in 2014. The move to

FM increased KCC Live's broadcast range beyond the college to the Borough of Knowsley. Online broadcasting then extended this reach to a potentially international audience. The station's target audience is 10-24 year-olds in the centre of Knowsley and the station typically has a 14-25 year-old volunteer base<sup>ii</sup> (KCC Live, 2007). Unpaid volunteers assume the role of presenters, producers, newsreaders, segue-technicians, music programmers and web editors. KCC Live's volunteer body is representative of a variety of subgroups, cultures, hobbies, musical tastes, sexualities and, as I discuss within this paper, accents and place-based identities.

Knowsley is a metropolitan borough of Merseyside, located around nine miles from Liverpool. The communities within Knowsley are a creation of the Twentieth Century, largely a result of Liverpool's over-spill development (Knowsley Council, 2012). Knowsley's 33.40 square miles contains a belt of towns, suburbs and semi-rural areas. The majority of the 145,936 (Office for National Statistics, 2012 mid-year projections) population are clustered in ten suburban townships, namely: Knowsley Village; Huyton; Kirkby; Roby; Prescott; Tarbuck; Whiston; Halewood; Stockbridge Village; and Cronton. Knowsley is ranked highly in all measures in the Government's 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation. The most deprived areas are Kirkby, North Huyton and Stockbridge Village (Knowsley Council, 2012). Significantly, 9.79% of 16-18 year-olds in Knowsley are not in education, employment or training (Knowsley Council, 2012); this is one of the highest rates nationally. Within Knowsley, 97.3% of the population has a white ethnic background (Knowsley Council, 2012). During my fieldwork at KCC Live, there was only one non-'White British' identifying volunteer. Thus, departing from much diversity literature which has focussed on ethnicity (e.g. Amin, 2002; Ang et al., 2002; Vertovec, 2007), I am looking at the commonplace differences that cohere around any one person in terms of accent and place-based identity, regardless of ethnicity, appreciating that diversity is "simply a fact of life" (Duckett, 2015, p. 533).

## **Methodology**

This paper emerges from a larger research project which employed a range of methods, as I detail below. The young people involved in this research were aged 17-38. By including four participants who were aged over 25, I was respecting KCC Live's (2007, p. 44) premise that "adults and experienced volunteers from the community will not be excluded from taking part". The total number of participants was 21 (13 men and 8 women).

I joined KCC Live in March 2012, and attended the station one day per week for two months. This scoping period was important in establishing rapport with staff and volunteers. After this period, I attended the station four days per week for 16 months, undertaking observant participation. I conducted more than 95 semi-structured in-depth interviews with volunteers and staff and held two focus groups; both contained seven self-selecting volunteers. The volunteers and I also co-produced a listener survey which gathered 460 responses. From this, seven listeners participated in a diary exercise, documenting their listening habits. The project was framed by "pockets of participation" (Franks, 2011, p. 15), such as the co-production of an audio documentary and radio series which were used to disseminate the results of this research. In this paper I focus predominantly on data arising from the observant participation, interviews, focus groups and listener diaries.

### ***Positionality***

I did not desire the young people to perceive me as an "omnipotent expert" (England, 1994, p. 81), I therefore positioned myself as 'researcher as friend'. I accepted volunteers' 'friend requests' on Facebook; I shared my mobile phone number; I invited volunteers to call me by my nickname; and we enjoyed activities together outside of KCC Live, including cinema excursions and shopping sprees. Skelton (2008) argues that, in research with children, researchers can be considered both 'insiders' and 'outsiders', as they have once been children

(insider), but now as adults they are outsiders. When I commenced the fieldwork I was in my early twenties; thus, as a ‘young person’, age was not a significant marker of difference. I characterise my stance in this research project as “part of the action” (Fuller, 1999, p. 221), as opposed to ‘going native’, and believe that my immersed positioning<sup>iii</sup> was fundamental to the rich data I gathered.

