

## LSE Research Online

## **Suzanne Hall** and Ayona Datta

The translocal street: shop signs and local multi-culture along the Walworth Road, South London

# Article (Accepted version) (Refereed)

**Original citation:** Hall, Suzanne and Datta, Ayona (2010) *The translocal street: shop signs and local multi-culture along the Walworth Road, South London.* City, Culture and Society, 1 (2). pp. 69-77. ISSN 1877-9166

DOI: 10.1016/j.ccs.2010.08.001

© 2010 Elsevier Ltd.

This version available at: <a href="http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29639/">http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29639/</a> Available in LSE Research Online: March 2016

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author's final accepted version of the journal article. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

The Translocal Street: Shop signs and local multi-culture along the Walworth Road, south London

Suzanne Hall and Ayona Datta

The definitive version of this article is published in *City Culture and Society*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 69-77

**Abstract**: In this paper we look at the different ways that visual signscapes along an inner London street produces particular types of translocal connections to different spaces and places that are physically distanciated yet symbolically proximate. We are particularly interested in examining these signscapes for the ways that they evoke particular connections between migrant entrepreneurs and a diverse clientele, between the colonial pasts and postcolonial presents, between the ordinary and the global city, and between everyday livelihoods and economic exchanges. We suggest that these signscapes are translocal since they evoke material and embodied links between the street and its neighbourhoods, while at the same time connecting the street to a wider spatial network of routes/roots which the migrant entrepreneurs have taken to establish their livelihoods on the street. Thus the Walworth Road, a place where a multiplicity of connections are made between different places through these signs, becomes the node or location of particular types of mobility and migration undertaken by migrants and their clients. It becomes a translocal street as it situates mobile actors and identities within the physical and social forms of economic exchange, shop front displays and signages. The local 'multi-culture' on this street is made and remade through these particular connections which are material, embodied, everyday and ordinary.

Key words: Translocal; Mobility; Situated; Emplaced; Visual Signage

#### Introduction

Numeric descriptions of London's population growth and diversification since 2000 underscore the recent growth of the city as one predominantly populated by individuals who were born outside of the UK. National census data reveal that in 2001, 53 per cent of all ethnic minority groups living in the UK resided in London (Hamnett 2003), indicating that demographic heterogeneity in the UK is primarily an urban phenomenon, moreover, one concentrated in London (Office of National Statistics 2001). Recent population survey estimates highlight the effects of migrations into London between 1998 and 2008: inner London's population has grown faster than outer London's population; migration occurs primarily from international flows; since 2004 there has been a surge in short-term migrants from the eight EU accession states in Eastern Europe; and, essentially, the high ethnic diversity levels in London are increasing (Greater London Authority 2008). What the official format of these statistical measures cannot address are the questions of how the impacts of urban change are experienced and in what ways cultural and ethnic diversity is manifested in the spaces of the city. However acute these numeric descriptions are, they do little to render a complex or fine-grained explanation of the everyday practices of mobility as situated within local places.

This paper examines the 'translocal geographies' (Brickell and Datta 2010) of migrant entrepreneurs in an inner London shopping street through their shop front displays. Specifically we explore how visual signscapes, or the choreographed arrangements of urban surfaces and spaces by proprietors along a south London street, provide a medium for individuals to negotiate differences. The Walworth Road in the London Borough of Southwark is a linear, cheek-by-jowl collection of workplaces and social spaces that are part of local life. The street runs adjacent to a series of large scale social housing estates, including the Heygate and Aylesbury Estates, and draws on a population of approximately 12,000 residents and 3,000 employees within comfortable walking distance of the street (CABE 2007). The close association of work and local life on the street emerges through the activities of people walking, shopping, going to school, collecting a social benefits cheque, or waiting for the bus on the one hand and the adjacent activities of making and selling on the other. Walworth Road therefore provides a fertile analytic territory to explore experiences of emplaced mobilities, the complex overlaps between transnational and translocal identities, and the reworking of social differences. We focus explicitly on the everyday life of the street through the arrangement of shop front displays to suggest how

transnational mobilities of diverse proprietors produce London as an 'ordinary city' (Robinson 2006).