### *Sonic positioning*

I grew up in Devon, and lived there until I was 18. Despite living, studying and working in Northern cities since (Preston, Liverpool, Durham, and Manchester), I retained my Southern accent. I therefore hold a different dialect to the majority of KCC Live volunteers who possess the Scouse accent. Appreciating that sound is a defining aspect of identity construction (Boland, 2010), I worried that lacking this ‘Liverpool English’ would prohibit me from negotiating legitimacy in the field. Two things in particular troubled me. First, I lacked the “nasal/adenoidal twang” (Atkinson, 2011, p. 167) and “passionate saliva” (Du Noyer, 2002 p. 7) that identify a speaker from Liverpool. Second, I did not possess the “backchat and jokes” (Murden, 2006, p. 423) of Scousers.

After a few months of conducting fieldwork, I subconsciously embraced the idea of “Stylised Scouseness” (Tessler, 2007, p. 49), and adapted vernacular linguistic traits such as ‘boss’ and ‘swerve it’ into my diction. This relates to how “different surroundings, different stimuli will produce different selves” (Porter, 1997, p. 4). The young people referred to me as an ‘honorary Scouser’, a term given to celebrities who made Liverpool their home (Boland, 2010). My appearance altered too. I began getting spray tans regularly, and I had a weave (hair extensions sewn in). These were acts that I carried out which I directly attribute to acquiring Scouse friends at KCC Live<sup>iv</sup>. Having situated myself at KCC Live, I now turn to present data emerging around the theme of accent and identity.

## Accent and identity

KCC Live's soundmark<sup>v</sup> pertains to the Scouse accent that the majority of presenters possess.

Although 'Scouse accent' is suggestive of homogeneity, there was diversity in the variation of the accent and in how Scouse accents were received in different parts of Merseyside:

Robbie: When I'm in Huyton [a town in Knowsley]...people think I sound quite posh for a Scouser! But I don't when I hear me voice...I sound common as muck! There's Scousers, plazzies, woollybacks<sup>vi</sup> and other non-Scousers on air, so there's varying degrees of poshness and commonness [laughs]

Madonna: ...Accents-wise, that's something I'm really conscious of...I live in Wavertree [an area in Liverpool], and with the people I hang around with, I'm considered really Scouse. But then when I come here [to Huyton] I'm considered posh, not that that's anything against here

(Madonna, 17, Robbie, 26, joint interview)

Through using the terms 'plazzies' and 'woollybacks', Robbie draws attention to 'the other' (Boland, 2010, p. 6). Ironically, though people in Knowsley often self-identify as 'Scouse', to a certain extent they are 'plastic Scousers', because they live in an area of Merseyside other than Liverpool (Boland, 2010). In acknowledging that there are different degrees of 'poshness and commonness', Robbie demonstrates understanding of society as divided through socioeconomic status, thereby affecting his sense of self in relation to others (Sutton, 2009). Reflecting how voice is produced by, and produces codings of class (Kanngieser, 2012), Madonna tells how she feels self-conscious of her 'posh' Scouse accent, because it is at odds with the variation of the accent in Huyton. As Cavanaugh (2005) argues, the phonological shape of speech can exhibit speakers' attitudes about, and orientations towards, their own positions in the social landscape. Madonna and Robbie's statements also reflect that there is considerable diversity between speakers in any one geographical area (Honeybone and Watson, 2006), reinforcing how place-based identities are not singular or cohesive (Boland, 2008; 2010); they are hyperdiverse, layered and socially (re)constructed.

Listeners, too, noted variation in accents on air:

If someone has a really thick Scouse accent I tend not to listen, just turn it down....People need to be articulate, irrespective of their regional accent...If you listen to Steve [KCC Live presenter]...he's a Southend [London] lad, he comes across as really professional by comparison....It's great for community radio because people want to hear people speak the same language, but...for me there's that disconnect, it doesn't work

(Eddie, 18, listener diary interview)

Eddie was born in Devon and possesses a Southern accent. Eddie's reported feelings of 'disconnectedness' could reflect his own sonic exclusion, experienced through lacking a Scouse accent and accompanying dialect (Boland, 2010). Eddie's action of turning down the volume reflects that accent and dialect affect one's capacity to listen and respond to each other (Kanngieser, 2012). By stating that a presenter from London 'sounds really professional' in comparison to some Scouse presenters, Eddie highlights the "pernicious influence" (Watt, 2002, p. 49) of BBC English, Received Pronunciation, or 'Queen's English' in mass communication. Eddie may be drawing on "moral, political, and cultural judgments" that define kinds of sounds that compose a particular dialect (Boland, 2010, p. 4). Mass-mediated representations of BBC English, for example, contribute to "a gradual sedimentation of habits of speech perception and production across particular social domains and persons" (Agha, 2003, p. 269), which go against the grain of everyday hyperdiversity.

Also interesting was how KCC Live accommodated non-Scouse accents. MJ told me that, when first joining KCC Live, her regional Lancashire (Chorley) accent created a point of difference:

My first task was to do news bulletins...I thought I was doing the news bulletins because of my voice [laughs], everyone always says I've got a posh Radio 4<sup>vii</sup> lady's voice

(MJ, 21, interview)

Interestingly, though MJ reflects that her accent is ‘posh’, the Chorley accent is very localised.

This perhaps reveals how MJ’s accent is considered posh *in comparison to* the Scouse accent.

Two months later, MJ told me how her accent led to her exclusion from certain on-air activities:

I used to think it was good to have a posh voice here, but now I’ve realised that it actually like erm limits me...I don’t get asked to do vocals for the station as much as the Scouse girls.

(MJ, 21, interview)

I made a comparable remark in my field diary:

The Station Manager wanted some of the girls to record vocals for an advert for a hair salon. I was told that my voice [my Southern accent] wouldn’t be desirable to Scouse females and therefore I did not take part. The Station Manager said in jest “unless you can put on a Scouse accent of course”

(Author’s field diary, 18/09/13)

Through prohibiting mine and MJ’s participation in recording vocals, KCC Live management are selectively fostering a soundscape, recreating specific acoustic properties of Knowsley, and Liverpool more broadly, which reflect their perceived listenership. In contrast to mine and MJ’s accounts, Nikki, a Scouse woman, told how ‘I constantly hear my vocals getting played out’ (Author’s field diary, 12/06/14). This supports Kanngieser’s (2012) argument that a space or place may act as a conduit for specific kinds of vocal utterances. Ames (2003), in a study on regional radio, likewise found that specific youth voices within the community were projected, whilst others were silenced. This relates to Matless’ (2005, p. 747) question of “which styles of voice belong in the landscape?” Thus, although KCC Live is hyperdiverse in its volunteer body in terms of accent and identity, as this paper now goes on to explore in more detail, this hyperdiversity was not always reflected on the airwaves.

### **Bridging the gaps**

Throughout my research, I found evidence that KCC Live was successful in creating a bridge between different towns and districts in Knowsley:

It wasn't just sort of Roby, Huyton people, people came up from Kirkby, up from Halewood and, err, throughout Knowsley. When the people from the station took volunteers out to do community projects, it wasn't just things round the corner...they were up in Prescot...Whiston, Halewood [towns/villages in Knowsley] and places like that...Although it's a very erm fragmented Borough...because they had access to the radio and it was feeding them information, and they were taking them back to all these different sort of segments...I suppose to a certain extent it was helping to bridge the gaps

(Pam, 68, former Vice Principal of Knowsley Community College, interview)

Pam emphasises Knowsley's structure as a fragmented Borough, yet tells that KCC Live helped to 'bridge the gaps' through providing listeners with information from a central source, which they took back to their own localities. I found that KCC Live not only creates a bridge between different towns and districts in Knowsley, but also different areas of Merseyside, and beyond:

I'm from Yorkshire...there's people from Wirral and...Lancashire, and...Cheshire, you know, Warrington...I know three people who come from the immediate area...but other than that, they're from all over. Earlier I found out that Jay is from Wirral, the posh end...We didn't know each other from before this, and we all just met each other and got on

(Damon, 38, interview)

Kurt: Here [at KCC Live] there's all sorts of different people...it's a nice environment to be in...it brings together different people...where are you from again?