The empirical context of this paper is part of a larger ethnographic research on the production and negotiation of livelihoods on Walworth Road, conducted between 2006 and 2008 (Hall 2009). In this paper we focus on a photographic analysis of the shop front signs of over 200 shops along the street, while drawing upon a wider face-to-face survey conducted with 128 of the independent proprietors. We explore the forms of expressions that emerge out of a combination of cultural affinities and entrepreneurial acumen on the part of the proprietors. Through observing the imaginative displays of language and objects in the independent shops, we focus on how connections are made between the spaces and places along transnational migrant routes to Walworth Road. In closing we ask, what are the spatial implications in examining situated mobilities through the everyday practices of visually communication enacted by proprietors of shops along Walworth Road?

#### Translocal geographies of the Walworth Road

In order to understand the shopfront displays of the Walworth Road, we situate this within a notion of 'emplaced mobilities' (Smith 2001) of those who occupy these shops – an intersection of both established residents, and immigrants who come from particular colonial and post-colonial spaces of the former British Empire. We suggest that these images refer to translocal connections between different spaces across the globe which are evoked within and beyond transnational connections. In recent years, a proliferation of debates has emerged around the formation of transnational or diasporic identities among those who migrate across national territories. While it is accepted that such identities are inherently fluid and incorporate multiple sites of affiliation, the nation-state often remains the primary point of reference through which they are examined. Further, scholars such as Appadurai (1996, 2005) and Hannerz (1996) suggest that heightened movement and mobility produces a notion of deterritorialisation and disembeddedness from places. While pre-existing notions of transnationalism retain the nation and national territories as its predominant focus, they appear to suggest a sense of dislocation from place.

On the other hand, critiques from scholars such as Michael Peter Smith (2001) suggest that despite migrants' transnational loyalties, there is a heightened sense of commitment within their immediate local contexts. Through the images presented in this paper, we concur with Smith to suggest that situatedness in migrants' lives

continues to be of crucial significance despite increased global mobility. We are not arguing for an anthropological sense of place as a bounded locale (as critiqued by Appadurai), but a rethinking of local places as dynamic sites where transnational, translocal, and diasporic identities are expressed and explored.

The images in this paper suggest a production of 'Translocal geographies' (Brickell and Datta 2010) – the notion that transnational mobility does not in any way reduce the importance of locales but rather produces particular articulations of 'situatedness' which are not limited, as Oakes and Schein (2006) acknowledge, to one specific context or one place identity. Within the street locale, references are made to varieties of sites, locations, and spatialities within and beyond the nation-state, while remaining grounded within everyday power structures and the agencies of actors in transforming the conditions of their own mobility. Following Brickell and Datta (2010) we argue that the translocal geographies of the Walworth Road include a range of mobilities across interconnected spatial scales – homes, neighbourhoods, cities, and regions – between and across different scales of locality.

In this paper we take the scale of the neighbourhood as our empirical context, but we are not limited by its spatial boundedness. A key quality of an inner-London street is that it is central to the everyday livelihoods of an urban neighbourhood, but it also extends past the area, linking it to other places and spaces. An urban high street situates and connects, both focusing and expanding the possibilities for contact between different people. A local resident aptly described the Walworth Road as 'basically a road between other places'. This key quality of being between provides a crucial direction for this exploration, capturing a spatial location neither at the centre nor the margins of contemporary London. In addition being 'in-between' refers to a cultural location neither captured by a static view of the remnants of Walworth's working-class residents based on location or community, nor a segregated view of its ethnic minorities based on origin or race. The in-between invokes the experience, time and place of urban cultures engaged in the context of deep change. Connections to other spaces and places are central to the understanding of difference on this street, and although the Walworth Road is a place of local particularities, its local world is integrally connected to the forces of significant urban and global mobility. The street is positioned between central London and Camberwell, between the modernist urban ambitions and post-war regeneration of the twentieth century, between global and post-colonial worlds, and between white

working-class traditions and diverse, transnational cultures in close physical proximity.