CW: Devon originally

Kurt: ...I would have never met someone from Devon before, without this...Until I went off to uni or something

(Kurt, 17, interview)

Above, Damon and Kurt discuss difference and diversity favourably, suggesting that KCC Live creates an opportunity for "intercultural exchange" (Amin, 2002, p. 967). As Peterson (2016) tells, micro spaces encourage the intermingling of diverse groups, enabling differences to be negotiated "on the smallest of scales" (Wilson, 2011, p. 635). This is positive, as the result of exposure to the unfamiliar is often greater social sophistication that permits positive social interactions amongst diverse people (Anderson, 2004). As Damon summarises, 'we all just met each other and got on'.



A telling account of the geographic heterogeneity of the volunteer body emerged through a focus group:

Andy: I live on the Wirral

Chris: Ah them lot!

[Everyone laughs]

Andy: Racist! [Laughs]...

Bruce: I live in Bootle and I -

Harry: I would never have said you lived in Bootle!?

Rita: Where the hell is Bootle?

Andy: You should move to the Wirral!

Chris: Boo!

Rita: I might get bullied for this – because originally I'm from Wigan

Harry: It's okay, he's [Andy] from the Wirral so you won't get much stick

[Andy laughs]

Rita: And, and then I moved to Warrington, so Warrington is just like Warrington

[Everyone laughs].

Harry: I'm Harry and I live in Tuebrook

Chris and Rita: Ooohh [said jokingly]

MJ: Where?

Harry: Tuebrook, it's by Newsham Park...

(Andy, 24, Chris, 18, Bruce, 25, Harry, 24, Rita, 19, and MJ, 22, focus group)

In this powerful account of hyperdiversity, the volunteers tell that they live in a variety of locations, within Knowsley (Huyton), Liverpool (Tuebrook), the borough of Sefton (Bootle) and further outside of Liverpool (Wirral; Warrington). Although this conversation surfaced during a focus group, it was not unlike the conversation I heard frequently between KCC Live volunteers. My research therefore extends other work on diversity (Amin, 2002; Vincent, 2013; Wise, 2007) which finds that spaces that facilitate meaningful encounters in a repetitive and structural way, organised around a shared interest (in this case community radio), encourage

relationships that transcend cultural, class and ethnic boundaries, to include geographic boundaries. The exchange continued:

Bruce: Can I ask Mr Martin [Chris] over there like about your community? Because like when he [Andy] said the Wirral like as in like a joke you said “boo” and then people said Warrington and when people weren’t from local areas to you, you kind of jokingly booed, so like -

Chris: Yeah but I’d boo Huyton!

Bruce: Ah but then you booed everyone when they were from areas that actually aren’t from nearby

Chris: I think that’s just because like the people you hang around with you pick stuff up, like stereotypes off other people and you just automatically like assume stuff like Kirkby, people say “Kirkby sock robbers” [laughs], no it’s just like a little joke kinda

(Chris, 18, Bruce, 25, focus group)

This excerpt is useful in understanding how the young people view ‘the other’. Chris tells that he ‘picks up’ stereotypes from people who he ‘hangs around with’, for instance that people in Kirkby are ‘sock robbers<sup>viii</sup>’. Thus, it can be seen that lack of contact between groups generates judgments based on suspicion (Sanderson & Thomas, 2014). Interactions at KCC Live can be seen as central to challenging stereotypes and can positively influence young people’s capacity to deal with otherness (Peterson, 2016). This relates to how territories and borders “are as much perceived in our mental maps and images as they are visible manifestations of concrete walls and barbed-wired fences” (Newman, 2006, p. 146). Though an alternate reading is that KCC Live valorises stereotypes and entrenches group animosities and identities through habitual contact (see Amin, 2002), what is not easy to convey through the above written extracts is the tongue-in-cheek humour in which this conversation and other similar conversations at KCC Live were imbued. Carlan (2012) also found that stereotyping and humour were used by participants in a South Asian Community of Practice in everyday interactions to reinterpret sociocultural differences, allowing them to reconfigure understandings of gender, class and ethnicity.