Walworth Road is translocal in yet another way: while the Walworth Road is a high street, it is also a route between local urban neighbourhoods. It is supported by residents living within a convenient walking distance of the street and a broader group of people who reach the street by way of other journeys. Some of these journeys are part of the daily or weekly routines of commute common to Londoners. Other journeys to the Walworth Road involve a distinctive break with the regularity and comfort of a familiar world; these are the migratory journeys from one country to another, and require traversing great distances. To travel these actual and perceptual distances, is to cross the boundaries between the familiar and unfamiliar, and demands particular social and cultural skills. The capacity to engage in difference and change requires an ability to live with more than one sense of a local or familiar place – a 'here' as well as a 'there', and a 'then' as well as a 'now' – and the ability to live amongst different people. The translocality of Walworth Road then is also produced through mundane everyday exchanges across spaces and places that do not easily fit within the transnational analytic frame. These everyday exchanges are at the scale of the neighbourhood and incorporate more corporeal and embodied exchanges of physical movement similar to but not the same as mobilities across real and imagined transnational spaces.

We therefore situate the shop fronts of these different entrepreneurs within/across particular 'locales' reflecting the combination of multiple territories and cultural reference points that the shop signs refer to. We are interested in how 'situated yet mobile identities' (Smith 2005) are articulated through the everyday organisation of shop fronts that draw on connections across regional, national, or global spaces. These images problematise the construction of the migrant as 'in here but still there', suggesting instead that migrants have varied loyalties to different places and these loyalties are constructed through complex negotiations with these places. The everyday practice of arranging these shop fronts to display goods and to communicate with a variegated clientele suggests the interconnectedness between the material and metaphorical contexts of different spaces on the migrant routes and suggest a fluidity and variability of scales of reference that problematises national identities. They suggest a far more complex intermingling of a multitude of local worlds on the Walworth Road: a shared terrain in which diverse references to humour, cultural symbols, aspirational objects and basic needs are collaged.

The connections between the Walworth Road and the adjacent neighbourhoods suggest another possibility for viewing and understanding the visual signscapes. The Walworth Road is both an aggregation of small, independent shops as well as a collection of individual imaginations, agilities and acumen that play a role in how the small spaces of the city are shaped and transformed. It is therefore translocal through the basic economic ways that migrant entrepreuneurs are attempting to improve their lives and livelihoods in the city. It forms a site of accumulation and negotiation of varieties of social, economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 2002). The visual signscapes can be seen as part of this negotiation, where their very visible aspect of economic capital can be exchanged for other forms of social and cultural capital at a later time. In order to operate as effective entrepreneurs, shop proprietors have to learn how to exchange between these different forms of capital. They operate therefore within what Bourdieu would argue as a 'field of meaning' through which their position and capital can be strengthened. The visual signscapes therefore are also forms of visual capital, which can be exchanged for particular economic capital if they are able to attract the right clientele into these shops.

These visual signscapes make multiple connections to the different social spaces of their clientele and give value and meanings to the products sold in these particular shops. They situate these connections between particular nodes of economic exchanges and produce particular ways of understanding and translating these in the context of mobility and social change in the neighbourhood. Understanding these signscapes as translocal means that we take into account the fields of meanings that they refer to – suggesting that these signages are not necessarily 'rational choice' but ways of transcending the divisions between structure and agency and proposing a 'theory of practice in which actions are both constrained by but at the same time constitutive of a deeper structure' (Kelly and Lusis 2006: 832).

The distribution and valuation of capital through visual signscapes on the Walworth Road, and its possibilities of exchange is not objective, but actors on the street are able to quickly learn the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu 2002) that are implicitly agreed upon. As visual forms of cultural capital, they can be translated into social capital through the development of a social network base of valued customers and therefore exchanged for economic capital through their patronage. A key feature of these signages is that they are contingent upon the particular context of the Walworth Road where they are read, interpreted and translated through a particular combination of social, cultural and economic capital vested in both entrepreneurs and clients. These

signscapes are neither deterministic in fixing identities and spaces, nor inhibited individual choice in their references – but a carefully crafted negotiation between the structure and agency of everyday livelihoods on an ordinary retail street in south London.

The focus in this paper then is on these combinations of social, cultural and economic capital, which produce different kinds of visual expression along a multicultural street.

### Unpacking the multi-lingual signscape of Walworth Road

Our first visual representation of the Walworth Road to the reader is by way of a plan of the Walworth Road paralleled with a map of the world (figure 1). Connections between the small spaces along the street to cities across the world are traced by linking the origins of the proprietors to their respective independent shops along the Walworth Road. By walking the Walworth Road over a two-week period in 2006, each independent shop unit along the street was recorded by both a photograph of the shop façade, as well as a brief face-to-face survey conducted within the shop. From this initial survey, it was apparent that there were 227 units along the mile length of the street, with 133 independent shops amongst these. From survey interviews with 105 independent proprietors, it emerged that there were over twenty different countries of origin amongst these proprietors, with no single place of origin predominating. The street is therefore composed of a diverse array of individuals and places, where for example, a barbershop attracting largely clientele with links to West Africa, sits alongside a Caff run by the second generation of immigrants from Turkish Cyprus, which sits alongside a shop proclaiming to serve both Eritrean and Italian food. Of analytic value then, are the ways in which both singular and multiple claims to identity and culture are made in the visual arrangement of the shop fronts, which must do the work of attracting a base of customers.



Figure 1. The juxtaposition of the global and local. A map of the Walworth Road is aligned with a map of the world, and shows the origins and journeys of the independent shop owners. (Hall 2009, p. 83)

What this Walworth Road-World drawing suggests about the translocality of an urban high street in the context of migration is that the local is neither static nor singular: Walworth Road is shaped by passages and journeys of a variety of individuals, who travel, literally and figuratively, between more than one knowledge base of local place. Further, the drawing captures the nature of an intense convergence of diverse individuals from within the UK and across the globe, each bringing established cultural expressions and social etiquettes to Walworth Road. However, what this drawing omits is the sense of time in the accumulation of these journeys. The interview material revealed that where some would have travelled to the Walworth Road in the last 5 years, others made their journey in the 1950s as part of post-war

immigration into London, whilst others still inherited their units on the street from grandparents who had set up shop in the mid nineteenth century. In addition, historic surveys such as the Post Office London Directory street surveys (1881-1950) provide a detailed record of respective shop activities and individual proprietors, and reveal that a mixture of entrepreneurial migrants both from inside and outside of the UK have occupied and shaped the small shop spaces along the Walworth Road, since the period of late industrialisation and urbanisation.

A fairly commonplace city street in London like the Walworth Road, is representative of an agglomeration of entrenched, established and emerging migrant cultures, and a palimpsest of immigration histories. Of crucial analytic regard then is not simply the agency of the individual proprietors as they migrate between places. As an aggregation of migration patterns, the map also suggests how these migrations are mediated by power relations, and there is a distinct pattern of already-established designations: an 'emplacement' of certain groups of people as they migrate between and occupy certain spaces of the city. Firstly, a map of the former British Empire is evident in the points on the World Map, reflected in the high proportion of the proprietor's countries of origin being former colonies of Britain and reveals a postcolonial 'situatedness'. Secondly, the alignment of the street and world map connects the 'third world' or 'developing world' to the Walworth Road, by linking places in Africa, the Middle East and the East to microcosms on this London street describing both an economic and developmental situatedness during mobility. While South America would have featured prominently on this drawing were the proprietors at the Elephant and Castle incorporated in this survey, North America and Western Europe are largely absent from the origins marked on this world map. Closer scrutiny of the drawing therefore reveals distinctive geographic patterns of mobility, agency and power, raising questions of who travels to which places during migration, and why certain individuals find themselves in particular locales in the city.