Some volunteers were quick to defend their home localities, demonstrating territoriality (Pickering, Kintrea & Bannister, 2012). Arguably, this defensive nature is because the features, both physical and symbolic, of the localities in which an individual resides can affect their identity (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003). This recognises identity as a system of categorisation, in which boundaries distinguish localities, creating binary distinctions between “us” and “others” (Paasi, 2002, p. 139). During my fieldwork, in response to a negative (although jesting) comment made about Huyton, where he lives, Robbie said: ‘ee, you wouldn’t get away with saying that outside of KCC Live’ (Author’s field diary, 27/08/14). KCC Live, then, can be perceived as a safe space in which hyperdiverse young people can have conversations about identity and belonging.

## **Conclusions**

Hyperdiversity underlines the necessity to look within the micropolitics of people and place to uncover more nuanced insights into intergroup identity and social interaction. This paper contributes to an emerging dialogue on hyperdiversity in geographical work by using a case study of community radio station as a micro space in which, through meaningful interactions, young people negotiate difference. It therefore extends existing work (Amin, 2002; Valentine, 2008; Wise, 2007) to find that repetitive encounters around a shared goal have the potential to challenge stereotypes.

This paper has two main conceptual contributions. First, it extends diversity literature which has focussed on multilingual settings (Kayaalp, 2016; Malsbary, 2016; Piller & Takahashi, 2011), to look at diversity within one language. Further, it contributes to literature on sonic geographies on voice and belonging (e.g. Matless, 2005; Boland, 2010) to uncover which styles of voice belong in the soundscape of KCC Live. I found that some young people at KCC Live who do not possess the Scouse accent, are sonically excluded (Matless, 2005) from certain on-

air activities, which are allocated to Scouse volunteers. My research therefore supports Kanngieser's (2012) argument that a space or place may act as a conduit for specific kinds of vocal utterances. Through uniting the lenses of sonic geographies and hyperdiversity I was able to look 'within' the Scouse accent to uncover "the contested values, the precarious balances" (Matless, 2005, p. 747) of identity.

Second, I have responded to Peterson's (2016) call to capture how people negotiate everyday diversity. I extended the term hyperdiversity to a discussion of how the young people view 'the other' in relation to their self-identifications. I contended that volunteers perceive KCC Live as a 'safe place' in which they can have deprecating 'banter' surrounding home localities. Enabling young people to engage with one another across their differences to achieve a common goal and to traverse boundaries, both the literal geographical boundaries and the boundaries in their minds, is important, as the result of exposure to the unfamiliar is tolerance of difference (Anderson, 2004). The lens of hyperdiversity has been useful in analysing the data emerging from discussions of identity and belonging, enabling me to look at "diversity within diversity" (Ang et al., 2002, p. 12). I close this paper calling for further work which critically and creatively explores young people's senses of self in order to open up space for further discussions surrounding the hyperdiversities of place-based identities.

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<sup>i</sup> Ofcom is the government-approved regulatory and competition authority for the broadcasting, telecommunications and postal industries of the United Kingdom

<sup>ii</sup> During the research period all volunteers were aged over 16, and six were over 25

<sup>iii</sup> To find out more about my immersion in the field see Wilkinson (2017)

<sup>iv</sup> See Wilkinson (2016) for a more extensive reflection on my positionality in this research setting.

<sup>v</sup> A 'soundmark' is a distinctive sound which is regarded highly by people in a community (Schafer, 1994, p. 10)

<sup>vi</sup> Whereas 'Scouser' is a phrase used to refer to a person who is from Liverpool, 'plazzy' or 'plastic' Scouser is used to refer to those who live 'over the water', for instance in Wirral. Woollyback or 'wool' is used to refer to anyone who lives in the surrounding towns around Liverpool, for instance St Helens.

<sup>vii</sup> Part of the BBC, a public-service broadcaster, Radio 4 comprises of speech based news, current affairs and factual content.

<sup>viii</sup> 'Sock robbers' is a reference to the way that burglars from Kirkby allegedly put socks over their hands to avoid leaving behind finger-prints.