Two short questions asked of the respective proprietors of the independent shops along the Walworth Road were: 'How long have you been in this shop on the Walworth Road?'; and 'What is the country you were born in?'. In some cases the answers coincided with historic patterns of migration. Proprietors who were originally from Greek and Turkish Cyprus, from Trinidad and Jamaica, and from Pakistan for example, proclaimed lengthy periods of occupation on the Street, often of 35 years or more. In a detailed ethnographic study of one proprietor who came to London from Turkish Cyrus with his family in the 1950s, it was apparent that while he visited

Cyprus annually, and still had family ties there, London would remain his primary place of residence. Other patterns of emplacement reflect a lack of mobility or migration amongst those of English origin, and including proprietors who had long-standing links and affinities with south London working-class culture. Those who had occupied shops on the Walworth Road for less than 2 years, came from a variety of places including Iran, Vietnam, China, Sudan, Malaysia, Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey and Ghana. The significance of this variety points to the extraordinary range of cultural origins and references that become situated along one street, without any single nation, ethnicity or culture predominating. There is also a distinctive socio-economic lesson to be drawn in the study of migration and urban livelihoods, in this case how the practice of street-oriented retail provides a common foothold for diverse individuals in the city.

#### Visual signscape as a form of translocality

The entrepreneurship of migrants in ordinary spaces along the Walworth Road provides analytic territory to explore everyday socio-economic practices through which migrants situate their mobility. But in a context of multiple and variegated mobilities such as the Walworth Road how do the proprietors of the independent shops communicate with a broad base of customers? Through their selection of products and services, how do they market or display their shop identities? In the following images of shopfront displays along the Walworth Road, we argue that the shopfont acts as the first platform of communication, and in attempting to capture diverse customers, visual signscapes provide an important mode of legibility in both a mobile and multicultural context.

The visual sequence of display is a primary mode of communication used by proprietors on the Walworth Road to combine entrepreneurial and cultural expressions, where a combination of imagination and acumen is employed to attract a variegated customer base. The ways in which individual, ethnic and cultural differences are choreographed within these visual and spatial displays distinguish not only the shop products, but also the identity of the proprietor and how he or she anticipates the needs and preferences of prospective customers. As will be seen, the particularity of each shop is defined by an arrangement based on cultural identity rather than product based identity. In contrast, in many of the franchise or chain stores on the Walworth Road, which have a pre-established product and brand such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, Mac Donald's or Boots, the merchandise and brand established the prominent expression of the space. These spaces tended to reflect

highly a standardised organisation of space by item-to-shelf sequence, and the familiarity of a brand-oriented shop identity is promoted. Arguably, the particularity and variety of visual and spatial arrangements in the independent shops offer a contrasting, more variegated view of globalisation: one in which the flows of people, objects, ideas and affinities combine, alter and rearrange to create less predictable cultural experiences. Visual displays that describe the flows of economies and individuals across the globe might therefore operate in two distinctive ways: those that depend on the application of sameness across place; and those that emerge out of the local particularities in which one or more places are combined.

In many of the independent shops along Walworth Road the displays were shaped by a combination of cultural and personal affinities of both proprietors and customers. In one Halal convenience shop, for example, the space was divided into two areas. The first, closest to the street, had a range of food products, including the meat counter, while the second space, further from the street, stocked food goods more oriented to North African and Muslim customers. In this second space there were pictures of Mecca and a small prayer area. The proprietor, who had recently arrived from Sudan, promoted his primary public display or his street frontage through signage in both Arabic and English, using a selection of words aimed at including a wide customer base: 'Absar Food Store. Camberwell Halal Butchers and Grocery. Afro Caribbean and Mediterranean Fresh Fruit & Veg'.

Other shop signage along the Walworth Road also represented a desire to reach a diverse customer base, sometimes with humour such as, 'Mixed Blessings Bakery. West Indian and English Bread'. Cultural and spatial referencing was not the only mode of multiplicity represented, and signage such as 'Roze and Lawanson Nigerian Market. Money Transfer. Wedding Garments' and 'Afroworld Food Store. Cosmetics, wigs and fruit and veg' allude to the curious combinations of merchandise and services offered within these independent shops (figure 2). The kind of place-making that emerges out of how mobile subjects situate themselves in their own retail spaces is an act of communication and interpretation. It is the simultaneous translocal practice of translating not only 'who I am' but also 'where I am', and of understanding not only 'who I am', but also 'who else is here'.







Figure 2 shop signs on the Walworth Road which refer to a range of spaces, places and connections (Hall 2009, p. 89)

In exploring the visual signscapes along the street, it is both analytically useful to focus in on small signs, particular objects, or interior divisions within a particular shop, as well as to zoom out to explore the visual and experiential effects of the amalgamation of these shops along the street. This relates not only to the selective process in the fieldwork exercise of which elements to capture, but also to the discretion in the writing exercise of how to combine images to represent the street.

The process of combining and arranging photographs of the street brought about the challenge of how to group the visual shop displays without necessarily reverting to classification by origin of proprietor. The survey and fieldwork data that emerged showed that it was difficult to conclusively relate particular merchandise or services with particular ethnic groups or places of origin. What was apparent was the predominance of food related shops both of the retail and restaurant type, where the display of food and the arrangement of spaces for eating food, appeared as a primary medium for cultural and social exchange (figure 3). Displays of fruit and vegetables evoked a rich cultural collage, where West African yams, Plantain bananas and Turkish Olives were suggestive of the range of individuals shopping on the street. At the same time, cheap or bargain merchandise, most evidently clothing, followed by assortments of inexpensive household goods including those in charity shops, provided additional visual displays, which tended to be directed at shoppers who were on fairly tight budgets. There were also a number of jewellery and pawnshops, as well as betting establishments and places to cash cheques and access quick loans (figure 4). These commonplace goods and services shown in figures 3 and 4 point precisely to the notion of the ordinary city, where the overlap of diverse individuals and spaces produces an everyday rather than exotic urbanity.

What remained as a consistent dimension of this diverse but everyday entrepreneurship is the spatial pattern of a retail street lined with small-scale increments of retail space, generally of narrow frontage, always limited to the ground floor, and with a visual and spatial identity revealed in the items and sequence of display. Significantly, this spatial pattern could be understood as a basic urban framework for subjectivity, or a collective pattern in which individual proprietors along this street made use of the opportunity for expression and engagement in the street society in which they are active citizens.







## Food retail







Food services







Clothing







Beauty products and services







## Bargains

Figure 3 Retail groupings of the independent shops on the Walworth Road. (Hall 2009, p. 92)







Charity shops







Professional services







Betting and gambling







## Loans and money transfers







## Pawnbrokers and jewellers

Figure 4 Shop activities on the Walworth Road. (Hall 209, p. 93)

Above all, these visual displays serve to communicate the multiple connections that individuals accumulate and maintain as they move within and across cities. These particular shopfront images are expressive of a combination of regional, national and everyday references. As a primary cultural cue, specific national affinities are named; 'Eritrean', 'Nigerian', 'Chinese', 'English' but are often placed side-by-side: 'West Indian and English'; 'Eritrean and Italian'. But the prosaic dimensions of the shop signs also provide very basic references to economic affinities; 'money transfers'; 'cosmetics', 'food and groceries'. In this interesting overlap of national belongings and everyday needs, a translocal language emerges that connects a variety of spaces and places and puts them in close physical or imaginative proximity, without necessarily producing a hierarchy in the nature of identity or difference.

## Translocality in the ordinary city

This paper has highlighted the expression of situated mobility through a visual medium of communication where something as prosaic as a shop front display provides a surface to project, explore, read and interpret mobilities and connections

across spaces and places that are physically distanciated. In spite of the fluidity of economy, people and objects in a global world, much of the contact between individuals and groups occurs through regular, face-to-face and in place forms of communication. In focusing on the visual signscapes of everyday livelihoods along the Walworth Road, we have attempted to move towards an understanding of translocality as a significant visual medium of communication along an inner London retail street. In seeking to understand the ways in which mobile actors situate themselves in their imagined and physical journeys across neighbourhoods, cities and nations, we argue for an understanding of these spaces and places along the Walworth Road as translocal – that is to see these as not simply territorial or bounded as physical forms, rather as sites where mobile identities are materialised and embodied. This 'situatedness' is rooted in an understanding of how culture emerges out of the contact that most readily occurs within the spontaneity of everyday life. In pursuing a visual analysis of everyday entrepreneurship that is increasingly conditioned by movement and flux, the translocal lens argues for an understanding of how individual mobilities are mediated: how nationality, ethnicity, race, class and gender position individuals with respect to certain localities and connections. Therefore, while exploring social and economic exchange and communication through individual bodies, signs and spaces on the Walworth Road, we have also attempted to situate these within an uneven and rapidly changing world.

This paper therefore argues for a production of a translocal visuality that is grounded in an understanding of the subtle and complex ways that individuals actually seek to make places and spaces within an ordinary city. From this we can begin to learn how to read and analyse translocality in terms of how individuals accumulate and communicate both their own cultural references, as well as those of their perceived and targeted clientele. We have focused on the forms of visual display on the small urban exteriors of the independent shops, precisely because in their smallness and ordinariness, varied expressions emerge and are refined. However the extent of social exchange between diverse individuals within the shop interiors is not apparent through the methods of visual and verbal surveys. To access the nuanced ways in which individuals preserve social distances, maintain or equally transgress deep national, racial, ethic and cultural boundaries requires an ethnographic approach.

A question raised by this paper then, is whether we gain a different sense of migration and transnationalism through a lens of translocal situated mobilities? The

visual signscapes briefly explored in this paper suggest not only the social and economic importance of a visual, and arguably more legible, medium of communication in a context where culture is complexly negotiated and reworked; it also suggests that visual signscapes can be read through displays, range from individual aspirations, to cultural affinities, to the economic locale in which individuals live. Therefore the collection of mundane objects in the 'one pound' store are just as important to the analysis of everyday practices, as are the vivid collage of exotic 'fruit and veg' in the convenience store. In learning to recognise the ordinary and everyday adaptations of urban multi-cultures in the context of migration and mobility, these visual signscapes emerge as the sites of translocal linkages between spaces and places that are distanced yet make London's incredibly diverse neighbourhoods.

#### References

APPADURAI, A. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

APPADURAI, A. 2005. The production of locality, in *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*, edited by R. Fardon. New York: Routledge, 204-225.

BOURDIEU, P. 2002. ``Habitus", in *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, edited by J. Hillier, and E. Rooksby. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 27-36.

BRICKELL, K and DATTA, A 2010 (forthcoming) *Translocal Geographies: Spaces, Places, Connections,* London: Ashgate.

CABE (2007) Paved with Gold: The Real Value of Good Street Design.

GLA (2008) Demography Update.

HALL, S. M. (2009) A Mile of Mixed Blessing: Boundaries and Belonging on a South London Street, PhD Thesis, London School of Economics.

HAMNETT, C. (2003) Unequal City: London in the Global Arena, London: Routledge.

HANNERZ, U. 1996. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places.* London and New York: Routledge.

KELLY P. and LUSIS T. 2006. Migration and the Transnational Habitus: Evidence from Canada and Philippines, *Environment and Planning A*, 38, 831-847.

OAKES T. and SCHEIN L. eds. 2006. Translocal China: Linkages, Identities, and the Reimagining of Space. London: Routledge.

POST OFFICE (1881-1950) Post Office London Directory – Streets and Commercial Directory, Published annually by appointment of the Post Office, London.

ROBINSON, J. (2006) Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development, London: Routledge.

SMITH, M. P. (2005) 'Transnational Urbanism Revisited', in Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 235-244.

## WEBSITES:

OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS: http://www.statistics.gov.uk